

## **A RETURN TO THE BIRTHPLACE OF THE BLACK PANTHER PARTY**

**By Elbert (Big Man) Howard**

**On April 15<sup>th</sup>, 2005, I was given the opportunity to visit Sacramento and Oakland, California. My visit was sponsored by my long time friend and his family, Billy X Jennings.**

**My visit had several meanings. First of all, April 16<sup>th</sup> was “Lil Bobby Hutton Day” on which we pay tribute to the first member to join the Black Panther Party and the first member to be murdered by the Oakland Police. The memorial for Lil Bobby Hutton was held at the West Oakland Public Library. The program included music, poetry, speakers and a book signing. The book featured was “Panther on the Prowl”, written by Elbert “Big Man” Howard. That’s me. As a member of the BPP from 1966-1974, I was a close associate of Lil Bobby.**

**As keynote speaker at the affair, I had a chance to express my feelings for the community of Oakland and my fellow comrades, brothers and sisters. Words first don’t seem adequate to express the joy I felt to see so many comrades who came to express their love for the Black Panther Party, for me and the work we did. I want to thank all the friends from all the many cities as well as those I haven’t seen in 30 years or so. It is my wish that we meet again.**

**Sunday, April 16<sup>th</sup>, there was another book signing and presentation at Carol’s Books in Sacramento. This was another beautiful event. The books were a sell out. There was standing room only for the presentation and many old comrades attended and participated. Some parents attended and brought their children. There were people present who lived in Sacramento and remembered the Panthers’ visit to the State Capitol to protest the Mulford Gun Control bill in 1968. Needless to say, that event made an impact on the struggle for justice in America.**

**The question and answer portions of the meetings were filled with questions and comments that were uplifting and let us know that the Black Panther Party and its people did many things that were correct.**

**I want to tell all the people who came out, and those who wanted to but could not make it, that I love you and though we may not see one another very often,**

**you are with me at all times. You all are a part of what I turned out to be so far. Thank you for keeping me and Lil Bobby Hutton in your hearts.**

**Last, but not least, I want to express my gratitude to BJ and Gail for arrangements for me to come, for their beautiful hospitality and their care for me. Starting with treating me to an exciting jazz concert featuring “Down to the Bone” and Gerald Albright, to enjoying their beautiful home and garden, to the excitement of the historical documents archive. That archive is a world class statement to the world as to how we spent a large portion of our lives.**

**Well done BJ. Well done AND IT AIN'T OVER YET!**

**ALL POWER TO THE PEOPLE!**

