

'Panthers' Recall Memories In Photo Exhibit

They said police misconduct was rampant in the Black community. America only heard "off the pigs." They said Black children were starving. America only saw the guns. A number of former Black Panthers were in Sacramento last week, to tell what they call "the real story." A reception held at the Golden State Museum was organized in conjunction with It's About Time, a local group dedicated to preserving the legacy of the Black Panther Party For Self Defense (BPP). An exhibit of BPP photos and memorabilia, "Louder Than Words" is on display at the museum through May 15.

by GENOA BARROW
OBSERVER Senior Staff Writer

"As you go through the exhibit, you'll see a lot of pictures of us doing work in the community," said Bill Jennings, BPP historian and It's About Time founder.

"I know that you might have heard some things about the Party, that we had shoot outs with the police and stuff like that. Well it's true, but the other 365 days a year we were working on the free breakfast program and the free shoe program," Jennings said.

Among those speaking during the afternoon reception was Dr. Tolbert Small who started the sickle cell anemia research and testing for the BPP back in 1970. Dr. Small was investigated by the FBI after volunteering his medical expertise. Today he runs East Oakland's Harriet Tubman Medical Clinic. The Panthers, he said, were leaders in addressing issues facing the Black community.

"Nationally, the Black Panther Party counseled and tested over a million Black patients in sickle cell anemia," he shared. The organization also addressed the low birth rates of African American babies and the prevalence of high blood pressure and strokes.

Many issues, Dr. Small said, still exist today.

"We have six million kids in this country who do not have health insurance. Why is this? We spend more money than any other country on health insurance."

"You ask yourself 'where does the money go?' It doesn't go to provide healthcare, it goes to pad the pockets of the blood barrens, the blood barrens who control both the Democratic and Republican parties," he said.

The Black Panther Party had 45 chapters nationwide and operated nine community clinics. "It was not just to provide health care, but to run a survival program until we could a change in government," Dr. Small said.

"We had a free food program, we had schools. We brought people to prisons to visit their loved ones; we had a free plumbing program. We were trying to provide the necessities of life that our government did not provide then and does not provide now," he added.

Aaron Dixon of Washington State also offered remarks.

"I'm proud to say our medical clinic in Seattle that we started in 1969 is still open today," said Dixon who was once known as Seattle Panther Captain.

Dixon, who started took the Panthers' work to Seattle after a 1968 visit to Oakland, shared what the organization meant to him.

"The thing I remember about the Black Panther Party the most is the love and warmth we had in our hearts for each other."

"The Black Panther Party was like a family, matter of fact the Black Panther Party had taken the place of my family. That was probably the one of the most difficult things of all. We all had to eventually leave the Black Panther Party and go back out into the cold cruel world in which we did not have the love and support we had before," Dixon shared.

Because of its progressive stance, the Black Panther Party became targeting by the FBI's infamous counter-



Visitors were welcomed by Black Panther Party Historian Bill Jennings, who has amassed an impressive collection of material on the organization. Jennings once supervised Bobby Seale's campaign office when he ran for Mayor of Oakland in 1973.

Presented by
It's About Time
Black Panther Party



The Louder Than Words Exhibit focuses on the social programs the organization maintained in Black communities across the country.

OBSERVER Photos by LARRY V. DALTON



The exhibit runs through May 15 and offers a unique history lesson.

intelligence program known as COINTELPRO.

The FBI called the Party an "internal threat" and infiltrated the organization in an attempt to create dissension among members and to discredit them in the Black community. COINTELPRO also kept tabs on the comings and goings of civil rights activists Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., Malcolm X and Eldridge Cleaver.

Former Black Panther Minister of Culture Emory Douglas shared his memories of brainstorming sessions between Cleaver and Party founders Huey P. Newton and Bobby Seale. Douglas, an artist, was a regular contributor to the organization's self titled newspaper. Today he serves in the Production Department for The San Francisco Sun Reporter, a Black-owned newspaper.

Douglas also shared his memories of the incident at the State Capitol building that gained the Party national notoriety. Party members, including Douglas, traveled to Sacramento to protest the Mulford bill, which sought to prohibit the carrying of firearms on one's person or in a vehicle in any

public place or on any public street. The image of members with leather jackets, Black berets and shotguns became synonymous with the Party. The Golden State Museum is mere blocks from the Capitol.

The event was also highlighted by the showing of a film on the contributions women made to the BPP.

"They were 50 percent of our work force," Jennings said.

"They had double duty, when the police raided our offices and took the males to jail, they continued our programs as well as raised money to bail the brothers out," he said.

The surviving men and women of the Black Panther Party will mark the organizations 40th anniversary in 2006 with a gathering in Oakland. The Louder Than Words exhibit continues through May 15.

The Golden State Museum, located at 1020 O Street in Downtown Sacramento, is open Tuesday through Saturday 10:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. and Sunday from noon to 5:00 p.m. Admission is \$5 for adults, \$4 for seniors, \$3.50 for children 6 to 13; those under 6 get in for free. For more information, visit www.goldenstatemuseum.org. For more information on the Black Panther Party's history visit www.itsabouttimebpp.com.

RECEPTION: Meet the Panthers

DATE: Saturday, June 12, 2004
TIME: 2 p.m.
LOCATION: Southern California Library for
Social Studies and Research
6120 South Vermont Avenue
Los Angeles, Ca. 90044
(323) 759-6063
www.socalib.org

Music – Refreshments – Film

Co-sponsors:

IT'S ABOUT TIME COMMITTEE
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Website for more Panther information:
www.itsabouttimebpp.com

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(323) 296-4383 - (323) 290-6146
NPVM Website: www.globalpanther.com



LOUDER THAN WORDS



Black Panther Party photo exhibit



Exhibit Runs from June 12 – August 9, 2004