

It's About Time for the Lumpen by Billy X Jennings

It's About Time has been working with Rickey Vincent on his book "Party Music" about the Black Panther Party singing group "The Lumpen." Rickey has been working on this project for a number of years. He first heard about the Lumpen from Boots Riley of the "Coups." Rickey started researching and trying to find information about the singing group. It wasn't until he came to www.itsabouttimebpp.com that he found photos and information about the Lumpen. Rickey was surprised when I told him that I knew the group members and that I had attended the Merritt College Live performances in 1971. Since that time, Rickey has been to It's About Time's Archives in Sacramento doing research and checking out photos from our collection



many times.

Brother Ducho Dennis took most of the photos of the Lumpen back then. I have always been a big supporter of the Lumpen. Clark Bailey, James Mott, Michael Torrance and Bill Calhoun were my closest comrades in the BPP, as well as now. Clark Bailey and James Mott are activist members of It's About Time. Michael Torrance wrote the intro song for our website, "Legacy." Up until a couple of years ago, three of them lived in Sacramento. Clark Bailey is one of the founders of It's About Time. Michael has been living in LA since he stopped working with Motown records. Michael went on to sing professionally after he left the BPP and became Marvin Gaye's background singer and a songwriter for Motown. We all used to work at Central HQ's together back in 1971-72. Between working in the community and Central HQ's, they were able to put out a 45 record called "Bobby Must be set Free." The record was about Bobby Seale, then a political prisoner in Chicago.

Rickey teaches at UC Berkeley and already has written an award winning book, "Funk." He also can be seen on the TV show "Unsung" from time to time. Rickey also hosts a radio show on Friday nights on KPFA called "The Roots of Soul." It is a great radio show which focuses on R & B music of the 1960's and 1970's. It was back in 2006, that I talked Michael into doing Rickey's radio show. It was a great program which can be found on our website under Lumpen. There are also photos and another interview done by James Mott a couple of years



back. Check them out.

I remember the Lumpen when they started singing at Central Distribution in SF as a way to get the work done back in 1969 -1970. We worked hard at Central HQ's and they were Panthers first. We were duty drivers, security for the Central Committee, and did whatever jobs needed to be done. Michael worked on the newspaper. He was a good artist and some of his art work can be found in the BPP newspaper. Clark and I were Huey's main aides along with Robert Bay and James Mott when he was going to court. I remember working hard but we partied hard as well. One night, we all had the night off together which was rare.

Fredricka Slaughter (later Huey's wife), Jann Thompson, Valerie Trahan, Clark, James, Michael and I all went out in Freddy's old white 1966 Impala together and partied all night. We barely got to Political Education class on Sunday at 10am at 29th Ave.; we made it to class only by minutes.

A couple of weeks ago Rickey arranged a photo shoot with the Lumpen in front of old Merritt



College on Martin Luther King Ave. The book is due out in October in time for Black Panther Party History Month. Photo of Rickey, Clark and James at the BPP History event in downtown Oakland last year.