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The Revolution comes to Britain: Black female activism and the redefinition of Black Power in Brixton 1967-1985

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The Revolution comes to Britain: Black female activism and the redefinition of Black Power in Brixton 1967-1985

Figure 1. Liz Obi with Olive Morris ©Neil Kenlock, 1973 <https://www.frieze.com/article/revisiting-neil-kenlock-british-black-panthers-official-photographer> {accessed 28th December 2020}

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List of Abbreviations

UCPA: Universal Coloured People's Association

BBPM: British Black Power Movement

USBPP: American Black Panther Party

BPaM: British Black Panther Movement

BBWG: Brixton Black Women's Group

BDC: Brixton Defence Campaign

Introduction

"America was on fire. [. . .] And here was this fire coming. And we go to meet the fire."[1]

First introduced at a Mississippi rally by Stokely Carmichael in June 1966, Black Power was originally an African American political concept of racial pride and solidarity, self-determination and liberation from white oppression. It crossed the Atlantic to Britain in the summer of 1967 when Carmichael arrived for a ten-day tour of London. He spent time visiting 'Brixton, Notting Hill […] advocating Black Power'[2] and 'firmly lodged Black Power into Britain's political landscape'.[3] Simultaneously, anti-Black racism was becoming commonplace in Britain, the most infamous example of this being politician Enoch Powell's anti-immigration 'Rivers of Blood' speech in 1968. The militancy of American Black Power spoke specifically to Obi Egbuna who, in September 1967, was inspired to set up the first official Black Power group in Brixton, the Universal Coloured People's Association (UCPA).[4] From this, the British Black Power Movement (BBPM) was born and served as a major turning point in anti-racist politics in the United Kingdom.

Along with a sense of Black pride, the American Black Power Movement also produced 'an increasingly masculinist sensibility and political language' which disseminated into the British context.[5] Leaving the UCPA to form the British Black Panther Movement (BPaM) in April 1968, Egbuna adopted the hyper-masculine style, iconography and politics of the American Black Panther Party (USBPP) consisting of a militant stance to activism, a patriarchal hierarchy and a socially conservative outlook on female liberation. However, women made up nearly half of the three hundred members of the BPaM throughout its lifetime. The BPaM had a female leader in Altheia Jones-Lecointe after the arrest of Egbuna. From 1973, a trend emerged for Black women to organise away from their male counterparts to incorporate Black women's issues within the Black Power Movement.[6] It is these women who are the focal point of my

[1] London Metropolitan Archives 4463/F/07/01/001, Jessica Huntley interviewed by Harry Goulbourne, 20th May 1992 as sourced from Robert Waters, *Thinking Black*: *Britain 1964-1985* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2018) p. 26
[2] 'The Pattern of Violence,' Times 25th July 1967 as sourced from Robert Waters, *Thinking Black* p. 26
[3] Robert Waters, *Thinking Black* p. 33
[4] Anne-Marie Angelo, 'The Black Panthers in London 1967-1972: A Diasporic Struggle Navigates the Black Atlantic', *Radical History Review*, 103 (2009), 17-35 (p. 21)
[5] Stephen Ward, 'The Third World Women's Alliance', in *Rethinking the Civil Rights-Black Power Era* ed. By Peniel Joseph (Oxford: Routledge, 2006) p. 124
[6] Anne-Marie Angelo, '"Black Oppressed People All over the World Are One": The British Black Panthers' Grassroots Internationalism, 1969-73', *Journal of Civil and Human Rights*, 4 (2018), 64-97 (p. 66)

research because 'hyper-masculinised Black Power politics have obscured the critical contributions of women to Black Power projects', particularly those undertaken at local levels such as in Brixton.[7]

This thesis seeks to amend the masculine mischaracterisation of the BBPM by reconstructing a Black female-centric narrative, something which historians of the topic have so far failed to do. It will argue that Black women adopted American Black Power in new and effective ways to challenge racism, sexism and classism in the United Kingdom, using Brixton as a local case study. Within the context of Brixton, this dissertation focuses on Black female activism in two different but interconnected Black Power groups, the Brixton branch of the British Black Panther Movement (BPaM) and the Brixton Black Women's Group (BBWG). Rather than simply adding Black women's experiences and contributions into the historical narrative of the British Black Power era, this dissertation argues that their involvement *redefined* the political meaning of Black Power in the United Kingdom. Black women changed the male stereotypes of Black Power leadership, challenged masculine Black Power iconography and moved away from militant and aggressive forms of activism transforming Black Power into a movement which spoke increasingly to women as well as men. Overall, this study shifts historical focus away from African American men as Black Power leaders in a sensationalised tale of confrontation and militancy towards a story of Brixton women who were giving Black Power a distinctively female and British identity.

Literature:

This research exists within the new historiographical trend in Black Power studies which seeks to reframe the movement from a global perspective. Historians have been gradually moving away from an exclusively American focus to explore how Black Power was mobilised by activists around the world in places such as Britain but also, for example, Israel and Australia.[8] However, this revisionist historiography focuses on the most visible and outspoken leaders of Black Power outside of the U.S context of which the overwhelming majority were men. My gendered study of the BBPM offers a refreshing departure from the existing narratives of the

[7] Christina Greene, *Our Separate Ways: Women and the Black Freedom Movement in Durham, North Carolina* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2005) p. 165

[8] Alex Lubin, 'Black Panther Palestine', *Studies in American Jewish Literature* (2016), 77-97; Kathy Lothian, 'Seizing the Time: Australian Aborigines and the Influence of the Black Panther Party, 1969-1972', *Journal of Black Studies*, 35 (2005), 179-200; Nico Slate, *Black Power Beyond Borders: The Global Dimensions of the Black Power Movement* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012)

global Black Power Movement and challenges this reproduction of masculine leadership stereotypes.

The current historiography of the BBPM is predominantly male-centric and either omits women's involvement completely or mischaracterises women as supporting actors rather than leaders. Historians Robin Bunce and Paul Field along with Rosalind Wild's work on the BBPM perpetuate this dominant narrative by concentrating largely on individual male leaders such as Egbuna and C.L.R James.[9] These scholars fall victim to the 'gender, race and class biases prevalent in the social movement literature' which result in primary focus on 'the activities and charismatic traits of male leaders' and neglects the political contributions of Black women.[10] This is also the case in the work of Anne-Marie Angelo, the leading historian of the British Black Panthers, who uses predominantly male source types, such as the autobiography of Egbuna and oral histories exclusively from male Panthers, to construct the history of this organisation.[11] As a result, she obscures the crucial role Black women played in the evolution of the BPaM, a significant omission which my research seeks to rectify. Angelo has recently released a book-length study on the British Black Panthers which was unavailable prior to the completion of this thesis and my hope is that she revises her primary source choices and consciously incorporates the lost voices of female Panthers.[12]

In contrast, US Black Power historiography is diverse and thorough in its analysis of the activism of Black women and their experiences in relation to Black Power.[13] Most praiseworthy is Rhonda Williams' work on anti-racist activism in Baltimore which highlights how Black Power manifested itself in unique and important ways at grassroots level through

[9] R.E.R Bunce and Paul Field, 'Obi Egbuna, C. L. R James and The Birth of Black Power in Britain: Black radicalism in Britain 1967-72', *Twentieth Century British History*, 22 (2011), 391-414; Rosalind Wild, 'Black was the Colour of our Fight: Black Power in Britain', (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Sheffield, 2008)

[10] Bernice McNair Barnett, 'Invisible Southern Black Women Leaders in the Civil Rights Movement," The Triple Constraints of Gender, Race, and Class', *Gender & Society*, 7 (1993), 162-182 (p. 163)

[11] Anne-Marie Angelo, '"Black Oppressed People All over the World Are One"; Anne-Marie Angelo, 'The Black Panthers in London'

[12] Anne-Marie Angelo, *Black Power on the Move: Migration, Internationalism and the British and Israeli Black Panthers* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2020)

[13] Jakobi Williams, 'Gender, Activism, and the Illinois Black Panther Party', *Black Women, Gender + Families*, 6 (2012), 29-54; A. Alameen-Shavers, 'The Woman Question: Gender Dynamics within the Black Panther Party', *A Journal on Black Men*, 5 (2016), 33-62

the mobilisation of local Black women.[14] However, this sole focus on Black women (particularly in local contexts) has yet to influence the historiography of its British counterpart.

There are some notable exceptions within the historiography of the BBPM which have emphasised the role of Black women. Natalie Thomlinson's account of Black women's activism in the UK forms the most detailed historical assessment of the BBWG.[15] However, this is done through the lens of the Women's Movement in England and so does not provide insight into the impact the BBWG had on the Black Power era but rather how their activism helped to tackle women-only issues. Robert Waters pays attention to Black women's ideological and practical contributions to British Black Power but as this is taken from a nationwide perspective, many instances of important local activism undertaken by Black women have been underrepresented.[16] W. Chris Johnson and Tanisha Ford also recognise the important contributions of Black women to the BBPM but write exclusively about formally recognised female leaders and so fail to address the significance of rank-and-file activism by local Black women.[17] This dissertation, whilst acknowledging the importance of the work of female leaders in Brixton, provides a more nuanced and comprehensive account of the relationship between local Black women and Black Power. These scholars rightly claim that Black women were key participants in Black Power in Britain. However, they have failed to examine how Black women redefined what Black Power stood for making my argument a refreshing departure.

Methodology:

This paper's inclusion of Black women's activism in Brixton extends the timeline of the BBPM to 1985, the year in which the BBWG disbanded, but accepts that Black Power manifested itself in different ways in Britain beyond this date. This challenges historian Rosalind Wild's periodisation which argues that the BBPM ended in 1976 when most male-led Black Power groups dispersed despite the continuation of Black female activism into the 1980s.[18]

[14] Rhonda Y. Williams, 'Black Women, Urban Politics and Engendering Black Power', in *Rethinking the Civil Rights-Black Power Era* ed. by Peniel Joseph (Oxford: Routledge, 2006)
[15] Natalie Thomlinson, *Race, Ethnicity and the Women's Movement in England, 1968-1993* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016)
[16] Robert Waters, *Thinking Black: Britain 1964-1985* (2018)
[17] W. Chris Johnson, 'Guerrilla Ganja Girls, Policing Black Revolutionaries from Notting Hill to Laventille', *Gender & Society*, 26 (2014), 661-787; Tanisha Ford, *Liberated Threads: Black Women, Style and the Global Politics of Soul* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2015)
[18] Rosalind Wild, 'Black was the Colour of our Fight', (2008)

I chose to concentrate my studies on the British Black Power Movement because as a historian in Britain I have become increasingly aware of the underrepresentation of Black history in British public memory. The decision to study the Black Power era through a local case study was inspired by leading Black Power historian Peniel Joseph. He insists that 'further investigation of the dynamic tension and interaction between local, national and global movement for black power will […] be vital to developing a more complete history of the era'.[19] With this in mind, I selected Brixton for my case study because it was 'the centre of the London West Indian community', therefore providing the richest account of Black Power activism at community level in Britain's capital.[20]

This dissertation focuses exclusively on the involvement of Afro-Caribbean women in the BBPM and not women of Asian or other descent. This is largely in response to the dramatization of the movement's history in Sky Atlantic's 'Guerrilla' released in 2017. Mirroring the conventional historiography of this period, the majority of leading roles in 'Guerrilla' were men, with the only female lead being South Asian actress, Frieda Pinto, who was cast as a character based on Black Panther, Mala Sen. Ex-British Black Panther Liz Obi stated that 'the portrayal of Black women' in 'Guerrilla' was 'unforgivable'.[21] This study will challenge the invisibility of Black women in mainstream narratives. 'Black' was used in the BBPM as a political identity which also encompassed Asian activists, but for the purposes of this essay when I refer to 'Black women' or the 'women of Brixton' it is those of Afro-Caribbean descent.[22]

My methodological approach aims to correct the omission of Black women from BBPM narratives by adopting what Julia Sudbury calls 'woman-centred research'.[23] Oral histories will be used to allow a variety of Brixton women to speak about their own experiences with Black Power in their own words. Whilst oral testimonies are associated with limitations such as nostalgia and memory loss, the benefit of retelling this story from the perspectives of the

[19] Peniel Joseph, 'The Black Power Movement: A State of the Field', *The Journal of American History*, 96 (2009), 751-776 (p. 774)
[20] Anne-Marie Angelo, 'The Black Panthers in London', (p. 23)
[21] 'What does Guerrilla teach us about the fight for racial equality today?' <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2017/apr/14/guerilla-fight-racial-equality> {accessed 3rd April 2020}
[22] John Narayan, 'British Black Power: The anti-imperialism of political blackness and the problem of nativist socialism,' *The Sociological Review*, 67 (2019), 945-967 (p. 949)
[23]Julia Sudbury, '*Other Kinds of Dreams': Black Women's Organisations and the Politics of Transformation* (Oxfordshire: Routledge, 1998) p. 4

women involved outweigh these drawbacks. This study uses oral histories from the 'Do you Remember Olive Morris?' Collection held by the Lambeth Local Archives (Minet Library, London) but will be supplemented by an online oral history project by Organised Youth in which women of the BPaM were interviewed, a source base no scholar has used to date.[24] This study will also use anonymous oral testimonies found in ex-Black Power activists Beverley Bryan, Stella Dadzie and Susanne Scafe's *The Heart of the Race*, a book written in 1985 reflecting on the movement.

Archival research has been conducted mainly using the Black Cultural Archives (BCA) available online. For example, to uncover the BBWG's involvement in the Brixton Defence Campaign, the papers of Cecil Gutzmore have been used.[25] Two source bases which are used throughout this study are the BPaM's newspaper, *Freedom News*, which was accessed from the 'Shades of Noir' website in collaboration with the George Padmore Institute (London) and the BBWG's periodical, *Speak Out*, made accessible online by the BCA.[26] It should be noted that several archival sources have been lifted from secondary works, particularly those documenting the early stages of the BBPM. This was due to the closure of archives and has been cited accordingly. Visual sources have also been incorporated, which historians have seldom used as a historical tool, but which offer valuable insight into the women of the BBPM.

Dissertation structure:

Taking inspiration from the historiographical developments of American Black Power, this thesis will be divided into the three main foci which Williams has identified as guiding the US scholarship on Black women and Black Power; 'black women's relationships to nationally recognised Black Power groups, black women's radical responses to Black Power politics and black women's grassroots activism in cities during the Black Power era'.[27] Adopting this

[24] Organised Youth, *British Black Power Story*, online interview recording, Soundcloud, 2013 <https://soundcloud.com/organisedyouth> {accessed 4th March 2021}
[25] BCA, The papers of Cecil Gutzmore <https://artsandculture.google.com/culturalinstitute/beta/search?q=brixton+defence+campaign&hl=en> {accessed on 5th January 2021} (Please note that no catalogue numbers were provided online. All the archival information available to me has been included)
[26]BCA, The papers of Stella Dazie, *Speak Out* Pamphlet, The newsletter of the Black Women's Group Brixton. Issues no. 1 to 4 <https://artsandculture.google.com/asset/speak-out-pamphlet-black-women-s-group-brixton/8wGd1OOMcK7W-w?hl=en> {accessed on 12th November 2020} (Again, no catalogue numbers were provided by this website. Also note that this newspaper will now be referenced as *Speak Out* from now, with the issue and page number listed)
[27] Rhonda Y. Williams, 'Black Women and Black Power,' *OAH Magazine of History*, 22 (2008), 22-26 (p. 22)

framework, I will prove how Black women were redefining the Black Power era in Britain at each stage of their involvement.

Chapter 1- Redefining the role of Black women within Black Power Groups: The main aim of chapter one is to historically reconstruct Black female involvement in the Brixton branch of the BPaM. It will examine how women operated and navigated their politics in male-dominated groups and how they influenced the development of the group's activism. It will posit that women were not just members of these groups but in fact leaders, redefining our understanding of what leadership meant in the Black Power era.

Chapter 2- Black women's redefinition of Black Power politics- This chapter traces the development, evolution and repurposing of Black Power ideology and iconography using the BBWG as a case study. It argues that the political meaning and symbolism of Black Power was redefined by the women of Brixton adding new depth and diversity to Black radicalism in the UK.

Chapter 3- Redefinition in Action: Black women's grassroots activism- This chapter will explore how the BBWG autonomously organised around its new concept of Black Power and empowered the Brixton community in innovative and important ways. It will argue that women of the BBWG were redefining how Black Power activism was materialising at local levels away from the violent and confrontational methods hitherto associated with the movement.

Chapter 1-Redefining the role of Black women within Black Power Groups

'Although we worked tirelessly, the significance of our contribution to the mass mobilisation of the Black Power era was undermined and overshadowed by the men. They both set the agenda and stole the show'.[28]

The arrest of Panther leader Obi Egbuna in late 1968 had significant effects on the visibility of women in the British Black Panthers, none greater than the creation of a leadership opportunity for Altheia Jones-Lecointe. She became leader of the Panthers in 1970 until 1973, when, due to political differences, the BPaM disbanded. Jones-Lecointe ideologically redefined the BPaM by shifting it from a hyper-masculine vanguard group to a grassroots intellectual movement. Despite the UCPA originally having women's liberation as one of its core aims, Egbuna took this off the list of demands when he formed the BPaM.[29] Instead, he stated that 'the secret to the Panthers' success lies in its insistence that the movement must be a fraternity of brothers of strictly identical ideological orientation'.[30] By being a formally recognised leader, Jones-Lecointe redefined the patriarchal image of Black Panther leadership and by trying to enshrine gender equality into the Brixton Panthers, she redefined the organisation from a 'fraternity of brothers' to one which sought to empower women; two important ideological shifts within the Black Panthers.

However, this chapter will also acknowledge that the experiences of women with Black Power were not monolithic. Similar to its American counterpart, the rank-and-file women of the BPaM were empowered by Black Power's ethos of racial solidarity yet suffered under the weight of its sexism. This dichotomy is emphasised in the above quote from *The Heart of the Race*; women were 'working tirelessly' and making 'significant contributions' to the struggle but their efforts were 'undermined and overshadowed' by the men. This paper makes a novel contribution to current historiography by attempting to reverse this 'overshadowing' and 'undermining'. It will highlight the diverse experiences of local Black women who helped to redefine their own role within the BPaM.

The historiography on Jones-Lecointe has two distinct trends, neither of which is fully representative of the experiences of all women within the British Black Panthers. Firstly, there are those who understate her role as a key leader - namely Angelo, Bunce and Field- whose

[28] Beverley Bryan et al., *The Heart of the Race: Black Women's Lives in Britain* (London: Verso, 1985) p. 85
[29] W. Chris Johnson, 'Guerrilla Ganja Girls', (p. 667)
[30] Marshall, 'Black Power Men Launch Credo,' 3, as sourced from Anne-Marie Angelo, 'The Black Panthers in London', (p. 22)

scholarship focuses on the male leaders of the BBPM thus perpetuating the masculine norm of Black Power leadership. In contrast, Johnson argues that Jones-Lecointe was a 'revolutionary' because she 'battled sexism' and came to the 'muscular defence of women and girls'.[31] However, this overstates her ability to wholly prevent the sexist tendencies of male Panthers and does not consider the contributions made by rank-and-file women to challenge the sexist and male-dominated environment under this female lead.

Jones-Lecointe redefined the priorities of the BPaM by focusing on community activism. She embarked on educating both the Panthers and the wider community about the history and culture of Black Britons, something which Egbuna chose not to do, favouring the 'media spotlight rather than the daily struggles of London's Black community'.[32] Jones-Lecointe told Organised Youth that 'one of the things we did a lot, and what was important for me, was to study the history of our struggle'.[33] She spoke at local schools, organised a Panther library and taught classes in anti-colonialism.[34] Linton Kwesi Johnson remembers meeting Jones-Lecointe through a sixth-form debating society and this motivated him to join the BPaM; 'she was a simply brilliant orator and a great teacher. That's where I got my real education'.[35] It was clear that Jones-Lecointe had started exposing the local community to the global Black liberation movement, an important development within the BPaM.

Jones-Lecointe also attempted to redefine the Brixton Panthers from a 'fraternity of brothers' to one which empowered and included women, albeit with limited success. She recalled that 'one of the early challenges was men and women in the movement, what sisters could do and what brothers were supposed to do. We established that there was nothing different between what anyone could do'.[36] She set up structures to challenge sexism, for example men suspected of abusing or exploiting women were subpoenaed before the central core, interrogated and punished if found guilty.[37] BPaM newspapers produced after 1970 reflect the shift in Panther gender ideology towards female empowerment. An article entitled 'Black Women's Resistance' published in *Freedom News* read 'there can be no black liberation without the

[31] W. Chris Johnson, 'Guerrilla Ganja Girls', (p. 669)
[32] Anne-Marie Angelo, '"Black Oppressed People All over the World Are One"', (p. 69)
[33] Altheia Jones-Lecointe Interviewed by Organised Youth, Soundcloud, 20th September 2013, <https://soundcloud.com/organisedyouth> {accessed 20th February 2021}
[34] W. Chris Johnson, 'Guerrilla Ganja Girls', (p. 669)
[35] 'I did my own thing' An interview with Linton Kwesi Johnson, The Guardian, 8th March 2008, <https://www.theguardian.com/books/2008/mar/08/featuresreviews.guardianreview11> {accessed 3rd February 2021}
[36] Altheia Jones-Lecointe Interviewed by Organised Youth
[37] W. Chris Johnson, 'Guerrilla Ganja Girls', (p. 669)

liberation of black women […] it is only our involvement and struggle that can rescue us and black men from the empty and decadent ideas of manhood and womanhood'.[38] By redefining the Black liberation struggle to include 'the liberation of women' the article showed a conscious incorporation of women into the movement's purpose under its female leader. The article in *Freedom News* was followed by an advertisement for a 'Sister's Forum…On the History of Oppression of Black Women' which was to be held on Sunday 19th March 1972 at the Panther headquarters on Shakespeare Road, Brixton. This was an illustration of the dedication of space, time, and effort to the education of female Panthers and their role in the struggle. Post 1970, the Panthers were welcoming and celebrating the value of women, a drastic redefinition of the gender dynamics within the BPaM away from its traditional male-centricity.

Despite Jones-Lecointe's harsh punishment of chauvinistic men and her drive to include women into the struggle, rank-and-file female members continued to experience everyday sexism from male Panthers, and many were left frustrated by her efforts. An anonymous woman shared her experiences in *The Heart of the Race* stating, 'brothers were hauled up and disciplined [by Jones-Lecointe] when what they needed was political education - to read, study and discuss the woman question and to confront their own sexism'.[39] Jones-Lecointe's more disciplinary style of leadership struggled to deal with the deeply entrenched misogyny inherent in Black Power organisations. Her overriding focus on studying the 'depth and breadth' of Black history meant that women's issues were sidelined leaving male Panthers largely uneducated about the oppression of Black women. Although her role as a female leader challenged the male-dominated hierarchy and was vital in symbolising that the Panthers were no longer uniting a 'fraternity of brothers,' Jones-Lecointe did not manage to wholly redefine the chauvinistic ideologies of the Brixton Black Panthers. It is therefore crucial to look beyond the ideological advancements of one female lead to uncover the contributions of female rank-and-file members which also helped to redefine the dynamics of male-dominated Black Power groups.

Black women working at grassroots level were bringing Black Panther policies to fruition and, in turn, demonstrating that leadership in the BBPM was not exclusive to official leaders. Although Jones-Lecointe was primarily responsible for fostering an environment centred

[38] 'Black Women's Resistance', *Freedom News*, 4th March 1972, <https://www.shadesofnoir.org.uk/artefacts/black-panther-newsletters/#the-rise-and-fall-of-michael-x/2> {accessed 27th March 2021} p. 4
[39] Beverley Bryan et al., *The Heart of the Race* p. 85

around Black Studies, rank-and-file female members were mobilising this drive for Black education from below. For example, the Panthers ran 'a weekend playgroup, around which youths can develop a sense of responsibility to the community' which for many years was co-led by female Panther Beverley Bryan.[40] Now based in Jamaica, Bryan was interviewed over Skype by Organised Youth where she spoke of 'going to the local area' and bringing school children to Shakespeare Road where 'we would have classes in English, maths and Black history'.[41] Black history was absent from the national curriculum at this time and it was women like Bryan who were educating local children in Brixton about their heritage, encouraging them to take pride in it and creating a space in the community where they belonged. As Wild argues, 'the supplementary education movement is one of the long-lasting and most successful aspects of black community action from the 1960s' and Black women such as Bryan played a significant role in deploying this.[42]

During the early 1970s, the BPaM became active in the London housing crisis and began challenging the inadequate living conditions of Black tenants. This issue was the focus of many *Freedom News* articles such as one on 1st June 1973 urging Black tenants living in 'slums' in Islington 'to stand up for our rights to a decent home'.[43] However, it was Panther women who were mobilising this demand for better housing at grassroots level in Brixton and making tangible change to the living conditions of its local residents. In an email sent to Organised Youth, female Panther Liz Obi talked about how she and fellow Panther Olive Morris protested against the inadequate heating in the flats on Ferndale Road. She remembers that she, Olive and the women and children who lived in the flats 'marched to the housing office in Brixton hill' demanding to 'see the head of housing'.[44] After their demand was refused, Olive suggested that the women 'leave the premises but that they should leave the children behind' to illustrate how unsafe it was to bring the children back home. They 'were not outside the housing offices for more than ten minutes before the head of the housing office agreed to come and meet'. As a result of this radical action, the council agreed to make the issue of heating provision at the

[40] 'Black Panther Speaks', *Freedom News*, vol.3, no.5, 10th June 1972, <https://www.shadesofnoir.org.uk/artefacts/black-panther-newsletters/#angela-davis-victory-day> {accessed 5th April 2021} p. 2
[41] Beverley Bryan interviewed by Organised Youth, Soundcloud, 2013 <https://soundcloud.com/organisedyouth/british-black-power-story> {accessed 4th March 2021}
[42] Rosalind Wild, 'Black was the Colour of our Fight', p. 131
[43] 'Islington Council is a Slumlord', *Freedom News*, 1st June 1973, from: <https://www.shadesofnoir.org.uk/artefacts/black-panther-newsletters/#freedom-news-islington-june-73/1> {accessed 4th April 2021} p. 2
[44] An email from Liz Obi read out by Organised Youth, Soundcloud, 2013 <https://soundcloud.com/organisedyouth/british-black-power-story> {accessed 4th March 2021}

Ferndale flats a ‘priority’. These two examples of grassroots leadership uncovered by unused oral sources from Black female Panthers illustrate how leadership in Black Power activism was being redefined.

The relationship between British Black women and British Black Power was not homogenous as historical accounts such as Johnson’s lead historians to believe. It was not simply a narrative of complete exclusion from the Black Panthers, nor was it one of complete empowerment under the shared goal of racial justice. By focusing on the role of Black women within the BPaM and including oral histories from female members the complicated internal gender dynamics, the successes *and* shortcomings of its female lead and the important activism of rank-and-file local women have all been highlighted. This reconfigures the traditional narrative of the British Black Panthers, adding much needed complexity to its story and testifying to the importance of incorporating Black women into its history.

Chapter 2 - Black women's redefinition of Black Power politics

'It is only by coming together and analysing our situation as black women in this society that we can make an effective contribution to the struggle'.[45]

By 1973, the 'die-hard sexism' displayed by many of the male members of the BPaM had unsettled many of the female members of its Brixton branch.[46] Combined with the education and sense of empowerment provided in the sister's forums established by Jones-Lecointe, Brixton women began to reassess their role in the struggle for racial and gender equality. Beverley Bryan, Liz Obi, Olive Morris and other Panthers such as Pat Gordon, boldly left the BPaM in 1973 to establish their own autonomous group, the Brixton Black Women's Group. This new organisation sought to place the issues affecting Black women to the forefront of the Black liberation agenda, issues which had traditionally been dismissed by the BPaM. The BBWG created a unique political identity for Black women separate from both the male-dominated Black Power groups and the feminist groups which were comprised mainly of middle-class white women.

Historians have recognised that Black women's groups such as the BBWG grew out of Black Power in Britain.[47] However, they have erroneously divorced these as two separate movements. The analysis of Stephen Ward's work on the New York- based Third World Women's Alliance (TWWA) can be applied to the BBWG. He places the TWWA into the context of the Black Power Movement in America to argue that 'black feminists were not simply challenging expressions of male chauvinism, but were also advancing arguments for deeper revolutionary purpose, theory, and commitment' and 'in effect, applying and extending Black Power thought'.[48] Inspired by Ward's argument, this chapter will argue that the BBWG broadened the political definition of British Black Power, something which no scholar studying the BBPM has acknowledged. By seeing the BBWG as an extension - rather than a split from - Black Power, the timeline of the BBPM will also be revised.

Prior to this hybridisation of Black radicalism and feminism, the definition, image and symbolism of Black Power had been overwhelmingly masculine both in America and in

[45] BCA, DADZIE, *Speak Out*, Issue. 1, p.1
[46] Beverley Bryan et al., *The Heart of the Race* p.85
[47] Tracy Fisher, 'Black Women, Politics, Nationalism and Community in London,' *Small Axe*, 11 (2002), 133-150 (p. 139); Natalie Thomlinson, *Race, Ethnicity and the Women's Movement* p. 64-66
[48] Stephen Ward, 'The Third World Women's Alliance', in *Rethinking the Civil Rights-Black Power Era* ed. by Peniel Joseph (Oxford: Routledge, 2006) p. 144

Britain. As Trayce Matthews argues for the USBPP, its 'quest for liberation was directly linked to the "regaining" of Black manhood'.[49] This is supported by Johnson who states that in Britain 'blackness was indivisible from manhood and black revolution aimed to liberate black men alone'.[50] The connection between manhood and Black Power was reiterated by Egbuna throughout his autobiography *Destroy this Temple* (the subtitle of which claims to be 'The Voice of Black Power in Britain'). Egbuna viewed Black Power as an overtly masculine pursuit stating that it was about 'man and his refusal […] of his dreadful failure,' unapologetically defining Black Power in Britain as one uniting and strengthening the Black men of the country.[51] In the British Black Panther newspaper under Egbuna (*Black Power Speaks*) the editorial called the violence of colonialism, racism and poverty 'man-dehumanising' to the complete exclusion of the effects this oppression had on Black women.[52] In reality, the early years of the BPaM only allowed Black 'male' Power to speak and was voicing an entirely masculine construct of Black Power.

The BBWG's radical response to the all-male definition of Black Power was articulated in the editorial of their first issue of *Speak Out*, the name in itself being a direct challenge to the male-centric 'voice' coming from Egbuna and the *Black Power Speaks* newspaper. In the editorial the BBWG stated that 'some argue we are splitting the black movement. We disagree with this argument because we recognise that our struggle is the struggle of Black people and also that we have an important contribution to make' bringing 'a new dimension of feminism into our struggle'.[53] They argued that Black women were 'triply oppressed because of our race, our class and our gender' transforming Black Power into a political concept which intrinsically connected gender discrimination to race and class oppression.[54] The establishment of gender as an intersectional oppression alongside race and class was a revolutionary development within the BBPM (indeed, intersectionality is still a theory being developed by feminists today). The formation of the BBWG in 1973 signalled a turning point in the BBPM with Black Power's political purpose being redefined by the women of Brixton.

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[49] Trayce Matthews, 'Gender and the Politics of the Black Panther Party', in *The Black Panther Party (Reconsidered)* ed. by Charles Jones (Baltimore: Black Classics Press, 1998) p. 278
[50] W. Chris Johnson, 'Guerrilla Ganja Girls,' (p. 667)
[51] Shirley Graham Du Bois, review of Obi Egbuna, *Destroy This Temple: The Voice of Black Power in Britain*, *The Black Scholar*, 3 (1972), 58-59 (p.59) Quote lifted from this review as the book of *Destroy this Temple* was unavailable.
[52] Sam Sagay, 'The More We Are', *Black Power Speaks*, 3, July 1968, p. 4, as sourced from W. Chris Johnson, 'Guerrilla Ganja Girls', (p. 667)
[53] BCA, DADZIE: *Speak Out*, Issue.1, p. 1
[54] Lambeth Local Archives, OMC IV/279/2/12/1a, Jocelyn Wolfe interviewed by Nadja Middleton, 23rd July 2009

This newly defined voice of Black Power in Brixton was visually represented by a photograph taken by British Black Panther Neil Kenlock in 1973, the year the BBWG was established. Founders Liz Obi and Olive Morris sit proudly in a high-back rattan chair, adopting a setting similar to the iconic image of USBPP founder Huey Newton.

Figure 1. Liz Obi with Olive Morris ©Neil Kenlock, 1973 <https://www.frieze.com/article/revisiting-neil-kenlock-british-black-panthers-official-photographer> {accessed 28th December 2020}

Figure 2. Huey P. Newton, *The Black Panther*, 20th July 1967, vol.1 nom.5, <https://www.marxists.org/history/usa/pubs/black-panther/01n05-Jul%2020%201967.pdf> {accessed 3rd December 2020} p. 3

Huey Newton's militant stance, leather clothes and two weapons grasped in both hands embodied the masculinity which enshrined the traditional image of Black Power in America. Obi and Morris resemble Newton in the way they sit on the chair with a serious facial expression and eyes fixated on the camera. Kenlock has placed the camera at the same angle as Newton's photograph to frame the female sitters with the same intensity. The photographer and two female sitters are working together to imitate the stance and setting as closely to Newton as possible showing that this was a purposeful appropriation of this iconic portrait of Black Power. By adopting the same stance on the same chair, the women were physically and symbolically replacing Huey Newton's ownership of Black Power, decentring it from its American and masculine hegemony. As Tanisha Ford argues 'Morris and Obi disrupted the image of the black woman as the political sidekick or sexual consort to the powerful black male leader that often punctuated articles on the Panthers in the mainstream media'.[55] This photograph insisted that British Black women were also leaders in the global Black Power Movement and showcased the same strength being visually projected by the male leaders of the movement in other images.

However, aspects of the photograph have been altered to emphasise the feminist element adding to the new image of Black Power. They are not in the militant leather jacket and beret which adorn Newton's body. Instead, feminine emblems have been fully embraced by these women; Obi wears 'a flower printed caftan', both women have their hair braided and bracelets around their wrists.[56] They do not hold weapons, signalling how they were not associating Black Power with armed violence in Britain but rather with non-violent community activism. Significantly, it is no longer one single male lead figure sitting on the rattan chair, but two women sharing the seat. Obi leans on Morris to represent how Black women were using Black Power as a political concept for female solidarity and unity. The founders of the BBWG were using photography as a way to visually redefine the face of Black Power in Britain. As this was a photograph accessed from the private collection of Kenlock and one which was not intended for a large audience, the real significance of this photograph lies in the way the women were perceiving *themselves* in relation to Black Power. The founders of the BBWG were equating both their militancy *and* femininity with the iconic leaders of the global Black Power movement highlighting the development of their own ideology and their confidence in their identity.

[55] Tanisha Ford, *Liberated Threads: Black Women, Style and the Global Politics of Soul* p. 152
[56] Ibid.

The BBWG also changed the symbol of Black Power to more accurately represent their unique contribution to the struggle. The infamous Black Power fist, adopted from the original American movement, was redrawn and published in *Speak Out* multiple times. It was not drawn as a strongly clenched and overtly muscular and masculine fist but rather as the clenched fist of a feminine hand with bangles on the wrist, embracing both femininity and Black Power, two concepts which before 1973 had been mutually exclusive.

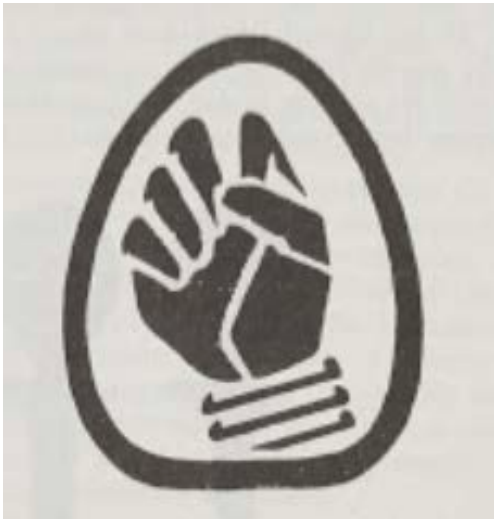

Figure 3. BCA, DADZIE, Speak Out Pamphlet used throughout Issue.1 -4 <https://artsandculture.google.com/asset/speak-out-pamphlet-black-women-s-group-brixton/8wGd1OOMcK7W-w?hl=en> {accessed on 12th November 2020}

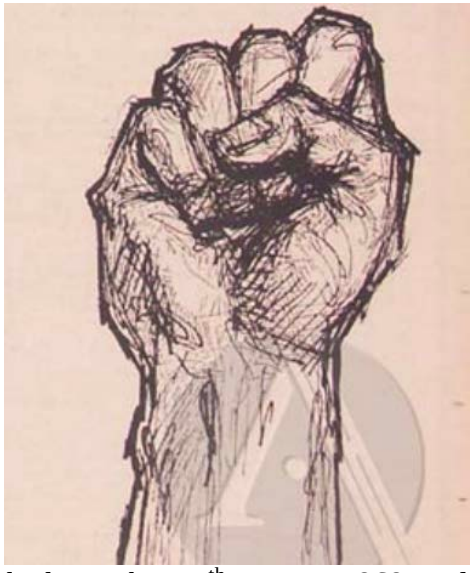

Figure 4. *The Black Panther* 25th January 1969, Vol. 2 No. 21, p.19 <https://www.marxists.org/history/usa/pubs/black-panther/02n021-Jan%2025%201969.pdf> {accessed 6th February 2021}

The positions that this redesigned Black Power fist were placed within the periodical were highly significant. In issue 4 of *Speak Out*, the fist was embedded within an article about menstruation cycles and how the taboos which surround periods negatively affect women.[57] By placing this new depiction of Black Power alongside an article addressing women-only issues, Black Power was now standing for something more than a reclamation of Black manhood. Associating the fist with something so personal to women demonstrates how much broader Black Power as a movement was becoming under the BBWG. It was directed at and speaking to an audience it had never reached before evoking a sense of racial pride *and* female empowerment and intimately connecting the liberation of the Black female body to the British Black Power Movement. The same Black Power symbol was placed in issue 5 alongside an article on Namibia Women's Day with the subtitle 'long live the international solidarity between Black women'.[58] Black Power was now being used as a political symbol to unite Black women as well as men in one international movement.

The BBWG reshaped the political definition of Black Power in Britain. They took male symbols of Black Power and repurposed them which, in turn, deepened the definition of what Black Power now stood for. The BBWG's redefined image challenges the stereotypical icons and symbols of masculinity and violence evoked by Black Power in popular memory. By largely ignoring the theoretical content in *Speak Out* and visual primary sources depicting Black women, the current scholarship on the BBPM has failed to incorporate this redefinition thus perpetuating the male-centric iconography traditionally associated with Black Power.

[57] BCA, DADZIE, *Speak Out*, Issue. 4, p. 6
[58] BCA, DADZIE, *Speak Out*, Issue 5, p. 12

Chapter 3- Redefinition in Action: Black women's grassroots activism

'There were some very strong Black women within the movement…they played a pivotal role and that ought to be remembered'.[59]

The women of the BBWG, emboldened by their newly defined vision for Black Power, took to redefining how Black Power activism was being put into practice throughout the 1970s and early 1980s. Black Power in Brixton was mobilised in very different ways by the BBWG compared with the militant and aggressive activism normally associated with the movement. Field and Bunce claim that in the early stages of the movement 'Egbuna believed that black power should be organised as a secretive, quasi-guerrilla, vanguard party that deliberately cut itself off from the community at large,' teaching members lessons in karate, judo, weaponry and military training.[60] In contrast, the BBWG used community-based campaigns, consciousness-raising efforts and incorporated women's issues into their activism, all of which advanced Black Power in new and effective ways. Two instances of BBWG grassroots activism will be analysed in this chapter; the Sabarr bookshop in Brixton and the Brixton Defence Campaign (BDC) both of which have yet to be thoroughly documented by scholars. This chapter furthers Julia Sudbury's efforts to 'redress the erasure of Black women's collective agency in current thinking about social change'.[61] When Black female grassroots activism is added to the historical narrative of the BBPM, it forces historians to rethink what Black Power activism looked like, particularly how it materialised as a vehicle for social change at local level.

Sabarr bookshop, established by Olive Morris and Liz Obi, opened in 1973 in squatted premises on Railton Road, Brixton. It was the first Black self-help community bookshop in South London selling 'children's, third world and women's literature' and was a meeting place for the BBWG.[62] Sabarr demonstrated how Black women were using both Black *and* women's literature to educate local people about these interwoven systems of oppression, providing the venue, materials and opportunity to put the BBWG's theory into practice at community level.

[59] Barbara Beese interviewed by Organised Youth, Soundcloud, 2013 <https://soundcloud.com/organisedyouth/british-black-power-story> {accessed 4th March 2021}
[60] R.E. R Bunce and Paul Field, 'Obi Egbuna, C. L. R James and the Birth of Black Power in Britain', pp. 405-406
[61] Julia Sudbury, *Other Kinds of Dreams* p. 2
[62] *Speak Out*, Issue. 2, p. 11

With traditional historiography focusing mainly on Black male-owned or white female-owned bookshops, Sabarr has been rendered largely invisible by scholarship on this topic. Colin Beckles' article about Black bookshops in London argues that they functioned as 'pan-African sites of resistance' where 'marginalised subjects resist the dominant group's construction of their identity by producing and disseminating alternative, valid definitions of Black identity'.[63] However, by using Bogle Bookshop, New Beacon Books and Grassroots Bookshop as case studies to support his arguments (all predominantly male-owned), Beckles does not attribute this same power of identity formation to Black feminist bookshops. Lucy Delap explores the impact of feminist bookshops and argues that they 'contributed to the cultural transmission of feminist ideas' linking those ideas 'to international activist networks and literature'.[64] She briefly mentions Sabarr, but this is overshadowed by her overriding focus on white feminist bookshops. By combining these two arguments, it would be true to say that Sabarr bookshop, a hybrid of Black radical *and* feminist bookshops, was having a similar transformative effect on the Brixton community, aiding the formation of the BBWG's redefined political identity.

Sabarr acted as a key distributor of 'diasporic resources,' functioning as a crucial nexus between the local Brixton community, the global Black Power struggle and the transnational Women's Movement.[65] It stocked Black and/or women's literature from countries outside of Britain which were often reviewed in the BBWG's *Speak Out* pamphlet. For example, African American Alice Walker's 'You Can't Keep a Good Woman Down,' made available through Sabarr, was reviewed as 'a non-stereotypical view of what it is to be black and female […] a celebration of self'.[66] Judith Lockhart remembers turning up to Sabarr thinking 'oh my god look at all of these books!' and that she 'kept buying books after books after books' demonstrating how the BBWG, through Sabarr, was encouraging local women to consume literature which would equip them with the knowledge to challenge their triply oppressed situation in Britain.[67] This process of reviewing, advertising and supplying Black and women's literature from international as well as domestic spheres made important feminist and Black radical texts available to the local women of Brixton.

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[63] Colin A. Beckles, '"We Shall Not Be Terrorized Out of Existence": The Political Legacy of England's Black Bookshops', *Journal of Black Studies*, 29 (1998), 51-72 (p. 52)
[64] Lucy Delap, 'Feminist Bookshops, Reading Cultures and the Women's Liberation Movement in Great Britain', *History Workshop Journal*, 81 (2016), 171-196 (p. 172-173)
[65] Jacquaeline Nassy Brown, 'Black Liverpool, Black America, and the Gendering of Diasporic Space', *Cultural Anthropology*, 13 (1998), 291-325 (p. 298)
[66] BCA, DADZIE, *Speak Out*, Issue. 4, p. 9
[67] Lambeth Local Archives, OMC IV/279/2/4/1a, Judith Lockhart interviewed by Sheila Ruiz, 2nd March 2009

The BBWG met every Sunday from 3 to 5pm in Sabarr, transforming the bookshop into a space where Black women shared and developed their political ideologies.[68] BBWG member Melba Wilson remembers that 'it was in those meetings' where 'we used to argue the toss in terms of politics' and 'in those meetings I learned a lot'.[69] As BBWG member Jocelyn Wolfe recalls, discussion in these Sunday meetings was not solely about 'what was happening here in England. We were interested in what was happening in Mozambique with Samora Machel…what was happening, you know, in South Africa and so on. So, as information came through, we would share with each other and so on so it was very much a, a kind of learning thing'.[70] Sabarr was the place where the women of the BBWG were being exposed to the politics of the global Black liberation struggle and defining their unique place within it.

Sabarr also functioned as a place where local children in Brixton could be educated about Black culture thus extending the reach of the BBWG's activism beyond women-only issues. This was carrying on the pioneering work undertaken by Beverley Bryan in the British Black Panthers. Wolfe remembers that the BBWG 'were making sure we took that education outside and worked in the community'.[71] Sabarr facilitated this endeavour; 'through the Sabarr Bookshop Collective we are able to keep in contact with schools and other institutions with whom we discuss educational material available in the bookshop for their use'.[72] Local children were provided with a chance to engage with what Beckles calls a 'counterhegemonic discourse'.[73] Sabarr was disseminating alternative and valid definitions of Black identity to local children, an act which radically challenged the white-centric British curriculum.

BBWG member Mia Morris states that Black women's bookshops 'held the community'.[74] However, the women who owned Sabarr, made this literature available and met within its walls did more than just bond the community. They transformed a squatted building into a political centre which exported their new radical way of thinking whilst at the same time solidifying a collective identity. This was a new way in which Black Power was being mobilised at

[68] BCA, DADZIE, *Speak Out*, Issue. 2, p. 11
[69] Lambeth Local Archives, OMC IV/279/2/16/1a, Melba Wilson interviewed by Kimberley Springer, 13th August 2009
[70] Lambeth Local Archives, OMC IV/279/2/12/1a, Jocelyn Wolfe
[71] Ibid.
[72] BCA, DADZIE, *Speak Out*, Issue. 1, p. 1
[73] Colin A. Beckles, 'The Political Legacy of England's Black Bookshops', (p. 52)
[74] British Library Sound Archive, Sisterhood and After: The Women's Liberation Oral History Project: Mia Morris interviewed by Rachel Cohen, 20th July 2010, as sourced from Lucy Delap, 'Feminist Bookshops', (p. 181)

community level distinct from militancy but still enshrining the ethos of Black pride and solidarity within Brixton.

Following the Brixton uprisings of 10th to 13th April 1981, the BDC was formed comprising of organisations of African and Asian groups of which the BBWG was one. The main aims of the BDC were to oppose 'mass arrests, illegal bail refusals, police harassment on the street and raids and destructions of homes', particularly the unjustified criminalisation of Black male youth in Brixton.[75] The BBWG played a leading role in this campaign, demonstrating that they were leaders in British Black Power activism as they depicted themselves in the Kenlock photograph. Through this campaign, the BBWG changed the ways in which police brutality was being challenged in the United Kingdom. Up until that point, the approach of Black Power groups had been largely militant and aggressive. For example, Egbuna published a pamphlet titled *What to Do if Cops Lay Their Hands on a Black Man at Speakers' Corner*, claiming that 'the cops must be overcome and beaten till the arrested brother is rescued, freed, and made to flee at once'.[76] Instead, as *The Heart of the Race* states, the BBWG started 'distributing leaflets, organising more public meetings and producing a regular bulletin' to combat police misconduct, taking a more consciousness-raising and informative approach.[77]

Simon Peplow and Natalie Thomlinson have both documented the BDC but have both failed to acknowledge the BBWG's leadership role. Thomlinson's only recognition of the BBWG's involvement was that it 'provided the physical space for the campaign to meet' characterising BBWG members as supporting actors rather than leading agents.[78] This is a reductive way of looking at the BBWG and ignores key archival evidence that emphasised its leading role. Peplow's only acknowledgement of the BBWG was that it faced hostility from the rest of the Defence Campaign and experienced a 'fight to be heard'.[79] Whilst BBWG member Gail Lewis stated this in an oral history, Peplow does not incorporate other women's experiences such as an oral testimony from *The Heart of the Race* which reads, 'we initiated the Brixton Defence Campaign, took on a lot of the leadership and, as a group, put in most of the work' which serves

[75] BCA, GUTZMORE, Brixton Defence Campaign: Correspondence (2)
[76] Obi Egbuna, "What to do when cops lay their hands on a black man at the Speakers Corner!," (n.d., ca. June-July 1968), in CRIM 1/4962/1, TNA: PRO, as sourced from Anne-Marie Angelo 'Any Name That Has Power': The Black Panthers of Israel, the United Kingdom and the United States, 1948-1977', (unpublished PhD thesis, Duke University, 2013) p.203
[77] Beverley Bryan et. al, *The Heart of the Race* p. 100
[78] Natalie Thomlinson, *Race, Ethnicity and the Women's Movement* p. 88
[79] Simon Peplow, *Race and Riots in Thatcher's Britain* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2019) p. 130

as another example of Black women in Brixton redefining what Black Power leadership looked like.[80]

Under the leadership of the BBWG, the BDC saw a shift away from the more militant tactics adopted by male activists such as Egbuna towards efforts to unite the community in a different style of protest for example picketing and public meetings. Three pickets were organised in just one month, one on 15th June outside Lambeth Town Hall, the other two outside Camberwell magistrates' courts on 18th and 22nd July 1981.[81] The pickets took place in conjunction with various public meetings held at the Abeng Centre, located opposite Brixton police station. Three such meetings were held all together; 7th June, 12th July and 20th December 1981 disseminating information about how to 'support the Brixton uprising' and 'oppose police brutality'.[82] The BDC was bringing Brixton together as a collective and setting up opportunities for community members to both learn about and protest against the police power which oppressed them.

As well as mobilising the community against police brutality, the BDC also expanded its activism outside of the Brixton community to resist police brutality on a city-wide and national scale. An all London meeting was organised by the BDC on 6th September 1981 where different defence campaigns from across the city discussed and coordinated ways to resist racially motivated police harassment. The report from this meeting stated that at least 7 'action meetings' had been organised to take place throughout October and November spanning from Camden to Southall.[83] Most significantly, the BDC brought Black people from across the United Kingdom together to educate them about police misconduct. On 9th April 1983, the BBWG chaired the 'National Conference on Policing Development and the Police and Criminal Evidence Bill'.[84] *Speak Out* reported that 'hundreds of people participated' in this day of 'international culture and political events'.[85] There were readings of 'political poetry' and 'international songs of resistance' showing that under the leadership of the BBWG, the BDC was fostering a sense of Black pride from *within* the British Black community to combat police brutality rather than using physical confrontation and violent rhetoric.[86]

[80] Beverley Bryan et al., The *Heart of the Race* p.100
[81] BCA, GUTZMORE, Brixton Defence Campaign Poster (2); Brixton Defence Campaign Poster (3)
[82] BCA, GUTZMORE, Brixton Defence Campaign Poster (1)
[83] BCA, GUTZMORE, Brixton Defence Campaign: Minutes and notes from meetings (3)
[84] BCA, GUTZMORE, Brixton Defence Campaign: Ephemera (2)
[85] BCA, DADZIE, *Speak Out*, Issue. 4, p. 7
[86] BCA, GUTZMORE, Brixton Defence Campaign: Ephemera (2)

More abstractly, the BBWG also redefined the sense of self of the women involved. Judith Lockhart said her time with the BBWG was a 'period of real growth and development'.[87] Melba Wilson said what she learnt from the BBWG was that it was 'about systemic change' and that she 'hadn't really been educated to that extent before'.[88] Olive Gallimore knows that her 'life has certainly been enriched by that experience'[89] and Jocelyn Wolfe believed that 'the Brixton Women's Group has actually influenced and made a difference in my life'.[90] The activism of the BBWG showed that the Black Power Movement in Britain was not just a short-lived imitation of its American equivalent mobilised by militant men, but an ethos which was being used by local women in targeted and effective ways to improve their community's social conditions.

[87] Lambeth Local Archives, OMC IV/279/2/4/1a, Judith Lockhart
[88] Lambeth Local Archives, OMC IV/279/2/16/1a, Melba Wilson
[89] Gail Lewis, Melba Wilson and Olive Gallimore interviewed by Agnes Quashie in 'Talking personal, Talking political', *Trouble & Strife*, 19 (1990), 1-53 (p. 52)
[90] Lambeth Local Archives, OMC IV/279/2/12/1a, Jocelyn Wolfe

Conclusion

Black women in Brixton admired, mobilised, struggled under and ultimately redefined what Black Power stood for in Britain. Rather than just adding women into the narrative of the BBPM, this dissertation has argued that Black Power in Britain was fundamentally changed by its Black female participants. Their inclusion revises and reimagines our historical understanding of what the British Black Power Movement meant and looked like at the time. Framing this movement as male-dominated and largely militant is a misrepresentation as it excludes key Black Power activists in this period, namely Black women who were leading Black Power organisations and building the movement at community level. The incorporation of Black women's activism in Brixton into the historical narrative has also extended the previously accepted timeline of the BBPM by documenting how their activism continued into the 1980s. Further, this study has shown that Black Power activism extended beyond official Black Power organisations mimetic of their American counterparts, to a Black Power movement specifically targeted at and addressing the problems of Black communities in Britain.

Chapter one demonstrated how a Black female-centric narrative of official Black Power groups has redefined what leadership in the Black Power era was by highlighting local instances of female leadership which have gone unnoticed due to the focus on their male counterparts. It also acknowledged the individual struggles of women within male-dominated Black Power groups and their complex relationships with this originally male-centric pursuit. Chapter two drew attention to the existence of local Black women's groups, formed when women left traditional Black Power groups following their difficulties with the male-dominated and misogynistic environment. It showed how there was an ideological and iconographic redefinition of Black Power in Britain from within these new women's groups as they challenged the traditional masculine portrait of Black Power. Finally, chapter three examined how Black women used Black Power in new ways to make actual change, both at grassroots and national levels, to improve the lives of many different groups of Black people in the UK. Examining the Black Power Movement through a gendered and local lens demonstrates how reductive previous historians' view of the movement was as a result of omitting Black women as important agents of Black Power in Britain.

My revisionist study has therefore opened up new avenues for further research by historians. In a British context, more needs to be done to locate Black women within the Black Power period. There were other male-dominated Black Power groups in the UK, such as the Black Liberation Front and the Black Unity and Freedom Party, where the crucial work of Black women has gone unstudied. There were also other Black women's groups making important contributions to Black Power. I have chosen the BBWG due to my focus on Brixton, however there were several organisations at the time in London, such as the Camden-Islington Black Sisters, and some nationwide, such as the Birmingham Black Sisters, which deserve scholarly attention. Historians studying Black Power organisations outside of a US and British context should similarly revise the male-centric narratives which currently exist. This would spark a new phase of the global Black Power Movement scholarship in which women's roles and the impact they had on the movement are illuminated. These historiographical developments would cement my overall argument that women were essential to the mobilisation of Black Power as a global phenomenon and in doing so, were redefining the movement's meaning.

There are systematic processes occurring which leave Black women out of the history of not only the BBPM but most mainstream narratives of social change. The primary source material on Black women's contributions to Black Power is substantially less than men's due to their limited coverage in contemporary sources (in part due to the misogynistic bias amongst many contemporary journalists, editors and biographers). Contemporary sources have mainly documented the movement's formal leaders, who were overwhelmingly male, thus disregarding important activism at the grassroots by Black women. This lack of primary source material of their activism leads to the commonly held perception that men were driving all aspects of the Black Power movement in Britain. The intersection of Black radicalism and feminism complicates the story of Black Power in Britain; therefore, historians have tended to focus on single-axis groups to provide a more straightforward narrative of the development of the Black Power movement in Britain. As a result of the consistent exclusion of Black women throughout the historical process, our ability to understand the full reality of social movements, such as Black Power, is made weaker. This research is my contribution to reversing this silencing of Black women in history by recovering the stories of unexpected and understudied activists. This way of approaching historical narratives of social change is crucial in attempting to capture a deep, diverse and complete history of the Black liberation struggle worldwide and thereby broadening our understanding of how social change and progress is enacted.

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Freedom News

Organised Youth Oral histories

< https://soundcloud.com/organisedyouth/altheia-jones-lecointe>

<https://soundcloud.com/organisedyouth/british-black-power-story>

Altheia Jones-Lecointe Interviewed by Organised Youth, Soundcloud, 20th September 2013, {accessed 20th February 2021}

Barbara Beese interviewed by Organised Youth, Soundcloud, 2013 {accessed 4th March 2021}

Beverley Bryan interviewed by Organised Youth, Soundcloud, 2013 {accessed 4th March 2021}

An email from Liz Obi read out by Organised Youth, Soundcloud, 2013 {accessed 4th March 2021}

Online Newspapers

The Guardian <https://www.theguardian.com/uk>

The Black Panther < https://www.marxists.org/history/usa/pubs/black-panther/index.htm>

Photographs

Liz Obi with Olive Morris ©Neil Kenlock, 1973 <https://www.frieze.com/article/revisiting-neil-kenlock-british-black-panthers-official-photographer> {accessed 28th December 2020}

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