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Transgressing to teach: Theorising race and security through struggle

Politics

1–16

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journals.sagepub.com/home/pol **Chris Rossdale**

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Abstract

Recent interventions in critical security studies have argued that the field has struggled to account for the racialised/racist foundations of security politics. This article engages with the US Black Panther Party (BPP), arguing that the Party did important work to show how security politics is dependent on racial violence. The idea that we can theorise global politics through struggle ('struggle as method') is becoming popular within disciplinary International Relations (IR), but has longer lineages in Black radical thought. The BPP were important advocates of struggle as method, with tactics and strategies intentionally designed with a pedagogical purpose; through Panther actions (including community self-defence and survival programmes), and the state's response to these, the mechanisms of capitalist white supremacy were laid bare. The article therefore acknowledges BPP action as a series of theoretical interventions, which demonstrated how the terms of US/white security are rooted in and dependent on anti-Blackness. It also shows how Panther tactics prefigured alternative, radical, anti-statist approaches to security, these conceptualised as 'survival pending revolution'. The article closes by arguing that scholarship on critical security studies - especially as related to the racialised politics of security - should do more to work with and acknowledge its indebtedness to struggle as method.

Keywords

black panther party, critical security studies, race and racism, critical pedagogy, black radicalism

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In 1969, FBI Director John Edgar Hoover claimed that the BPP was the 'greatest threat to the internal security' of the United States. Under his leadership, the Bureau worked tirelessly to destroy the Panthers, waging a campaign of misinformation, intimidation, and assassination. It's easy to see why the Panthers were threatening to the US state apparatus.

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The Party's conception of Black America as a colonised nation under imperial occupation; their determination to arm, educate, organise, and feed the ghetto; and their anti-capitalist internationalism, underpinned a Black radicalism that sought to overturn the very foundations of US society.

In 1970, BPP leader Huey P. Newton was asked about his successes in communicating the party's ideology to the masses. 'So far I haven't been able to do it well enough to keep from being booed off the stage, but we are learning', he replied (Newton, 2019: 207). Nevertheless, he had built a Party strategy that was explicitly designed to deepen understanding within Black communities about both the nature of oppression within capitalist white supremacy and the means for overturning these conditions. Ranging from armed patrols of the police to community breakfast programmes, Panther methods were conceived as simultaneously revolutionary and pedagogical.

This article locates Newton's pedagogical approach within a theoretical tradition which recognises that political struggle operates as a critical method or analytic through which to read relations of power and violence. Panther tactics, and the responses they elicited from the authorities, were designed to make clear the true nature of US society, to unsettle dominant categories of understanding, and to generate new concepts and social relations. As much as they were deeply practical, directed towards addressing the manifold insecurities of daily life for Black Americans, they were also intimately theoretical, adopting, circulating, and reshaping a conceptual framework directed towards survival and revolution. Attention to the theoretical qualities of political struggle, to 'struggle as method', can be a powerful lens through which to understand both the contours of power and the possibilities for new political formations.

I argue that BPP struggle elucidates the racist foundations through which security politics in the United States is produced, and which security politics in turn remakes. The Party's ascribed status as security threat came not only because they armed themselves and prepared for revolution, but because they revealed how the fundamental terms of US society are rooted in and dependent on Black subjugation. They demonstrated how standards of law, order, and security are predicated on (while concealing) racialised violence and exploitation. They called attention to the social relations that are produced as normal, safe, as the status quo which security secures and from which insecurity departs, and to the ideological work that sustains this perception. Through their struggle, they made clear the whiteness of US security, and the centrality of that white security to the United States as a capitalist-imperialist project. In their efforts to practically address the violences experienced by Black Americans, the Panthers also prefigured a broadly anti-capitalist, anti-statist response to insecurity; this they termed 'survival pending revolution'.

Recent interventions in Critical Security Studies have recognised that the field has struggled to contend with the racialised foundations of security politics, indeed that it has reproduced racist categories of the human and endangerment (Eriksson Baaz and Verweijen, 2018; Howell and Richter-Montpetit, 2019, 2020; Security Dialogue, 2020). In the context of these debates, the article situates the BPP as important theorists of the racialised politics of security. It also demonstrates the importance of recognising struggle as method. The idea that we can theorise IR through engagements with struggle is becoming popular, but this emergence obscures the fact that struggle as method has long been foundational to critical thought – a legacy often concealed through translation into academic contexts. While explicit engagements within IR have tended to begin from the work of Michel Foucault, I argue that the role of Black radicalism must be foregrounded in such work.

The first three sections of the article set out how the BPP theorised security politics. I begin by outlining the terms on which the BPP was regarded as a threat by the US security establishment, detailing the Party's analysis of Black exploitation within US racial capitalism, their practice of armed police patrols and self-defence, and their extensive community programmes. In the 'To teach the people' section, I argue that we should read the BPP's interventions in pedagogical and analytical terms, as moves to demonstrate and critique the racial violence of security politics. The section 'Prefigurations' explores how the Panthers developed responses to insecurity which refused accommodation within the dominant political system. I introduce Newton's conception of reactionary intercommunalism (his prescient account of neoliberal/racial capitalism) in order to argue that we might read these practices through the lens of 'survival pending revolution' rather than security. These parts of the article largely overlook disciplinary work on security studies. Not because such work is unimportant, but in order to afford the BPP structural primacy, to resist the imperative to authorise their interventions through scholarly insights which rarely acknowledge their own indebtedness to prior struggles, and so to position the Panthers as theorists rather than case study. Nevertheless, the final section turns to contemporary debates in order to argue that thinking through struggle in the manner exemplified by the Panthers should be integral to critical engagements with the racialised politics of security, and to stress that the emerging disciplinary interest in 'struggle as method' must take seriously the formative role of Black radicalism in its development.

The greatest threat

The Panthers sought to overturn the structural insecurity to which Black people in the United States are subjected. It was precisely on the terms that they interpreted and responded to this condition that Hoover designated them a threat to national security. By setting out the terms through which the Panthers theorised and responded to the insecurity of Black America, and through which they were therefore deemed threatening by the state, we can begin to see the racialised foundations which produce particular normative conceptions and apparatuses of security.

Panther leaders – principally Newton alongside Bobby Seale and Eldridge Cleaver – situated the conditions of Black Americans within a broader context of imperialism and racial capitalism. They drew from the tradition in post-War Black radicalism which understood the conditions of Black America in parallel to global conditions of Western colonial subjugation (Malloy, 2017: 18–45; Self, 2006: 22–23). Influenced by the writings and examples of Frantz Fanon, Mao Zedong, Malcolm X, and Harold Cruse, Black radical thinkers developed domestic analogies for anti-colonial struggle that allowed them to position racial domination in the United States as 'part of the history of Western imperialism' (Self, 2006: 21). This internationalist conception of 'domestic' racial exploitation challenged the exceptionalist position of Black liberals, who believed that the American project could be rescued through integration. Recognising the depths through which racial domination is interwoven into American society, Newton (2014b: 72) argued that 'the only way that we're going to be free is to wipe out once and for all the oppressive structure of America'.

The BPP's politics also turned on an urban-centric analysis, beginning from the position of the impoverished Black subjects of ghettos in the North who had been written out of the dominant narrative of the Civil Rights Movement. In the decades before 1968, millions of Black families had migrated to cities only to find high unemployment and low

wages (Self, 2006: 28–36). Black radicals observed how capital structured the ghetto as a space of exploitation, recognising race not as a marker of physical difference, but an ‘instrument of exploitation within urban capitalism’ (Self, 2006: 32). The BPP drew on this framework, positioning the city as both a site of local exploitation *and* as produced through the ‘capitalist foundations of a global colour line’ (Self, 2006: 37). They also took seriously Fanon’s observation that colonial rule tends to concentrate people of colour in urban ghettos and that this concentration creates a powerful base of power from which to resist (Abu-Jamal, 2019).

The significant innovation that the BPP made as they mobilised this anti-colonial analysis was to position the police as the domestic army of occupation, ‘the foot-soldiers in the trenches of the ghetto’ (Cleaver, 1968: 164). As Newton (2019: 161) wrote, because ‘Black people desire to determine their own destiny . . . they are constantly inflicted with brutality from the occupying army, embodied by the police department’. This conception of the police as an interloping army of occupation was a constant theme in Party speeches, publications, and imagery (Malloy, 2017: 70–106). Alongside making sense of everyday experiences in the ghetto, it allowed the BPP to draw intimate connections between imperial violence overseas and at home. For instance, Seale wrote in the Party’s newspaper *Black Panther* that ‘[t]he same thing they’re doing over there to the Vietnamese people, they’re getting ready to upstep and do to Black American people. The same thing; the same kind of weapons’ (Seale, 2014: 92; see also Bloom and Martin, 2013: 83–86; Manchanda and Rosedale, 2021).

The Party was originally named the Black Panther Party *for Self-Defence*, and from inception placed an armed response to police brutality at its core. The seventh point of their Ten Point Program states that

We believe we can end police brutality in our Black community by organizing Black self-defense groups that are dedicated to defending our Black community from racist police oppression and brutality. The Second Amendment to the Constitution of the United States gives a right to bear arms. We therefore believe that all Black people should arm themselves for self-defense. (BPP, 2014a: 3)

The BPP’s rise to prominence started early in 1967 when Newton, Seale, and a handful of others began to conduct armed patrols of the police in Oakland. On foot and in cars, they followed officers and declared themselves willing to use force in response to illegal police action, on numerous occasions drawing firearms. The patrols were both highly disciplined and lawful. Newton was meticulous in his understanding of California law, often reading from his lawbooks to stunned patrolmen. Party members were all trained in regulations concerning the ownership and use of firearms, and the party had strict rules about when firearms should be used.

The patrols electrified the Black community in Oakland, connecting with the experience of the streets more effectively than the abstract analysis and slow pace of other radical organisations. The Party encouraged others to arm themselves, and to join the organisation:

In the past, Black People have been at the mercy of cops who feel that their badges are a licence to shoot, maim, and out-right murder any Black man, woman or child who crosses their gun sights. But there are now strong Black men and women on the scene who are willing to step out front and do what is necessary to bring peace, security, and justice to a people who have been denied all of these for four hundred years. (Black Panther, 2014a: 11–12)

The patrols also caused panic among the political and economic establishment. The offence here was not only that Black people were taking action to defend themselves with weapons, but that they were doing so both legally and with explicit references to the constitution. In response, the California legislature passed the Mulford Act, which criminalised the carrying of loaded weapons in public (Bloom and Martin, 2013: 57–62). The BPP subsequently ceased their armed police patrols. Nevertheless, they continued to emphasise the role of armed self-defence, instructing Party members to keep guns in their homes, and to defend themselves against unwarranted searches (Bloom and Martin, 2013: 107). The image of the gun would remain central to the Panther aesthetic, connecting an image of practical defiance with global anti-colonial struggle.

While the patrols dominate popular accounts of the Panthers, they were both smaller in scale and shorter in lifespan than many other Party activities. They were also always secondary to the larger aims of organising, educating, and sustaining the Black community, and building a revolutionary movement. Those aims would be further served by the Party's extensive community programmes. The most famous of these was the Breakfast for Children programme, which began in January 1969. By April, Party members were serving breakfast to more than 1200 children across nine facilities, and by November, the programme was active in 23 cities (Bloom and Martin, 2013: 182). Tens, possibly hundreds, of thousands of children were fed by the programme. An article in *Black Panther* explained the rationale:

Why a Breakfast for Children Program? The answers to this question need be answered for only those who belong to the upper or so-called middle class. The majority of Black, Mexican-American . . . and poor Whites know from their American experience that it is impossible to obtain and sustain any education when one has to attend school hungry. (Black Panther, 2014b: 169)

That more immediate motivation was folded into its structural context: 'In America this program is revolutionary. In capitalist America any program that is absolutely free is considered bad business' (Black Panther, 2014b: 169).

While providing food to children might seem innocuous, it was viewed as deeply threatening by the state. Hoover claimed that

The BCP (Breakfast for Children Program) promotes at least tacit support for the Black Panther Party among naive individuals . . . and, what is more distressing, it provides the BPP with a ready audience composed of highly impressionable youths . . . Consequently, the BCP represents the best and most influential activity going for the BPP and, as such, is potentially the greatest threat to efforts by authorities . . . to neutralize the BPP and destroy what it stands for. (Collier, 2015).

The programme thus faced state repression: 'Police and federal agents regularly harassed and intimidated program participants, supporters, and Party workers and sought to scare away donors and organizations that housed the programmes, like churches and community centers'. Participation in one Harlem free breakfast programme dropped after the police spread a rumour that the children were being fed poisoned food. The police repeatedly raided breakfast programmes while children were eating (Bloom and Martin, 2013: 186).

Despite this repression, the Panthers organised a wide range of community programmes across the United States. They provided medical care, legal advice, ran a school, organised prison transport, and conducted research into sickle cell anaemia (Nelson, 2011). They organised within prisons, recognising the mass incarceration of Black Americans as a project of racist exploitation (Jackson, 1994). In organising these programmes, the Panthers were seeking to become the vanguard party of the Black community (Newton, 2014a). But they were also working to sustain Black lives and communities in a context of mass impoverishment and violence.

Sara Ahmed (2017: 143) observes that ‘There can be nothing more dangerous to a body than the social agreement that that body is dangerous. We can simplify: it is dangerous to be perceived as dangerous’. The Panthers recognised and yet were caught in the trap of a violent paradox through which racialised subjects are perennially exposed to violence through security. Where they distinguished themselves is that they sought to unsettle the foundations of this state, to render insecure a normalcy which was and is always a condition of violence. In the following section, I outline how Panther struggle operated as a form of critical methodology for understanding and unsettling the politics of security.

To teach the people

The BPP programme was explicitly conceived as a form of revolutionary pedagogy. Newton and Seale were critical of organisations like the Revolutionary Action Movement who focused on perfecting their analysis while failing to connect with people’s lived experiences. While committed to building a vanguard revolutionary organisation, the Panther leaders were also suspicious of Marxist-Leninists who thought that sophisticated analysis was only needed among a revolutionary elite who would direct the energies of the masses (Bloom and Martin, 2013: 66–70).

For Newton (2014a: 42–43), the vanguard party should ‘raise the consciousness of the masses’. He argued that slavery and racial violence had imposed a mind–body dualism which alienated Black people from their minds and white people from their bodies. The revolutionary process must not re-tread this line, and must instead promote mind–body reunification. The role of the guerrilla was to aid in this process (Newton, 1972: 68–71). Most importantly, the vanguard party should not disappear underground as many advocated; a revolutionary Black vanguard would only gain the trust of the masses if it remained among the people. This means that for the BPP, action and analysis were inseparable; the very purpose of BPP action was to spread this analysis, the very purpose of the analysis was to generate revolutionary sentiment and solidarity. In Newton’s terms

There are basically three ways one can learn: through study, through observation, and through actual experience. The black community is basically composed of activists. The community learns through activity, either through observation of or participation in the activity. To study and learn is good but the actual experience is the best means of learning. The party must engage in activities that will teach the people. (Newton, 2014a: 42)

While life in the Panthers did involve more conventional forms of learning – the organisation established a school, and new members were given reading lists including texts by Fanon and Mao – these were preceded by and grounded in a pedagogy of praxis.

The Panthers conceived their tactics and strategies in a manner which embodied a critique of the political and conceptual apparatus of US security politics. This analysis

was most immediately apparent in the Party's militant response to the police, structured through an inversion which showcased how the supposed guarantors of security, law, and order were in fact agents of racist brutality. The system maintained Black insecurity; 'Justice is secondary. Security is the byword' (Cleaver, 1968: 165). Sean Malloy cites Gene Marine's impressions after witnessing a confrontation:

The crowd that watched Huey Newton, a round of ammunition ostentatiously jacked into the firing chamber of his M-1 [rifle], face down a squad of Oakland police was not thinking about colonies and mother countries; most had never heard of Fanon. But whatever the validity of the theory, they knew the truths from which it grew: that they are oppressed people, that the police normally treat them with contempt and regard them as less than human, and that a small band of black men had stood up in defiance of every taboo to insist on their own humanity. (Cited in Malloy, 2017: 64)

The move here was not solely to highlight the violent nature of the police (about which few needed convincing), but to break down the state's hegemony and set out the possibilities for 'practical anticolonial organizing' (Malloy, 2017: 64).

However, the Panthers were making a more substantive critique than simply inverting the terms of security. They showed how the system does not just make Black Americans insecure, but is *made by* Black insecurity. Black insecurity is not merely an effect of the US political and economic system, but is intimately constitutive of it. In the kinds of reaction the Panthers provoked in the state security apparatus, and the ruptures they effected in the law and order fantasies on which white security in the United States was and is predicated, the Panthers demonstrated how the normalcy which security secures, and from which insecurity is a departure, is always itself a condition of racialised violence, terror, and dispossession. And so, they gave out food and provided community services in an attempt to arrest the slow death of ghetto life, and revealed the state's investment in Black poverty and disposability. They carefully asserted their Second Amendment rights, only to be reminded that these rights are not their rights. The obviously politically motivated prosecutions of Panthers leaders, the hasty moves to criminalise Panther tactics, the illustrations of Bobby Seale in court, shackled and gagged to prevent him from speaking in his own defence, strikingly revealed the racialised terms of American security, in a manner which amplified and spoke to the experience of ordinary Black Americans. The Panthers thus connected the routine physical violence meted out to Black people by the police, and the organised state repression of their organisation, to the experiences of exploitation, deprivation, and dispossession which were and are the 'normal' conditions of Black American life and the necessary conditions of American security.

Within the contours of white security, the experience of insecurity was and is intimately tied to a sense of security lost whereas, for the Panthers, insecurity and violence is the prior condition of Black America. Nostalgia often functions to obscure the racial and imperial violence which underpins lost (often Keynesian, frequently fictitious) states of well-being (Narayan, 2017: 12). Reflecting on the breakdown of his friendship with Norman Mailer, James Baldwin writes that there 'is a difference, though, between Norman and myself in that I think he still imagines that he has something to save, whereas I never had anything to lose', further observing that

most of the white people I have ever known impressed me as being in the grip of a weird nostalgia, dreaming of a vanished state of security and order, against which dream, unfailingly and consciously, they tested and very often lost their lives. (Baldwin, 1961)

The Panthers showed how this white security is predicated on both Black passivity and Black deprivation. In refusing to be passive, in overturning the condition of deprivation, the Panthers provoked a crisis. This was, then, about more than law and order; it was a politicising and situating of security, a revealing of the racialised contours of the American normal.

Newton drew on Fanon's writings on the psychological effects of colonisation to theorise the condition of life in the ghetto. He argues that the Black man is taught to blame himself for his position in society, identifying a double bind where, on one hand, he believes himself inherently inferior, while on the other, he refuses to believe this, and so blames himself for his failures to advance (Bloom and Martin, 2013: 66):

he is asked to respect laws that do not respect him. He is asked to digest a code of ethics that act upon him but not for him. He is confused and in a constant state of rage, of shame and of doubt. (Newton, 1972: 80)¹

The purpose of Panther action was to render systemic the experience of insecurity and the violence of security to which Black people were subjected, an 'unmasking and scandalizing of the status quo' (Sithole, 2020: 4) which made plain the racialised contours through which 'normal' in the American context meant both law and order, and violence and dispossession.

As she meditates on how attempts to challenge power reveals the material and ideological walls that sustain oppression, Ahmed (2017: 144–145) argues that the instinctive and unthinking actions of individuals and institutions are fertile spaces for learning: 'The most immediate of our bodily reactions can be treated as pedagogy: we learn about ideas by learning how they become quick and unthinking. There is nothing more mediated than immediacy'. Such experiences allow us to reflect on the conditions which make possible the moment, insofar as '[c]oming up against walls teaches us that social categories precede a bodily encounter, deciding how a body appears in an instant' (Ahmed, 2017: 147). She is right, of course, but such learning is not inevitable. The encounter frequently overpowers any attempt to recognise the systems through which it is made possible. But it is here that the Panthers were most effective, reinscribing encounters on the streets and in kitchens and courtrooms, and revealing the systemic categorisations which precede and direct those moments. This was theory embodied and taught through struggle.

Prefigurations

As they used struggle as method to critique the racialised politics of security, the Panthers also prefigured 'alternative ways of life, both institutionally and ideologically, to the racially divisive, class exploitative and gendered structures of capitalist society' (Narayan, 2017: 13). What was threatening to the state was not only that the Panthers rejected its authority but that they cultivated new forms of social relation. As Christina Sharpe (2016: 22) has argued, the exclusion of Black subjects from the normal terrain of citizenship and from the responsibilities of the state creates the conditions for new and particular ways of re/seeing, re/inhabiting, and re/imagining the world. It is as they were excluded from the state's politics of security that the Panthers prefigured security practices which blended community autonomy and revolutionary internationalism. In this context, struggle was not only a method for understanding the power relations at play in the politics of security but a practice through which alternatives were conceived.

Panther leaders were explicit in their desire to attend to the (in)security of Black Americans. To an extent they sought to provide this security themselves, through armed defence of the community and community programmes. However, there was again a pedagogical quality to these interventions: the ‘chief purpose of the patrols was to teach the community security against the police . . . only the community could effectively defend and eventually liberate itself. Our aim was simply to teach them how to go about it’ (Newton, 2009: 128–129). The position of the state in relation to this community security practice was ambiguous. The BPP’s Ten Point Programme closes by invoking Jefferson’s declaration that, when faced with tyranny, it is the people’s ‘right, it is their duty, to throw off such government, and provide new guards for their future security’ (BPP, 2014a: 4). As with the use of the Second Amendment, this reference to the Declaration of Independence is both tactical and ironic, knowingly mobilising sources of legitimacy that are not designed for Black liberation. The Panthers largely placed their faith in local knowledge and agency:

[n]ot only control over jobs and housing, but also control over the schools and courts of the Black community must be turned over to that community. Only the residents of a community have a true understanding of its needs and desires. (BPP, 2014b: 178)

However, Newton also exhibited support for the state’s police and army in socialist countries including China, where they were ‘there to protect and help the people, not to oppress them’ (Newton, 2009: 349), thereby aligning with others who have argued that ‘true’ security can only be achieved through revolution (Reitan, 1999).

Here, we arrive at an often-recognised tension in the study of security, between those for whom security is an assemblage of ideas and practices which might be rehabilitated in the service of emancipation, and those for whom security as a concept must be resisted. The former acknowledge that security politics is often entrenched in and reproductive of racialised violence, but view security politics as contestation between competing visions, practices, agents, and referents of security (Burke, 2013; McDonald, 2013). Alternative, even revolutionary, approaches to security are possible. Others argue that the ideological and political apparatus of security is too implicated in racialised governance and too intimately woven into the violence of colonial modernity for rehabilitation. Alternatives too easily retain the masterful aspirations, the racialised categorisations of danger, and fidelity to a model of the human that is always in relation to the non-human and the less than human (Howell and Richter-Montpetit, 2019; Rossdale, 2019: 108–114). These approaches push us to explore whether and how the very concept of security might be abolished. Here too, the Panthers provide guidance.

Lara Coleman and Doerthe Rosenow argue that the purchase of struggle as method lies not only in the ability of struggles to reveal and unsettle dominant concepts and categories, but in their creative capacities:

Struggles may begin with a preliminary understanding of ‘what they are up against’ but in the process of trying to intervene upon and manipulate those power relations – in meeting with attempts at repression, co-optation, domestication and so on – they are forced to reconfigure their own frames of reference. In the process, struggles themselves create new concepts and objects, they shift and deepen understandings of power, politics and ethics. (Coleman and Rosenow, 2016: 215; citing Coleman, 2015: 276)

The Panthers' aporetic encounter with security, conceived as both necessary yet irredeemably violent, generated novel reconceptualisations of security. Here we see theoretical innovations which are precisely the product and creative output of struggle.

Beginning in 1970, Newton gave a series of speeches in which he reflected on the Party's failure to incite a successful revolution, and on the situation facing movements for decolonisation, many of which had achieved formal independence but remained subordinate on the global stage (Newton, 2019: 173–188). He argued that these failures were connected to a broader shift in global power relations. Developments in productive technology, mass communication, and military power had intensified global interconnections. Formal imperial occupation had given way to the 'peaceful' co-optation and integration of disparate societies into a new phase of empire (Narayan, 2017: 4–5). The totalising movements of capitalism and hegemonic status of the United States meant that individual nation states had ceased to be the principle agents of global politics. In this global imperial context, national liberation was no longer a meaningful goal (Newton, 2019: 183).

Recognising the dissolution of the state as an agent and viewing the new world as an interaction of communities rather than nations, Newton referred to this new order as 'intercommunalism'. He rejected the impulse to respond to these shifts by rehabilitating the state, insisting that the only option was to transform this new order by building relations of solidarity across borders in pursuit of a global revolutionary project. He thus sought to fight the emerging *reactionary* intercommunalism with *revolutionary* intercommunalism: 'It is true that the world is one community, but we are not satisfied with the concentration of power. We want the power for the people' (Newton, 2019: 187).

This account of intercommunalism and its implications for radical politics resituates the politics of security. Neither national nor local/community articulations of security can capture or contend with the global forces which render people insecure. Presaging later accounts of racial capitalism and neoliberalism, Newton argued that the progression of reactionary intercommunalism would lead to an intensification of exploitation and inequality, increased labour precarity, the violent governance of indisciplined communities, and the deepening of racialised antagonisms (Newton, 2002: 245–266). (Racialised) insecurity is not a failure of governance or an accidental by-product of that system; it is constitutive of it. Globally as within the United States, security within this context can only mean accommodation and subjection to that system.

This analysis pushed Newton to redirect the BPP's strategic energies, with a greater focus on the community programmes. National liberation was a chimera in a world structured through empire, but the creation of liberated territories was integral to the pursuit of revolutionary intercommunalism. This was a project which must be both local and global, and the community programmes (thereafter called survival programmes) were to play a central role in reestablishing and reinventing the communal institutional fabric that reactionary intercommunalism had rent (Narayan, 2019: 74). As ever there was a pedagogical dimension: '[t]he survival programs are not answers or solutions, but they will help us to organise the community around a true analysis and understanding of their situation' (Newton, 2002: 230). Consciousness was raised 'through practice as well as ideology' as 'new and novel institutional forms of intercommunal cooperation and collaboration . . . provided democratic empowerment' (Narayan, 2019: 71).²

These developments in the Panther programme showcase theory emerging through struggle. This emergence is evident in Newton's theorisation of intercommunalism, but a related conceptual innovation is better known. Under conditions of reactionary

intercommunalism, where local organisation is essential but inadequate, and community autonomy impossible but integral to a revolutionary project, Newton began to speak in terms of ‘survival pending revolution’. This was the concept through which the community programmes were organised from 1970, structured through the recognition that they ‘satisfy the deep needs of the community but . . . are not solutions to our problems’ (Newton, 2002: 230). Rejecting the nostalgia and/or fantasies of security, which will only mask racialised accommodations to capitalist oppression, ‘survival pending revolution’ holds radical promise while being attentive to the needs of the everyday. It holds the present and the future together, recognising that each is the condition of the other. A subversive mobilisation of-and-against security, it is a prefigurative principle which recognises the need to live in a world to which you cannot and will not accommodate yourself. As a way of thinking radical survival and action, it has outlasted the Panthers, and remains integral to contemporary movements against global racial capitalism (Narayan, 2020).

Conclusion: Security through struggle

There is a growing body of work in disciplinary IR and Security Studies that is committed to engaging struggle as a form of critical methodology and site of theory production. The most comprehensive accounts have come from Coleman and Rosenow (2016: 205), who argue that struggles provide ‘a vital way into making sense of power because of the less visible violences to which they testify and because they focus attention on heterogeneous technologies deployed to contain and manage disruptive politics’. Political struggle reveals the contours and fault lines of power systems, unsettles dominant categories of knowledge and identity, and incites the creation and mobilisation of new concepts. Struggle *is* method, and reading power through struggle is not only something that professional theorists *can* do – it is something that movements *do* do.

While uses within IR are incipient, there is a far longer tradition of recognising and mobilising the theoretical and pedagogical nature of struggle in Black radical thought (James, 1996; Kelley, 2002: 1–12). In *Teaching to Transgress*, bell hooks pays careful attention not only to the transgressive potential of radical pedagogy, but to the pedagogical quality of transgression itself. She writes that

I am grateful to the many women and men who dare to create theory from the location of pain and struggle, who courageously expose wounds to give us their experience to teach and guide, as a means to chart new theoretical journeys. (hooks, 1994: 74)

Audre Lorde notes that a condition of perpetual endangerment has made learning through struggle an essential survival strategy for Black people (Lorde, 2017: 119–132). And reflecting on her experiences conducting ‘diversity work’ in university institutions, Sara Ahmed (2017: 89–90) explains that ‘I have learned about how power works by the difficulties I have experienced in trying to challenge power’. She demonstrates how theorising through struggle is largely the preserve of marginalised subjects; it is as systems of power reveal their walls and blockages, as they resist resistance, that their contours become visible (Ahmed, 2017: 146–148). Those who are supposed to move through such systems will not encounter these walls.

Attention to struggle as a theoretical exercise demands a decoupling of theory production from the formal academy, refusing to gatekeep what counts as ‘real’ theory. hooks argues that energy in critical thought invariably emerges through struggle, recounting the

work undertaken by Black feminists challenging the hegemonic, white, academic category of woman. However, marginal ways of speaking and creating theory are delegitimised (witness the privileging of written over oral traditions) even as the ideas themselves are appropriated. Enshrining the academy as the cardinal site of theory production enables that appropriation, compelling both individualisation and the decoupling of theory from struggle (hooks, 1994: 62–64). Taking seriously the idea of struggle as method involves paying attention to how theory is created and lived as a means of inhabiting, understanding, and dismantling power systems which do not exist for you.

Despite this heritage, much of the explicit work on struggle as method within IR and Security Studies begins with Michel Foucault. Foucault's account of the co-implication of power and resistance incites analyses which recognise how systems of power are revealed through attempts to challenge them, insofar as such practices expose tensions, fractures, and ever deeper lines of penetration (Foucault, 1982; Rossdale, 2019: 3). Foucauldian work has engaged with political struggle in order to understand how (post) modern subjects are produced, governed, policed, and to expose the fissures through which alternative political formations become possible (Bleiker, 2000; Bulley, 2016; Daase and Deitelhoff, 2019; Kazi, 2016; Rossdale, 2019; Stierl, 2019).

This lineage marks an erasure. As Brady Thomas Heiner demonstrates, it was following his encounters with late-60s Black Radicalism, and especially the Black Panther–connected prison abolitionists George Jackson and Angela Davis, that Foucault turned towards an investigation of disciplinary modes of governance and the intertwined study of power and resistance (Heiner, 2007). The Panthers are foundational to Foucault's account of struggle as method. However, Foucault makes no reference to them (nor that wider Black Radical context) in his published work. This precisely is the kind of move hooks warns against, the appropriation of struggle-theory into the obscurities of academic production, this then repackaged free from its grounding in practical action. It is a move which in Alexander Weheliye's terms signals how 'white supremacy and coloniality still form the glue for the institutional and intellectual disciplinarity of western critical thought'. He continues,

Since the ideas of the BPP are limited to concerns with ethnic racism elsewhere, they do not register as thought qua thought, and can thus be exploited by and elevated to universality only in the hands of European thinkers such as Foucault, albeit without receiving any credit. (Weheliye, 2014: 63)

Recognising the Panthers as proponents of struggle as method is therefore important both as a matter of epistemic justice and as a means of marking and unsettling the white supremacist erasures at work in Foucauldian accounts. Doing so also opens pathways for thinking security in critical and generative ways.

There is a growing body of work paying careful attention to the raced politics of security (Eriksson Baaz and Verweijen, 2018; Henry, 2021; Howell and Richter-Montpetit, 2019, 2020; Security Dialogue, 2020), these drawing on an extensive literature within and beyond IR (Anievas et al., 2015; Henderson, 2013; Rutazibwa, 2020; Sabaratnam, 2020). This work has demonstrated how the categories on which both security policy and theory rely – threat, danger, vulnerability, death, norm and exception, the human – are rooted in and generative of colonial, racist, and white supremacist politics. They make the case that, if we are serious about understanding the violence which is produced, directed, and normalised through contemporary security politics, we must begin from colonialism and

racism. The BPP are important reference points in the intellectual genealogies which underpin this work, anticipating but also prefiguring the conceptual terms on which contemporary critiques have emerged. They show us that struggle as method has always been integral to critical work on security and invite further reflection on the role of struggle in theorising security.

Coleman and Rosenow set the analytics of security and struggle against one another. They argue that poststructural approaches to security studies have fetishized the conceptual apparatus of security (by which they mean politics rooted in the 'management of threat, risk, vulnerability, protection, the mediation of death and/or the fixing of political identities by categorizing others in ways that render them sources of threat, risk or vulnerability' (Coleman and Rosenow, 2016: 204)), problematically placing it as the starting point for understanding the power relations of contemporary liberal society rather than as situated 'within complex entanglements with other technologies of power' (Coleman and Rosenow, 2016: 203). While acknowledging that poststructural work has succeeded in demonstrating how particular ways of knowing and managing security are interwoven with political violence, they argue that there are forms of violence which cannot be apprehended through a security lens. In always centring and beginning from security, poststructural security studies limits its capacity to apprehend forms of violence and pacification which are less visible, which are normalised, which operate as the 'neutral' backdrop against which security takes place. They argue that struggle, rather than security, generates more substantive accounts of the politics of violence.

The critique is an important one, but the suggestion that we should therefore displace the study of security relies on too narrow an understanding of what security is, what security does, and what the possibilities are for thinking security *through* struggle. Coleman and Rosenow's critique focuses on security as a series of technologies of population governance, overlooking the role of security as a discursive assemblage which authorises such technologies. These discourses, which cannot be detached from racialised categories of the human, political community, and danger and threat, fundamentally turn on the intimate relationship between normalisation and exception. Coleman and Rosenow do acknowledge that there are ways of reading security which are more attuned to the ways violence is folded into processes of both normalisation and exception, but suggest that the disciplinary, political economic and policy-facing stakes of contemporary security studies hinder careful analysis here. In this article, I have demonstrated how the Panthers engage in precisely such a theorisation of security.

Rather than moving from security to struggle, we might then think security *through* struggle. Panther struggle reveals the racist terms through which security in the United States is produced and which security politics remakes. Through their actions, they demonstrated the foundational role played by anti-Black violence, making clear that Black insecurity is not an unfortunate by-product, but is intimately constitutive of US 'security'. They made clear the racial violence and terror always folded into the conditions of normalcy which security promises, and so set out the white supremacist terms on which security, law, and order are predicated. They also explored alternative ways of thinking and practicing security, recognising both how security in such a context entails accommodation to the political system and the simultaneous necessity of defending Black communities, thus advancing a politics of 'survival pending revolution'. Their audience for this analysis was not professional theorists, but Black people subjected to 'a trigger happy social order' (Cleaver, 1968: 162); the merits of Panther

actions should be evaluated primarily for their successes in mobilising many thousands of those people to radical politics. However, as the discussions here make clear, this analysis remains vital for any attempt to contend with the racialised politics of security.

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Notes

1. The Black Panther Party's (BPP) focus on reclaiming Black masculinity has been deeply contested. The Party was criticised both internally and externally for expounding a vision of revolution rooted in patriarchal militancy, in which misogyny and homophobia were common and women's agency was circumscribed. In response, others pointed towards the manifold roles in the Party played by women, including – unusually for the time – participation in militant action, and argued that racist violence from the state was the principle issue facing Black women (Springer, 2006: 26–28; Wallace, 2015; Wendt, 2007). Over time, the Party's rhetoric and culture shifted in response to those challenges. Newton reached out to the women's liberation movement, key figures began to talk about the continuities between racism, patriarchy, and heterosexism, and, during the 1970s, women increasingly took leadership positions within the Party (Bloom and Martin, 2013: 305–308).
2. The turn to intercommunalism and the expansion of the community programmes were controversial within the Party. Many viewed these shifts as an abandonment of armed struggle, a sign of defeat in the face of a violent empire. While Newton and his allies nominally remained committed to revolutionary violence, this became largely symbolic. In contrast, factions linked to Cleaver sought to intensify violent struggle against the US government. They feared that a strategy of survival pending revolution would stall at the former. Space limits prohibit a fuller treatment of an impasse that soon – with encouragement from the FBI – developed into a civil war that shattered the Party. Nevertheless, it is useful to note that the terms of that impasse were not only strategic – this new framework of liberation, alongside growing numbers of women in leadership roles and changing consciousness around gender and sexuality, 'constituted a direct challenge to the link between national liberation, armed struggle, and manhood that characterized the early years of the party' (Malloy, 2017: 181). The split thus traced diverging analyses of and responses to interrelations of masculinity, militancy, violence, and (in)security within the Party.

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