

A Firsthand View of the Rise of the Black Panther Party

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It was almost exactly 50 years ago, in October of 1966, that Huey Newton and Bobby Seale founded the Black Panther Party for Self-Defense. Less than a year had gone by before University of California student Stephen Shames showed up at an anti-war rally and photographed Seale. In the years that followed, the two would develop a tight relationship and Shames would have access to the inner world of the Black Panthers during a turbulent and world-changing time.

The extent of that access is made clear in a forthcoming book from Shames and Seale, *Power to the People: The World of the Black Panthers* (Abrams), several photographs from which can be seen here. The book, with photographs by Shames and an oral history by Seale and others, traces the rise and impact of the Panthers.

Asked whether he has a favorite of all of those images, Seale tells TIME that the photograph that stands out is one of the first that Shames captured of his work: a picture of him selling Chairman Mao's "Little Red Book" at a rally in 1967, a tactic the Panthers used to raise money for their organization and the programs they operated.

"We had sold over 3,000 of those books in the spring of 1967. I got them for 20 cents a piece and sold them for a dollar," Seale recalls. "But what's great about that story is that we hadn't even read that book! That's the killer. That was 1967. I never made that book official reading material [for the Party] until 1968."

Dozens of Shames' photographs, many of which have never before be exhibited, will be on view starting Friday at Steven Kasher Gallery in New York City.