

**Student Handout**  
**Oakland Museum of California**  
*What's Going On? California and the Vietnam Era*  
**Lesson Plan #2**

**1968: Year of Social Change and Turning Point in Vietnam and the U.S.**

**Oral History**

**Bobby Seale**

**Bobby Seale was a leader of the Black Panther Party.**

... establishment press picture with Huey and I standing in front of our Black Panther Party office at 5624 Grove Street. I lived at 57th and Grove. I lived on 57th, so it was a block or so away from my home. And I had rented that office there. But my point is I have that Army .45 in a holster, but it's hanging over my shoulder—the belt that you would turn around your waist is hanging over my shoulder. And Huey has a high-standing shotgun that, uh, I bought. It was an \$89 deal I bought that high-standing shotgun with one of my paychecks from the North Oakland Neighborhood Service Center. And I was still employed at the North Oakland Neighborhood Service Center for the city government, but, uh, that's what we did. And we took and recruited—it took two months to recruit 14 people.

*Interviewer: How did you get the name, "Black Panther Party"?*

Oh, that's right. I'm sorry. The Black Panther Party—the naming of the organization, the real original name of the Black Panther Party was the Black Panther Party for Self-Defense. But we had written a ten-point platform and program and it took a week to get everything refined. And one day I had received mail from the Lowndes County Freedom Organization down south, where voting rights were going on with the Lowndes County Freedom Organization. Well, the Lowndes County Freedom Organization had a logo of a pouncing panther in the material they had mailed to me. See, back in those days I would write any protest movement organization if I could get their address, and tell them to send me information on what your protest is about, your philosophy, etcetera and so on. That was my way of putting some degree of scrutiny to all the protest movement that was going on in the United States of America. Whether you were a black caucus in a union, whether you were an anti-war group, etc. Whoever. If you were some civil rights person \_\_\_\_\_ I would write them. So a piece of my mail arrived seven days after we had written this ten-point program. We don't have a name for this organization. Huey drops over to my house and I'm saying, "Why do they have this black panther here as a logo?" And Huey says, "I don't know." He says, "Oh, wait a minute." He says, "There's a white



racist organization down there that has a fighting cock, a rooster, as a logo.” I said, “Yeah, but a panther and a rooster.” I said, “A white racist rooster ain’t got a chance here,” you know? So Huey left to do some research at the University of California Law Library and came back to my house about two hours later. He says, “You know, the nature of a panther—I looked it up.” He said, “If you push it into a corner that panther is going to try to move left or right to get you to get out of the way. But if you keep pushing it back into that corner sooner or later that panther is going to come out of that corner and try to wipe out who keeps oppressing it in that corner.” I says, “Wow, Huey,” I says, “That’s just like black people—we’re pushed in a corner.” He said, “What are you talking about?” I said, “Look, what Martin Luther King and others are saying peaceful protest,” I said, “but they jump on the peaceful protesters, they beat them up, they brutalize them, they kill them.” I says, “And it’s like black folks are pushed in a corner.” I says, “We tried—” I says, uh, to, uh, I says, “Down in Los Angeles, peaceful people were observing police and they beat them up.” I said, “It’s like pushing a panther in the corner.” He says, “What are you trying to say?” I says, “I don’t know what I’m trying to say, Huey. Um, we need to name our organization,” you know? I says, “What we really got to do.” He says, “What \_\_\_\_\_? Well, we’re going to be a political party, that’s what we said—right? He says, “Yeah, a political party.” I says, “Okay, so \_\_\_\_\_ be a political party.” He says—I says, “And it’s like the panther.” Huey says, “Oh, I see what you’re talking about. So let’s name it the Black Panther Party.” I say, “Oh, okay—Black Panther Party, that’s fine with me.” I says, “Because I got to get this thing etched in.” I said, “Well, what about the self-defense? We said our organization is also going to be on the right—based on the right to self-defense, also. Besides all the employment, housing, education, end to exploitation, and police brutality we talked about self-defense.” He says, “Okay,” Huey says, “What about Black Panther Party for Self-Defense?” I say it was fine with me. Black Panther Party for Self-Defense. I say, “Okay, Black Panther Party for Self-Defense.” I said that’s what it’ll be. I said it sounds good. I says, “Yeah.” Huey says, “Yes.” When the panther roars the world will tremble. All the races will tremble in their boots. I says come on, Huey. Little Bobby Hutton happened to walk up. Well, Little Bobby Hutton was one of my employees at the North Oakland Neighborhood Service Center. He’s 16 years of age at the time. And Little Bobby Hutton says, “What’s going on?” And we were at my house in the driveway area, walking out when Little Bobby Hutton walked down. We said we named the organization. Little Bobby said, “Okay, yeah, what is it going to be?” We says, “The Black Panther Party.” He says, “The Black Panthers?” Said, “Yeah, the Black Panther Party.” So you have to imagine—here we are, young and youthful. Little Bobby Hutton said, “That sounds good to me.” So \_\_\_\_\_ Little Bobby Hutton. So Huey says, “Remember, you’re going to be the treasurer, you the treasurer of the Black Panther Party. You the first member of the Black Panther Party.” So we’re walking down the street and we stop and we said, “The Black Panther Party.” We talking to ourselves and amongst each other. Right, the Black Panther



Party for Self-Defense period. Huey says, “Right.” This is right. This feverous walk. We’re going to walk. We \_\_\_\_\_ go to my office and I etch out in that oil stencil The Black Panther Party for Self-Defense. [Laughs]

