

Black Panthers at 40: Legacies still alive

By Brandon Perry -
Special to Sentinel-Voice
INDIANAPOLIS (NNPA) - This year marks the 40th anniversary of the formation of the Black Panther Party, an organization that pushed the limits on what steps Blacks can take to protect themselves, achieve civil rights and become self-sufficient in their own communities.

As surviving Black Panther leaders prepare gatherings to share the nostalgia of their accomplishments and reminisce about members lost in the struggle, they are making it clear that the best way activists today can honor their legacy is to seriously address the latest set of challenges being faced by African-Americans, and humanity in general.

In a recent statement the Dr. Huey P. Newton Foundation, the organization that currently represents many of the original Black Panthers, noted that, in some aspects, conditions for African-Americans are worse today than they were in the '60s.

"Blacks in the main continue to live in poverty," the statement reads. "Disproportionate percentages of Blacks

die from AIDS and cancer, as the Black infant mortality rate continues to be double that of Whites. There is a desperate need for a liberation agenda."

There are still many people who would argue that an organization like the Black Panthers would be best suited to find solutions to those problems.

Originally named the

Black Panther Party for Self-Defense, the organization was formed by Newton, Bobby Seale and Richard Aoki in 1966 in the wake of the assassination of Malcolm X, the riot in Watts, Calif., and the frustration some Black leaders had with non-violent civil rights efforts.

The new group immediately announced its principles in a revolutionary Ten-Point Program that called for, among other things, "land, bread, housing, education, clothing, justice, peace, an end to capitalist economic exploitation" and exemption of African-Americans from military service.

One of the primary goals of the Black Panther Party was to stop abuse committed by local police departments, especially those in the South. Starting in their native city of Oakland, Calif., armed Black Panthers conducted neighborhood patrols to watch police and ensure that law enforcement officials did not harass Black citizens.

The party, which had more than 30 chapters nationwide, was known for instituting several survival programs in various cities that were designed to serve neighborhoods that were in need of aid or thought to be neglected by the government. These services included clothing distribution, classes

on politics and economics, free medical clinics, drug and alcohol abuse rehabilitation, an emergency ambulance program and transportation to prisons for families of inmates.

"They came up with solutions for some of the poverty-based problems in the Black community with such initiatives as the Free Breakfast Program for school children," said Ramla Bandle, a professor of political science at Indiana University-Purdue University Indianapolis and expert on urban politics. "The Panthers offered clinics that were widely accepted once they backed off the revolutionary stance and moved towards changing things in the community themselves."

Bandle also noted that the work of the Black Panthers led to the establishment of institutions that are common in most cities today, especially social service centers and citizens' boards that regulate the ethics of police departments.

However, because of its revolutionary slant and use of some socialist principles the Black Panther Party became a target of the FBI, which viewed it as one of America's greatest "communist" threats to national security. By 1974 the party had collapsed due

Court nixes parts of Texas map

WASHINGTON (AP) - The Supreme Court on Wednesday upheld most of the pro-Republican Texas congressional map engineered by former House Majority Leader Tom DeLay and freed all states to draw new political boundaries as often as they want.

The court, however, said that part of the new Texas map failed to protect minority voting rights, a small victory for Democratic and minority groups who accused Republicans of an unconstitutional power grab in drawing boundaries that booted four Democrats from office.

The ruling did not make clear whether or not lower courts or the state would have to change congressional district boundaries before the November elections.

Justice Anthony M.

Kennedy, writing for a 5-4 majority, said Hispanics do not have a chance to elect a candidate of their choosing in south and west Texas under the state's plan.

The plan's "troubling blend of politics and race — and the resulting vote dilution of a group that was beginning to achieve (the federal law's) goal of overcoming prior electoral discrimination — cannot be sustained," Kennedy wrote.

Some 100,000 Hispanics had been shifted out of a district represented by a Republican, and foes of the plan had argued it violated the Voting Rights Act, which protects minority-voting rights.

More broadly, Republicans picked up six Texas congressional seats two years ago, and the court's ruling does not seriously threaten

those gains.

The court ruled 7-2 that state legislators may draw new congressional maps anytime — not just once a decade as Texas Democrats had claimed and has been traditional nationwide. That means any state's lawmakers can push through new maps anytime there is a power shift in the Legislature.

The Constitution says states must adjust their congressional district lines every 10 years to account for population shifts. In Texas the boundaries were redrawn twice after the 2000 census, first by a court, then by state lawmakers in a second round promoted by DeLay after Republicans took control.

That was acceptable, the justices said.

"Some people are predicting a rash of mid-decade re-

districting. I am skeptical," said Richard Hasen, an election law expert at Loyola Law School. "It would be seen as a power grab in a lot of places."

The contentious map drawing in Texas was done after Gov. Rick Perry, a Republican, called lawmakers back for three special sessions in 2003. Democrats fled the state to halt the process. It also contributed to the downfall of DeLay.

DeLay was charged in state court with money laundering in connection with fundraising for legislative candidates. Although he is fighting the charges and maintains he is innocent, DeLay gave up his leadership post and then resigned from Congress.

The Supreme Court has

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Hunger

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tion centers for Feed the Children, delivered the donated goods for the 800 families that were qualified and selected by the Hope for the Homeless Ministry. Each family received a 25-pound box of canned and non-perishable food, personal care items, milk, baby food and juice.

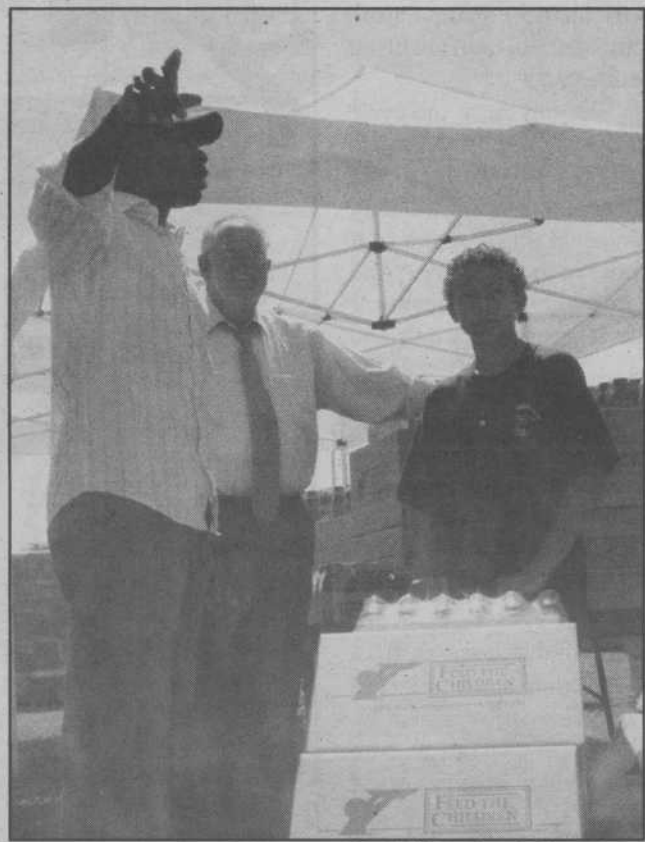
"First of all, I want to thank everyone for coming out today. This is something for me that's an honor and a responsibility to get involved in the community," Anthony, native of Las Vegas, said. "We have been fortunate enough to partner with Feed the Children, who have been responsible for constructing efforts to putting lives back together."

The Rancho High School graduate continued, "As a kid growing up, I can remember many times that my mother, who has since passed, went to different types of venues that participated in giving back to the community, helping out with food and per-

sonal care items that made a difference in people's lives. It's a small thing, but this is one of the ways that I try to help in the communities... across the country," Anthony added.

Jones, whose organization has been in existence for the past 27 years, embraced his presence at the event, noting that another event was occurring in New Orleans with his group but that he has visited there on previous occasions and was honored to be in Las Vegas with Anthony. He stated: "One out of three women in your city with three or more children live way below the poverty level earning \$10,000 to \$12,000 a year and they cannot make it. It doesn't matter where we go, there are a lot of families struggling, you will find this in any city in America, and my hat's off to your mayor for inviting us to your city."

In addition, he said, "Hunger never takes a vacation, and this is not Christmas or Thanksgiving when everyone seems to get compas-



Sentinel-Voice photo by Ramon Savoy

Youth volunteer Miles Killebrew, right, listens to ex-NBA player Greg Anthony. In the back is Mayor Oscar Goodman. sionate about helping others, but the summer where people still have needs, and we are happy to be here. We see the need on one side and the re-

difference."

Goodman and Weekly shared their perspectives about the event and what it meant for Las Vegas.

Goodman said, "Well, it's great, we have one of our originals coming back to our community, Greg Anthony, who is an old friend of mine, giving back to our city that he has loved so much since attending and graduating from UNLV [University of Nevada, Las Vegas]."

He continued, "We have many social service organizations here in Las Vegas like the Salvation Army, Catholic Charities, that provide meals to those in need, and there should be no one going hungry for lack of a meal. The main thing is to provide assistance and transitional services to allow them to return to a normal lifestyle."

Weekly said, "I am very grateful to Greg Anthony and the entire Feed the Children family for doing what I believe is God's work, taking care of God's children. We're

so happy that many needy families are going to benefit from this event and this great charity."

Mickell Forehand and her four children attended the event to secure food and other necessities for the family. They relocated to Las Vegas from Victorville, Calif., last month and are facing difficulties. Forehand works part-time eight hours a week at a local retail store, and her husband has only been able to secure two part-time jobs to provide for their family.

"We went to the local food bank and received a voucher to come here today and get some food assistance for our family. We are struggling to make ends meet and it's difficult with the high cost of rent and having the ability to provide for the children. My husband and I are looking for full-time employment so that we can take care of our needs, but it has been hard not having the income necessary to take care of ourselves and our children," Forehand said.