

A Panther Tale #3

“A Man Gets Tired Sometimes” - an Ode to Jimmy Slater

In 1972, the BPP Central Committee decided to run Bobby Seale and Elaine Brown for political office; Bobby for mayor and Elaine for councilwoman. In doing this, the Party made a big decision to close some offices and downsize other offices in other cities and bring the extra personnel to Oakland for an all out assault on the power structure in Oakland.

Comrades came from all over: Seattle, LA, Philly, New Orleans, Chicago, Cleveland, New Haven, Detroit, Dallas, Houston, Winston Salem, Baltimore, and other areas that had Panther offices or NCCF (National Committees to Combat Fascism).

Many found working in Oakland to be a lot different from in their former locations. The Oakland BPP ran 24 hours a day, which was a big change for some Panthers. They were used to going home after the office closed, but not in Oakland, we were gearing up for the election, organizing different committees and area's of work. Many comrades didn't have the same resources they might have had back in their former location. this also brought on hardships. Some people didn't like to totally rely on the Party for support. So there were some contradictions about method of work and rank. A person might have had some title or position in their former location, but in Oakland the Central Committee ran everything.

Some people didn't like their area of work. Some sisters didn't like being away from their children who all went to our Children's Care Center everyday in Berkeley and Richmond. Some people didn't like working on Sunday because it was a slow day in terms of selling papers and talking to people in the hoods. Some couples were separated; each might have different areas of work and not able to see each other that much.

The contradictions continued until we held a big Rank and File meeting at Saint Augustine's Church. Hundreds of Panthers

attended; some voicing their opinions and dislikes - a real criticism and self criticism session. Comrades spoke freely. One of the big subjects was working on Sunday. Some wanted free time, Sundays off, a chance to visit with their children or socialize with each other. Other more hard line comrades didn't like that, because they believed that a revolutionary never has a day off. That struggle went back and forth for a while until a brother name Jimmy Slater spoke up.

Brother Jimmy was from the Cleveland chapter. He had joined the Party through his older brothers who were Panthers. The Slaters were well known in Cleveland and his brothers didn't come out to Oakland. Jimmy had worked out of the medical clinic, free clothing program and free breakfast program. The comrades from the Cleveland chapter were some of the first to come out because of their experience in voter registration. It was the Cleveland Panthers who got Carl Stokes elected in Cleveland, the first Black elected to be mayor of a major city. Party members made the difference in getting out the vote.

Jimmy was a dedicated, reliable, hard working quiet person, but this time he wanted to speak. Jimmy said, I've listened to people go back and forth for 30 minutes, and all I got to say is, "a man gets tired sometimes" and "we need some time for ourselves." Jimmy said something so clear and profound that once he said it, everybody got it. After Jimmy said that, it was decided that Sunday would be a free day.

So that's how the Panthers got a free day (Change in Policy) - thanks to Jimmy Slater.

Note: Jimmy died a few years ago in Oakland. He will always be remembered for his hard work in building the legacy of the BPP.

After leaving the Party in the mid 1970's, he developed a Baseball league in the E. Oakland community. Many kids knew Jimmy through Baseball.

Jimmy got married to Cynthia and had 3 children. They lived in E. Oakland. One of his big supporters was Gary Payton, the pro basketball player. Gary played for the Seattle Super Sonics and the LA Lakers. Whenever in Oakland to play the Warriors, Gary would track Jimmy down and give him tickets for the kids in E. Oakland to come check out the game.

Jimmy Slater was one of the founders of the Commemorator newspaper, which just celebrated its 20th year anniversary. Jimmy was a rallying force in 1989 after Huey was killed. He help put the rally together after Huey was buried. He was a strong member of It's About Time and worked hard to establish Lil Bobby Hutton Day in Oakland. We miss you Jimmy

Billy X Jennings

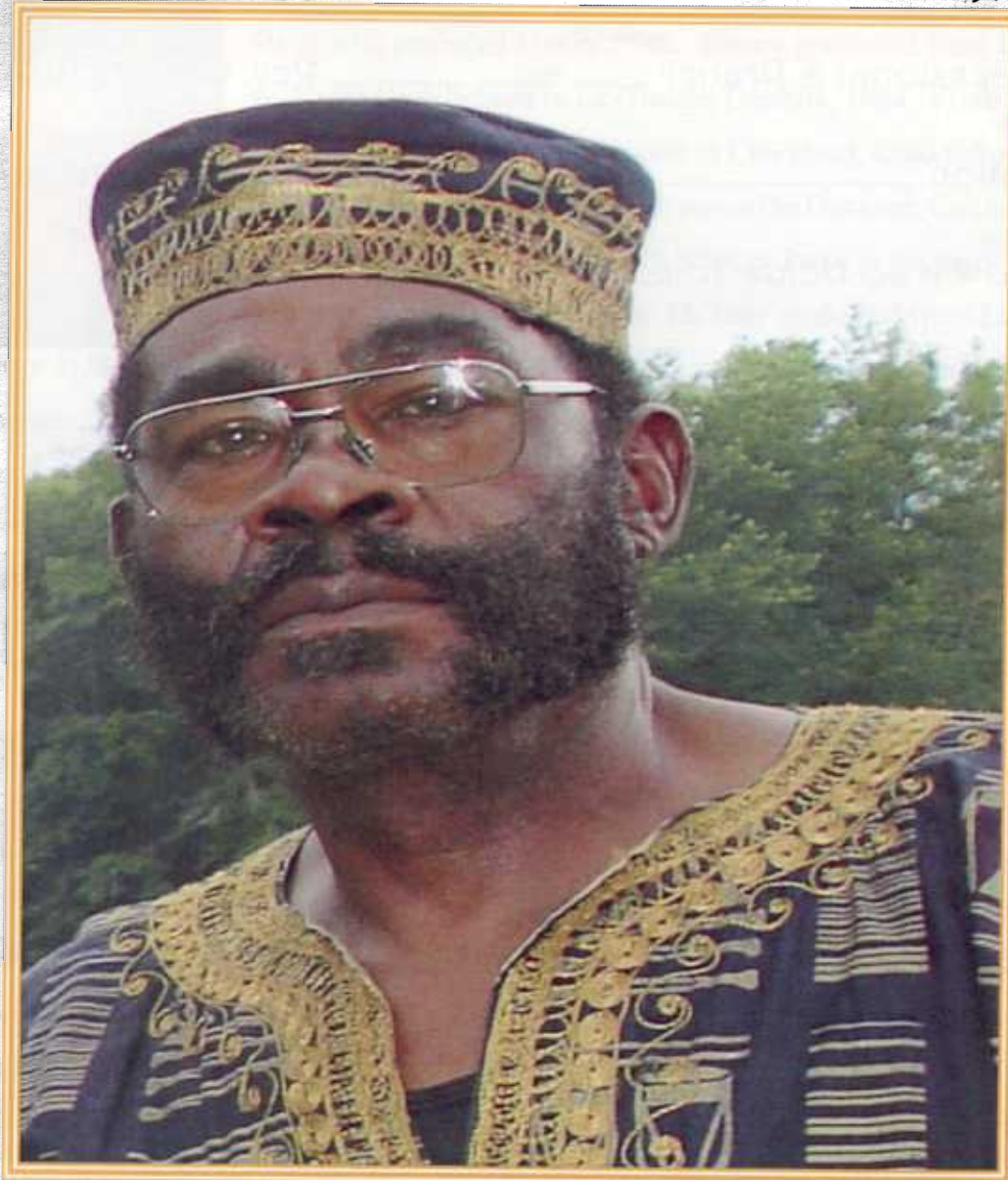
Note: By 1972 with Huey out of Prison the Party was developing and establishing many new programs, like the Free Shoe program, The free food program and getting involved in local politics, we even developed a cadre called "Procurement" Their job was to reach out to factory's and businesses on a national basics for donations. The Staff was headed by Joyce Carter.

In Loving Memory
Of

Jimmy Milton Slater

Sunrise September 3, 1946

Sunset November 27, 2007



Saturday, December 1, 2007

12:30pm (Final Viewing 12:30-12:45)

Colonial Chapel

2626 High Street

Oakland, California 94619

Kokahyi & Neico Sa-Ra Officiating

A Legacy of Love



To my loving Husband

We gave a new meaning to the words "True Love"

It was unconditional

It was the one thing in life that we were sure of

We loved each other

And raised our children in the same loving manner

Allowing them to grow into the beautiful people they are today

You were my rock

My heart

My constant in life

And I will GREATLY miss you

~Cynthia~
