

### **Three Little Panthers: Black Panther Fairy Tales for Children**

In 1966, Huey Newton and Bobby Seale created a ten-point program for their nascent organization based in Oakland, California, the Black Panther Party. The fifth of these ten points concerned the education of Black children in America, calling for Black history and culture to be taught to facilitate self-knowledge for Black students. While many Liberation and Black Power-inspired supplementary schools relied heavily on biography, history, and poetry to educate young African-American readers in Black Power ideology, a group of mothers in Newark led by Toni Cade Bambara created revisionist fairy tales with Black Panther themes, including “Three Little Panthers,” “Billy Goats Turf,” and “The True Story of Chicken Licken”. Their stories were published together with other fable and folktale retellings by more well-known African-American authors in *Tales and Stories for Black Folks* (Zenith 1971). This paper will compare the activist work of the “Newark Mamas” with other stories in the volume, as well as published and unpublished material created for Black children during the Black Power era found in the Schomburg Center for Research into Black Culture in New York City. Using contemporary scholarship about the educational needs of African-Americans, such as Nancy Larrick’s “All-White World of Children’s Books” (1965) and Jim Haskins’ *Diary of a Harlem Schoolteacher* (Grove 1970) and the writings of Black Panther Party members on children’s education, the fairy tales’ activist messages will be analyzed for their contribution to the education of Black youth.