

Safeway Store Boycott 1971

In 1971, the United Farm Workers were boycotting lettuce and Safeway stores were still carrying non-union lettuce. They asked the Black Panther Party to help them close down the Safeway stores in Oakland.

The Safeway store located on 27th and West St was chosen because they wouldn't donate to the Breakfast Program across the street at St. Augustine's Church. The Safeway boycott came at a time in Party history when we had gone through a defection of many Panthers from the BPP. This was a tense time in the BPP and we were doing a lot of security work. When the boycott happened, we were able to get out of the office. James Mott, Michael Torrance, Clark Bailey and I (Billy X) were line were line captains and were full of fire. We put revolutionary enthusiasm into the line.

We were all about 20 years old at the time. We didn't walk the line, we danced the picket line. We would have everyone fired up. When the leadership came down to the boycott line, they were surprised to find the parking lot empty and comrades fired up and happy, We had a car that would take people to another store down the street, to keep them from shopping at Safeway. The UFW picketers were surprised at' how effective we' were. We closed the Safeway down in a few days.

Photo of Billy X in straw hat with a sign and Clark Bailey with no sign.