Body and Soul
The Black Panther Party and the Fight against Medical Discrimination
Alondra Nelson

Alondra Nelson deftly recovers an indispensable but lesser-known aspect of the organization’s broader struggle for social justice: health care. The Black Panther Party’s health activism—its free health clinics, its campaign to raise awareness about genetic disease, and its challenges to medical discrimination—was an expression of its founding political philosophy and a recognition that poor blacks were underserved by mainstream medicine.

The Black Panther Party’s understanding of health as a basic human right and its engagement with the social implications of genetics anticipated current debates about the politics of health and race. That legacy—and that struggle—continues today in the commitment of health activists and the fight for universal health care.

“This book is a revelation. Alondra Nelson provides the deep context for our current conversation about the health disparities that plague the African-American community (and) adds immeasurably to our knowledge of the Black Panther Party. Nelson is the first scholar I know of to bring these two histories into dialogue with each other, and she does so with spectacular results. This is a tremendously important book.” —Henry Louis Gates Jr., Harvard University

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