

Interview with **Huey P. Newton**

Date: May 23, 1989

Interviewer: Louis Massiah

Camera Rolls: 3100-3104

Sound Rolls: 345-347

Team: C

Interview gathered as part of *Eyes on the Prize II: America at the Racial Crossroads, 1965-mid 1980s*. Produced by Blackside, Inc. Housed at the Washington University Film and Media Archive, Henry Hampton Collection.

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Note: These transcripts contain material that did not appear in the final program. Only text appearing in *bold italics* was used in the final version of *Eyes on the Prize II*.

[camera roll #3100]

[sound roll #345]

00:00:12:00

Camera Crew Member #1:

Camera's turning.

[slate]

00:00:17:00

Interviewer:

OK. Your, your family moved from Louisiana to California like many folks. They moved from the South to, to the Oakland area. What, what did your family hope when they moved to Oakland, and what did they hope for you?

00:00:29:00

Huey P. Newton:

My family moved from Louisiana to Oakland primarily t—seeking a better life. My father was a farmer in Louisiana and a preacher. And my f—he moved out to the Bay Area in order to work in the shipping yards. It was the, naval supply it was called at the time. And that was

the reason most Blacks moved out, for work, better work, better pay, and a better life hopefully.

00:01:04:00

Interviewer:

You talked about political aspirations that they had for you, and, and the fact that you're named after Huey P. Long. Could you talk about that a little?

00:01:10:00

Huey P. Newton:

Yes. My father was impressed with Huey P. Long even though at the time in the South that Blacks couldn't vote that Huey P. Long was—created the first Black hospital and medical school. And even though Huey P. Long gave the pitch to the, the White racists that they needed a Black medical school and hospital because he didn't want White women seeing Black men nude and so forth. My father thought he was, my father thought Huey P. Long was using tricks in order to improve the, the situation for Blacks at the time.

00:01:54:00

Interviewer:

OK. Are, are there specific events or—events or, or relationships that helped advance your, your political grounding? I mean, things that, that you remember that, that sort of helped you inform your political thought?

00:02:08:00

Huey P. Newton:

Well, my family was, were, they were always interested in politics, especially my father. As, when we moved to Oakland, we were connected to the—as a matter of fact, my father was the assistant pastor to Antioch Baptist Church. Reverend Thomas was the pastor, and this was down on Seventh Street. The church was, became a member of the NAACP. And matter of fact, in the early '50s that King was invited out by a collection of churches, and that was my first time hearing King at the Oakland Auditorium, I believe. But my family was interested in improving the political and economic situation of Blacks.

00:03:05:00

Interviewer:

How, how did Bobby Seale and you use the anti-poverty office as a base of operation for the early work of the Black Panther Party?

00:03:12:00

Huey P. Newton:

Bobby Seale and I used the North Oakland Service Center as a, really as a work, as a, the original work spot to put together our program. They had, and they had all the machinery, mimeographs machines, and typewriters. Also they were, at the time the, the, the poverty program, the North Oakland Service Center was a part of the poverty program. And the service centers collected names of people on welfare, elderly people who needed aid. We used those lists to go around and canvas the community in order to find out the desires of the community. So, we would go from house to house and explain to people our program. We printed up the first program at the North Oakland Service Center.

00:04:13:00

Interviewer:

Why did you choose to focus on the police as, as a major target for the Panther Party early on?

00:04:19:00

Huey P. Newton:

Well, the, *the police* throughout the communit—not, not only the Oakland community but *throughout the Black communities in the country were really the, the, the government. We had more contact with the police than we did the city council. The police were universally disliked.* In Oakland, there was about, in '66, there was about, October '66, when the party was founded, there was about one percent Black on the police department. Shortly before that in, I think in '53, Oakland had its first Black policeman who was, who was a friend of my father's. His name was Kenner. My father broke friendship with Kenner because of his, because of his membership in the Oakland Police. Not because he, he was a policeman but because at the time that, the policy was that Kenner could only arrest Black people. And if, he could detain a White, but he would have to call a White officer. And my father thought this was degrading. It was no change from what was happening in the, in the South.

00:05:44:00

Interviewer:

Could, could you talk about, the patterns of, of police brutality in Oakland as, as you understood it at that time and how people articulated it to you?

00:05:51:00

Huey P. Newton:

Well, the police were, were southerners. Matter of fact in the 60's, they were still recruiting from Georgia because we captured some post—some fliers. And they said that White southerners knew how to handle these Negroes. So, the police were impolite, and they were very fast to kill a Black for minor offenses such as youth—such as Black youth stealing automobiles, they'd shoot them in the back, and so forth. I can't re—recall any particular names, but it was widespread dislike for the police because of their inhumane treatment of Blacks.

00:06:38:00

Interviewer:

OK. What was the intention of putting forward the Ten-Point Program? And you might summarize that if, if you, the Ten-Point Program.

00:06:44:00

Huey P. Newton:

Well, the Ten-Point Program tried to identify the basic needs and aspirations of Black people. We, within the Ten-Point Program, we came up with basically we needed education. We needed decent housing. We wanted fair treatments in the court. We wanted medical care. We wanted the availability for food and clothing for Blacks. And full employment. So, the program was a comprehensive program to really lay down a, a blueprint for community development.

00:07:38:00

Interviewer:

OK. And could you talk about, was there any relationship with the Nation of Islam, and could you talk about your experiences with the Nation of Islam and, and how that affected the Ten-Point Program's shaping?

00:07:48:00

Huey P. Newton:

Well, early on I was about, in the early '60s, about 1960, '61, I had started Oakland City College. At Oakland City College, I was a member—instrumental in, in creating the Afro-American Association. The Afro-American Association was led by Donald Warden. And the

program was a cultural program to, to institute ethnic studies, African studies and Afro-American studies. From the Afro-American, the Afro-American Association, we created from, from, from the Afro-American Association, it stemmed the Soul Student Advisory Council. And that was the action group inside of the school. After we created the, the study classes, I felt that there were a need to do other things to affect the wider community. And I became in contact, I came in contact with the Black Muslims. I was very impressed with Malcolm X. And Malcolm X' program, or the Honorable Elijah Muhammad that Malcolm X followed, program was a T—it was like a Ten-Point Program. Matter of fact that our program was structured after the, patterned after the Black Muslim program. It was minus the religion. And I think that I became disillusioned with the, with the Muslims after Malcolm X was assassinated. I think that I was following not Elijah Muhammad or the Muslims but Malcolm X himself.

00:09:43:00

Interviewer:

OK. You were talking about before about community control within the Black community and also integration into the larger institutions. Could you talk about how that, how you believed in that philosophy and how you saw the Panthers sort of implementing that?

00:09:57:00

Huey P. Newton:

Well, sh—well, a short time after I was impressed by the Muslims and disillusioned after the assassination of Malcolm X, I was studying politics. And I became interested in progressive labor and the Socialist Workers Party. At that time, it was, it was during the period of African liberation. Many of—most of the African countries were liberated during the '60s from colonialism. And that, we felt that there was a need for not a separate nation but control of our dispersed communities. And we wanted control of, of the communities where we were most numerous, and the institutions therein. And at the same time that we felt that we were due because of tax paying. We were due free access to, and equal treatment in public, public facilities. And we thought everyone should be, have that kind of participation in public facilities. This—

[rollout on camera roll]

[wild sound]

Camera Crew Member #1:

Let's cut. We need to change the roll.

[cut]

[camera roll #3101]

Camera Crew Member #1:

And sticks.

[slate]

Camera Crew Member #1:

Give me one second to settle.

Camera Crew Member #2:

Second sticks.

00:11:23:00

Camera Crew Member #1:

OK, it's all yours.

00:11:25:00

Interviewer:

OK. Again, the notion of community control in, in Black communities and also fighting for public, access to public accommodations. How was that part of the Panther philosophy, and how, yeah.

00:11:36:00

Huey P. Newton:

At the time, there were many Black nationalist groups that were influenced by the African liberation movement. And we differed from the Black American national movement—nationalist movement in that we felt that we wanted, it wasn't a, it wasn't a, our goal for segregation or integration really. We wanted control of the institutions in our community where we were most numerous. And at the same time that we thought that we would, we were, we were due public, to access to public institutions on an equal basis. And we thought everyone should participate, be able to equally participate in public institutions. I think that as I remember back, I was influenced by the situation and the conditions in China in the Peoples' Republic of China where there was, there were many, many minority groups. I think the Huns are the majority group. All of the, in the areas of the minority ethnic groups the Chinese, this, this ethnic minority controlled its community, they get that full access to the public facilities, so I thought that if it could work there, it could work here.

00:13:05:00

Interviewer:

That, that's good. Could you talk about the, you, you've done it a little bit. But talk a little bit about the, the original vision of the Black Panther Party. Did you see it as, as a local organization or as a revolutionary organization? What, in, in the beginning when, when you and Bobby Seale were first talking?

Huey P. Newton:

No, I thought that it would be a national organization. I thought that with our, when Blacks across the country—

Interviewer:

If you could just, just start that again and rephrase it, "the Black Panther Party." I'm sorry.

00:13:31:00

Huey P. Newton:

All right. The Black Panther P—the Black Panther Party felt that we would, we would quickly become a national organization when Blacks across the country saw what we were doing in Oakland by driving out the, we, what we call the oppressive army of police and controlling our community, the institutions in the community. We felt that the government's next move would be to bring in the National Guard to recapture these institutions, and this would connect us to the international movement of, of the worker's movement, the International Proletar—Pro—Proletarian movement such as was happening in, in the, in Cuba. And we were very impressed by the Cuban revolution. And at the, at the time of the creation of the, the Black Panther Party, I was introduced to Marxism, and I think I had read a book called the Imperial, Materialism and Imperial, Empirical Criticism, [sic] and, by I.V. Lenin. And at that time that it was pointed out that there are many contradictory social forces. And if you knew what to increase or decrease at a particular time that you could cause a transformation. And so we were trying to increase the conflict that was already happening, and that was between the White racism, the police forces in the various communities, in the Black communities in the country. And we felt that we would take it to, take the conflict to so high a level that some change had to come.

00:15:26:00

Interviewer:

OK. Something very specific. The, the action to gain a traffic light in front of Santa, Santa Fe Grammar School, it was fairly dramatic. Could, could you just describe what happened?

How, how that changed and how, how you went about trying to do that? And also the, the use of theater. I mean, and, and drama as a way, and symbolic gestures in terms of the political transformation, political acts.

00:15:48:00

Huey P. Newton:

Yes, I went to Santa Fe Elementary School in north, in north Oakland. And while I was there, the, many children was, were hit by cars and so forth. There was no traffic light in front of the school. It was a very busy street, Market Street crossing the school. So, one of the first, the first action of the Black Panther Party was to go down with our arms and be traffic police. We, at three o'clock when the school was let out, we would stop the traffic and allow the children to pass. Of course this would bring a, an army of police in the area. They would take over the traffic jam that would occur. So, and also they would attempt to arrest us for bearing arms. But they would become aware, which they were not, that the law provided for us to bear arms at that time. So, we went to the city council and asked them to put up a traffic, the planning commission of the city council, the Oakland City Council. So, the, the, the Oakland City Council said that they had already passed some policy to put up a traffic light, but it would be about five years from '66, October '66. And we weren't satisfied with that, so we went to the community and gathered a few hundred or maybe even a thousand or so signatures. And, and, and took those to the city council. We also would still police, when the police were not there, we would, we would police the area. And every time we would try, the police would take over. So, the, the purpose was served anyway. The traffic light quickly went up in about three or four months after that event.

00:17:56:00

Interviewer:

Great. What were your feelings when you went on, on, on the police patrols? And you might describe them a little bit. But how did you feel when, when you did that?

00:18:03:00

Huey P. Newton:

Well, every time we would go out on the police alert patrols or surveillance patrols that, I would feel that we might not come back. I felt that the police might shoot us because they were very disturbed to say the least about our, the presence of Blacks with guns. And some of the works of, of, [pause] of Fidel Castro when he was in the Sierra Maestra, or matter of fact, before he left Mexico that he asked that everyone give their name of their first of kin or someone to be notified in case of their death. And when people had to do that in his guerilla organization, everything became very serious. And so we would, before we would go, before we went on our first patrol, and anyone who would join us after, we would always ask who

to, who should be notified in case of their death. And this would make it very serious to the person.

00:19:19:00

Interviewer:

Yeah, the Panthers often quoted the law. Could you talk about the importance of, of law, US law to the Panthers? Was it tactical, or was there a philosophical agreement? And, and what, what were some of the books that you read, and what were some of the, the, the texts that, that you read and, and quoted from?

00:19:35:00

Huey P. Newton:

Well, while I was at Oakland City College, I took a law enforcement course, and it was *Criminal Evidence* by Alarcon and Fricke. And *Criminal Law*. And this was the, the textbooks used by the local law enforcement agencies. And that in *Criminal Evidence*, there was a reasonable—there was a section inside of the book on reasonable cause to search and reasonable cause to stop. And ***we would follow the police around. And when the police would arrest or, or detain someone, we would read their rights to them.*** We would stand at a, a distance where the police couldn't say that we're interfering with their arrest or their detention of the individual, and make sure that there was no brutality. Of course this, this turned the wrath of the police on, towards the party. And if they arrested anyone, we would in some cases, we would go down to bail them out, thereby getting a new recruit in our organization.

00:20:51:00

Interviewer:

OK. Denzil, Denzil Dowell was shot down in North Richmond in, in April of 1967. Supposedly under some sort of fugitive or intent to commit a crime law, or act, or whatever. How was this, how was this, this death the backdrop to the May '67, I'm sorry, visit to the Sacramento State House?

00:21:11:00

Huey P. Newton:

There, there was a law, a California law, and I think it still exists if, if there's reasonable cause to believe that a felony is being committed and if the, if the defendant flees, it's the right of the police to sh—to detain him in any, to capture him in any, with any means necessary. And that's including shooting the person. Denzil Dowell was accused of, of tampering with a lock in the back of a store, and he was shot in the back with a shotgun in

Richmond. And there were some question of whether he was trying to, whether he was walking through the alley or whether he was actually trying to break into the store. We protested his murder, and we went to the DA's office and the sheriff department. And the sheriff told us if we didn't like the law of detaining or, or—

[rollout on camera roll]

[wild sound]

Huey P. Newton:

—capturing a felon, or suspected f—

00:22:25:00

Camera Crew Member #1:

All right, we just ran out of film. We're gonna have to change it.

[cut]

[camera roll #3102]

[sound roll #346]

[slate]

Camera Crew Member #1:

Sarah, you're OK on camera noise. Is that right?

Camera Crew Member #2:

No, I'm fine.

00:22:37:00

Camera Crew Member #1:

OK.

00:22:37:00

Interviewer:

OK. Again, the, the death of Denzil Dowell in North Richmond became a motivating reason to go to Sacramento. Could you just talk, talk about that and, and talk us through that?

00:22:47:00

Huey P. Newton:

Yeah. Denzil Dowell was killed there in Richmond by the police and, for allegedly tampering with the lock in the back of a store. And that, we talked to the district attorney about his being shot in the back, and we talked to the sheriff. And they both claimed that it was a justifiable shooting because if anyone is suspected of a felony, and he tries to flee, then he could be detained or captured, apprehended any way, by any means necessary including murdering the person. And if we, the sheriff told us if we wanted those laws changed, we could go to Sacramento to change the law. And that was, that's, we said that we would go to Sacramento and talk to the legislature.

00:23:52:00

Interviewer:

OK. Why were the draft riots in October of '67, why were they significant in terms of a changing approach of, of the White Left? And what, what are some of your personal memories of, of, of, of the draft, the draft riots?

00:24:08:00

Huey P. Newton:

I went to a, to the Oakland Induction Center where there was a march going on, and, against the recruiting of, of soldiers for Vietnam. And the police moved in and, and started to beat the demonstrators. And I heard some of the, the White progressives say that, We need guns. And of course we had concluded that before, we weren't armed at this particular meeting. Matter of fact, I think it was only Bobby and I who went down. This was shortly after the party was created. And matter of fact, after that event that we had a closer relationship with the White progressives in the area. At that time, we called them White radicals.

00:25:11:00

Interviewer:

OK. What happened that, that night in October of 1967, the night you were, you were shot? Officer Frey was killed, and you were arrested. Could you just talk us through that?

00:25:24:00

Huey P. Newton:

We, I had been to a party meeting, and we, after the meeting broke up, I went down on Seventh Street, which is, was an all-night spot for food. And as I drove down, that I noticed the police following me, and they finally, the, the police stopped me on Seventh and I think, Seventh and Willow. And the police came up t—came around to my car, and there was a backup. So, there were two police cars. And so the police, see, I don't know whether he, he followed me because he had discovered who I was. But he asked my name. I gave him my name, and he told me to get out of the car. I asked him, I asked the police was there any reasonable cause to stop me, and he just said, Get out of the, he just repeated, Get out of the car. As I got out of my car, that, I took my book with me. There was a passenger who also was a party member riding in the car also. And as I started to walk, the police then told me to walk back to his car. And as I walked back to the car, I turned around and started to read the reasonable cause to stop law from my law book, Alarcon and Fricke. And the police then told me that, well, he had, he had every right to stop me, and to go to the car. And I continued to read, and he pulled his revolver and shot me. I was wounded in the stomach, and there was a lot of gunfire. I was...when I was shot, I became unconscious. There was many people on the street at the time. The police officer, one police officer was killed. He was, it was, it was finally concluded that, by my attorneys anyway that he was killed by a shot from his back by the second police officer. The second police officer's also shot. He was shot about five times, and the first police officer about three times. At the time that I was not armed. The police officer, they, they...the pathologist discovered that the police was shot by his own weapon.

00:28:15:00

Interviewer:

How, how did you get to the, the hospital?

00:28:17:00

Huey P. Newton:

The...according to the police reports, I commandeered a car and kidnapped the, the driver in order for him to take me to the hospital. I don't remember doing this. There was one Odell Lee who, no, Ross. There was, his name was Ross, I'm sorry. Who drove me to the hospital. It was discovered, it was discovered in his latter testimony, he gave a number of conflicting testimonies, that I did get into his car, and he drove me to the hospital. But before I, before I got, before I arrived at the hospital, I became unconscious.

00:29:03:00

Interviewer:

And then what happened?

00:29:05:00

Huey P. Newton:

My next recollection was the, or my conscious [pause] was that the police were beating me on, on the gurney that I was, that the doctors were preparing me for surgery on. Matter of fact, I became, the, one of my hands was, the nerves were gone in, in my left hand, and the police were spitting on me and so forth. There was a picture taken by some of the reporters who barged into the emergency room, and the police beat the reporters also. But the one reporter got away with one picture that showed that I was shackled on the gurney, and while the police had to beat me because I was struggling with them.

00:29:57:00

Interviewer:

OK. I'm gonna jump ahead a little bit. How, well, how did your arrest after, how did your arrest affect the party? I mean, now, their, their, their leader is in prison. And how were you able to communicate while you were in, while you were in jail?

00:30:16:00

Huey P. Newton:

Well, I c—I, when I was arrested, the, I was taken to, to Kai-Kaiser Hospital, and I was transferred from Kaiser Hospital to Highland Hospital. And as soon as they, this was October, it was near Christmas time. Oh, I became conscious with a, a local disk jockey dedicating a song to me. And the, Beverly Ax—well, first, it was Beverly Axelrod came to the, the attorney, was at that time was Eldridge Cleaver's girlfriend, came to the hospital and discussed with me a, a support group and a fundraising group in order to defend me. I communicated th—with the party through the attorneys. Before I went to, before I was held for murder in the first degree, I was shipped to, not to the county jail but to San Quentin Prison. And I was put on death row there. And at the time, they said, This is necessary, because at the time the, the county hospital did not have a, a, a detention center. So, they, as they put me on death row, they, the, a group of police were on either side – three in the front, three in, in the back. And I was on the gurney. And they would, they were chanting, Dead man, dead man. Later I found out that this was their usual procedure of any condemned man who was comin' off of death row to see his attorney and so forth. Of course I wasn't condemned yet.

00:32:26:00

Interviewer:

Sorry. But again, in terms of the leadership, how, how, you, you talked about the tapes.

00:32:30:00

Huey P. Newton:

Oh, yeah. I, I was, I would communicate through—by making tapes. And the attorneys would send the tapes to the party, to the Black Panther Party, and the Black Panther Party would then send tapes back to me.

00:32:46:00

Interviewer:

OK. I'm interested in, in the language, particularly the word "pig." Would, would you talk about, talk about that use of language of the Panthers, and where, where it came from. Particularly the term "pig." And what, what was the intention? What was the political intention of, of, of addressing, calling the police pigs?

00:33:05:00

Huey P. Newton:

The Black Panther Party felt that we needed to, we need im—we needed imagery to change the consciousness of the people. And the, the pol—the police were disliked and so forth. So, by the community. So, we, I, I don't know who, it, it might have been Beverly Axelrod or Eldridge. I don't think it was Bobby, suggested that—

[rollout on camera roll]

[wild sound]

Huey P. Newton:

—that we—

00:33:41:00

Camera Crew Member #1:

I think we just ran out.

Camera Crew Member #3:

Change—

[cut]

[camera roll #3103]

00:33:45:00

Camera Crew Member #1:

Turning. Mark.

[slate]

00:33:49:00

Interviewer:

OK. Could, could you talk about the political use of language by the Black Panther Party?

00:33:56:00

Huey P. Newton:

We started to use the symbol of a pig to identify the police. I don't know who first presented the, that symbol. But ***I knew that images had to be changed.*** I, most of my young life I was a student, and, and ***I knew sociologically that words, the power of the word, words stigmatize people, and we felt that the police needed a label. A label other than that fear image that they carried in the community. So, we used the pig as a rather low-lived animal in order to identify the police, and it worked.*** We, the community picked it up, and it sort of put the police in another category. A category that was not respected, and a category that the community could deal with. And the police were very offended by it, so it heightened the contradiction between the, the community and the police.

00:35:13:00

Interviewer:

OK, cut. Are you keeping that [unintelligible]?

Camera Crew Member #1:

[unintelligible] doesn't want to.

[cut]

00:35:17:00

Camera Crew Member #2:

Yeah.

[slate]

00:35:21:00

Interviewer:

OK. And let's continue with this, talk about language and, and the decision not to use certain words.

00:35:27:00

Huey P. Newton:

During the, the, the Free Speech Movement led by Mario Savio, it later grew into, it was corrupted into a dirty word movement. Matter of fact in my autobiography, *Revolutionary Suicide*, I made a great mistake of, of criticizing Savio for this, but really he had nothing to do with it. Eldridge Cleaver was impressed with the dirty word movement. And this influenced Bobby Seale. I was always against the use of, of dirty words because it didn't recruit anyone while it alienated other people. Many of the churches across the country allowed us to use their facilities for the breakfast for children program. Matter of fact at the time, we were feeding about 75,000 children a day. And they eventually put us out of, they wouldn't let us use their facilities because of, of the profanity. I think, that led into the contradiction that, and the sep—and the, the division of the party, matter of fact. The, because I was against the use of the dirty words. Also, this was about '69. I was also against, I, I was for getting rid of all the arms and just concentrate upon building local political institutions, and, and participating in s—candidates for city council and so forth. David Hilliard, Bobby Seale, and Eldridge Cleaver were for the profanity and the, they were, well, I don't know about Bobby Seale. But I felt that David Hilliard was leaning towards Eldridge Cleaver. Of course the FBI, and the COINTELPRO were aware of the brewing contradiction. And they took advantage of this by writing letters of, threatening letters to either party.

00:38:02:00

Interviewer:

OK. How, how did the media become part of the Panther strategy? I mean, how, how did it, how did it help the Panthers in terms of growth, but also how did it hurt the Panther party in terms of its relationship with the, the Black community or the community?

00:38:16:00

Huey P. Newton:

The media, first of all the media initially publicizes where that—and it causes immediate growth. Like, for an ex—for an example, they, they covered Sacramento. They covered us

escorting Malcom X's widow from the airport. While they, they reported the sensational parts of our movement, they neglected the, the community programs that were, that were really the basis of our whole organization. They, they, they neglected reporting the development of the, of our political, polit—our ability to politicize the community. Also *the party grew much too rapidly because many of the young people were en—very enthusiastic about the guns and about the berets. But they knew little about the community programs that, that were really our reason for existing.*

00:39:32:00

Interviewer:

OK. What possibilities did you see in the merger with the SNCC leadership, particularly merging with Carmichael, bringing Carmichael in? And, and how did you feel about Carmichael's strong nationalist stance, particularly at that February '68 birthday rally? Free Huey birthday rally.

00:39:53:00

Huey P. Newton:

Well, first I had a lot of respect for Rap Brown and Stokely Carmichael. SNCC carried the national and international support. And I felt that Stokely Carmichael could, and the SNCC organization could better lead the Black Panther Party than even the, the [pause] executives in the party. Also I thought it would be a good example set of Black unity and not attempting to, to compete for the center stage. At the, at the time of the birthday party, SNCC was in a great transition period. And we felt that we could sway Carmichael's political stance with our popularity, our popularity throughout the community. So, we weren't too afraid of his, his posture on separation. We thought that we could, the community would ameliorate this particular kind of rhetoric that he was giving.

00:41:24:00

Interviewer:

And, and what happened?

00:41:26:00

Huey P. Newton:

Well, SNCC never really, they made a gesture to come up to merge with us, but they were very paranoid. They thought that we had a trick up our sleeve. They thought that no organization would give up its leadership to them, and they would only come if we would make that compromise. But at the time that I was willing to do that, to make the compromise.

00:41:47:00

Interviewer:

OK.

Camera Crew Member #1:

I need to change my battery.

Interviewer:

Let's stop. Cut.

[cut]

Camera Crew Member #2:

—potential jealousy [unintelligible] yeah.

[slate]

00:42:00:00

Camera Crew Member #1:

OK. OK, it's all yours.

00:42:03:00

Interviewer:

All right. Why did the Panthers take the constant stand, the, the conscious stands after the, the, the death of Martin Luther King to discourage rebellion in the Oakland community? If you could talk about that a little bit.

00:42:16:00

Huey P. Newton:

After Martin Luther King, Dr. Martin Luther King was assassinated, the police across the country were prepared and expecting a uprising in the community. And we felt that to protect the community from that kind, from the kind of brutality that, that we anticipated, we would ask the community not to, not to have an open rebellion. At the time I was in the county jail awaiting trial for murder of an Oakland police officer and assault, and, and attempted murder on an another. And that I communicated with the party that we should not have any rebelling

and enc—encourage our chapters across the country to try to, to, [pause] to contain the community from open resistance.

00:43:23:00

Interviewer:

OK. And what was the impact of King's death on, on the growth of the party?

00:43:27:00

Huey P. Newton:

People were very disillusioned with the possibilities of a peaceful, a peaceful transformation to civil rights and equality. And universally, they were disillusioned then with the civil rights movement. So, by the thousands, they were joining up with our organizations and organizations very much like ours. Like the Republic of New Africa, and Revolutionary Action Movement, and many other Black organizations.

00:44:11:00

Interviewer:

OK. Who was Bobby Hutton, and, and why did his death affect the party so deeply?

Camera Crew Member #1:

We better—

Interviewer:

We're gonna change—

Camera Crew Member #1:

Yeah, we better change this—

[cut]

[camera roll #3104]

Camera Crew Member #1:

Any time.

00:44:25:00

Camera Crew Member #2:

OK.

[slate]

00:44:28:00

Interviewer:

OK. Who was Bobby Hutton, and why did his death affect the party so deeply?

00:44:35:00

Huey P. Newton:

Bobby Hutton was the first member of the Black Panther Party. He was recruited at the North Oakland Service Center in October, '66. He, I believe he was 15 at the time. He was our first recruit, and we made him treasurer. And he was like my little brother that I'd never had, and he was like, he was the inspiration of the party. Because the party was very youth oriented. And while he worked at the North Oakland Service Center, we tutored him and politicized him. And until he was killed that, I really couldn't imagine, not really imagine any of our party members being murdered. Even though that I knew that that risk took place. I was in the county jail at the time of his murder. This was the day that Martin Luther—Martin Luther King was assassinated. And after he was killed, and it was like that, it, I felt that anyone in the party, I felt the party vulnerable. So, he was very loved as a youth in the party and as, and as our first member.

00:46:05:00

Interviewer:

OK. Could you talk about how, how, how did the, the food programs and the, later the survival programs fit within the Panther philosophy? Just talk about their place within the party.

00:46:18:00

Huey P. Newton:

Well, the, the food program and the escorting the elderly to the, to pick up their checks so they weren't mugged, giving care to them was the basis of our program. Our Ten-Point Program was aimed at creating institutions in the community that really serve the community. And so these were alternative, alternative institutions that served while those institutions that were supposed to, to answer most of the desires of the people in the

community did not do it. So, the food program, the, the housing program was to, to answer really the need of, to answer the need for a developing community.

00:47:24:00

Interviewer:

OK. How did the Panthers come about the communal lifestyle? And, I mean, every, I mean, the style of the Panthers, the, the way they lived and the way they dressed, the way they ate, how, how did they come about that?

00:47:36:00

Huey P. Newton:

Oh, again, that I was very impressed with the Chinese revolution and the Cultural Revolution that was goin' on in China at the time. And Mao Tse-tung who was the chairman of the Communist Party in China was experimenting with communal eating and communal living. This served us well because it was so difficult. Housing was so difficult in our community. So, we felt if we pooled together that this would answer that question. Especially for the core of the party.

00:48:16:00

Interviewer:

OK. Where, where did you see the, the Black Panther Party headed by, by the end of '68? At that point, you're in, you're in, you're in prison. You know, you've been convicted. Seale is under indictment. Cleaver is out of the country. What, what did you think, what did you think was gonna happen?

00:48:35:00

Huey P. Newton:

Well, again, that I wanted to emphasize the, the, the community development aspect of the party. We were at the time, that we were just creating the, we, we were planning our creation of a community school. We were having busing programs to prisons where we would pick up community people and take them to the various penal institutions. I felt that we should turn away from the arms because the, too much had been made of them. And I thought that, I thought that the arms had served their purpose as far as being a catalyst to, to get, to gain enthusiasm of the community.

00:49:30:00

Interviewer:

But what, what did you think was gonna happen? I mean, were you aware that the federal government was on, on the Panther's tail at that point?

Huey P. Newton:

Oh, yeah. I was very well aware of, that was one of the, that was one of the reasons that we didn't want the, we were—

Interviewer:

I'm sorry. If you could just rephrase it to—

Huey P. Newton:

All right. All right. All right.

Interviewer:

Once again.

00:49:47:00

Huey P. Newton:

During the period of '68 to '69, the federal government had declared all out war on the party. And they were breaking into headquarters across the chapters, breaking into chapter headquarters across the country and filming weapons and saying that, look, they have guns. It was never mentioned that the guns were legal weapons. They were doing everything to, to make the community afraid of the party. And of course you can't organize when people are afraid of you. So, we, so I, I was inclined to try to develop more local politics, to run local members for various offices, and develop our Ten-Point Program, which was a housing, food, and health program.

00:50:41:00

Interviewer:

OK. And I'm just gonna go back over two questions briefly. Could, again, could you talk about the impact of King's death on the growth of the party? And, and again, how, how it may have affected New York and the eastern sectors more. That growth may have affected those eastern sectors more than it did Oakland.

00:50:56:00

Huey P. Newton:

When Martin Luther King, when Martin...Dr. Martin Luther King was assassinated, people were dis—became disillusioned, especially the youth, very disillusioned with the old civil rights movement. They felt that it wouldn't work. That it was proved that it wouldn't work by, by the assassination of Martin Luther King. And as a consequence, the growth was very heavy in the—especially, all over but even more so, it was more prominent in the, on the East Coast. And it's probably because conditions on the East Coast, living conditions and survival conditions were much more dreadful than even on the West Coast here where the weather is much better.

00:51:47:00

Interviewer:

OK. And just the, the last question again is the use of, of, of profanity. And let's just stop in '68. I mean, how, what was your position, and how did that position differ from, from Cleaver's position in terms of the use of profanity?

00:52:05:00

Huey P. Newton:

Eldridge Cleaver was influenced by the dirty word movement that grew out of Mario Savio's Free Speech Movement. And the dirty word movement, I, I didn't feel that in the Black community, that it recruited anyone. It alienated people. For instance in the church, in many churches that allowed us to use their facilities for breakfast for children program, we were ousted because of the la—the fa—the profanity that was used by Eldridge Cleaver, and later Bobby Seale and Davy Hilliard followed this. They were impressed with it. And I was against it. And, and matter of fact, that started to brew a dissension in the party.

00:53:03:00

Interviewer:

Cut. That's great.

[cut]

[wild sound]

Interviewer:

—community, how you communicated with Fred Hampton and where you saw him rising, and, and why he was such an effective leader.

Camera Crew Member #2:

Take eight.

Camera Crew Member #1:

We have 200 feet.

Interviewer:

OK.

Camera Crew Member #2:

Speed.

Camera Crew Member #1:

And turning

[slate]

00:53:24:00

Camera Crew Member #1:

I just wasn't sure.

00:53:26:00

Interviewer:

OK. Could, could you talk, could you talk about Fred Hampton and, and why he was such an, an effective leader, and, and his, his rise within the party?

00:53:35:00

Huey P. Newton:

Fred Hampton was a very charismatic orator, and I think what's even more important, that he had early training with the Southern Christian Leadership Council. He was tutored by Jesse Jackson. And he was on our central committee, and I saw him becoming a national, international leader. And I, I think that's one of the reasons that he was assassinated.

00:54:07:00

Interviewer:

OK. Let's just cut. So, I think that, I think that—

[cut]

[end of interview]

00:54:18:00

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