

My experiences as a community worker in the BPP.

In 1970 I was 15 years old. One day I was walking along 18th Street and noticed that the Black Panther Party had opened. My curiosity was peaked and I went in. One of the first people that I met was Charles B **[how do you spell Charles' last name]**. I would come by and hang out after a summer job that I had. Other people who I remember during this time are Malik, Maria, and Mano. Everyone was welcoming. A few things that I remember from that time are the political education classes, babysitting and selling papers -- and doing push ups for being late. The party also taught me how to grow up, (which is something good to know). After a while, the party moved into the house on 17th & U. It was very close to a police precinct. I remember the one time that there was a police raid just because we were singing off the pigs. The police came up the stairs like storm troopers breaking the cement on the stairs. Their justification was that someone threw a brick and hit a cop in the face. No one knew of that happening. I sold papers it was on 14th & H in front of Waxey Maxies?, a record store where everyone went. I can remember having conversations with people going in and out of the record store. It really was a good feeling to sell all of them.

We also had an information table in front of the house where we would sell books or give out information and I would sometimes sit out there to speak with the people in the community.

As a troubled teen I found that the party became my family. I think that if it had not been for the party, who knows what would have happened. The party taught me social responsibility at an early age. This early activist training has followed

me all of my life where on some level I have been of service to the people. At one point, I even volunteered for the Democratic Party and was a volunteer coordinator for Clinton's first campaign. At the present time I am interested in anti-war activism. I feel disillusioned about the direction of things today. Outside of the fact that we have lost most of our rights, we do not even have the freedom of assembly where we can come together, share our ideas and help in making the world a better place. Our plight as black people has not improved that much in 35 years. We are disenfranchised, our communities are ravaged with drugs, gang violence and poverty. The infrastructure of this country is falling apart and our elected officials are deadlocked and gridlocked and do not have any use for the American people as no one is listening. We also find ourselves in a needless war. We need representatives who are concerned about their constituents and not big business. We need to put government back into the hands of the American people.



Osa Massen



15 Years old

Local Bank

Two views

'These things happen to black people every day'

By BEN McKELWAY III

From a car, the Black Panthers' Community Information Center at 1932 17th-st nw looked normal for a Sunday afternoon. The girl at the table in the front yard sold copies of the party's newspaper while other blacks relaxed on the front steps. Kids drank soda pop from no-return bottles. But the conversation wasn't normal. People, feeling like soldiers the day after a battle, were talking about the police raid on their building Saturday night.

As they told the story to outsiders, they would gesture toward the pale yellow, three-story brick building with pride. A blue door, ripped from its hinges, rested against a wall showing the community that their Alamo had been besieged Saturday night by a wave of policemen wielding crow bars, nightsticks, and pistols.

On a poster in the front yard was the face of Eldridge Cleaver, fugitive Black Panther Minister of Information. Next to the face were the words, "The more they try to come down on us, the more we will expose them for what they are..." Someone had written "pigs" underneath.

'OFF THE PIGS'

A girl chuckled at a newspaper account of the raid. "It says we were singing 'We Shall Overcome'. Who sings that anymore? — We were singing 'Power to the People — Off the Pigs'. Are the papers afraid to print that?"

Twenty blacks were arrested Saturday night on charges of disorderly conduct after a policeman was hit in the face with a brick. According to the panthers, about 30 people had gathered about 10:30 p.m. in front of the building and they were singing when a police car pulled up. A policeman ordered them to stop singing, but they refused. Then more police arrived with a patrol wagon. Women and children were taken into the house, and the men

stayed outside to face an expected confrontation with police. The men say they tried to keep police off their property pushing them back onto the street. Those present Sunday said they didn't know who threw the brick. Most didn't know a policeman had been seriously hurt.

When a third group of policemen arrived, the men retreated into the house, but police broke down the door and seized all those inside. Panthers say many blacks were beaten by police, who dragged the people including three young children, to the patrol wagon. All were released on bail later that night after a rock-throwing crowd marched on the police station down the block. A trial is scheduled July 17.

'THANK YOU'

"These things happen to black people every day," said Panther Wayne Purcell. "The only reason the newspapers are interested now is because it happened to the Panthers. But every victory the pigs have brings them closer to their own doom."

Jesse Williams, an aging, soft-spoken black who is not a Panther but who witnessed the raid, said, "I have a message for you. We're tired of this brutality and we will no longer stand for it." His eyes were weary but resolute. "Thank you," he concluded.

"The people here have picked up on this," explained Panther Bernard Green. "A lot of them last night were just ordinary people who live around here, and they had never seen anything like that (the raid) before. They were afraid. We (the Panthers) already knew about this kind of thing, and now they know too. It was criminal, gangster type of action."

Mr. Green said he saw police swinging crow-bars at people and overheard one policeman say, "We ought to kill 'em all right here." "They even kicked three children down the stairs and threw them into the wagon," he said. Two of the children were 16-month-old twins, Juan and Damon S. Hoop.

A boy brought a speaker out onto the front porch and soon a song by a black singer was blaring out into the street from a record player. "They're running off a press release upstairs right now," someone said. Mr. Green and a girl unfurled a banner reading "Free Clothes Here" and began to nail it to the front of their building.

"You know yesterday they had a thing down there called Honor America Day," said Mr. Purcell. "They wondered why not many black people showed up. This is why. We're having our self-determination taken away from us every day."



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Juan Schoop, one of the 16-month-old twins taken to jail Saturday night after police broke into the Black Panther Community Information Center, rested on a pamphlet table yesterday. Looking one is Panther Wayne Purcell.

—Photo by Geoffrey O'Sullivan

Police vs. Panthers

P.O. 347-8100

'It was not a raid of the Black Panthers'

Two District police officers were injured, one seriously, in a Saturday night melee which involved the arrests of 29 persons inside the Black Panthers Community Information Center at 1932 17th-st nw., police said.

Officer John B. Robinson, 27, who was struck in the face by a brick, is in serious condition today at the Washington Hospital Center, and Officer Finis McGraw has a possible fractured foot from another flying object.

Police said Officer McGraw and another policeman were cruising their regular 3rd District beat when they heard "boisterous noise, chanting, and obscenities hurled at them" by a crowd on the corner of 17th and U streets nw as they drove by.

They stopped and tried to disperse the crowd, but were greeted with flying rocks and bottles. The two officers called for assistance, police said.

WORKING ON DAY OFF

Officer Robinson was among those who came to help. His usual assignment these days has been collecting funds for the Police Boys' Club, but he was working on his day off because of the heavy holiday demand for police services.

One of the hurled bricks struck Officer Robinson in the face and as he stood bleeding, police said, the crowd ran into the Black Panther center and locked the door.

Police broke into the house and seized its occupants without a search warrant because, they said, they were "in hot pursuit of a felon." An attack with a brick is considered an assault with a deadly weapon, police said.

They said they met with "some physical re-



OFFICER ROBINSON

sistance" inside the door, then arrested six women and 14 men on charges of disorderly conduct.

"The assault was the basis of our breaking in," a police spokesman said, "but the arrests were for a combination of things — the disorderly conduct, the profanity, the police. It was not a raid of the Black Panthers."

They said no one had been charged with assault because they did not know who had thrown the brick. Also seized from the house were a 12 gauge shotgun, a loaded 32 caliber revolver, two rifles, and several hundred rounds of ammunition. Panthers later admitted "having a few guns there."

After the arrests, a crowd of about 200 neighborhood people marched on Third District headquarters in the 1600 block of V-st nw, throwing rocks and bottles, to protest what they called the rough handling of the seized women and children. Police said they calmed the crowd and all was quiet by midnight Saturday.

'These things ha

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As they told the story to a reporter, they would gesture toward the pale brick building with pride, showing the community that it had been besieged Saturday night. Policemen wielding crow bars, and pistols.

On a poster in the front yard, a Black Panther, fugitive Black Panther, next to the words, "The more they try to expose us, the more we will expose them." Someone had written underneath.

'OFF THE PIGS'

A girl chuckled at a newspaper article about the raid. "It says we were singing 'Overcome'. Who sings that any more? Singing 'Power to the People'. Are the papers afraid to report it?"

Twenty blacks were arrested on charges of disorderly conduct. A policeman was hit in the face while responding to the Panthers, about 10:30 p.m. in front of the building and they were singing when pulled up. A policeman ordered them to stop singing, but they refused. Then a patrol wagon arrived with a patrol wagon. Women were taken into the house.