



Black Panther Party

From the time of my very first encounter with the San Francisco Chapter of The Black Panther Party to this very day, I've never lost that sense of total commitment.

As protectors of the Rights of the People, we sought first and foremost that justice and equality became our primary cause to rise up against the white Power structure in this country. The time was volatile; the country was a powder keg and ready to explode at any second. The Police were quick to shoot unarmed Blacks throughout the Black communities in this country.

The white power structure was over bearing and antagonistic toward minorities. The Vietnam War was in full bloom, and the schools were not completely integrated. Blacks still could not vote in the South. If not now when? The time was now, and there was a sense of urgency.

I answered the call as did many other brothers and sisters in San Francisco during the mid 1960's; we knew we had to get involved.

The Black Panthers were not Racist, in fact we had support from all races and nationalities. Only Black Americans were able to join the rank and file.

We learned the Party rules, The Ten Point Program and the Principles of the Black Panther Party. We studied the revolutionary tactics of "Ernesto Che Guevara". (Fidel Castro's right hand man during the Cuban Revolution) We also studied the "Little Red Book" by Chairman Mao Test Tung . It was also mandatory to read "Soul on Ice" by Eldridge Cleaver. We also had to attend Political Education Classes that were a very important part of the Party.

We located and setup safe houses and places of refuge in the community, we were preparing for the worst. We were taught that there could be no revolution without bloodshed. Other brother and sisters were to procure food for the breakfast program, the free clinics, and other community programs started by the Black Panthers.

There were times when we were assigned as perimeter guards at political rallies and gatherings. During the trial of Huey Newton, Fred Bennett, John Brown and I were part of thousands that marched on the Alameda County Courthouse and maintained vigil. These brothers were my mentors.

We accompanied Eldridge Cleaver when he spoke on occasion especially at the University of California Berkley and around the Bay area. We were assigned to accompany Kathleen Cleaver from a rally in Oakland. We escorted Stokely Carmichael from the San Francisco Airport to Black Panther Headquarters when he came in 1968; we were armed with shot guns, rifles and pistols.

Every day we sold Black Panther Party newspapers while patrolling the neighborhoods. Our constant presence in the community eventually gave the people

a sense of security that they never had before. Police brutality ceased and street gangs had truces.

Our work became very popular with the people. So for retaliation, the police began shooting up our offices at night. That was the beginning of drive-by shootings. We did not attack the Police, they attacked us. Soon the Government launched their Counter intelligence program to undermine and assassinate our leaders and destroy the party. (COINTELPRO)

I am most fortunate to have been involved with the brothers and sisters of that era. The teachings and discipline of the party were incredible and made me the person I am today. We are still active and working towards a better community, and a better world.

We are not finished; the work is far from complete. Today there are hundreds of us throughout the world still pursuing the unfinished business that the Civil Rights Movement so diligently addressed in the 1950's and 60's. That is the Legacy of the Black Panther Party.

May the legacy of the Black Panthers live on in the hearts of every man, woman and child forever. Our cause was not a Black cause, it was a Human cause.

**All Power to the People
Louis "Saint" St. Cyr
San Francisco Chapter BPP**