

The World is a Child's Classroom: Lessons from the Black Panther Party's Oakland Community School



(L-R Top) Ericka Huggins, M. Gayle "Asali" Dickson,
(L-R Bottom) Angela LeBlanc-Ernest, Gregory B.
Lewis

A Series of Programs Focusing on Themes of Black Radical Pedagogy: Part 1

Join educator, former Black Panther Party (BPP) leader and Oakland Community School (OCS) Director Ericka Huggins; independent scholar and independent filmmaker Angela LeBlanc-Ernest; Black Panther Party graphic artist and OCS teacher M. Gayle “Asali” Dickson; and former OCS student Gregory B. Lewis for a conversation on the impact of the BPP’s praxis on the success of the OCS and lessons for today. OCS was one of the longest lasting of the BPP’s community Survival Programs and grew into a model for culturally relevant, community responsive education nationally. Moderated by Associate Professor in Comparative Human Development at the University of Chicago Dr. Micere Keels.

[RSVP](#)

Program video

About the Panelists

Ericka Huggins is an educator, human rights activist, poet, and former Black Panther Party (BPP) leader and political prisoner who has used her life experiences in service to community for more than fifty years.

Huggins served as director of the BPP's Oakland Community School (1973–81) and managed HIV/AIDS volunteer and education programs (1990–2004). She has also supported innovative mindfulness programs for women and youth in schools, jails, and prisons. Huggins was professor of sociology and African American studies from 2008 through 2015 in the Peralta Community College District. From 2003 to 2011 she was professor of women's and gender studies at San Francisco State University and California State University, East Bay.

As a Racial Equity Learning Lab facilitator for WORLD TRUST Educational Services, Huggins curates conversations focused on the individual and collective work of cultivating equity in all areas of our daily lives. Additionally, she facilitates workshops on the benefit of spiritual practice in sustaining social change.

Angela D. LeBlanc-Ernest is an independent scholar and independent filmmaker whose work focuses on American history post-1965, with an emphasis on the modern Black Freedom Struggle. She was founding director of the Black Panther Party Research Project at Stanford University, and has focused on ensuring that the Party's history includes the contributions of women, the impact of gender, and the organization's community Survival Programs. The founder and current director of The OCS Project LLC, LeBlanc-Ernest is creating a documentary about the Oakland Community School (OCS), one of the Black Panther Party's (BPP) longest-lasting such Programs.

LeBlanc-Ernest holds degrees from Harvard University and Stanford University. She is a co-founder of the Intersectional Black Panther Party History Project (IPHP), whose focus is to highlight the role of women and gender in the BPP, and community partner with and co-leader of "The Black Panther Oakland Community School: Community Archives, Activism, and Storytelling" at the University of California, Irvine Humanities Center.

M. Gayle "Asali" Dickson is an ordained minister who was born and raised in Oakland, California. Dickson became a Black Panther Party (BPP) member in Seattle in 1970. In 1972, she

and other Party members joined the Oakland: A Base of Operations campaign, the focus of which was to take over the city's government, make it responsive to the community's needs, and ideally replicate that model across the country.

Dickson, who is an artist, soon joined the graphic art department at the BPP newspaper as its only female artist. Shortly after transferring to the BPP's Oakland Community School (OCS) in 1974, she created their logo. After leaving the Party in 1976, she returned to school to finish her art degree, and she continues to hone her craft and personal artistic style. She has been a substitute teacher in the Oakland Unified School District. Her previous community projects include an elementary school and working with the Golden Gate Valley Library, the African American Museum and Library at Oakland, the Oakland Museum of California, and the de Young Museum. Most recently she was a consultant on the mural commissioned by Jilchristina Vest honoring the women of the Black Panther Party.

Gregory B. Lewis is an Oakland, California native and the son of two former "rank and file" members of the Black Panther Party (BPP). He was one of a small class of original students, most of them children of Panthers, who attended the Oakland Community School (OCS) from its inception in the 1970s. Lewis and his family remained in the BPP until his parents' abrupt departure from the organization in 1979. As a student at San Francisco State University (SFSU), he reconnected with his Panther roots and was reminded of the power of the movement that had shaped his life. He has been writing and sharing his story ever since, and is currently working on a memoir, *Power*

to the Children: Writing from the Life of a Panther Cub.

Lewis holds degrees from SFSU and New College of California School of Law. He has worked as a mentor, a paralegal, an adjunct instructor, and a coach, and is currently the varsity wrestling coach at Albany High School. He is the proud father of three grown children and has been known to play the guitar and sing his special brand of blues and funk for family and friends.

Dr. Micere Keels is an associate professor in comparative human development at the University of Chicago. She focuses on understanding how race-ethnicity and poverty structure the supports and challenges that children and youth experience. She is particularly interested in how family and neighborhood inequality are associated with the sorting of children into different quality schools, and the interventions that can improve their educational outcomes. She is currently leading three projects that work to improve the educational experiences and outcomes of students from historically marginalized communities.

She is the founding director of the Trauma Responsive Educational Practices Project (TREP Project), which is a research-translation and research-practice-partnership that aims to connect the brain and behavior research on developmental trauma with the realities of school and classroom management.

These programs are co-presented by [Logan Center Exhibitions](#), [the Center for the Study of Race, Politics and Culture at the](#)

University of Chicago, and Logan Center Community Arts.

All events are free and open to the public.

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The World is a Child's Classroom: Lessons from the Black Panther Party's Oakland Community School

October 6, 2021 6:00-7:30pm

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