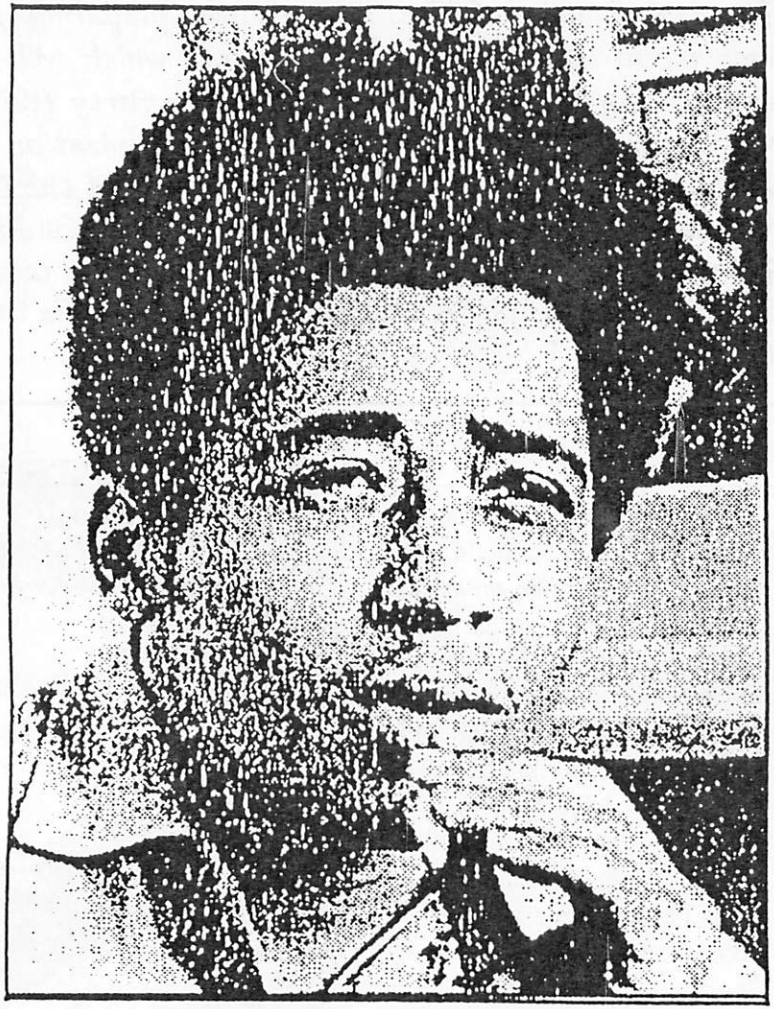


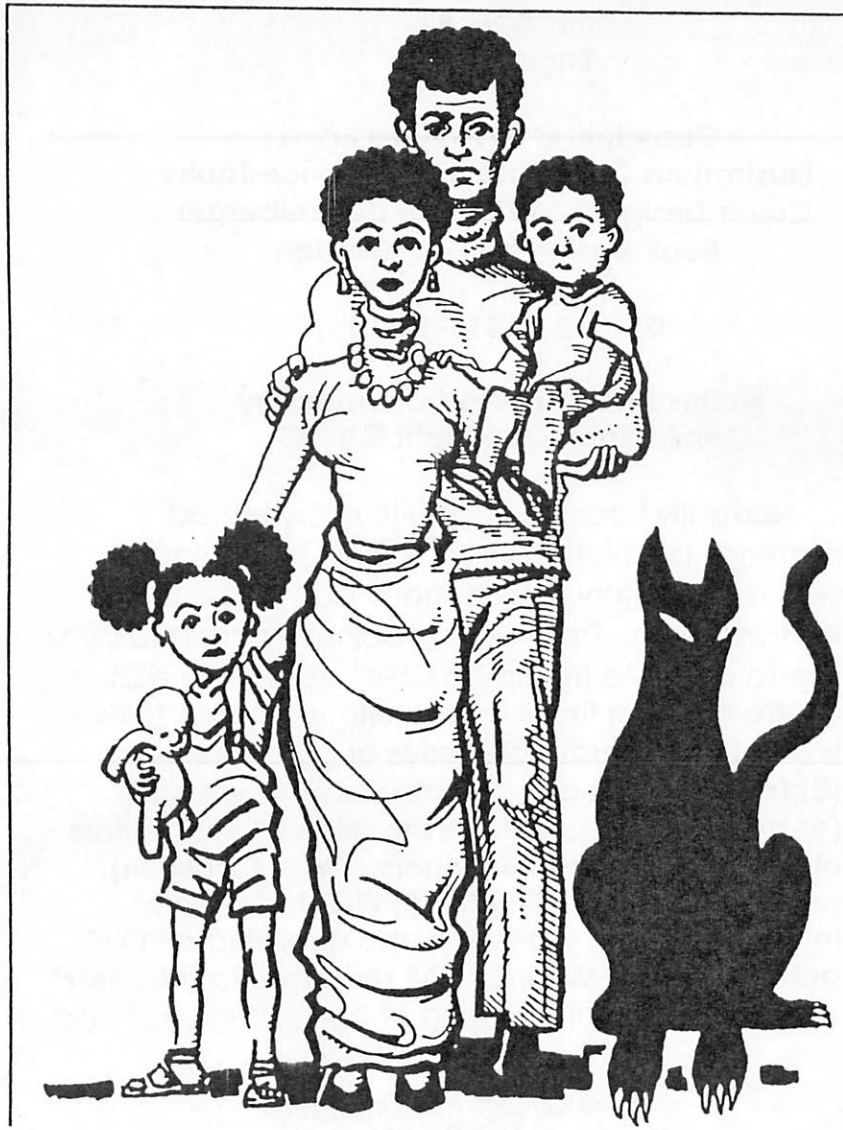
"If my enemies, your enemies prove stronger [than us,] at least I want them to know that they made one righteous African man extremely angry."
George Jackson

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BLACK PANTHERS

FOR BEGINNERS



This compelling and beautifully illustrated book was first published in 1995 by
Writers and Readers Publishers, Inc.
P.O. Box 461, Village Station
New York, New York 10014

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Cynthia Street
London N1 9JF
England

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Cover Design @ 1995 Terrie Dunkelberger
Book Design by Paul Gordon

ISBN# 0-86316-196-0

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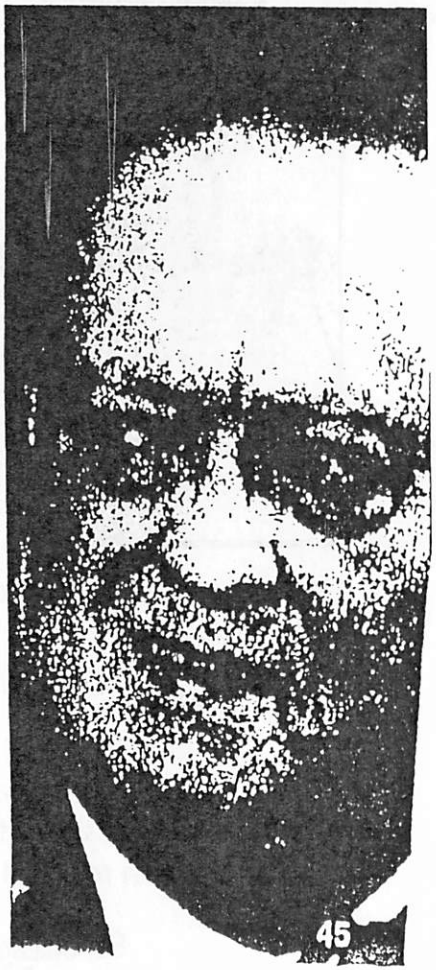
Normally I do not deal with copyrighted material, but I felt this was a most worthy and well-done history, which many can benefit from learning from. They were gracious enough to allow me to add it to the South Chicago ABC Zine Distro.

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The Los Angeles Office is currently preparing an anonymous letter for Bureau approval which will be sent to the Los Angeles Black Panther Party (BPP) supposedly from a member of the US organization in which it will be stated that the youth group of the US organization is aware of the BPP 'contract' to kill Ron Karenga, leader of US, and they, US members, in retaliation, have made plans to ambush leaders of the BPP in Los Angeles."

The FBI also produced and distributed cartoons with each side appearing to insult and ridicule the other. On January 17, 1969 this diabolical scheme reached a deadly conclusion. Black Panther leaders Alprentice "Bunchy" Carter and John Huggins were murdered by US members George and Joseph Stiner, and Claude Hubert, in a classroom at UCLA's Campbell Hall. "Apparently at the FBI's behest, the Los Angeles Police Department (LAPD) followed up by conducting a massive raid—75 to 100 SWAT equipped police participated—on the home of John Huggins' widow, Ericka, on the evening of his death, an action guaranteed to drastically raise the level of rage and anger.





Things were also going to hell at the Panther chapter in Los Angeles. Minor differences between the Panthers and Maulana Ron Karenga's "US" (first dubbed "United Slaves" by the media, but ultimately, "US" was us, Black folks) were distorted or blown out of proportion by the slimy tricks of the FBI and its COINTELPRO (Counter Intelligence)



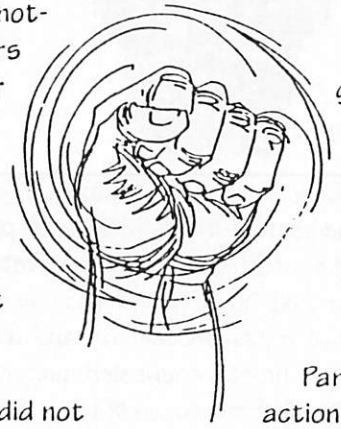
To provoke violence between the two groups, FBI agents faked letters and made phone calls to make it appear the Panthers were plotting to kill members of US, and vice-versa. A sample of the way the FBI tried to get one group to actually murder members of the other group is seen in a memo dated November 29, 1968:



A crowd of onlookers gawked from the sidewalk as four young black men dressed in black leather jackets and berets leaped from a Volkswagen, each of them wielding pump shotguns with bandoliers strapped across their bodies. The young men surrounded two white police officers who had accosted a black man and had him spread-eagled against a building.

The young men did not say a word as the police officers watched them nervously, their eyes fixed on the shotguns.

One of the young men held a large law book in his hand, waiting to recite their Constitutional rights to bear arms and to observe the police's actions.



Under the fierce gaze of the young black men the police stopped their arrest procedures, returned to their patrol car and drove off.

This was the Black Panther Party in ideal action. The real story—the whole story—was both more and less heroic.

In the fall of 1966, Huey Newton and Bobby Seale, both students at Merritt Junior College in Oakland, California, decided that they had lost all faith in the government of America.



They were sick of the Federal Government's brutal policy of "benign neglect," furious with local politicians more interested in stuffing their own pockets than in helping the poor and hungry, and they were sick to death of the civil rights movement and its out-of-touch old leaders who still counseled moderation and nonviolence after all those years of useless promises. To hell with moderation and nonviolence! It was time to stop singing and to start swinging! It was time to start talking and to start fighting back.

4 We want decent housing, fit for shelter of human beings.



"HUEY"

"HUEY"

"HUEY"

"HUEY"

"HUEY"

"HUEY"

"HUEY"

"HUEY"

"HUEY"

Meanwhile, the Huey Newton Defense Committee gathered steam. They may not have raised all the money that was needed, but they did a good job of inciting the masses of young people who positioned themselves daily outside the Alameda County Courthouse—"Moby Dick" it was called by the demonstrators—where they kept up a noisy and boisterous vigil. "Roast the Pigs! Free Huey! Off the Pigs! Free Huey!" they screamed until they were hoarse.

At the end of the seventh week of a trial muddled with conflicting testimony and a divided jury, a verdict was reached. Newton was guilty of voluntary manslaughter and wounding Officer Heanes. Naturally, no one was satisfied with the outcome, least of all the Oakland police who on the night of the verdict drove by the Panther office and shot out the windows, ripping the posters of Newton and Li'l Bobby Hutton to shreds. With their leader on his way to four years in prison, the rest of the Panthers knew it was time to cool it for a while and find a new location for their headquarters. Literally and figuratively they dug in on Shattuck Avenue, about midway between Berkeley and Oakland, but their escape tunnels beneath the house became flooded by backwater from the subway





For the next several minutes the two friends hashed out the platform for the Black Panther Party, exchanging ideas, with Newton reciting and Seale taking notes.

In less than an hour they had outlined the Ten Point Program.

1

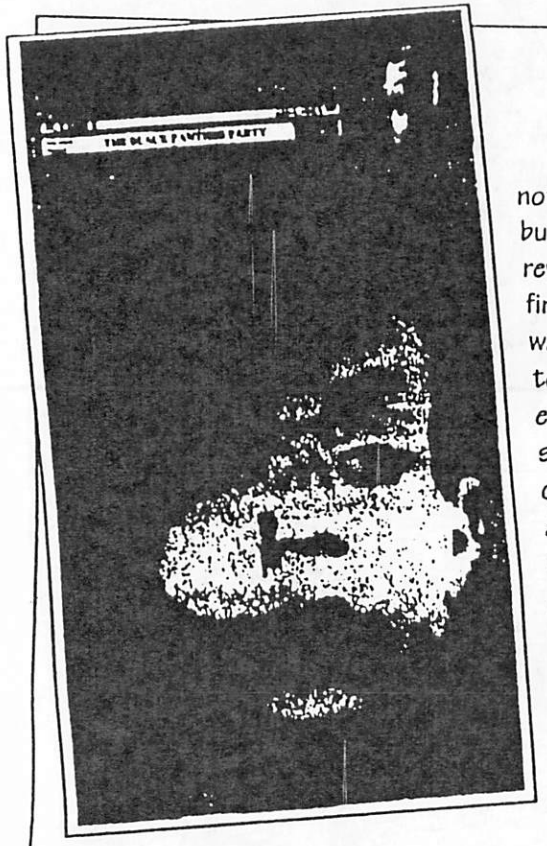
free until we are able to determine our destiny.





Chief among the institutions that bolster capitalism, the Panthers often cited, was the criminal justice or "injustice" system. And now their leader was caught squarely in the web of it, facing a long prison term or execution if found guilty of killing Officer John Frey. In his quest to ensure a fair trial for Newton, Charles Garry's first strategy was to either quash the indictments brought by the grand jury or to disrupt the entire jury system. Both requests were denied. A trial date was set for July 15, 1968. The case read: **The People of the State of California v. Huey P. Newton.**

After several days and reams of testimony the jury was finally selected—none of them a "peer" of Newton's. The one Black man of the twelve was David Harper, and he was elected foreman. Newton's motive for killing Officer Frey and wounding Officer Heanes, the prosecution contended, was to elude arrest. Prosecutor Lowell Jensen charged that Newton was in possession of two matchboxes of marijuana and carrying a concealed weapon, which if discovered by the officers in Newton's car would have placed him in violation of probation. All of this was mere speculation since Newton was never officially indicted for these infractions.



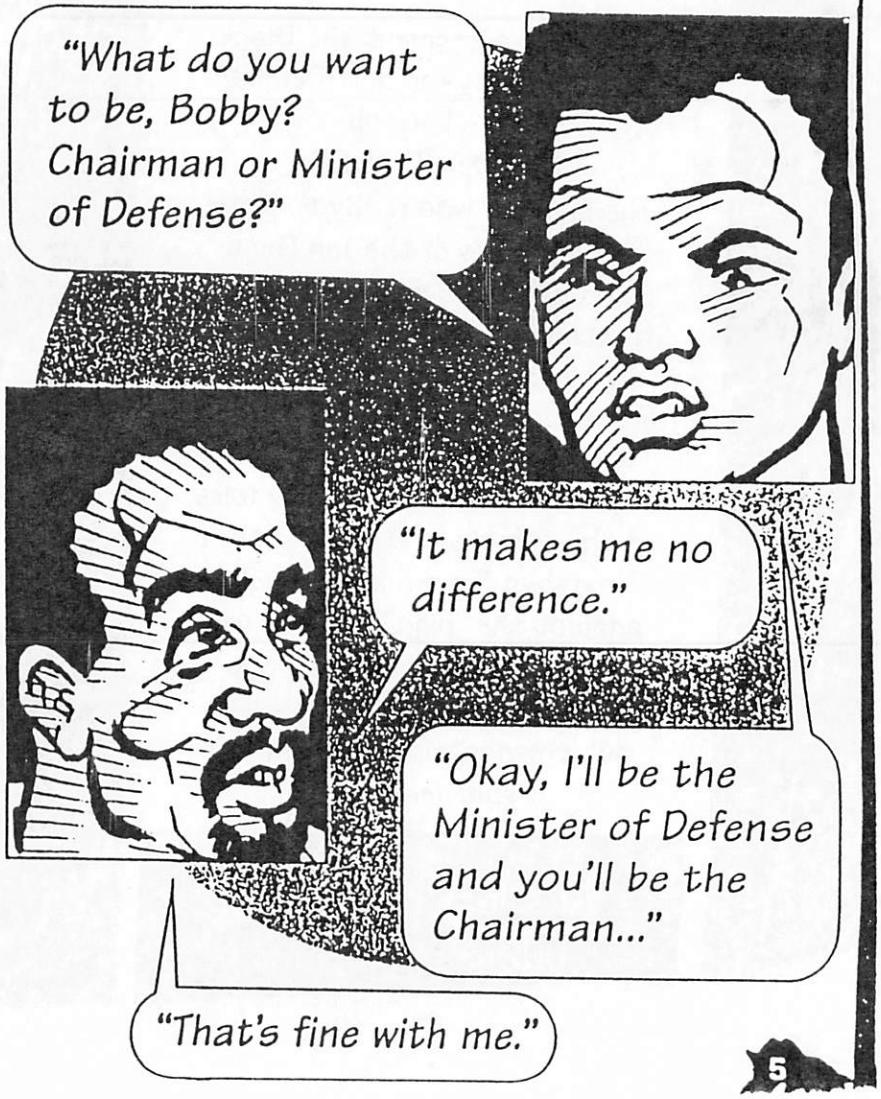
Little Bobby Hutton was not the Panthers' first martyr, but he was certainly the most revered. He was the Party's first real recruit, and now he was first of the key members to fall. Cleaver, having violated his parole, was taken to state prison. Later he was charged with three counts of attempted murder of policemen and three counts of assault with a deadly weapon. His bail was set at $50,000. But through a loophole in the law, Cleaver was released two months later.

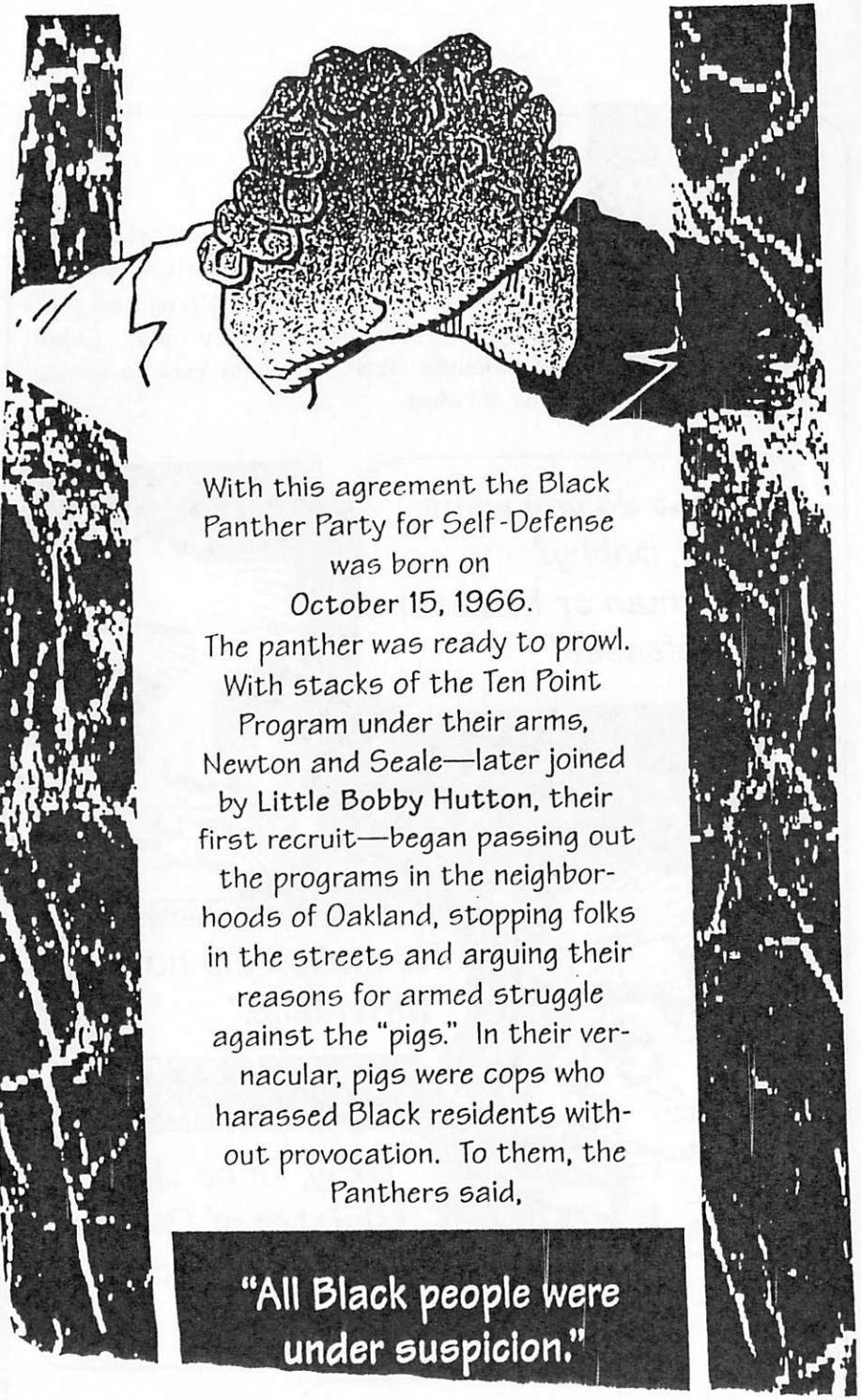
The Panthers' Minister of Information was free, but its Minister of Defense, Huey Newton, was still locked up awaiting trial. It was time now for the courts to pass judgment on a man who led a group J. Edgar Hoover, director of the FBI, called ...





Whether they knew it or not, Newton and Seale's list of demands and beliefs were nearly identical to earlier ten point programs proposed by Marcus Garvey and Elijah Muhammad. Their next task was to decide who did what.



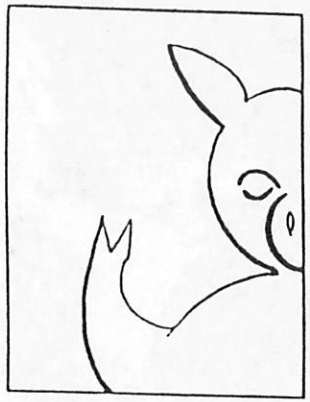


With this agreement the Black Panther Party for Self-Defense was born on October 15, 1966. The panther was ready to prowl. With stacks of the Ten Point Program under their arms, Newton and Seale—later joined by **Little Bobby Hutton**, their first recruit—began passing out the programs in the neighborhoods of Oakland, stopping folks in the streets and arguing their reasons for armed struggle against the "pigs." In their vernacular, pigs were cops who harassed Black residents without provocation. To them, the Panthers said,

"All Black people were under suspicion."



"Then they snatched Little Bobby away from me and shoved him forward, telling him to run for the car. It was a sickening sight. Little Bobby, coughing and choking on the night air that was burning his lungs as my own were burning from the tear gas, stumbled forward as best he could, and after he traveled about ten yards the pigs cut loose on him with their guns."





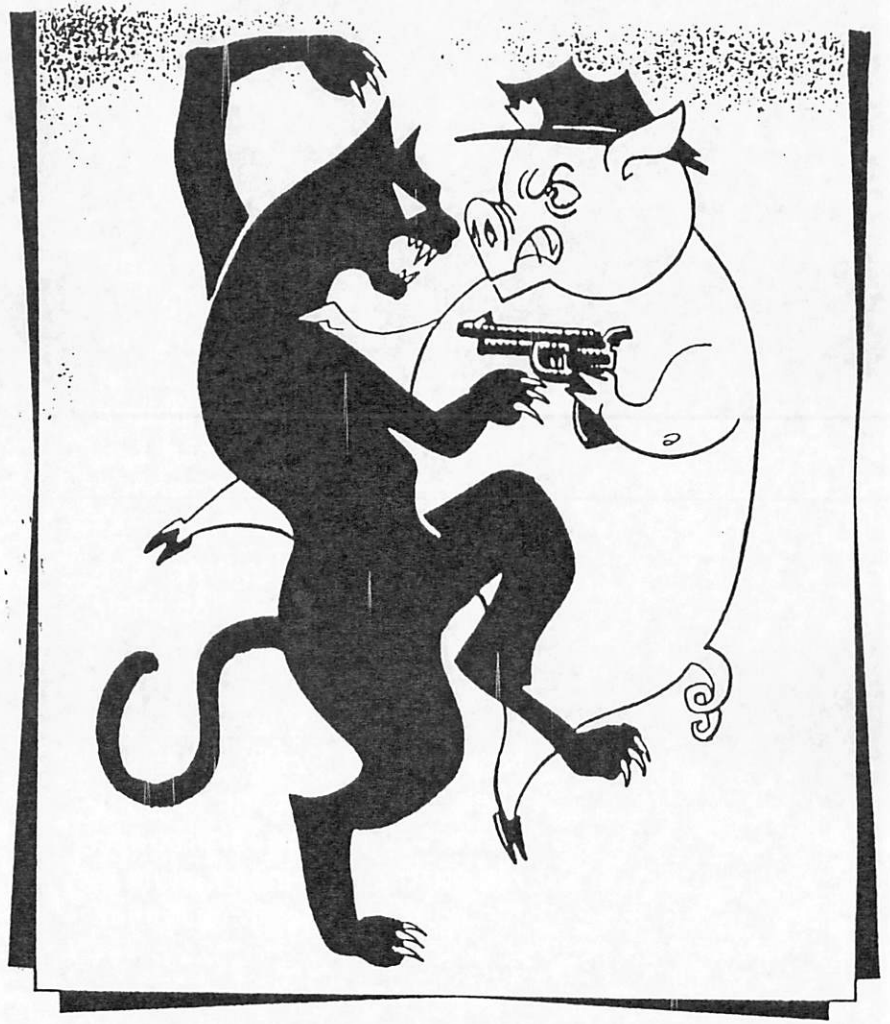






Cleaver zipped up his pants and started for the front of his car. Suddenly, gunfire raked the night. Panthers took cover or scattered to nearby houses. Cleaver and Hutton scampered into the basement of a house. For over a half hour the shootout raged. Unable to roust them, the police hurled tear-gas canisters into the basement. One of them hit Cleaver in the chest. He had already been wounded in the foot by a ricocheting bullet. Suddenly the house was on fire, and Bobby and Eldridge had no choice but to surrender. After tossing their weapons out, Hutton and Cleaver came out of the basement. Cleaver was stark naked with his hands thrust in the air.

The cops told both of them to hit the ground and spread-eagle. Once they were down, the cops dragged them to the squad cars. Cleaver said the next thing he knew, the cops were cursing and hitting them. "The pigs pointed to a squad car parked in the middle of the street," Cleaver said, "and told us to run for it. I told them I couldn't run.



People the trio of Panthers encountered on the streets were stunned by the new group's boldness and wondered why they had chosen a panther as their symbol.

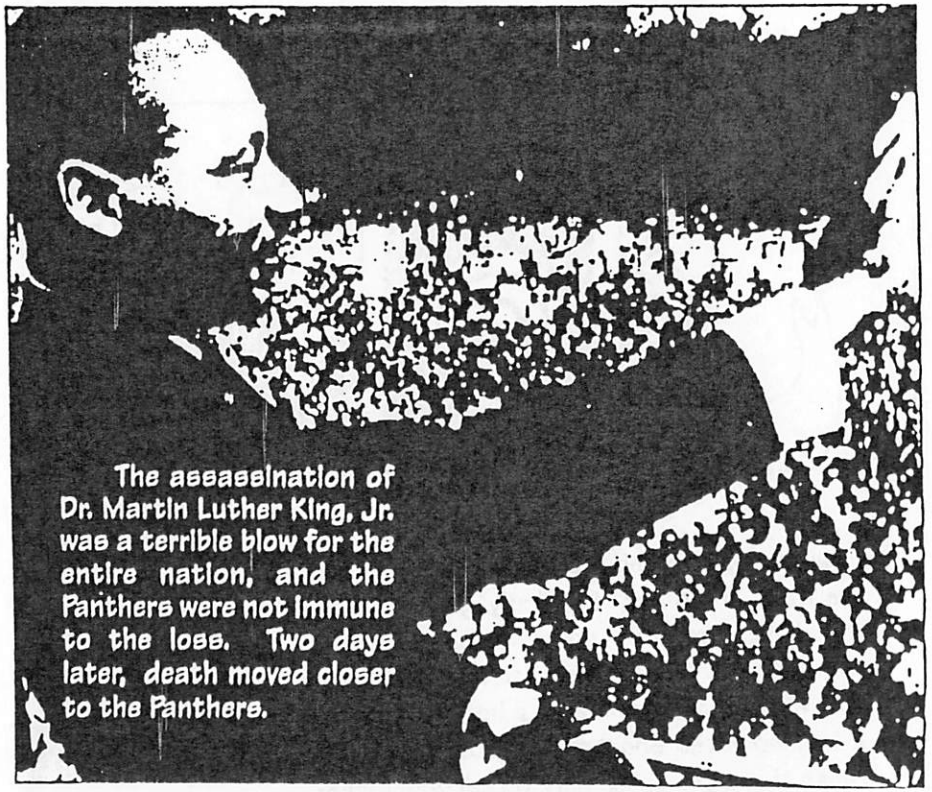
Newton, who was never at a loss for an answer, explained: "The nature of the panther is that he never attacks. But if anyone attacks him or backs him into a corner the panther comes up to wipe the aggressor or that attacker out."

Newton and Seale decided that these Panthers needed guns.

Actually, there was nothing new about using the panther as a symbol, or about Black people using guns. Several months before Newton and Seale started the Panthers, the Lowndes County Freedom Party of Alabama had declared the panther the symbol of their party.

A few years before Newton and Seale conceived their plans, militant activist Robert Williams expressed his outrage against racism in his book *Negroes with Guns:*

"All those who dare to attack are going to learn the hard way that the Afro-American is not a pacifist; that he cannot forever be counted on not to defend himself. Those who attack him brutally and ruthlessly can no longer expect to attack him with impunity."



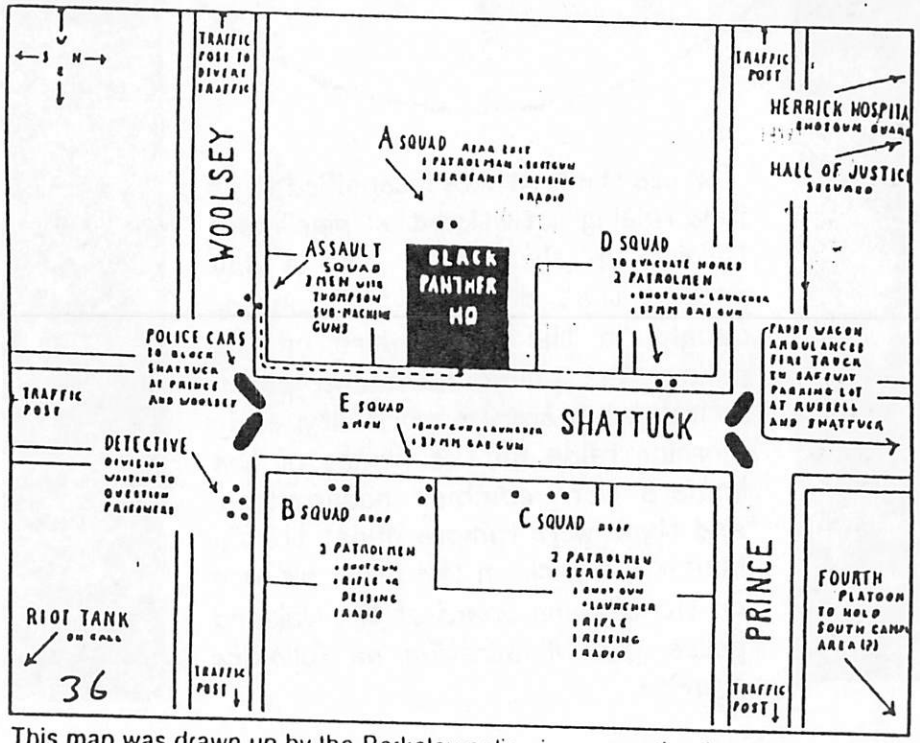
The assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. was a terrible blow for the entire nation, and the Panthers were not immune to the loss. Two days later, death moved closer to the Panthers.

According to one account, Eldridge Cleaver was leading a convoy of cars filled with Panthers bound for David Hilliard's house when he stopped the car to relieve himself on a dark street. "While I was in the middle of this call of nature, a car came around the corner from the direction that we ourselves had come, and I found myself in danger of being embarrassed, I thought, by a passing car," Cleaver remembered. "So I cut off the flow...and awkwardly hurried around to the other side of the car, to the sidewalk, to finish what had already been started.... But this car instead of passing, stopped, and a spotlight from it turned on and beamed my way. I could see it was the cops, two of them. They got out of the car and stood there....One of them shouted, 'Hey, you, walk out into the middle of the street with your hands up, quick!'"

"Hey, you, walk out into the middle of the street with your hands up, quick!"



Despite the constant raids and assaults, the Panthers continued to marshall support for their cause, although by April, 1968, there would be a double dose of tragedy.



This map was drawn up by the Berkeley police in preparation for an August 30 ambush.



Newton and Seale were no fools: They not only carried guns, they studied law books. From the law books they read, Newton and Seale learned that it was permissible to carry an unconcealed, unloaded rifle or a shotgun in California. Because Newton was on probation, he couldn't carry a pistol; so, Seale carried the pistol, and Newton shouldered an unloaded M-1 rifle. When they were accosted by the police, they would recite the Second Amendment of the Constitution about the people's right to bear arms:

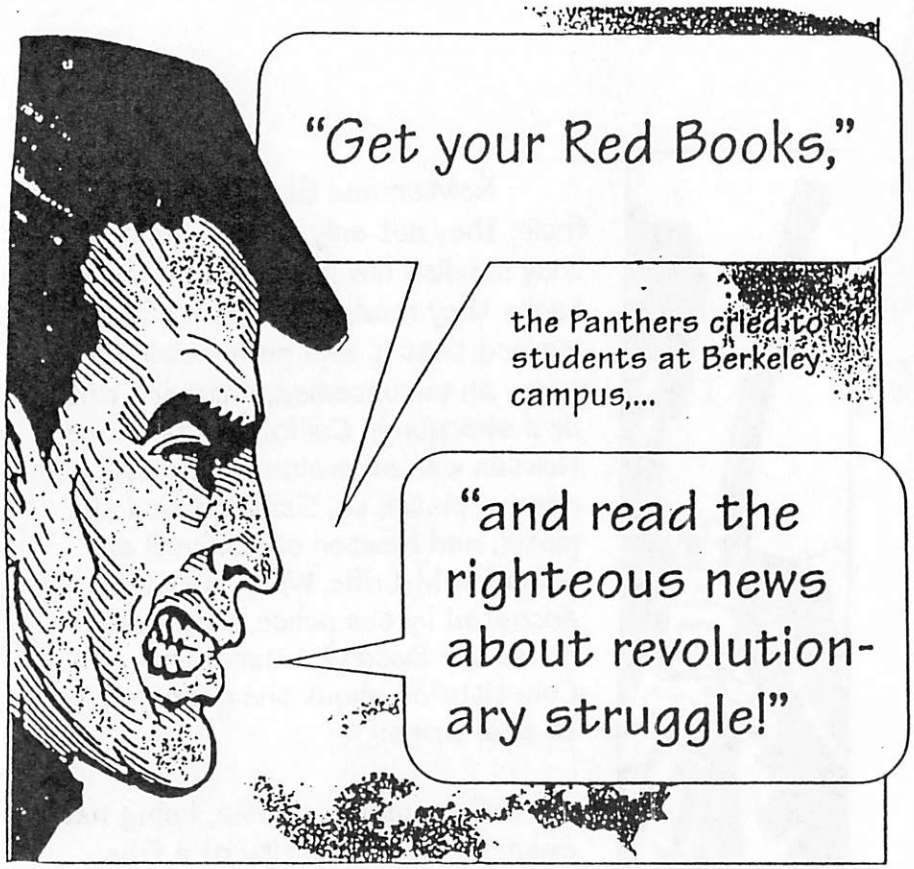
"A well-regulated militia, being necessary to the security of a free state, the right of the people to keep and bear arms shall not be infringed."

"Power flows from the barrel of a gun..."

Residents of the Black community would see the Panthers coming and run for cover. The question on everybody's mind—which nobody had the nerve to ask—was: "Who in the world are those crazy radicals?"

"Power flows from the barrel of a gun."

was one of Mao Tse-Tung famous quotes, and was while selling Mao's Little Red Book earn money to buy the guns that the young Panthers adopted both the spirit and letter of Mao's words and became, in their own eyes, revolutionaries..



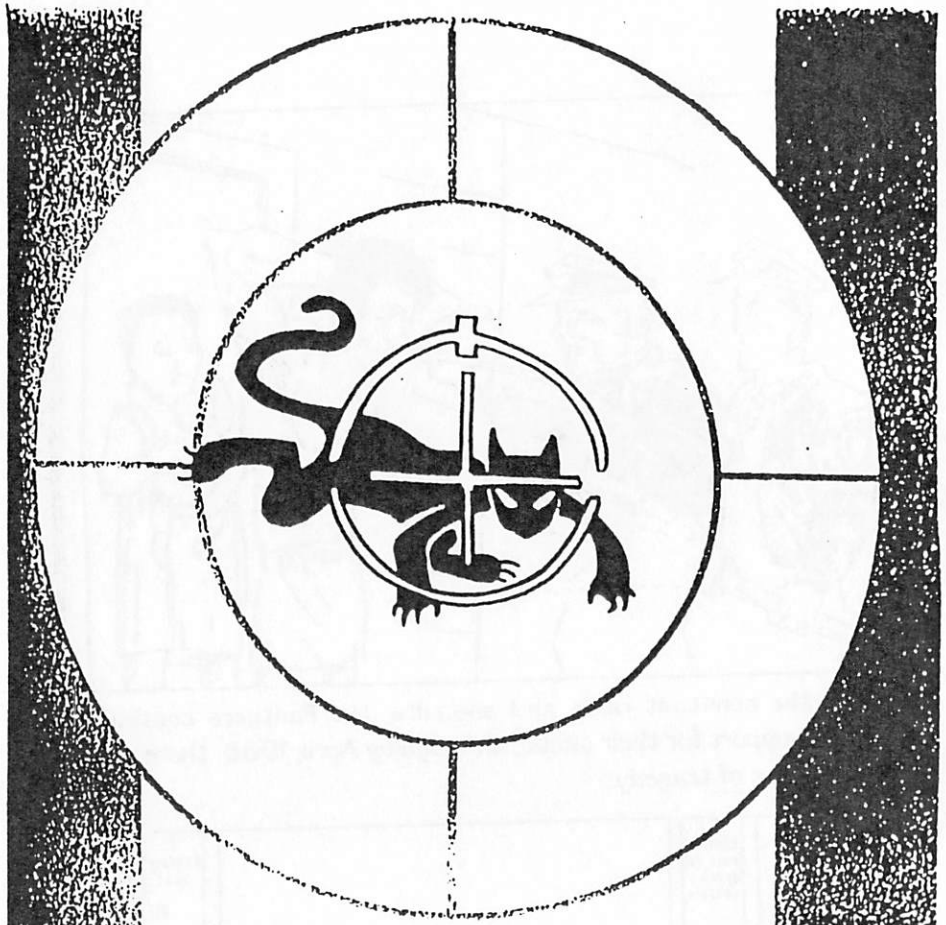
The Panthers admired the militant philosophy of Malcolm X -- especially his advocacy of armed self-defense.

"WE'RE GOING TO BE THE PERSONIFICATION OF MALCOLM'S DREAMS," Newton told his comrades.

Malcolm called for freedom and justice "BY ANY MEANS NECESSARY!"

The Panthers, at rallies and marches, screamed in unison, "POWER TO THE PEOPLE!"

It all came down to that, didn't it?



While the Panthers intensified their fund raising activities, the "pigs" were turning up the heat. Not a day passed that didn't find a Panther caught in the cross-hairs of the police. The police harassed party members at every opportunity; early morning raids on the homes of the leaders were common occurrences; and there were rumors afloat that a massive attack on the Panthers was on the drawing board of the Oakland police (*see illustration on following page*)







Indeed, the money flowed in from all over the place as the Panthers sponsored forums, workshops, and rallies on campuses, at churches and community organizations. Contributions came in from concerned individuals and support groups, including forerunners of the White Panthers, Grey Panthers, and the Young Lords. There was even a delegation calling themselves Honkies for Huey. If Newton was to have the proper representation during the upcoming trial, then buckets of donations were needed, the Panthers preached.







A decisive coalition was formed between the Panthers and the Peace and Freedom Party—a mostly white independent political party—and from this alliance additional money was raised in order to secure the services of attorney Charles Garry. Still another alliance was forged between the Panthers and leaders of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC). More than $10,000 was raised at a rally in Oakland that January featuring Carmichael, James Forman, and H. Rap Brown. The money lasted longer than the alliance.

2 We want full employment for our people.





Inspired by Malcolm's legacy and funded by the sales of Mao's Red Book, the Panthers expanded their activist agenda and stepped up their plan to defend the community.

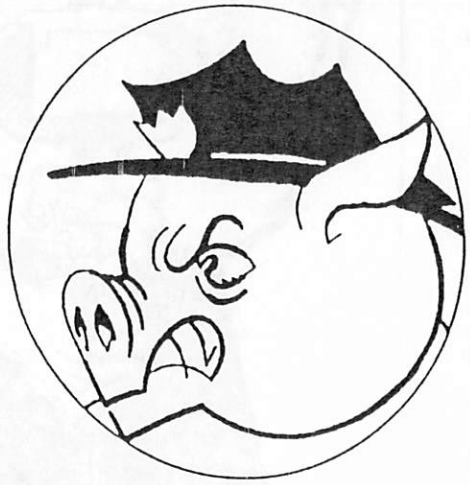
"We'll protect a mother, protect a brother, and protect the community from racist cops..."

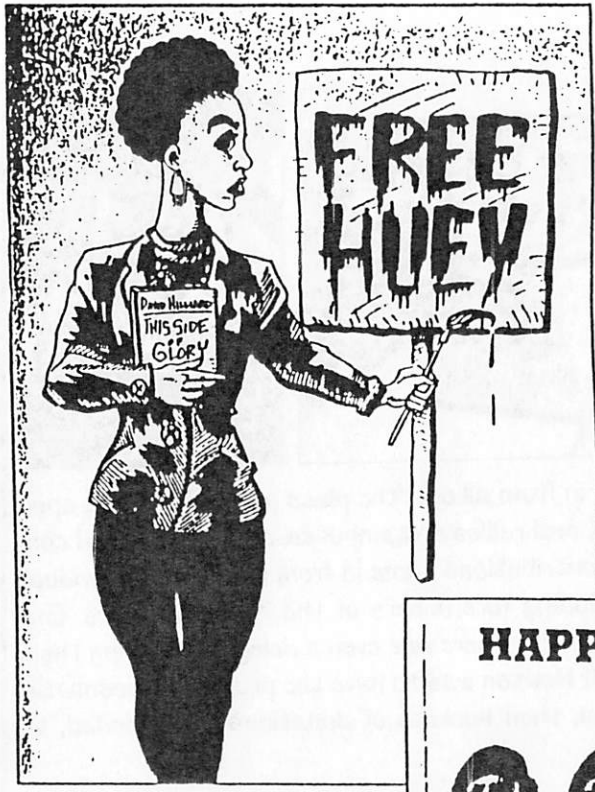
...Seale proclaimed in his autobiography *Seize the Time*.

"And in turn we get brothers in the organization and they will in turn relate to the Red Book. They will relate to political, economic, and social equality in defense of the community."

The activity that really put the Panthers on the map was "policing the police."

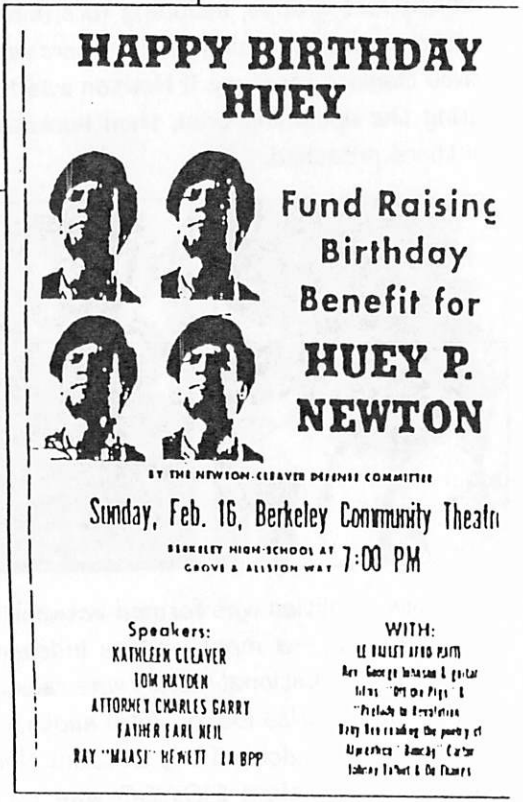
There were only 19 Blacks out of 600 officers on the Oakland police force, so the Panthers, to say the least, had their hands full. They were so balsy that they actually followed the Oakland police around. Whenever they encountered the police harassing or arresting somebody, Newton, Seale, and Li'l Bobby Hutton would jump from their car and approach the officers.

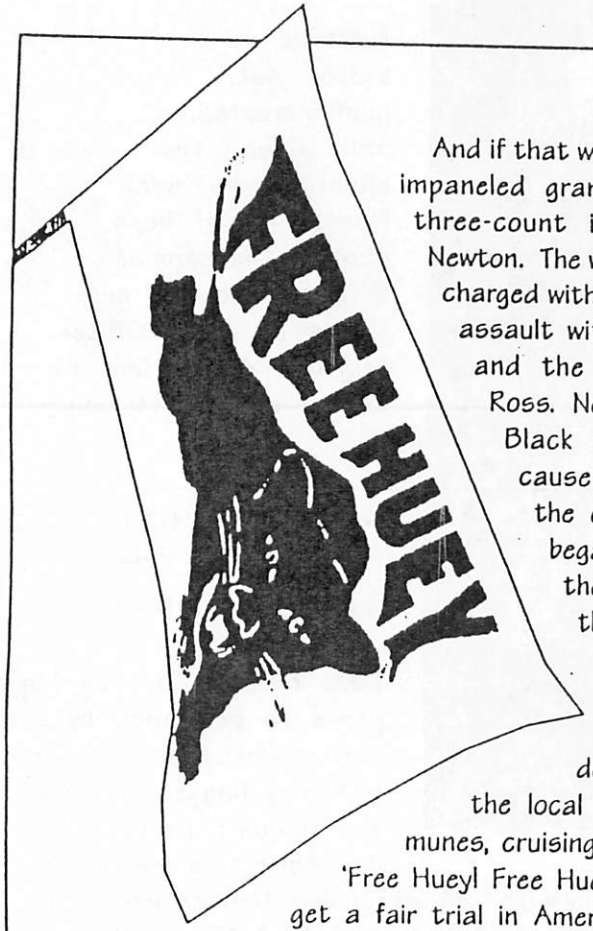




The first rallies and marches were held at the courthouse with brothers and sisters chanting: "Free Huey, Free Huey, Free Huey, or the sky's the limit!" Soon it was a kind of shared mantra that reverberated beyond the radical community, uniting folks around the world who were interested in social justice and political freedom.

"In February we host the grand birthday party [Newton was born February 17, 1942] attended by H. Rap Brown and Stokely Carmichael," Hilliard continued. "Huey and the Black Panther Party are becoming known nationwide. Every day people call headquarters wanting to give money, start chapters. The second life of the Party has begun."





And if that wasn't bad enough, an impaneled grand jury returned a three-count indictment against Newton. The wounded Panther was charged with first-degree murder, assault with a deadly weapon, and the kidnapping of Dell Ross. Now the party and the Black movement had its cause celèbre and slowly the cries of "Free Huey" began to resound across the country. "In less than a week we're in action, borrowing a psychedelically painted double-deck bus from one of the local white political communes, cruising the streets blaring 'Free Hueyl Free Hueyl Can a black man get a fair trial in America—even if he was defending his life against a white policeman?" David Hilliard recalled in his searing autobiography *This Side of Glory*. Hilliard, Newton's lifelong friend and the party's Chief of Staff, said that with this incident Newton became a national figure, thanks largely to large rallies created by the Huey Newton Defense Committee.





Brandishing a camera, a tape recorder, a law book, and with their guns in full view, they would stand off to the side and make sure the police conducted themselves within the law. "So long as we remain the proper distance from you," Newton often told the police, "we can observe what you do. This is not interfering or disorderly conduct."

Their policing the police was quickly the talk of the town. It was also the talk of every law enforcement agency in the country. It was only a matter of time before the Panthers aggressive monitoring provoked a showdown with the nervous, racist police officers... .

AND EVERYBODY ON BOTH SIDES KNEW IT.

The Panthers didn't invent the idea of keeping tabs on cops. A similar plan was started in Los Angeles after the Watts riots in 1965. But the Panthers took the idea a step—a GIANT STEP—further: They used guns! They did it in a perfectly legal way—and their patrols were successful. Too successful: The police stopped harassing the citizens and turned





their attention on the Panthers themselves.

Not long after the Panthers opened their first office in Oakland on January 1, 1967, the police accosted Newton and Seale in a car with other Panthers parked in front of their office. With his cohorts as the audience, Newton put on a daring, if reckless performance. It was a proverbial Mexican standoff, and Newton never blinked.

"What are you doing with that gun?" an officer asked Newton, after following him from his car into Panther headquarters.

"What are you doing with your gun?" Newton snapped back. "Because if you try to shoot at me, or if you try to take this gun, I'm going to shoot back at you, swine."



A scuffle broke out, gunfire erupted, and when the shooting was over, Newton had been shot in the stomach, Officer Heanes had multiple wounds, and Officer Frey was dead. Newton's companion, Gene McKinney, fled.

But a gentleman named Dell Ross told a different story:

Ross claimed that he happened to be driving by the scene when Newton and McKinney flagged him down and at gun point made him drive them to a nearby destination, then they both took off running. Newton made it to David Hilliard's house who in turn took him to Kaiser Hospital. At the hospital Newton was handled roughly by the police, handcuffed, and denied immediate medical attention. A news photographer at the scene snapped a picture of Huey Newton, only this time he wasn't posing for a poster. His naked torso, pierced by a policeman's bullet, turned up on the front page of every newspaper in America.

Frey took the documents, looked them over, passed Newton his license but kept the registration, which he took with him to his car. Obviously Frey had telephoned for help, for within minutes patrolman Herbert Heanes was on the scene. When Frey returned from checking the registration, he asked Newton and his companion, Gene McKinney, to get out of the car.



The officer asked Newton to walk over to his patrol car.

"You have no reason to arrest me," Newton asserted, opening his law book to cite a passage.

"You can take that law book and shove it up your ass,"



Unnerved by Hucy's deliance, the officer muttered something under his breath and then stammered:

"You're just trying to turn the Constitution around."

Earlier in the encounter, Newton had refused to answer the officer's questions, citing the Fifth Amendment and the right of individuals not to incriminate themselves.

"I'm not turning anything around," Huey responded.



Another officer, equally upset by Newton's antics, began badgering the Panther leader. "Are you a Marxist?" the husky officer asked.

"Are you a fascist?" Huey replied.

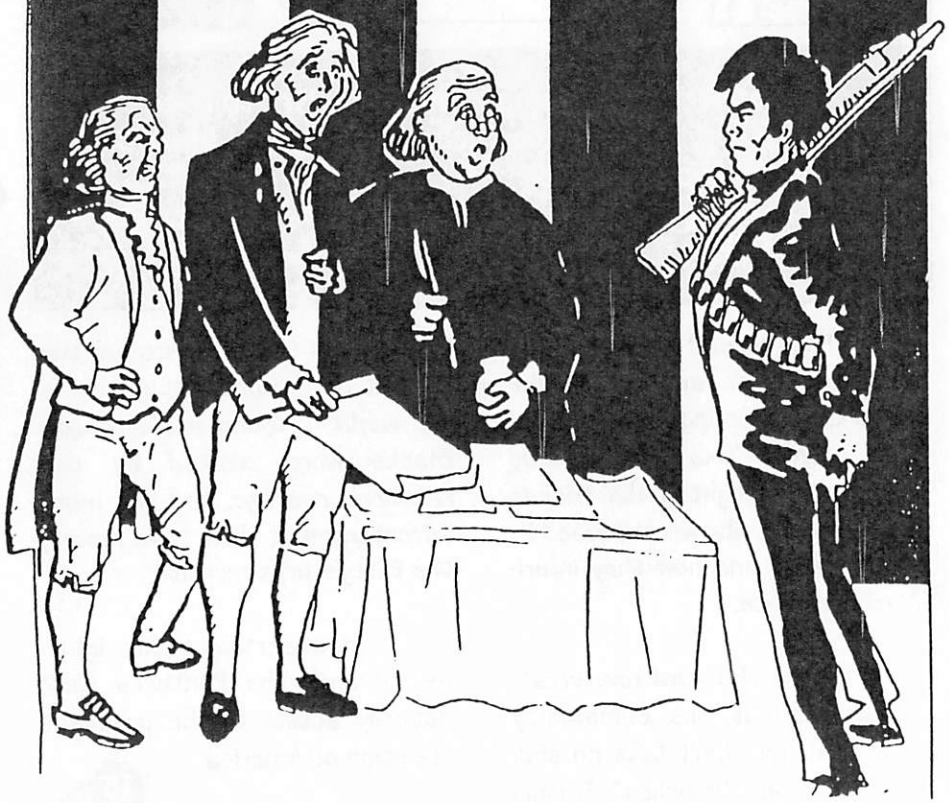
For several minutes the two went back and forth, the remarks becoming louder and more intense. This bit of bravado by Newton delighted his friends and admirers, who were amused by the remarks and how they infuriated the police.

Soon the word reverberated throughout the community. "The Panthers don't take no shit; not even from the police." "Either Newton and the Panthers are the bravest or the craziest people in the world." Young neighborhood Blacks were excited by the Panthers' courage, and the more adventurous of them were among the Party's first recruits.

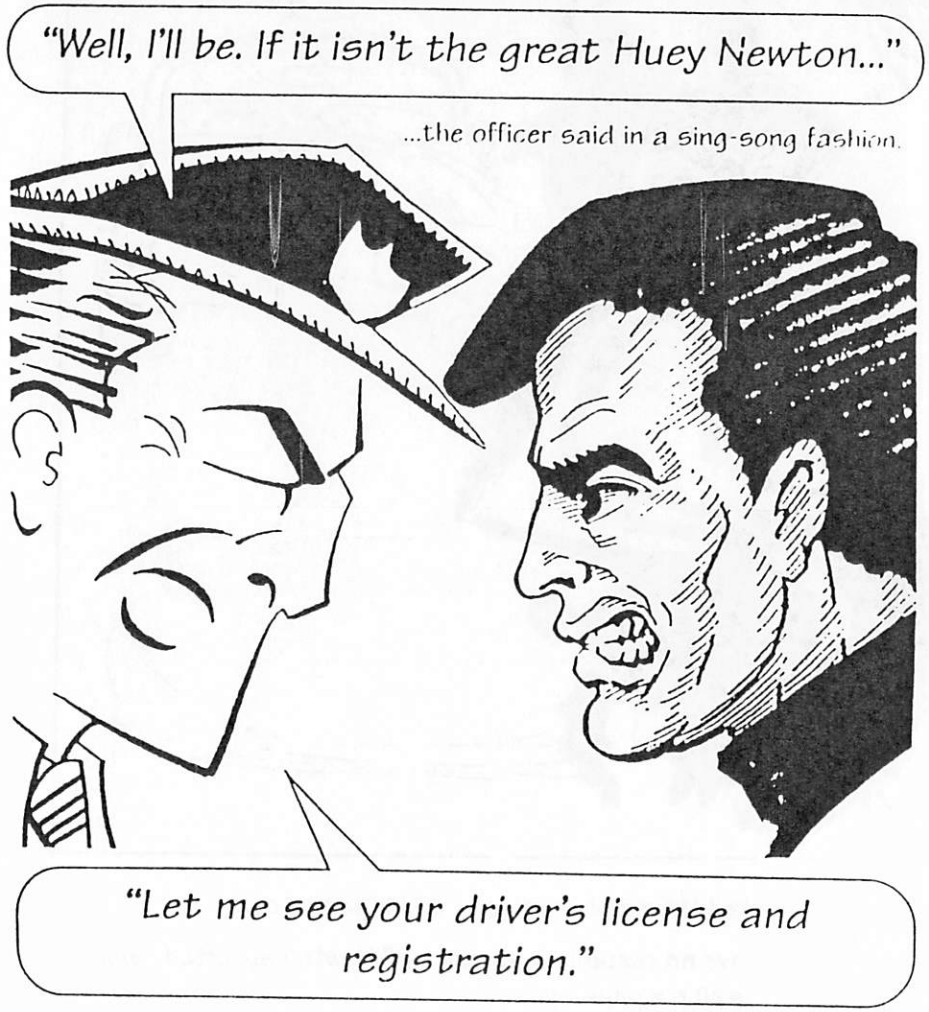
In asserting their rights as citizens the Panthers were actually acting in the proudest tradition of America.

Their acts were consistent with the rugged Individualism and the desire for freedom and dignity that had characterized the behavior of the so-called Founding Fathers of this nation. If there was anything unAmerican about the Panthers' story, it was the repressive and brutal behavior of the Police. From the beginning, the Panthers could see that there was no trick, no deception the police would not use to stifle the rise of the Black Panther Party.

But they had work to do, and it couldn't wait.



Much of what happened on that early morning is a matter of conjecture; what can be said for certain is that Newton was on his way home from a party celebrating the ending of his probation with a friend when Officer John Frey in his patrol car asked Newton to pull over. From the car's license plate, Officer Frey knew the car was registered to a member of the Panther party.



Young people who had no idea who or what the Panthers were all about soon placed Newton posters on their walls alongside Elvis, John Coltrane, Malcolm X, Marilyn Monroe, Muhammad Ali, and Jimi Hendrix. In theory, Huey Newton opposed the "cult of personality" implications of his poster; in reality, it fed his considerable ego. Bottom line: It was a great poster that helped to put the Panthers on the political map.

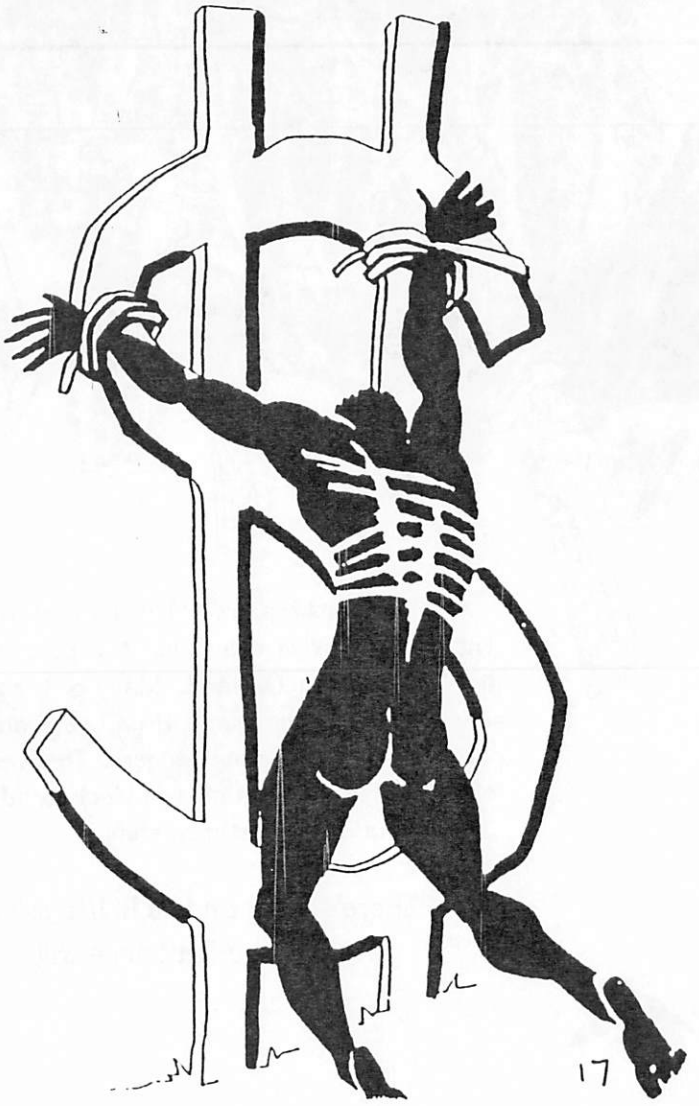


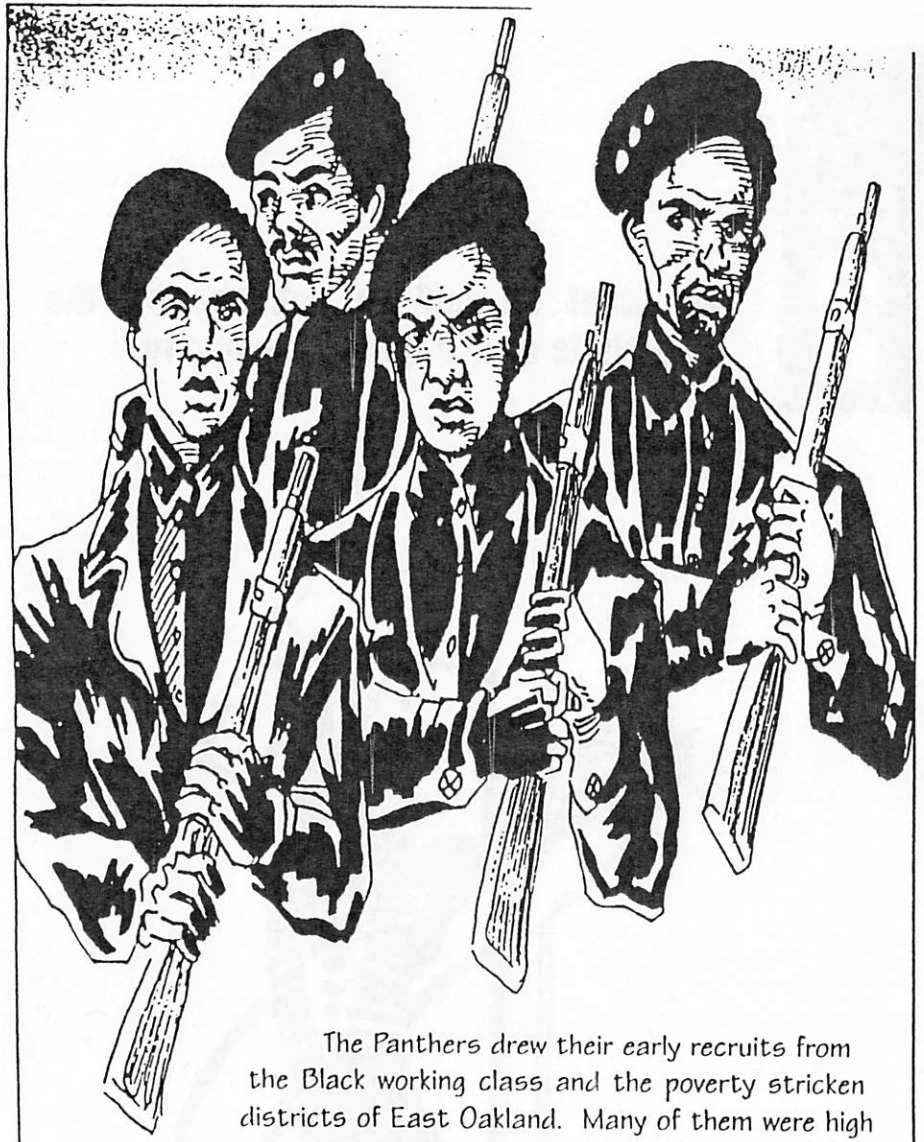
But it was just the beginning. In the succeeding months the Panthers commanded the headlines and no Black face was as immediately recognizable as Newton's. His boyish features, macho gaze, and muscular body seemed straight from central casting. Newton was also, according to close associates, a mental case with a quick temper. And given the right circumstances and audience he was capable of the most bizarre, unruly behavior. In October, 1967, almost a year to the day of the founding of the Black Panther Party,

Newton clashed violently with the law, and within a few hours after the incident not only would his face be well-known in America but...we're getting ahead of ourselves.

3

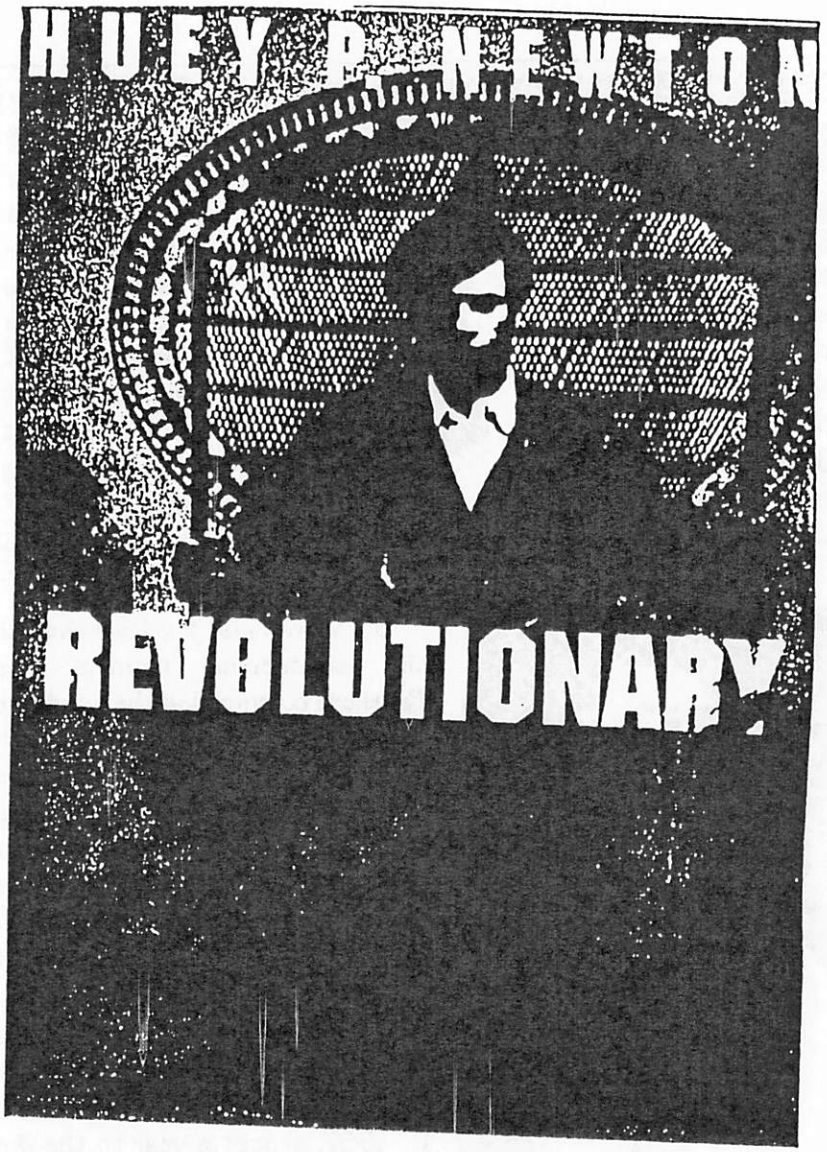
We want an end to robbery by the Capitalists of our Black community.





The Panthers drew their early recruits from the Black working class and the poverty stricken districts of East Oakland. Many of them were high school dropouts, ex-felons, drug users and peddlers, petty hustlers and gang bangers. They were a gaggle of "basic bloods from off the block" ready to throw down, and who sometimes sang:

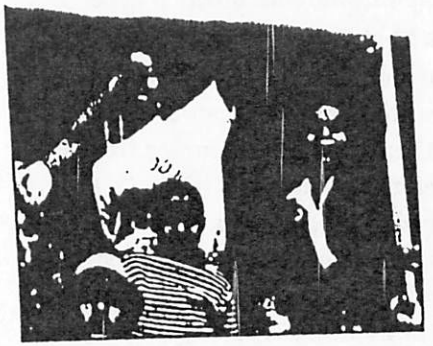
"There's a pig on the hill/If you don't get 'im, the Panthers will."



That was an easy decision. Have the handsome Newton—dressed in his typical Panther garb with his beret at just the right angle—sit in a broad-backed rattan chair, a zebra-skin rug under his feet, bracket him with a couple of African shields, and place a spear in his right hand and a shot gun in his left and, voila! One of the most popular posters of the sixties.

The media all across the nation picked up the story. It was not the words that kept eyes riveted to the reports; it was the image of Black men bearing arms. It was a dazzling show of force; but the Panther's gun display backfired on them. Instead of halting the push for gun-control laws then on the minds of many legislators, the invasion only sped up the introduction of new measures to check the possibility of another Panther embarrassment. Having made their point in a most dramatic fashion thanks largely to the media, the Panthers wisely decided to develop a media network/ propaganda machine of their own. They started a newsletter and gradually expanded it to a bona fide newspaper, loaded with inflammatory rhetoric. Because he possessed considerable writing skills, Cleaver took over as editor of the paper. Then there was the matter of creating a Party icon, a symbol that would help bring in even more members.





ployment rate was almost twice the national average. Complementing this ragtag crew were a number of Panthers who attended college, held down full-time jobs, or were merely impressionable youth eager for any kind of action.

Attraction to the Panthers was not limited, however, to just teenagers; a gaggle of older men and women, Black and white, fell under the spell of the Panther mystique. Eldridge Cleaver recalled his first meeting with the Panthers:





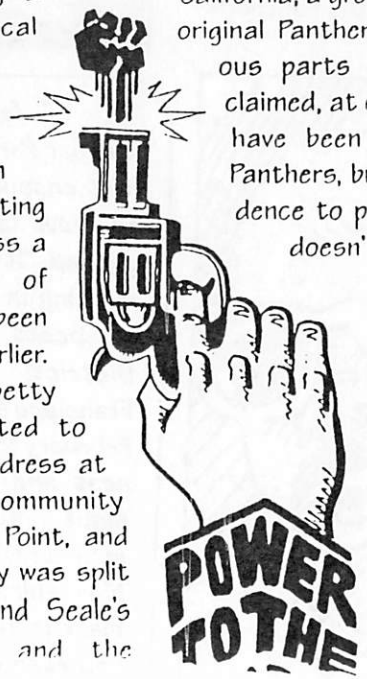
"I fell in love with the B Panther Party immediately upo first encounter with it; it was l ally love at first sight," Cl gushed. "It happened one night meeting in a dingy little store on Scott Street in the Fil District, the heart of Francisco's Black ghetto. I February 1967....I spun around seat and saw the most be sight I had ever seen; four men wearing black berets, blue shirts, black leather jackets black trousers, shiny black shoes and each with a gun!"



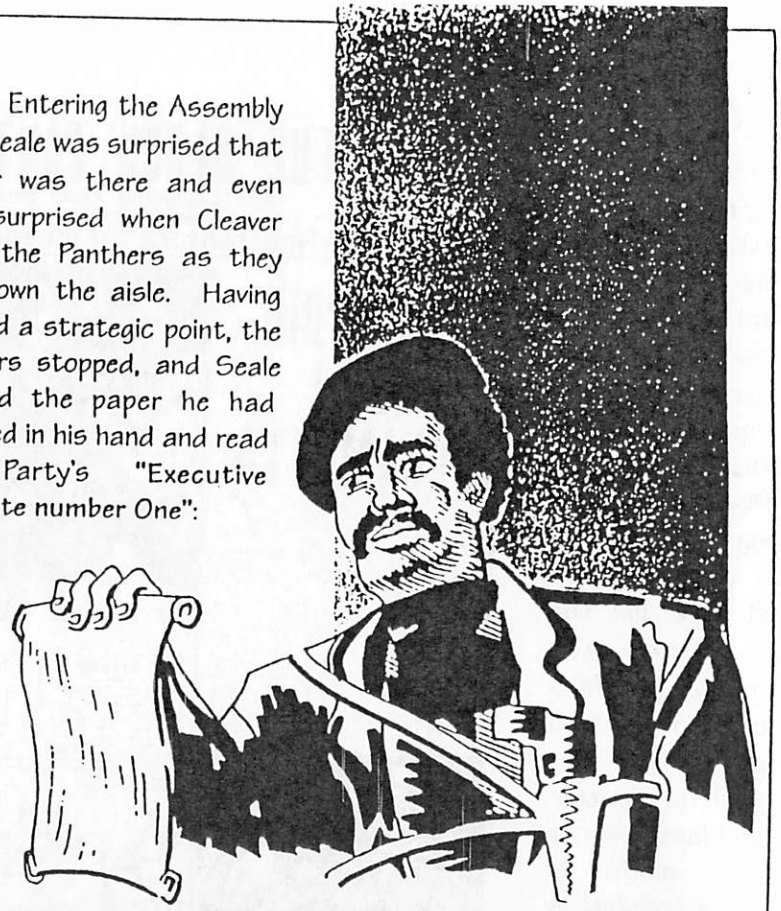
That a hardened felon, an ex-rapist, who had spent a good part of his youth in prison, could be struck with such awe epitomized the seductive power of the Panthers. A recent parolee from Soledad Prison where he had served nine years of a fourteen year sentence for rape, Cleaver, then 33, was working as a senior editor at *Ramparts* magazine and would soon gain national acclaim when his book *Soul on Ice* hit the bestseller list.



Cleaver was among a number of local activists at this meeting when he met the Panthers for the first time in full regalia. The meeting was called to discuss a commemoration of Malcolm X who had been slain two years earlier. Malcolm's widow, Betty Shabazz, was invited to give the keynote address at the Bayview Community Center in Hunter's Point, and the task of security was split between Newton and Seale's party and the California, a group declaring it was the original Panthers. (Groups from various parts of the country have claimed, at one time or another, to have been the *original* original Panthers, but there is no hard evidence to prove that claim. That doesn't mean they're wrong. The time is so right for some things that they seem to happen spontaneously in several places at the same time. But that quintessential Panther moment—confronting the police with law books and rifles, could only happen in states



Entering the Assembly floor, Seale was surprised that Cleaver was there and even more surprised when Cleaver joined the Panthers as they filed down the aisle. Having reached a strategic point, the Panthers stopped, and Seale unrolled the paper he had clutched in his hand and read the Party's "Executive Mandate number One":



"The Black Panther Party for Self-Defense calls upon the American people in general and the Black people in particular to take careful note of the racist California Legislature which is now considering legislation aimed at keeping the Black people disarmed and powerless at the very same time that racist police agencies throughout the country are intensifying the terror, brutality, murder, and repression of Black people."

With a holstered 9mm pistol strapped to his waist, Bobby Seale led the way as the Panthers fanned out and walked toward the Capitol Building. Suddenly, from out of nowhere came a virtual army of reporters. Lights from the TV cameras and flashbulbs illuminated the band of young Panthers as they went from room to room, looking for the State Assembly meeting hall.

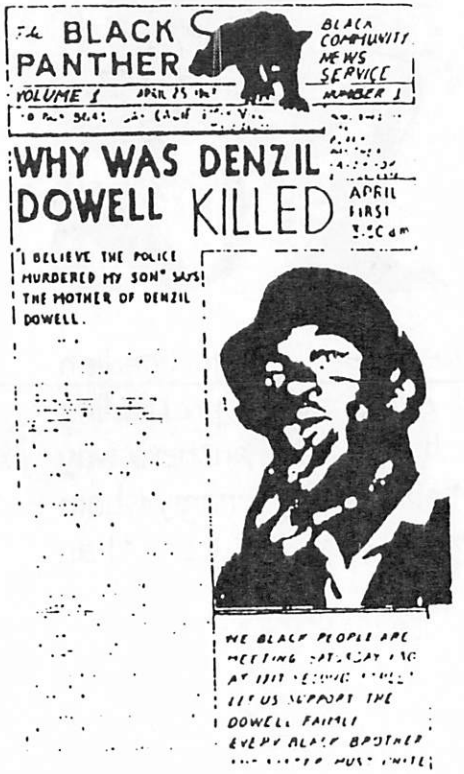




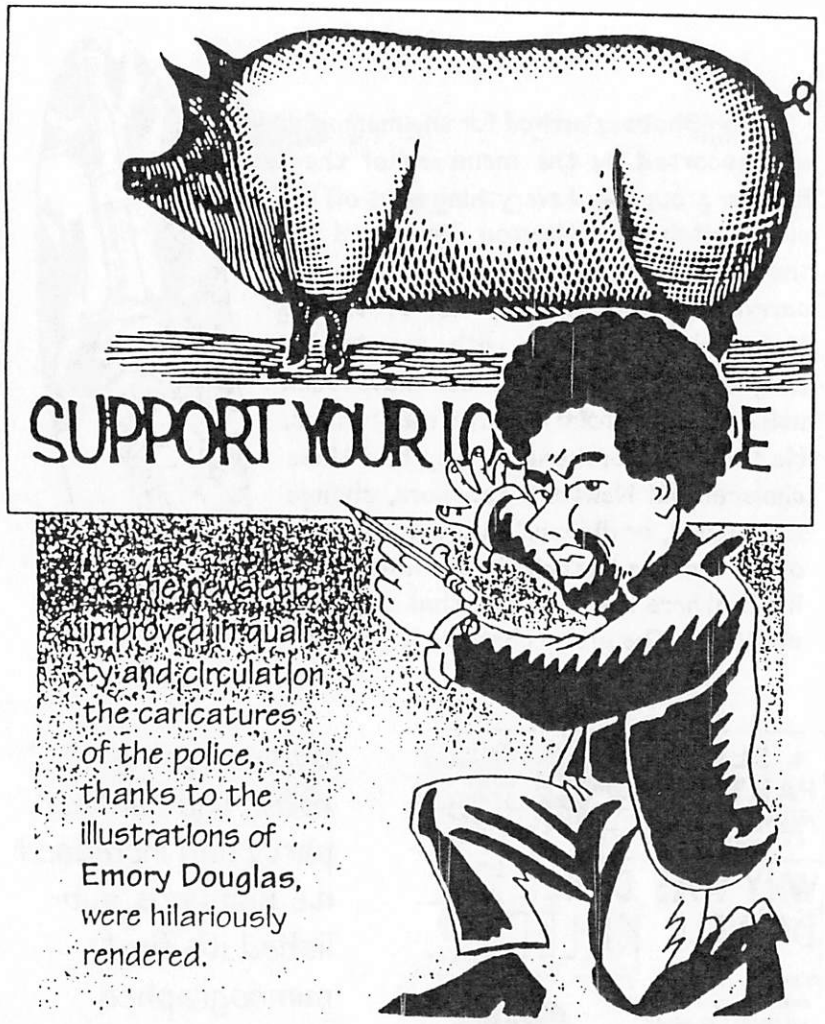
Onlookers were stunned at the procession, gawking and muttering to each other: "Who in the hell are these crazy Negroes?" The Panthers were unaware that one of the shocked, muttering, spectators was Governor Ronald Reagan.

When Shabazz arrived for the memorial she was escorted by the members of the two Panther groups and everything went off without a hitch until Newton discovered that the Panthers from Northern California were carrying unloaded weapons. Protecting Malcolm's widow with unloaded weapons—they may as well have been using water pistols! Newton was furious. He told the Northerners they had three choices: join Newton's Panthers, change their name, or disband. They found none of the options to their liking. Newton and his Panthers made it plain that they were not jiving. The group changed its name.





By the spring of 1967, the Panther party had increased its numbers, published its first mimeographed newsletter, and gained wider recognition for its brazen contempt for the police, who by now were always referred to as the "pigs."



As the newspaper improved in quality and circulation, the caricatures of the police, thanks to the illustrations of **Emory Douglas**, were hilariously rendered.

Each of them possessed a huge, fiendish snout, pointed ears, and a protruding corkscrew tail. It was the Panthers way of turning the tables on an enemy whom they felt viewed them as less than human.

The popularity of the Panthers spread rapidly, but they were still virtually unknown outside of California. One act was necessary to propel them into the national spotlight, and it occurred on May 2, 1967, in Sacramento at the State Capitol Building.

When the caravan of cars came to a halt outside the Capitol Building, thirty Black Panthers—twenty-four men and six women—emerged. All of them were dressed in black and some of them had bandoliers criss-crossing their bodies with rifles and shotguns pointed down to the ground or straight up in the air.

