

RAYSHAUN WOOLRIDGE, 7, reads the Black Panther history display in the West Oakland Library on Saturday at the Bobby Hutton Day celebration. Rayshaun's father, David Woolridge, attended the Black Panther Party free breakfast program as a youth.

Photos by **HASAIN RASHEED**



Black Panthers celebrate first member's life

■ Participants find the positive in efforts of 'Little' Bobby Hutton, a self-taught Oakland revolutionary

By Kamika Dunlap
STAFF WRITER

OAKLAND

BANNERS, T-shirts, old newspaper clippings and other Black Panther Party memorabilia decorated the West Oakland Library on Saturday as a small crowd celebrated the life of Bobby Hutton.

The Black Panther's first and youngest member he was affectionately called "Little" Bobby Hutton. He was shot and killed by police in West Oakland 37 years ago this month. Hutton was a self-taught revolutionary who worked to help the city's poor and to instill pride in disenfranchised African-American communities.

Bobby Hutton Day, is one of many organized events marking the Black Panther's 40th anniversary, which culminates in October with a reunion.

"We want this to be a joyous occasion," said James Mott, who emceed and first became a Black Panther Party member in 1968. "I was around his age. . . It was inspiring that he put his life on the line for something he believed in."

The celebration began with a pouring of libations out of respect for ancestors. Libations were also offered in a tribute to all the Black Panther members nationwide.

"Bobby is the example of what the Black Panther Party is about organizing and helping the community," said Billy X Jennings, the party's historian and founder of It's About Time, the Black Panther reunion committee.

Please see **HUTTON**, Metro 8



BLACK PANTHER PARTY artist Malik Edwards and photographer, Ducho, catch up outside of the West Oakland Library on Saturday at the Bobby Hutton Day celebration. Bobby Hutton Day is one of many organized events marking the Black Panthers 40th anniversary, which culminates in October with a reunion.

West Oakland library celebrates Bobby Hutton's life

HUTTON, from Metro 1

Bobby Seale and Huey P. Newton organized the Black Panther Party in 1966, during the civil rights era of free speech, war protests and black power.

Hutton was 15 when he met Seale and Newton, who were working for the mayor's anti-poverty jobs program in North Oakland, and he asked to join the Panthers as their first member, Jennings said.

The group fought for social justice by demanding equal rights in education, housing and employment in poor black communities.

They started free breakfast programs and opened schools and medical clinics.

The Black Panthers Party also armed its members, claiming guns were needed to defend against police brutality.

"The Panthers are older now so a lot of the collective memory is gone," said Christine Saed, branch manager of the West Oakland Library. "But the library will be a place to capture it and build on the history and the hope and courage people had."

Saed attended her first Black Panther rally in 1966 with her sister Paula Saed Sweeney in Sacramento. Collecting newspapers, posters and other memorabilia to display at the library brings back memories, she said.

Many Panther reunion committee members said they hope that Bobby Hutton Day will encourage young people to make positive choices and become less involved with violence and crime.

"Bobby liked music, and he liked to dress sharp and do most things like other young people in life," said Jennings. "But he also had a social conscience. We want to carry on his legacy."

For more information about the Black Panther Party reunion, visit www.itsabouttimebpp.com.

Staff writer Kamika Dunlap can be reached at kdunlap@angnews-papers.com.