



WORKS

Black Panthers in London: Who Were They and Why Should They Interest Anarchists?

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(2016)

The text of a talk given at the Autonomous Centre of Edinburgh on 17/12/2016. The author (Carlus Hudson) would like to point out these are more notes/transcript for a talk rather than a properly written article.

I'm going to talk to you about the history of the British Black Panther movement, focusing specifically on the groups in London in the late 60s and early 70s. There were groups elsewhere in the UK and before and after the period I'm focusing on, but the most readily available source material I've so far been able to draw from is London in the late 60s and early 70s. My own research specialism is student anti-racist activism in Britain in the 1970s, which I'm doing my PhD on in Portsmouth at the moment, so what I've looked at with the Black Panthers runs parallel to that and some of the content of my masters thesis. I'd not consider myself an expert in this particular topic, but I hope to at least promote greater interest in it.

To do that I'm first of all going to say a bit about why the topic's so important today for anarchists and the way I'll be approaching their history, before I go into the history itself and the insights it offers. This is an extremely important topic because, very simply, anarchists' engagement with feminism and anti-racism is long overdue. Most of us may be aware of what's termed 'manarchism' that shuts down most experiences of oppression and struggle against it in favour of an extremely narrow idea of class struggle. This idea of class struggle in the anarchist movement, with its parallels in Socialist Workers' Party style Leninist politics, tends to be very dismissive of feminism and anti-racism. It generalises them together into what's termed 'identity politics', and stereotypes identity politics as being about getting more women and PoC into corporate boardrooms, abolishing freedom of speech on university campuses, and people being wankers on tumblr instead of getting involved in what they see as real revolutionary class struggle.

This very narrow idea of class struggle only speaks to a small section of the global working class and arguably only to the least oppressed among them. I don't believe that it's just a coincidence that anarchist and more broadly revolutionary politics have remained so marginal in society when they've been dominated for so long

