'Panthers' Recall Memories In Photo Exhibit

They said police misconduct was rampant in the Black community America only heard "off the pigtails." They said Black children were starving America only saw the guns.

A number of former Black Panthers in Sacramento last week, so tell what they call "the real story." A reception held at the golden state museum was organized in conjunction with its "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 BARTON
OBSERVER Senior Staff Writer

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

"I know that you might have heard some things about the party, that we had shootouts 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," Jenkins said.

Among those speaking during the afternoon reception was Dr. Robert Smalls, who started the sickle cell anemia research and testing for the BPP back in 1970. Dr. Smalls was investigated by the FBI after volunteering his medical expertise today 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 tended over a million Black people for sickle cell anemia," he shared. The organization also addressed low birth rates among African American babies and the prevalence of high blood pressure and strokes.

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

"We have six million kids in this country who do not have health insurance, the free breakfast program and more income than any other country on health insurance," he said.

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

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

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 known as Seattle Panther Captain.

Dixon, who started the Panthers' work in 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, a matter of fact the Black Panther Party had 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 target of the FBI's infamous counterintelligence 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 Bayard Rustin.

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-Exponent. 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, provoked to Sacramento to protest the Midhill 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 men in berets with leather jackets, black berets, and shotguns became synonymous with the Party.

The Golden State Museum is more 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," Jenkins said.

"They had double duty, when the police asked our officers 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 15; 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.blackpantherpp.com.
RECEPTION: Meet the Panthers

DATE: Saturday, June 12, 2004
TIME: 2 p.m.
LOCATION: Southern California Library for Social Studies and Research
8120 South Vermont Avenue
Los Angeles, Ca. 90044
(323) 759-6063
www.socalib.org

Music - Refreshments - Film

Co-sponsors:

IT’S ABOUT TIME COMMITTEE
"itsabouttime3@juno.com
Website for more Panther information:
www.itsabouttimebpp.com

NEW PANTHER VANGUARD MOVEMENT
1470 West Martin Luther King Blvd. jclosed
for repairs)Los Angeles, Ca. 90062
(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