Dear Friends and Comrades:

In recent years there has been much said, written and discussed about the history of the Black Panther Party and the mistakes that took place. We were a very young organization and we admit to many errors in judgment, as well as mistakes in policies and decisions. But our overall goals and aspirations have never changed. We have always felt that the U.S. system of governing was flawed and needed change. It is easy for the pundits and historians to pick out certain people to blame for our mistakes... but when it is all said and done, this government was frightened to its core by our youthful exuberance and our idealistic approach to a very serious problem.

We believed in change and went about the task of making change with a "by any means necessary" approach; and we meant just that. We lived our personal lives by a very strict set of principles and those principles guided our everyday lives within the confines of our organization. But to accomplish the tasks at hand, many unprincipled moves had to be made, and many very difficult choices had to be made. Our leadership was not perfect, and believe me, the choices they made very well may not have been the choices I would have made, but I respect their courage in making them.

We fight a system that has no principles, which will do and say anything to protect its interests, including lying and murder. We lost many comrades to jail and death. Many of our comrades are still incarcerated to this day. Do we cloud their contributions with a discussion of who's to blame within the organization, whose decisions caused their incarceration or death? I think not. The government used every tactic at its disposal to discredit and destroy the Black Panther Party and believe me it had plenty of practice. History shows us that their handy work was used many years before the Black Panther Party came into existence and these underhanded tactics are still being used today.

So what did we learn that should be passed on to the next group of young people who believe that change can be achieved? History is very important to look to for positive input but must be put in context. There will always be mistakes made within a movement. But we must not be afraid of them. We must approach them as a learning experience.

Making major change in this country is a difficult task and takes serious people to accomplish it. Much sacrifice will be needed. During the existence of the Black Panther Party many people put there lives in the hands of the organization. We each made the decision that win, lose or draw this would be the direction that our lives would go. We all knew that our fate could lead to incarceration or death. I am totally shocked that I'm still alive and for that I feel a great responsibly to tell the story of our Party. This story cannot be told by one or two people, but by many Party members from as many areas as possible.

I have much love for all of my comrades. I can't say I agreed with all of them, but I do know that we all made the decision to dedicate our very lives to the cause of CHANGE. For all that survived, I say *All Power to the People!*