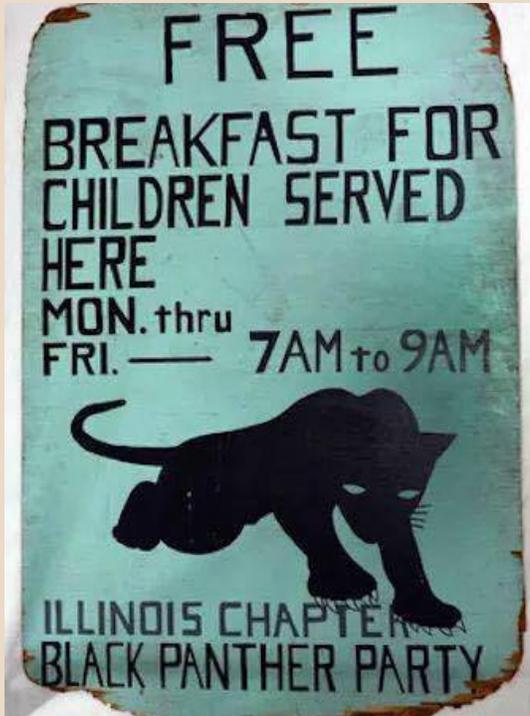


The Black Panther Party Free Breakfast for School Children Program

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Did you know that the head of the FBI declared The Black Panther Party Free Breakfast for School Children Program the biggest threat to the internal security of America in 1969? Did you know that the Black Panthers are the reason the U.S. serves free breakfast to all public school students today? Black History Month may be over, but the legacy of the Black Panther's radical politics is worth remembering all year round.



The Black Panther Party (BPP) was founded in 1966 with the goal to end police brutality in Oakland. But as the party grew, so did push back by the government. To strengthen BPP and improve their public image, the Panthers deployed various social programs that served and uplifted Black communities across the country. Free Breakfast For School Children became arguably their most effective program.

→ **The first day the program opened it served 11 children. By the end of the week, the Panthers were serving 135 children each day. In 1969, before they completed their second year of programming, the National School Lunch Program administrator admitted that the Black Panthers fed more poor school children than the entire State of California.**

Because of the widespread popularity of this program, FBI director J. Edgar Hoover called it “potentially the greatest threat to efforts by authorities to neutralize the The Black Panther Party and destroy what it stands for.” He gave law enforcement complete freedom to destroy the Panthers by any means necessary.

Ultimately, government efforts to destroy the BPP lead to the end of the Free Breakfast for School Children Program in the early 1970s. But, the party ultimately put pressure on politicians to provide food for all hungry children before school. In 1975, the USDA School Breakfast Program began. Currently, it makes food available to almost 15 million children before school each day. Without the radical actions of the Black Panthers, this may never have happened.