

Peace and Freedom State Office
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Monday, April 8, 1968

RUSH RUSH RUSH

MEMO TO THE PRESS

At an emergency meeting of the 25-man Peace and Freedom Movement State Steering Committee late last night, Bobby Seale, Chairman of the Black Panther Party, and other representatives of that organization, reported eyewitness accounts of the incident in Oakland the night before.

This report of the events leading up to the killing of Bobby Hutton and the wounding and arrest of Eldridge Cleaver, together with other Panther leaders, continued speculation that the incident was part of an ongoing drive by local police departments to intimidate, harass, and destroy the Black Panther Party and its leadership. It was provoked by the police - - and Bobby Hutton, after surrendering - - was shot down and killed by the police.

THE PEACE AND FREEDOM MOVEMENT STATEWIDE, TOGETHER WITH THE BLACK PANTHER PARTY, HAS CALLED FOR JOINT STATEWIDE MASS ACTION LATER THIS WEEK IN RESPONSE TO THE SITUATION.

DETAILS WILL BE ANNOUNCED TO THE PRESS AT 11:15 A.M. TODAY (MONDAY) ON THE STEPS OF SPROUL HALL BY KATHLEEN CLEAVER, COMMUNICATIONS SECRETARY OF THE BLACK PANTHER PARTY, AND JACK WEINBERG, REPRESENTING THE PEACE AND FREEDOM MOVEMENT STATE STEERING COMMITTEE.

(The press conference will precede the mass marches and memorial demonstrations being held all over the state by Peace and Freedom chapters today to protest the white racism which struck down Martin Luther King. San Francisco's Peace and Freedom Movement will hold a mass memorial in honor of Martin Luther King at noon at the Federal Building in San Francisco, calling for setting free all Black political leaders; Paul Jacobs, P & F Senatorial candidate, and others will speak. Alameda County's Peace and Freedom Movement will begin its march "to end racism in America now" at noon at Bancroft and Telegraph, in Berkeley (see enclosed). Representatives of the Peace and Freedom Movement will also participate in the march in Memphis today, and attend the funeral of Martin Luther King tomorrow in Atlanta.)

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Transcript of BLACK PANTHER PRESS CONFERENCE - April 7, 1968

(A Panther youth was murdered last night by the Oakland police department and Eldridge Cleaver, Minister of Information of the Black Panther Party, was shot and incarcerated. This happened on the eve of a mass march scheduled for Monday, April 8, co-sponsored by the Alameda County Peace and Freedom Movement and the Black Panther Party to "protest against the white racism which struck down Martin Luther King," and to "demonstrate our commitment to changing the racist institutions which bear the ultimate responsibility for Rev. King's death. We urge all other organizations to join us in co-sponsoring this march, as the Black Panther Party has done. Our actions now and in the coming months will help determine how many more Black men, including Huey Newton, must die before racism is finally destroyed in America." Eldridge Cleaver is a member of the State Steering Committee of the Peace and Freedom Movement which is meeting tonight, April 7, in Berkeley.)

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Huey Newton's statement on last night's occurrence: "We think it is a concerted effort on the part of the police department to destroy whatever chance there is for a fair trial."

Participants in the press conference pointed out that pictures and dossiers of Panther leaders have been distributed throughout California by the police along with description of the methods of dealing with them, that the entire pattern of the Oakland Police Department over a period of several months, predating October 28 when Newton was arrested on an alleged charge of murder, has been a concerted effort to harass and to kill and maim the militant leadership of the Black Panther Party.

On April 3, the police broke into a church where the Panthers were holding a meeting. The police came in with arms at the ready for action. Attorney for the Panther Party, Charles Garry, pointed out that even the Nazis did not have the audacity to break into places of worship. When the police broke into the church where the Panthers were meeting, he would not permit the sanctuary to be violated. The minister of the church stated at that time that the only time he had seen weapons around his church was when the police had them. Garry: "This is a classic example of racism on the part of the police establishment and this kind of conduct must stop."

"We intend to take action in the courts and exercise every right and to proceed immediately."

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Q.: What do you intend to do about it?

Bobby Seale: "We have a platform and a program - the 10 Point Panther program. We aim to determine our own destiny in the Black Community, to have our own black police forces who live in the black community, jobs, decent education, and an immediate end to police brutality and murder of black people. And a fair trial tried by our own citizens."

Seale: "We want nonviolence just like Martin Luther King." But we will not watch ourselves be slaughtered and shot. "We must defend ourselves by any means necessary. We will not attack anyone. Panthers never attack anyone but when pushed into a corner, like the brothers were last night, we must defend ourselves."

During the occurrence last night Seale happened to be talking to Reverend Nealle (spelling), minister in whose church Panthers hold their meetings, about Martin Luther King.

Garry asked: "equality under law?" Eldridge Cleaver was on the staff of Ramparts, he has written a best seller, but he was pushed round like an animal. He was taken from emergency hospital, transferred without attorneys knowing it, to San Quentin. This morning he was transferred to Vacaville. Right now he is unable to communicate with his attorneys. The theory under which he was removed was that he needed serious medical attention; this is specious in light of fact San Quentin has good medical facilities, that his wound is just a shot in the leg. "All at once his wound was so serious he was taken out of San Quentin - - and whisked out of the Bay Area."

Seale: Bobby Hutton was shot while his hands were in the air. He was the first to walk out the door. He was gunned down by the racist pig department of Oakland."

Q.: Do you believe there is a plot to wipe out the leadership of the Panther Party?

Seale: Yes

Garry: Yes. Coakley should file a murder charge against the officer who killed

Garry: Yes... Coakley should file a murder charge against the officer who killed Bobby Hutton. The pattern has been consistent in aim and purpose of destroying the militant Black Panther Party which is exercising its rights under the 1st and 14th Amendments, the rights of freedom of speech, assembly, and the right to be safe in one's own home. The police assume any Black man is a Panther who is not docile.

Seale? "That's why there are black rebellions. Racism. When police say they were ambushed, or when they charge burglary, or when an officer says "there is reasonable cause to believe..." this is racist." These arguments are used "to commit murder against black people."

Q: What's going to happen in Oakland tonight?

A.: (Seale?) "If you stop attacking black people nothing is going to happen."

Attorney: Garry mentioned the threats of violence that have been directed towards the Panthers in recent weeks. "We're going to kill you, etc."

Seale: "You speak of nonviolence. What about King's principles being accepted by racist white America?" Seale mentioned the number of lynchings in 20th century American history: "this is real racism. This is what we're defending ourselves against." "Do you know that in the last 4 weeks 6 black people have been murdered by the police? Did we attack them? No, they attacked us. We want our own Black police department which lives in our own community - - because the police are the arm of the power structure."

Who do the police patrol? Not the white people in the hills.

"We're talking about the same principles that murdered King. That's what Huey Newton was talking about."

"King, by an act of a racist, exhausted his means. What's wrong with self defense? There are 100 million guns among white people."

Garry: The irony of Easter week when the vested interests killed Christ. In this same holy week, this same kind of killing is perpetuated under the guise of law and order. Until I got into this case, I thought I understood the problems of black people. During World War II, we talked about fascism, about man's inhumanity to man. I have found that people in the ghetto have been faced with fascism for centuries - right here - wherever black people are under the iron heel of the police.

Garry: The President's Commission Report on Civil Disorders reported that the first grievance of black people is police oppression. This was a unanimous report in which 4 or 5 police chiefs participated.

Other participants in the conference referred to discussions with Eldridge Cleaver in which he had foreseen the possibility of this happening, of Seale and himself being attacked by the police.

(ed., L. Birnbaum) See Peter Franck's tape for full transcription.



IN MEMORY OF DR. MARTIN LUTHER KING



Martin Luther King is dead--the victim of a white racist bullet. The entire nation has assumed a cloak of mourning. The Commander-in-Chief of the United States Army pays official tribute to Martin Luther King and to non-violence. But although officials on all levels of government give public praise to the man and his deeds, they are all too silent in pledging themselves to the concrete actions that are needed to deal with the evils in American society that Dr. King dedicated his life to eliminating. As a response to the racism that took his life, and as a tribute to the man, we make the following demands upon those who now hold power in this country:

EXISTING POLICE FORCES MUST BE WITHDRAWN FROM ALL BLACK COMMUNITIES

It is the police who are the main perpetrators of violence against Black people. They are the official agents of a white racist society which enforces the will of that society upon the Black and other national minority communities. They are not of that community, cannot understand its problems, and do not identify with it and its needs. Their ignorance of the community leads them to deal with it through violence and gives an official stamp of approval to the idea that white racist violence is an appropriate response to the needs and demands of the Black community. Existing police forces should be replaced by a new police force responsible to the Black community and consisting of men who live in that community.

MASSIVE ECONOMIC AID SHOULD BE PROVIDED TO REBUILD THE BLACK COMMUNITIES

The United States spends over 40 billion dollars per year in Vietnam. At least that amount should immediately be redirected to meet the needs of America's oppressed communities. Ghetto housing must be rebuilt and turned over to the occupants. Adequate jobs and services must be provided to all ghetto residents, and these must be turned over to the cooperative control of the ghetto residents. White racism is a reactionary response to the just demands of Black people. Ultimately, white racism will not be eliminated until those demands are adequately met.

CONTROL OF THE INSTITUTIONS OF THE BLACK COMMUNITY MUST BE TURNED OVER TO THAT COMMUNITY

Not only control over jobs and housing, but also control over the schools and courts of the Black community must be turned over to that community. Only the residents of a community have a true understanding of its needs and desires. As long as white society dominates the institutions of the ghetto, racial tensions will continue to exist. No people is free unless it can determine its own destiny.

We believe that those who mourn the death of Dr. Martin Luther King, but do nothing to eliminate the white racism and oppression that has characterized America for the past three hundred years are merely mocking him and the Black community. We will judge men not by their words, but by their deeds, not by their sentiments, but by their programs. America must stop mourning Dr. King, and must begin satisfying the needs and desires of its Black community.