REVOLUTIONARY MEMORIAL SERVICE FOR BRUCE (DEACON) WASHINGTON
(Oakland, Calif.) - Revolutionary Memorial Services were held last Wednesday afternoon at the Son of Man Temple for Bruce Lee (Deacon) Washington, a beloved 26-year-old comrade of the Black Panther Party shot in the back while protecting children from wild gunfire at a teen dance on Friday, October 5. Comrade Deacon died in the early morning hours of Saturday, October 6, after fighting for his life for more than eight hours on an operating table at Highland Hospital.

The Revolutionary Memorial Services began as the flag-draped casket bearing the body of Deacon Washington was brought, in silence, into the Temple auditorium, ceremoniously flanked on all sides by a special Honor Guard comprised of four Black Panther Party members who had known and worked with Comrade Deacon in the early development of the Philadelphia Chapter of the Party in the late 1960s and here in Oakland.

As the top of the casket was raised and the flag, bearing the emblem of a large solid, black panther was pulled back, the Son of Man Temple Choir, dressed in black robes, stood and softly but firmly sang the very meaningful ballad, "We Are Soldiers":

"We are soldiers
In the army
We have to fight
Although we have to die.
We have to hold up the blood-stained banner,
We have to hold it up until we die..."

Deacon had been an original member of the Son of Man Temple Choir, and had actively recruited others with whom he came in contact to join.

Following the Choir, Brother Emory Douglass, the internationally-acclaimed People's Artist for the Black Panther Party, read a selection from Revolutionary Suicide, written by Huey P. Newton, the Party's leader and chief theoretician. The passage which Brother Emory read was appropriate, for Comrade Deacon was conscious of the dangers involved with his work in the Black Panther Party, but as all who knew him will readily testify, Comrade Deacon refused to compromise his own integrity and dignity:

...Revolutionary suicide does not mean that I and my comrades have a death wish; it means just the opposite. We have such a strong desire to live with hope and human dignity that existence without them is impossible. When reactionary forces crush us, we must move against these forces, even at the risk of death...

The moving poem, "For Deacon," read by Sister Ericka Huggins, was filled with words expressing a realism that could not be denied:

We come into life
without a wish, a dream, a desire.
life is so simple—to eat, to sleep
then with knowledge comes pain
life is no longer simple—
how do we eat?/where do we sleep?
we think
we want to do CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE
we regain what we lost, we take what we never had, we keep what is ours, as men and women, we wish for happiness, we dream of peace, we desire freedom.

we will have food, shelter, clothing, justice.

we will control our lives, and if some of us must die, it will be so that our children and theirs will live—a simple life.

A new, beautiful and inspiring ballad written and sung by Ms. Elaine Brown, "We Can Do Anything," had an even more powerful meaning to it, coming as it did when the president of the Son of Man Temple Swingens was unable to finish her statement, leaving the stage in tears. Without mincing any words, young sister Rose had been explaining the events which took place at the Swingens-sponsored teen dance that Friday night, and, obviously holding back her tears, was speaking of the deep mutual love between Comrade Deacon and the Swingens group when she could not go on. It was Ms. Brown's first performance of "We Can Do Anything," and she sang it in an emotional style that was unforgettable.

The message for the Revolutionary Memorial Service was delivered by Reverend J. Alfred...
ELAINE BROWN sings, "We Can Do Anything."