The *Polynesian Panthers* and *The Black Power* Gang: Surviving Racism and Colonialism in Aotearoa New Zealand

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Introduction[1]

Scholars of Black Power are increasingly exploring its global dimensions.[2] A number of studies have paid attention to the international connections and influences of key US Black Power people and organizations,[3] and the mapping of the influence of US Black Power across the American and African continents is well underway.[4] However, further analysis of the global import, influence and effect of Black Power across the postcolonial world must pay more attention to the various ways in which its postcolonies have been inserted into global hierarchies of colonial and racial orders. In this respect, attention must also be paid to the particular lived experiences of the protagonists who have in various ways heard and interpreted the call to Black Power. This sensitivity is especially important when accounting for the influence of Black Power on colonized and/or oppressed groups that do not directly share an African heritage[5].

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[2] See the historiographical review by George N. Katsiaficas, "Introduction," in *Liberation, Imagination, and the Black Panther Party: A New Look At the Panthers and Their Legacy*, by Kathleen Cleaver and George N. Katsiaficas (New York: Routledge, 2001), vii-xiv.

[3] Michael L. Clemons and Charles E. Jones, "Global Solidarity: The Black Panther Party in the International Arena," *New Political Science* 21, no. 2 (1999): 177-203; Ruth Reitan, "Cuba, The Black Panther Party, and the U.S. Black Movement in the 1960s: Issues of Security," in *Liberation, Imagination, and the Black Panther Party: A New Look At the Panthers and Their Legacy*, by Kathleen Cleaver and George N. Katsiaficas (New York: Routledge, 2001), 164-174; Fanon Che Wilkins, "The Making of Black Internationalists: SNCC and Africa before the Launching of Black Power, 1960-1965," *The Journal of African American History* 92, no. 4 (2007): 467-490.

[4] For example, Anne-Marie Angelo, "The Black Panthers in London, 1967-1972: A Diasporic Struggle Navigates the Black Atlantic," *Radical History Review* 2009, no. 103 (January 1, 2009): 17-35; David Austin, "All Roads Led to Montreal: Black Power, The Caribbean, and the Black Radical Tradition in Canada," *The Journal of African American History* 92, no. 4 (2007): 516-539; Gail Gerhart, *Black Power in South Africa: The Evolution of an Ideology* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1978); Brian Meeks, *Radical Caribbean: From Black Power to Abu Bakr* (Barbados: The Press University of the West Indies, 1996); Jennifer Smith, *An International History of the Black Panther Party* (New York: Garland, 1999).

[5] See especially the Aboriginal Black Power movement, for example, Gary Foley, "Black Power in Redfern 1968 - 1972", 2001, http://www.kooriweb.org/foley/resources/pdfs/228.pdf; Kathy Lothian, "Seizing the Time:Australian Aborigines and the Influence of the Black Panther Party, 1969-1972," *Journal of Black Studies* 35, no. 4 (March 1, 2005): 179 -200. Similar calls for flexibility of analysis have also been made with regards to the study of Black Power in the United States; see Peniel E. Joseph, "Introduction: Toward a Historiography of the Black Power Movement," in *The Black power movement: Rethinking the Civil Rights-Black Power Era*, by Peniel E. Joseph (New York: Routledge, 2006), 1-26.

Even within the US context it is clear, for example, that Red Power emerged from pasts, traditions of thought, and experiences of dispossession particular to First Nations,[6] despite being contemporaneous to and in many ways cognate to Black Power, and despite sharing the weight of FBI oppression.[7] Such considerations bring to light the centrality - and I would add global significance - of *settler* colonialism for the further study of Black Power. Under settler colonialism, the dispossession of land from indigenous peoples and its genocidal effect exists prior to and parallel to the exploitation of peoples based on racial exclusion from and discrimination within the civic sphere. This means that in most societies born from settler colonialism there exists distinct – albeit intimately related – sedimentations of land dispossession and labour exploitation that form the uneven ground of white supremacist rule in thought and practice. In fine, colonialism and racism, while intimately linked both with regards to the governance and mixing of oppressed peoples are nevertheless distinct.

Therefore, when understanding white supremacism as a technology of rule in societies born out of settler colonialism, it is not enough to focus only upon the racism that inheres in labour exploitation and social discrimination.[8] This recognition is evident in at least the rhetoric of many US Black Power activists. But other settler-colony contexts seem to have impelled a deeper grappling with this challenge. For example, the indigenous Australian Black Power movement addressed land dispossession, labour exploitation and racial discrimination within their programme because they suffered directly from all.[9] This is where the articulations of Black Power in Aotearoa New Zealand are instructive, not just on their own merit, but also with regards to how they might enrich understandings of the relationship between Black Power and settler colonialism more broadly. For this purpose I examine the Polynesian Panther Party and The Black Power gang and how both have developed and pursued survival strategies against racism and colonialism.

In what follows I give more space to an analysis of the Polynesian Panthers because they provide the most explicit and intentional articulation in Aotearoa New Zealand of one of the most influential movements associated with US Black Power history, the Black Panthers. The Polynesian Panthers had to engage simultaneously with two sedimentations of white supremacism: the colonial dispossession of Māori, the indigenous peoples of Aotearoa New Zealand, and the racial discrimination and exploitation that met Pasifika peoples upon their immigration as labourers from South Pacific islands. I show how this engagement led to innovations in both the Panther survival strategy and the associated concept of "revolutionary intercommunalism". The Black Power gang was not directly modelled organizationally or ideologically on any US Black Power organization. Nevertheless, an analysis of the development of the gang's strategy for family survival as an answer to colonial dispossession is crucial for better understanding the relationship between Black Power (as a broad movement and ideology) and indigenous self-determination.

I proceed by first sketching out the immediate context in which Black Power emerged in late 1960s Aotearoa New Zealand as an ideological challenge to the white supremacism evident in the assimilationist policies that accompanied urbanization. I then turn to the Polynesian Panthers and explore their application of the survival programme and the innovations in thought and practice that

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[6] See the documents in Alvin M. Josephy, *Red Power: The American Indians' Fight For Freedom* (New York: American Heritage Press, 1971).

[7] Ward Churchill and Jim Vander Wall, *Agents of Repression: The FBI's Secret Wars Against the Black Panther Party and the American Indian Movement* (Boston MA: South End Press, 1988).

[8] See especially, Zainab Amadahy and Bonita Lawrence, "Indigenous Peoples and Black people in Canada: Settlers or Allies?," in *Breaching the Colonial Contract: Anti-Colonialism in the US and Canada* (New York: Springer Publishing, 2009).

[9] Lothian, "Seizing the Time"; Foley, "Black Power in Redfern 1968 - 1972."

accompanied it. Finally I turn to The Black Power gang and explore the fragile development of a programme for family survival.

Urbanization and the Emergence of Black Power

In the space of a decade, the percentage of Māori living in urban areas – as opposed to their mainly rural *tūrangawaewae* (places of belonging) – rose dramatically from approximately 35% to over 60%. The 1961 Hunn report, written for the Department of Māori Affairs, explicated the official position on this development.[10] It recognized that the Māori population, long considered moribund, was now growing at a significant rate, it noted the increased urbanization of much of this population, and it drew attention to the need to provide infrastructure to meet the needs of this population. But at the same time the report actively promoted urbanization by encouraging crown purchase of Māori land to facilitate development programmes, even while acknowledging that employment for Māori would be a future problem.

Most importantly, the Hunn Report stated with confidence that, rather than assimilation or segregation, the minority Māori population was "integrating" with the majority Pākehā/Palagi population (New Zealanders of European heritage)[11]. And yet the Report proposed in a distinctly racialized language that this "integration" was having the positive effect of modernizing Māori "complacently living a backward life in primitive conditions".[12] By the late 1960s it had become evident to some that integration really meant de facto assimilation and that urbanization had encouraged a visceral and immediate racism felt keenly by Māori youth.

Complicating but in many ways intensifying this confluence of urbanization, racism and assimilation was the encouraged migration of *Tangata Pasifika* (non-Māori peoples of the Pacific) over the same time period. Old colonial links with Western Samoa, Niue, Tokelau, Tonga and the Cook Islands were used to pull unskilled and semi-skilled laborers and their families to urban industry especially around Auckland.[13]

In this context of double migration, the key comparator of the growing "Polynesian problem" was the "Negro problem" in the Northern cities of the United States.[14] Such comparisons were used, in part, by advocates of anti-racist policies as a strategy to impel the government to consider radical changes to its de facto assimilationist policies. Many influential commentators questioned the prevalent complacent attitude that the race riots sweeping across American cities could never happen in harmonious New Zealand.[15] Alternatively comparisons with the "Negro problem" were also used as a racist rhetorical device to incite moral panic over the invasion of white citadels by brown natives, from home and abroad. And it is here that the concept of Black Power really gained traction in the public mindset. One editorial in the popular magazine *New Zealand Listener* mourned the death of Martin Luther King's peaceful reformist approach and bemoaned the turn towards

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[10] J.K. Hunn, *Report on Department of Maori Affairs* (Wellington: R.E. Owen, 1961).

[11] The first term is from the Māori language, the second term is Samoan.

[12] Hunn, *Report on Department of Maori Affairs*, 16.

[13] For an overview of the issues see Augie Fleras and Paul Spoonley, *Recalling Aotearoa: Indigenous Politics and Ethnic Relations in New Zealand* (Auckland: Oxford University Press, 1999), 194–201.

[14] Comparisons with Apartheid South Africa were also popular.

[15] CARE, "Submission of the Citizen Association for Racial Equality (inc.) Presented to the Johnson Committee", 1973, MS Papers 1617 / 681, Alexander Turnball Manuscript Archive; Guy Powles, "Editorial: Neither Black nor White," *Te Maori* 1, no. 1 (1969); David Ausubel, *The Fern and the Tiki: An American View of New Zealand National Character, Social Attitudes and Race Relations* (New York: Holt Rinehart and Winston, 1965), 156; New Zealand Post-Primary Teachers' Association, *Maori Education: An Interim Report* (Wellington, 1970), 1; Koro Dewes, "The Bi-Cultural Challenge: Mana Maori Magazine", May 13, 1970, New Zealand Sound Archives.

Black Power and its "violent means".[16] The audacity of the idea of Black Power was attributed, somewhat sensationally by the mainstream press, to emergent Māori activism through the term, "Brown Power".[17]

The direct engagement by Māori and Pasifika youth with the meaning and strategies of US Black Power came from two broad constituencies. One was centred primarily amongst university students. Syd Jackson, for example, was a core member of Ngā Tamatoa (the "young warriors"), the pre-eminent Māori pressure group of the time. He undertook comparative studies on race and racism in the United States and New Zealand as part of his Masters in Political Science degree,[18] and was in part inspired in his activism by the books of Eldridge Cleaver and Stokely Carmichael.[19] For some activists, then, Black Power was seen to be forcing a confrontation of New Zealand society with the reality of white supremacy. As one participant recounted, in an important youth conference, "Black Power is to stop white power … mention Black Power to Pakehas and they won't accept it. I mentioned it to one Pakeha and he said he would kill me."[20] However, others argued that equating Māori activism with Black Power effectively erased its "original indigenous impulse" and a Māori tradition of radical struggle against colonialism.[21] This statement is important because it is a reminder that Black Power and indigenous self-determination did not map smoothly onto each-other.

But Black Power also resonated with disaffected youth - the "lumpen" in Cleaver's terms - whether hanging out in gangs on the street corner or locked up in prison. There were important personal overlaps with university students; nevertheless, activists generally acknowledged that the lumpen youth were, in a way, the natural constituency who would pick up Black Power. For, as an increasingly "landless brown proletariat with no dignity, no mana [authority], and no stake in society [,] like the blacks in America, they will stand outside society and aggress against it".[22] Indeed, the social habits and activities of these youth in the urban setting were de-facto and de-jure criminalized when judged through racialized assimilation policies and processed through the expectations and fears of the Pākehā/Palagi majority. I is amongst this disaffected and criminalized youth that we must primarily place our investigation of the affective and/or ideological embrace of Black Power. For example, a newsletter written by prisoners and organized by a famous Pākehā/Palagi non-conformist, Tim Shadbolt, spent several pages examining the Black Panthers and Black Power. Following this exposition was an article written by an inmate agitating to "stand firm and bit [sic] back at the pigs, as our coloured brothers in America are doing."[23]

The Survival Programme of the Polynesian Panthers

Such agitations were put into practice by a group of ex-gang members from the inner-city Auckland suburbs of Ponsonby and Grey Lynn. The Polynesian Panthers began as an Auckland based movement ofthat would grow to over 500 members, supporters and family members spread over 13 chapters throughout Aotearoa New Zealand (including as far south as Dunedin).[24] The Panthers were predominantly composed of *Tangata Pasifika* as well as some Māori and even an Indian brother. The first central committee was composed of ex-members of a Pasifika gang, the Nigs. The first chairman,

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[16] Alexander MacLeod, "Editorial: Black Power: White Peril," *NZ Listener*, 1968.

[17] "'Brown Power' Emergent," *The Dominion Weekend Magazine*, September 12, 1970.

[18] Documents relating to these courses can be found in the Bob Chapman archive at the University of Auckland.

[19] Tony Reid, "The Laughing Revolutionary: Interview with Syd Jackson," *NZ Listener*, 1989, 22.

[20] *Young Maori Leaders Conference*, 1970, 15–17, University of Auckland Library.

[21] Reeder, C. et al., "Stereotypes and People," *NZ Listener*, 1973.

[22] Te Roopu o te Matakite, "Manifesto", n.d., 85-080-07/01, Alexander Turnball Manuscript Archive.

[23] Andi, "United Brown Brothers," *P.D. Barb.*, 1970.

[24] Melani Anae, ed., *Polynesian Panthers: The Crucible Years* (Auckland: Reed Publishing, 2006), 109.

Will 'Ilolahia, was the only member of the committee to attend university although it was his fellow gang members who protected him and supported him in this endeavour and who, in many ways, provided him with his "real education".[25]

Black Power literature was fast becoming ubiquitous. 'Ilolahia's encounter came in the course of his university studies although at the same time the president of another Pasifika gang, the King Cobras, had just come out of prison brandishing Bobby Seale's book, *Seize the Time.*[26] All the while, family members and friends who had left school to work as seamen were returning with literature from the outside world.[27] 'Ilolahia encouraged his gang mates to make a principled decision to do something more for their immediate community than hanging on the corner. However, they could not call themselves the Black Panthers because a broad association of Māori and Pasifika gangs, included some of their brothers, had already taken that name. Hence the *Polynesian* Panther Movement (PPM) was inaugurated in June, 1971.[28]

Those who subsequently joined initially assumed the Movement to be a kind of acceptable gang.[29] But the Polynesian Panthers were something more. They sought to raise political consciousness, enthusiastically adopted the Black Panther's 10 Point Programme so as to teach Pasifika families "to survive in the [New Zealand] system",[30] and professed to be "the New Zealand response to the Black Revolution".[31] Structuring themselves in the same micro-nation format as their US counterparts with various ministerial portfolios,[32] the Polynesian Panthers echoed Huey Newton and Malcolm X's organizational mantra "we cannot have black and white unity until we have black unity".[33] They undertook a variety of grassroots activities – some in partnership with their Palagi equivalent in Ponsonby, the Peoples Union – including: organizing prison visit programmes and sporting and debating teams for inmates; providing a halfway house service for young Pasifika and Māori men released from prison; running homework centres; offering interest free "people's loans", legal aid, and food banks that catered for 600 families at its height. The Panthers also employed one of their members, Miriama Rauhihi-Ness, as a full-time community worker.[34]

Whilst community welfare was the major activity of the Panther Movement, their basic aim was more political: to eliminate the visceral and institutional racism that accompanied assimilation policies. Indeed, contentious debates about the effect of their community activities to promote structural change led, after a couple of years, to the transformation of the Movement into a fully fledged Party. While the community initiatives continued, more focus was placed on political education and mobilization of the people.[35] And with the adoption of a vanguard identity, more

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[25] Will 'Ilolahia, "Interview", February 2010; "Interview with Polynesian Panthers" (The Press, June 1973), 99-278-08/09, Alexander Turnball Manuscripts Archive.

[26] 'Ilolahia, "Interview."

[27] Tigilau Ness, "Interview", November 2009.

[28] 'Ilolahia, "Interview."

[29] Anae, *Polynesian Panthers*, 62.

[30] Arthur Baysting, "The Pakeha Problem", n.d., 94-106-19/07, Alexander Turnball Manuscript Archive.

[31] Polynesian Panther Party, "Panther Action", 1973, 94-106-19/07, Alexander Turnball Manuscript Archive.

[32] Polynesian Panther Movement, "Platform of Movement Positions and Structure of Organisation", 1971, 94-106-19/07, Alexander Turnball Manuscript Archive.

[33] Polynesian Panther Movement, "Investigation Period", 1972, Personal Archive of Tim Dyce.

[34] Paul Reeves, "Letter to Baldwin Sjollema, World Council of Churches", 1973, 4223.13.32, World Council of Churches Archive; Polynesian Panther Movement, "Where We The Panther Movement Have Aided Our People", 1972, Personal Archive of Author; Roger Fowler, "Interview", February 2011.

[35] Polynesian Panther Party, "P.P.P.", 1973, 99-278-08/10, Alexander Turnball Manuscript Archive; Polynesian Panther Party, "Platform and Programme, January '74", 1974, 94-106-19/07, Alexander Turnball Manuscript Archive. It is interesting to note that Black Power groups in urban Australia were involved in an almost exactly the same problem solving activity; Foley, "Black Power in Redfern 1968 - 1972."

direct forms of confrontation with the exploitative and discriminatory power structure ensued. Such confrontations were already latent in the early days of the Movement, taking the form of, for example, protest marches against Vietnam (placards with messages such as "no Vietnamese ever called me coconut" paraphrased Muhammad Ali), Apartheid sporting contacts, and in support of justice for the Soledad Brothers.[36] The formal politicisation of the Polynesian Panthers would concentrate direct action, which, again, had already begun with their involvement in the Tenants Aid Brigade, a group that had on occasion physically confronted exploitative landlords and their political supporters.

Two direct action campaigns stand out, the "PIG Patrol" – familiar to scholars of the Black Panthers in San Francisco - and the "Dawn Raids". With regards to the PIG Patrol, police would regularly descend upon bars that had a significantly Māori and Pasifika clientele and act extremely provocatively in order to engender a reaction that, no matter how small (for example, swearing), could facilitate an arrest. Many of the clientele did not know their legal rights, hence, the Panthers' lawyer, David Lange (a future prime-minister), helped to produce a legal-rights document. In partnership with other activists as the Police Investigations Group (PIG) the Panthers would listen into Police frequencies, pre-emptively follow the police vans, and run into the targeted bars to warn the clientele of an impending official visit and to distribute the legal aid leaflets.[37]

The Dawn Raids of 1976 targeted Tangata Pasifika families. Immigration from the Islands had initially been welcomed in the past as an answer to the need for cheap labour. However, a worsening economic climate compelled the government to massage racist rhetoric in order to provide an easy scapegoat: the Islander overstayer. The fact that the majority of overstayers were white and Western was ignored. Instead, Polynesian looking youth were stopped on the street, regardless of whether they were Māori, Cook Islander, Niuean, Samoan, and regardless of being either a recent arrival or having been born in the country. Most traumatic was the practice of descending upon an alleged overstayer's house in the early hours of the morning and forcefully taking away whole families. There was much disagreement within the Panthers over the degree to which and the methods with which the government should be directly confronted. In the end, it was decided that Frank Gill, minister of immigration, should experience his own "dawn raid". The Panthers' arrival outside of Gill's house with lights and megaphone directing him to surrender himself to the authorities was timed to coincide with an ad hoc phone interview with a journalist from an Auckland newspaper. The event did much to undermine the legitimacy of the practice.[38]

The last official activity of the Polynesian Panthers was to participate in the Springbok protests in 1981. Space rules out a detailed analysis of these Anti-apartheid protests suffice to say that a mini-civil war ensued across New Zealand towns for the duration of the South African team's sanction-busting stay.[39] Panthers alongside other long-time activists and gang members were in the front line of often violent confrontation with the police as part of the "Patu (hit) Squad". In the aftermath, 'Ilolahia, with other prominent activists, narrowly escaped a prison sentence only by having the good fortune to be able to call upon the testimony of Desmond Tutu who was visiting at the time. Tigilau Ness, the minister of culture, was not so lucky and spent nine months in

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[36] Photographs in author's possession.
[37] 'Ilolahia, "Interview"; Fowler, "Interview"; see also Anae, *Polynesian Panthers*, 78–80.
[38] See Damon Fepulea'I, *Dawn Raids* (Isola Productions, 2005).
[39] See Jacob Pollock, "'We Don't Want Your Racist Tour': The 1981 Springbok Tour and the Anxiety of Settlement in Aotearoa/New Zealand," *Graduate Journal of Asia-Pacific Studies* 21 (2004): 32-43.

detention.[40] Both had been singled out in the past by the police for personal harassment and biased trials.[41]

Panther Power in the Pacific Context

Having sketched out the programme and activities of the Polynesian Panthers I now wish to examine the ways in which the movement articulated with the specificities of the New Zealand context. At a strategic level perhaps the most important difference of the Polynesian Panthers was the abrogation of armed struggle. While the philosophy of vigorous self defence was accepted fully by the Polynesian Panthers, unlike in the US there was and is no constitutional right to bear arms in Aotearoa New Zealand.[42] Non-violent (but direct action) programmes were hence the norm, although there existed a "military wing" of the Polynesian Panthers that sometimes undertook directed actions that were just on the other side of legal. Nevertheless, the issue of violence was consistently debated.[43] Indeed, the more the government exhibited intransigence and active hostility as the decade wore on, the more activists sensed the possibility that society was heading towards violent revolution.[44] In some ways, the Springbok protests witnessed the height of such tensions with the Patu squad operating along distinctly martial lines. Yet even at this point guns were not introduced and, by a miracle, no one died.

In terms of influence it is important to count not just US Black Power but also Pasifika heritages, independence movements, opposition to French nuclear testing in the region and Māori struggles for self-determination.[45] Pasifika aesthetics combined with African-American when it came to dress code: men would wear "cultural shirts" along with the standard black dress, while women would wear "cultural dresses".[46] And while members were advised to read *Seize the Time* and *Autobiography of Malcolm X,* they were also encouraged to "read on our culture, to give us something to identify with".[47] These connections should be understood as living histories. Albert Wendt, for example, a seminal Samoan poet and writer, engaged with the Panthers.[48] Wendt's Masters thesis in History had investigated the Mau independence movement in Western Samoa against New Zealand trusteeship in the inter-war period. Interestingly, one member of the Panthers had family connections to the Mau; his uncle was shot in the rebellion and his parents had kept the stories alive. His father came to Aotearoa New Zealand expecting no help from either Palagi or Māori.[49]

Such convergences indicate that, despite the alienation suffered by Pasifika youth, they were experiencing a dislocation rather than disconnection from their filial Island cultures, stories, and political heritages. Indeed, the contested valuation of these heritages often formed the ground-zero of Panther politics. For example, a signal moment in Tigilau Ness's radicalization was his suspension from school for refusing to cut his afro. He was singled out despite Palagi "surfer" students being

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[40] Ness, "Interview"; 'Ilolahia, "Interview."

[41] Polynesian Panther Party, "How Justified is Our Judicial System", 1975, 94-106-19/07, Alexander Turnball Manuscript Library; Norman Tuiasau, "Open Letter to Supporters" (1974, n.d.), ms papers 1617/658, Alexander Turnball Manuscript Archive.

[42] Polynesian Panther Party, "Panther Action."

[43] For example, after the experience of touring the very conservative South Island; Polynesian Panther Party, "Newsletter", n.d., Ms Papers 1617/670, Alexander Turnball Manuscript Archive.

[44] Ness, "Interview"; 'Ilolahia, "Interview."

[45] Anae, *Polynesian Panthers*, 98.

[46] Polynesian Panther Movement, "Investigation Period."

[47] Ibid.

[48] Pictures in author's personal possession.

[49] Michael Fonoti Satele, "The Polynesian Panthers: An Assertion of Ethnic and Cultural Identities Through Activism in Auckland During the 1970s" (MA in Education Thesis, University of Auckland, 1998), 93.

allowed to keep their hair long. Whilst the afro aesthetic owed much to Jimi Hendrix, the actual practice of the eldest boy growing long hair came from his Niuean heritage.[50] And while in New Zealand, being Niuean bore the stigma of Captain Cook's naming of the "Savage Island", Tigilau is also the name of a legendary Niuean *toa* (warrior) whose deeds span the Pacific.[51] Reflecting upon the source of his political convictions, Tigilau Ness believes that "the real pacific island influence in me is when you go hard, you go hard. You put everything you've got into your every being".[52]

Furthermore, particular Polynesian values informed the organization and operation of the Panthers. For example, Rauhihi-Ness spent most hours of her community work on the street in face to face discussions, a method of communication traditionally preferred across the Pacific region, rather than writing public reports so as not to break down the sense of pride upheld by Pasifika families.[53] Alternatively, the Pasifika practice of according respect to elders due to their demonstrated leadership underlay the organization of gangs such as the "Nigs" and followed through into the Panthers.[54] 'Ilolahia even considered this respect to be a "revolutionary thing" because "there's all this European shit breaking up the [Polynesian] family unit."[55]

Mention of the family unit prompts an examination of the gender dimensions of the Panthers' survival programme. Organizational rules dictated: "have respect for each other and help each other out at all times. Solidarity depends on how good our relationships are with each other. We are all equal."[56] This dictate did not stop the male Panthers from automatically "leading from the front". But neither did chauvinist attitudes stop female Panthers from making significant leading contributions and challenging their male counterparts. For example, Rauhihi-Ness, the Panther community worker, ordered the Panther men to attend group workshops to work through these issues.[57] It is important to note that Rauhihi-Ness had first come to the Panthers' attention through her organizing of a strike by Pasifika women over pay conditions.[58] This implies that the double-exploitation of Māori and Pasifika women (once as women, once as Polynesian) was an unavoidable part of the terrain upon which the Panthers developed their survival strategy. Moreover, received gender roles were unavoidably challenged in the very discharging of the Panthers' core duty to help their peoples "survive in the [New Zealand] system."

As I have noted, the Panthers, along with the Citizen's Association for Racial Equality (CARE), set up homework centres designed to promote "Polynesian culture" but also to "obtain better understanding and to encourage parents to participate in children's welfare and education".[59] However, these after-work-hour activities impacted directly on the time that families would usually spend at their church. Pacific churches in Auckland commanded a large share of community time because they functioned to re-congeal the social relations and cultural practices (including the use of language) that parents had had to leave behind when they left the Islands. The Panthers recognised precisely this point that churches did "a lot to preserve the communalism that exists back in the Polynesian islands". And of course, as such, church leaders commanded significant respect. [60] Yet, for the survival of the youth, the Panthers were asking their parents to commit to alternative activities

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[50] Ness, "Interview."

[51] Tigilau Ness, "Email Correspondence With Author", March 15, 2011.

[52] Satele, "The Polynesian Panthers," 101.

[53] Baysting, "The Pakeha Problem." In Māori, this form of communication is called *kanohi ki te kanohi.* Amongst Tangata Pasifika, the term *talanoa* is widely used.

[54] Anae, *Polynesian Panthers*, 52–54.

[55] "Midnight Rider", 1973, 99-278-08/09, Alexander Turnbull Manuscript Archive.

[56] Polynesian Panther Movement, "Investigation Period."

[57] Miriama Rauhihi-Ness, "Interview", July 2010.

[58] Ibid.

[59] Reeves, "Letter to Baldwin Sjollema, World Council of Churches."

[60] Baysting, "The Pakeha Problem."

outside of this world. The seeming audacity of the Panthers' pursuit of social justice for their peoples led to charges by Pacific churches of being "Fia Palagi communists",[61] agents of un-godly outsiders. More importantly, though, precisely because of this challenge, young Pasifika women found in the Panthers a social and purposive space outside of the home *and* the church. One female Panther remembers that "the ladies there felt they were pretty functional in regards to helping out, we weren't there to boost boys' egos, that's for sure."[62]

Again, I would suggest that this challenge to gender roles was not one that sought to dismantle but rather re-acclimatise Pasifika cultures to work positively in a different context for the sake of community survival. In some ways, the implications of these challenges are still being worked out. For example, Alec Toleafoa, Panther and now churchman, is seeking to decolonize Christianity by critiquing the way in which the commandment for a special and exclusive relationship to God has tended to erode the special relationship between brother and sister that many Pasifika cultures hold dear.[63]

Pacific Innovations in Intercommunal Struggle

In terms of political ideology, The Polynesian Panthers provided an interesting reinterpretation of Huey Newton's "revolutionary intercommunalism".[64] For Newton, the shift to intercommunalism was predicated upon a deeper understanding of the global role of the United States as an imperial power that through military and economic intervention, disallowed the self-determination of colonised peoples to result in independent nationhood. This new framework of analysis required Newton to also disavow the preceding Black Nationalist representation of African-Americans as an "internal colony". Instead, he now claimed that they existed as communities dispossessed of the means of self-governance. But precisely because of this dispossession, African-Americans, Vietnamese, etc. could be now conceived as "all very similar in terms of communities".[65] In fine, Newton's new framework cast a broad equivalence between all dispossessed communities so that they collectively formed the worlds *lumpen proletariat*.[66] Eldridge Cleaver, pushing Newton's line or argument to its logical conclusion, read the dispossession of a peoples' technologies of social reproduction as a universal moment – the lumpanization of humanity.[67]

In mind of the frictional relationship between indigenous and Black struggles in North America, I want to suggest that Newton and Cleaver's revolutionary intercommunalism ran the danger of effectively smoothing the surface of white supremacy, hence collapsing the differentiated – even if intimately related – nature of its accumulated dispossessions, exploitations and discriminations. And in this respect, the Polynesian Panthers had to make innovations because their situated position in the New Zealand settler (post)colony was unlike either their Australian or American sisters or brothers.

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[61] Anae, *Polynesian Panthers*, 98.

[62] Graham Reid, "Polynesia's Radical Spirit," *New Zealand Herald*, June 23, 2001.

[63] Melani Anae et al., "The Polynesian Panthers – Political Activism in Aotearoa New Zealand" (presented at the OCIS IV Conference, University of Auckland, July 2010).

[64] Will 'Ilolahia, the Chairman of the PPP, was especially attracted to this notion; Ibid.

[65] Huey Newton, "Speech Delivered at Boston College: November 18, 1970," in *The Huey P. Newton Reader*, ed. D. Hilliard and D. Weise (New York: Seven Stories Press, 2002), 169–171.

[66] See Floyd W. Hayes III and Francis A. Kiene III, "'All Power to the People': the Political Thought of Huey P. Newton and the BPP," in *In Search of the Black Panther Party: New Perspectives On a Revolutionary Movement*, ed. Jama Lazerow and Yohuru R. Williams (Durham: Duke University Press, 2006), 157–176.

[67] Eldridge Cleaver, *On Lumpen Ideology* (Black World Foundation, 1972).

The parents of the Polynesian Panthers had migrated from the relatively cohesive cultural hinterlands of the Islands with an assumption that Aotearoa New Zealand was the place to "get ahead".[68] Upon arrival parents encouraged their children to assimilate in order to enjoy the benefits of New Zealand society. However, the desire to enter into a majority Palagi society as an equal tended to foster an insensitivity to the prior and continuing dispossession of Māori (and its accompanying cultural genocide), a process that had created the dominant space for Pākehā society in the first place. Amongst many parents and elders – both Māori and Pasifika - this conjuncture of labour exploitation and land dispossession played into a "divide and rule" mentality.[69]

Nevertheless, at school – and under the gaze of white supremacy - Māori and Pasifika youth were all lumped into the same category of Polynesians. Indeed, those Pasifika youth who were born in Auckland, and therefore had a Kiwi accent, were often assumed to be Māori (as the Dawn Raids testifies to).[70] Therefore there is a generational component to the early 1970s personal and ideological weaving of young Pasifika, Māori (and even Indian) suffering into a Black Power group. In fact, the assimilatory pressures described above soon started to affect Pasifika communities in similar ways to those experienced by Māori. For example, witness one Panthers' newsletter that drew attention to a Samoan lady who had been disallowed from speaking her language: "This is CULTURAL GENOCIDE. These racist honkies have robbed the Maoris of their land and now are stripping other Polynesians of human dignity, pride and self respect."[71]

The Polynesian Panthers had to negotiate a terrain wherein unified opposition was necessary to the racism of assimilationist policies, but wherein the process of unification could not be made to render all Polynesian youth as the same kind of dispossessed lumpen. 'Ilolahia was confident that Māori and Pasifika youth shared the same problem: racism. Yet in identifying as a united front of Polynesians, Ilolahia was clear that Māori could and would not "loose their *Māoritanga* (culture) and replace their Maoriness".[72] Put simply, "the solution to our predicament lies in UNITY through DIVERSIFICATION, and not UNIFORMITY."[73] In terms of strategy, the land issue was strictly to be led and determined by "Māori Polynesians", although "non-Māori Polynesians" should "take a stance of solidarity and support".[74] Indeed, the Panthers took a supportive role in some of the seminal Māori struggles over land dispossession in the 1970s. During the great Land March of 1975, for instance, the non-Māori Panthers took on security roles for parts of the journey; Rauhihi-Ness, a core Panthers member and also Māori, took a much more involved part in organizing the Land March. The Panthers also supported the (re)occupation by the Ngati Whatua tribe of Bastion Point in Auckland, 1978.[75] Conversely, racial discrimination and exploitation over housing, education, the courts, work and employment were issues that *all* Polynesians owned,[76] and here the Panthers regularly took leading roles.

As I have noted, Newton had developed the concept of intercommunalism as a way of making all struggles against dispossession equivalent, so facilitating a world-wide optic onto white supremacy. Alternatively, for the Polynesian Panthers, the concept effectively worked to safeguard a

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[68] 'Ilolahia, "Interview."

[69] Miriama Rauhihi-Ness made these comments at Will 'Ilolahia, Miriama Rauhihi-Ness, and Tigilau Ness, "Polynesian Panthers Lecture" (Victoria University of Wellington, May 14, 2010).

[70] Anae, *Polynesian Panthers*, 31.

[71] Polynesian Panther Party, "Newsletter Aug 1974", 1974, Ms Papers 8958-24, Alexander Turnbull Manuscript Archive.

[72] Will 'Ilolahia, "We Are All Polynesians," *Rongo*, 1973.

[73] Brian McDonald and Norman Tuiasau, "Conference Advertisment", 1974, Ms Papers 1617/670, Alexander Turnbull Manuscript Archive.

[74] 'Ilolahia, "We Are All Polynesians."

[75] 'Ilolahia, "Interview"; Ness, "Interview."; "Interview."

[76] 'Ilolahia, "We Are All Polynesians."

mode of solidarity wherein no group dominated over the other. This was a necessary strategy in order to produce a unity that was ethically sensitive to the particular way in which Pasifika peoples had entered into existing historical sedimentations of colonial dispossession in Aotearoa New Zealand. Yet the concept still provided an expansive optic onto global struggle. So while Newton's revolutionary intercommunalism buoyed a "tri-continental" approach,[77] the Polynesian Panthers hoped to cultivate an Australasia-Pacific common front, a region that also included indigenous peoples generally considered *not* to be Polynesian (i.e. the peoples of Australians, Papua New Guinea and the Hew Hebrides).[78] Beyond that, they looked forward to a united Black Power front composed of all oppressed peoples in the "world struggle".[79]

Adapting Black Power ideology to the Pacific context had one more effect. Despite his intent to focus upon community-development programmes, Newton, the chief theoretician, conceptually rendered intercommunalism as a group condition defined by a *lack* of ability to self-determine. It should be noted, though, that the rank and file were much more concerned with community control in the practical and positive sense.[80] Alternatively, for the Polynesian Panthers intercommunalism as *both* a practice and a concept expressed a positive requisite and potential for self-determination to the extent that it sought to recover fundamental Polynesian mores of living. In retrospect, 'Ilolahia suggests that the unifying force of communalism had been significantly undermined amongst African-Americans by the slavery legacy; and while the pronouns brother and sister might be used by African-Americans to redeem a racial solidarity, in most Polynesian languages there is no word for cousin, hence all relations really are types of brothers and sisters.[81]

The Black Power Gang: "Lumpen" Politics

Similar to their Pasifika counterparts, gangs of young Māori men formed through a precarious and reactive attempt to practice communal living on unforgiving urban soil. I consider the Māori gang phenomena to be fundamentally political because even if the gangs did not consciously ascribe to e.g. a 10 point political plan, their very existence is testament to a basic collective survival strategy against the genocidal effects of urbanization and assimilationist policies. As noted above, the Polynesian Panthers finds its genesis in this cohort of what Cleaver would term the "lumpen" youth.[82] And in this respect, the Black Power gang can also be singled out for special attention.

Reitu Harris formed the Black Bulls in 1970. One story goes that the Bulls went to confront another gang - the Mighty Mongrel Mob - over an attempted rape and when the latter performed a *haka* (a posture dance) finishing with the taunt "and who are you?" Harris replied on the spur of the moment "we are the Black Power".[83] The Black Power are known for the relative strength of their organization and discipline vis-à-vis gangs in Aotearoa New Zealand. And the Wellington chapter (the first chapter) has especially been known for its politicized nature, again, relative to other gangs,

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[77] Besenia Rodriguez, "'Long Live Third World Unity! Long Live Internationalism': Huey P. Newton's Revolutionary Intercommunalism," *Souls* 8, no. 3 (2006): 119-141.

[78] Will 'Ilolahia, "Maori Organisation on Human Rights Newsletter: Letter from Will Ilolahia", October 1972, 2004-024-3/02, Alexander Turnball Manuscript Archive.

[79] Polynesian Panther Party, "Newsletter Nov 1974", 1974, MS Papers 8958-24, Alexander Turnbull Manuscript Archive.

[80] Donna Murch, *Living For the City: Migration, Education, and the Rise of the Black Panther Party in Oakland, California* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2010), 193–194 I thank Donna Murch for making me aware of this point.

[81] 'Ilolahia, "Interview."

[82] Indeed, after stepping down as chairman, Will 'Ilolahia took on the role of detached youth worker for Pasifika gangs.

[83] Denis O'Reilly, "Interview", March 3, 2011.

which to a large extent is down to the activities of some of its key members including the national president, Harris. However, although the name suggests that the political edge of the gang owes something to the US influence, and despite the Black Power fist icon being adopted as a key motif for the gang "patch", the formative politicizing influences on the gang were much more diverse and idiosyncratic.

Bill Maung, a Buddhist political refugee from Burma, was seminal in encouraging the Black Power leadership in the 1970s to take a public stand on injustice and engage constructively with the political establishment.[84] The tradition of Catholic activism also entered into the mix, largely through an Irish-Pākehā member, Dennis O'Reilly, who became a gang spokesman and who is guided by the Jerusalem project of a famous Pākehā poet, James Baxter (with whom Maung also had an affiliation).[85] Key to this project is a positive embrace and working with *ngā mōkai,* a term that usually translates as slave yet in this context has been reinterpreted to represent the disaffected and ostracized of society. Other seminal influences include established Māori politicians of the time, such as Matiu Rata, and leaders in the Māori land struggle such as Eva Rickard.[86] Finally, Rastafari aesthetics that invoke demands for social justice for the dispossessed were in the formative years of the gang diffused through the medium of Reggae.[87] Vestiges of "dread talk"[88] are still audible today in the ascription of representatives of the establishment as "baldheads".

Over the years, the Black Power have been involved in directly political initiatives. Members have orchestrated sit ins at Parliament over housing issues[89] and pickets of labour ministers.[90] They have been present at a number of key protest sites, including Bastion Point (1978), the Springbok Tour (1981), and Moutoa Gardens (1995).[91] The national president has taken part in calls to boycott general elections and has campaigned and stood as a candidate for Mana Motuhake, an independent Māori party;[92] Black Power spokesman Eugene Ryder has ran for a seat on the Wellington city council.[93] For a number of years in the 1980s, Abe Wharewaka, president of Black Power Sindi (Auckland chapter), ran a political conscience raising newspaper, *Te Iwi O Aotearoa,* that even featured interviews with the likes of Rasal Muhammad, son of Elijah Mumammad.[94]

The Black Power have even engaged with the Waitangi Tribunal, a commission of inquiry charged with making recommendations relating to breaches of the Treaty of Waitangi (1840) between the British crown and Māori *iwi* (tribes). In the late 1990s, the Black Power was referred to in one of its reports in a section that defined *iwi,* which provided an opening for the gang to be at least considered as a contemporary urban tribe.[95] In 2008 some Black Power members lodged a

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[84] "Bill Maung Interview," *Directions 41*, n.d., Radio New Zealand Sound Archives.

[85] See John Newton, *The Double Rainbow: James K. Baxter, Ngāti Hau, and the Jerusalem Commune* (Wellington: Victoria University Press, 2009).

[86] Eugene Ryder, "Interview", March 2011.

[87] See Robbie Shilliam, "Keskidee Aroha: Translation on the Colonial Stage," *Journal of Historical Sociology* 24, no. 1 (2011): 80-99.

[88] Velma Pollard, "Dread Talk: The Speech of the Rastafarian in Jamaica," *Caribbean Quarterly* 26, no. 4 (1980): 32-41.

[89] Photographs in author's possession from Denis O'Reilly.

[90] Pip Desmond, *Trust: A True Story of Women and Gangs* (Auckland: Random House New Zealand, 2009), 287.

[91] "Minutes of Meeting at Orakei Marae", 1978, MS Papers 6373/50, Alexander Turnbull Manuscript Archive; Ryder, "Interview"; Ruth Laugesen and Catriona MacLennan, "Pressure On As Activists Head For Moutoa Gardens," *The Dominion Post*, March 24, 1995.

[92] "Support for Boycott," *Cut out of newspaper in author's possession*, September 14, 1990; Eileen O'Leary, "Mana Motuhake Campaigns at Hui," *Evening Post*, April 3, 1993.

[93] Ryder, "Interview."

[94] "USA Black Power," *Te Iwi O Atoearoa*, February 1990.

[95] Tony Wall, "Tribunal Ruling Boosts Black Power," *New Zealand Herald*, July 7, 1998.

claim with the Tribunal, which makes the case that gangs were a direct consequence of colonialism. Instead of pecuniary compensation the claim demands "education as to why we're in the position we're in".[96] Moreover, another claim has been recently lodged by Te Aroha Trust, a work trust from the late 1970s composed of women many of whom have carried close associations with the Black Power. This claim cites failures of the Crown leading to "cultural alienation, economic despair, impoverishment and violent abuse of Māori women and their whanau in gang environments."[97]

These directly political initiatives were and are of great importance. However, to my mind, they are the most visible manifestations of the day to day struggles over family survival. And it is here that the deeper politics of The Black Power reside. So at this point I wish to return to the context of rapid urbanization that defined a whole generation of Māori youth who would gravitate to gangs.

Black Power as Family Survival

As I have claimed above, urbanization must be understood as one more chapter in the story of the colonially induced ethnocide and attempted genocide of indigenous peoples. Although 1960s New Zealand was ostensibly a post-colonial society, assimilation policies acted with precisely the violence attributed by Frantz Fanon to the colonial relation in general,[98] that is, to make it impossible for (post)colonized communities to live humanely, i.e. in integrally social lives. No where was this effect more concentrated than in the breaking up of the extended family organization (*whanau*) and the dissolution of its cardinal ethics of care (*manaaki*), compassion (*aroha*), and relational reciprocity (*whanaungatanga*). In the early 1970s Hana Jackson, a Māori activist, summed up this effect of urbanization and assimilation passionately and acutely: "you are killing the basic human nature of the people – love for others."[99]

The first generation of Māori youth who associated with gangs had often been dislocated from their wider family/social support networks and political structures that were centred around the predominantly rural *marae* (communal meeting complex). Additionally these youth had often lost – or had cut short - the enculturation practices, often undertook by grandparents. Alternatively, in the urban low-wage economy both parents would have to work, a practice that often led to child neglect, break-ups and alcoholism. Many children experienced the loss of central figures in their early teens combined with abuse – physical and sexual – from immediate family members as well as so-called care providers. Moreover, the parents themselves had already suffered from concentrated assimilationist policies and had been pressured to distance themselves from their inherited languages, cultures and values. And the child now also inhabited a directly and viscerally racist urban milieu.[100]

To appreciate the depth of this process of dispossession it is necessary to start with the fact that, even though both boys and girls bore the brunt of the physical, sexual and institutional abuse that came with the break-up of extended family structures, it was females whose subjection was compounded by the threat of abuse from their male partners and friends. This abuse came in the form of mundane domestic violence and also rape. In fact group ("block") rape, usually of women who were not in relationships with gang members, was very common during the 1970s. And despite the context in which the name was inaugurated, young men of The Black Power were generally as involved in this practice as other gangs.

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[96] "Black Power Lodges Waitangi Claim," *NZPA*, September 17, 2008, http://tvnz.co.nz/content/2080577.
[97] Desmond, *Trust*, 312.
[98] Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth* (New York: Grove Press, 1965).
[99] Alexander MacLeod, "Maoris Voice Their Discontents," *NZ Listener*, 1971.
[100] I have gleaned these factors from a multitude of personal conversations.

Mumia Abu-Jamal's comments are as fitting for Aotearoa New Zealand as they are for the US context: "sexism did not, and could not, exist in a vacuum. As a prominent feature of the dominant social order, how could it not exist in a social formation drawn from that order, albeit form that order's subaltern regions?"[101] After all, gangs were by no means the only culprits of the widespread racist, misogynist attitude and set of practices towards Māori women that existed in New Zealand society.[102] Indeed, women - and men - often experienced their first sexual abuse from the hands of institutional "carers" who were supposed to protect them. Moreover, Te Aroha Trust testimonies show the complexity of the relationship between men and women in gangs.[103] Some of these oral histories hint at the fact that many young men did not want to participate in rape, and might have been psychologically damaged by their participation. Nevertheless, such participation was necessary in order to prove their manhood in front of peers and hence ensure acceptance into their new *whanau*. Hence, Black Power men were at times the enemy and perpetrators of acute violence, but at other times they were brothers, cousins, partners, work-mates and protectors against the violence meted out by other gangs and Pākehā society at large.[104]

A series of events led to the eventual outlaw of rape by the Black Power. Key to this story is the resistance of women, especially those of Te Aroha Trust who directly challenged their men and the Black Power president himself on the issue.[105] It was a seminal moment. Approximately one decade later, the Black Power had set up a support group for domestic violence, *Pae Arahi o Te Manaaki* (the movement towards caring and dignity).[106] The challenge over rape may well have fast-tracked a growing desire by Black Power leaders to recuperate the deeper – and *positive* - social and cultural meaning of *whanau* with its attendant anti-misogynistic cardinal values.[107] In fact, parallel to these challenges, the Black Power had started to encourage a re-embracing of members' *whakapapa* (personal genealogies) and Māoritanga (culture). For example, the first national Black Power convention to be held at a *marae* was at Taiwhakaea in 1977; and it was at this *marae* that, later on, one of the first attempts to provide justice for a gang rape victim would be pursued through the protocols of the *tangata whenua* (people of the land).[108]

These parallel and inevitably conjoined trajectories further combined with one of the most important socio-economic initiatives in the history of The Black Power. By the early 1980s the government had started to support group work contract schemes wherein, as members of work trusts, gang youth could undertake "socially useful activity" (as O'Reilly characterises it[109]) but on their own collective terms. The name of the Wellington trust, *Te Waka Emanaaki* (the canoe of caring)*,* is indicative of the way in which some of the leadership of the Black Power were moving to reconnect to the cardinal values of *whanau ora* (family wellbeing).[110] *Te Waka Emanaaki* was physically based in an inner-city house that purposefully functioned as a *marae,* even though it was not officially sanctioned as such. In this respect, day to day gang life for men became much more intimately woven into family life.[111] A government report on funding the Black Power *Tatou te Iwi*

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[101] Mumia Abu-Jamal, "A Life in the Party," in *Liberation, Imagination, and the Black Panther Party: A New Look At the Panthers and Their Legacy*, by Kathleen Cleaver and George N. Katsiaficas (New York: Routledge, 2001), 44.

[102] Desmond, *Trust*, 229.

[103] Desmond, *Trust*.

[104] Ibid., 165.

[105] Ibid., 250.

[106] Ibid., 251.

[107] Denis O'Reilly, "Gangs and the Culture of Alienation", 1979, Personal Archive of Tim Dyce.

[108] Email conversation with Denis O'Reilly, 27 March 2011.

[109] Peter Cathro, *Black Power - Fast Forward* (Zee Films, 1990).

[110] See Juliet Ashton, "Te Waka Emanaaki Rises From the Ashes," *Tu Tangata*, 1982.

[111] Ryder, "Interview."

trust in Auckland also noted that relationships had became more stable and women now enjoyed more respect from their men.[112]

However, such positive movements by the dispossessed of society are always fragile and easily disrupted by shifts in government policy. By the late 1980s, the arrival of neo-liberal economic principles had forced the suspension of gang work schemes. Paradoxically, these changes encouraged a tripling of gang membership.[113] Heretofore, apprenticeships for Māori youth had purposefully placed them in towns far from their *tūrangawaewae* (place of belonging), which is why the majority of the original Black Power members of Wellington (but not the President) were from Tuhoe land, a significant distance away.[114] The first generation of Black Power had therefore by and large been skilled or apprentice workers.[115] Yet this was not so for the generations that came up under neo-liberalism and who tended to bring with them a keener focus on criminal enterprises. Accompanying this new generation was the cultivation by the New Zealand police of a US style confrontational/retributive rather than reconciliatory policing strategy towards gangs.[116] And in this climate a veritable plague of methamphetamine (trade and use) has recently hit gang members and their families with effects not entirely unlike those caused by the crack epidemic on African-American communities.[117]

Nevertheless, even in these unforgiving conditions, the *whanau* renaissance is still continuing amongst The Black Power and other gangs with Māori membership, albeit in fits and starts. Currently there is a growing pressure, fanned by right wing commentators and eagerly embraced by some sections of law and order, to entrench the principle of guilt-by-gang-association especially in terms of family connections and bloodlines.[118] In this contemporary climate, Ryder of the Black Power is promoting an audacious counter-position: a *positive* articulation of The Black Power as a new *iwi* (tribe), born initially out of a *kaupapa* (common purpose), but now transmitted through bloodline (*whakapapa*). Ryder seeks to separate the negative activities of gangism from a positive identification of The Black Power as an *iwi* that, like all others, is composed of regional sub-tribes (*hapu*) and various *whanau.* In sum, cleaved of the self-destructive behaviours of gangism, Ryder envisages The Black Power gang as an *iwi* constituted through the cardinal ethics of care (*manaaki*), compassion (*aroha*), and relational reciprocity (*whanaungatanga*).[119]

Attendance to these ethics might even hold the potential of providing the basis for a cautious pan-gang movement against the self-destruction of whole generations of disenfranchised and dispossessed Māori individuals and families. In January 2011 members of both the Black Power and the Mighty Mongrel Mob convened at Otatara Pa, in the east of the North Island, for a day retreat. The discussion, concerning fatherhood and drugs, was led by John Wareham of the Eagles Foundation and assisted by Richard Habersham, an African-American who, along with other activities, works as a community organizer in Washington DC. At the end of a tumultuous day an accord was reached where gang leaders resolved to improve their parenting skills, support *whanau ora* and "strive for understanding of each other's issues as a step towards peace on the streets and

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[112] Department of Internal Affairs, *An Evaluation of the Detached Youth Worker Funding Scheme*, Occasional Paper on Youth (Wellington, 1983), 238.
[113] Andrew Allison, "Gangs Dark Side of Maori Renaissance," *Evening Post*, February 6, 1989.
[114] O'Reilly, "Gangs and the Culture of Alienation."
[115] O'Reilly, "Interview."
[116] Jim Kayes, "Gang Close to Boiling Point, Says Harris," *Evening Post*, May 18, 1994.
[117] O'Reilly, "Interview." It should be noted, however, that this "P" epidemic has impacted on all sectors of New Zealand society.
[118] For an overview see Denis O'Reilly, "It's an Ill Wind," *Nga Kupu Aroha*, August 2010, http://www.nzedge.com/features/ar-denis41.html.
[119] Ryder, "Interview."

in the jails".[120] In order to pursue these goals, participants agreed to register to vote, as most felt that at present they were not accepted by mainstream society as New Zealand citizens.[121]

Conclusion

The United States originated in a process of settler colonialism. The enslavement of Africans and the exploitation and discrimination of their descendents proceeded parallel and in overlap with the dispossession of the indigenous peoples of the land, their cultures, spirits and lives. The same practices of dispossession are evident in Aotearoa New Zealand albeit operating with different intensities and successes. Although slavery was widely practiced in the South Pacific at the point in time where its Atlantic variant began to wind down, there were no slave plantations in the settler colony of New Zealand. Yet labour migration routes of *Tangata Pasifika* still owe much to the imperial projects of European powers in the Pacific, including enslavement for the sugar plantations of e.g. Queensland, Australia and Fiji. And the attitudes and practices of colonial dispossession were forced upon Pasifika peoples upon their migration to Aotearoa New Zealand.

The sedimentation of different but related dispossessions, exploitations and discriminations impelled by white supremacist rule thus constitutes the bedrock of New Zealand society.[122] Even today, various statistics regarding imprisonment, education, health, and employment reveal the persistence of this uneven ground many of which are comparable to other post-settler colonies such as the United States. However, a comparative analysis of these two post-settler colonies has not been the purpose of this chapter. Rather, I have argued that examining the articulations of Black Power in Aotearoa New Zealand might contribute to a better understanding of the interplay between racism and settler colonialism in the Black Power phenomenon, conceived globally.

In this respect, the innovations of the Polynesian Panthers are testimony to the importance of developing a critique of white supremacism that is aware of the co-constitution of colonialism and racism. For this purpose, more attention must be given to a) the interplay between the dehumanization of indigenous and non-indigenous but racialized and oppressed communities, and b) the ways in which this interplay has not resulted in a smooth surface of common oppression but rather has produced a rough material made up of sedimented layers that are constantly being added to. This testimony is of direct relevance to present day struggles in all post-settler colonies, and even more so with the waves of neo-liberal induced migration that have occurred over the last thirty years.

Furthermore, if we understand Black Power to be a fundamental and radical refusal to live under the oppressive regime of white supremacism, then the family survival strategy of The Black Power gang provides another kind of testimony. Quite simply, Black Power is nascent at the deepest sediments of oppression formed by settler colonialism. It should not surprise us, then, that Black Power would percolate upwards in the most unexpected of forms. And if this is a world order that owes much to the settler-colonial project, then, in the most progressive sense, there is nothing exceptional about Black Power.

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[120] "The Otatara Accord", 2011, In author's possession.
[121] O'Reilly, "Interview."
[122] Hopefully it will be obvious that I do not use this term as an identity politics, but rather as pertaining to a multi-dimensional system of racial-colonial oppression.