

The Black Panther Party

AND

THE CASE OF
THE NEW YORK 21

~~ONE DOLLAR~~ 50 c

Prepared
by
members of the
CHARTER GROUP FOR A PLEDGE OF CONSCIENCE

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In the 1950's the House UnAmerican Activities Committee (HUAC) and its allies in state, city and local governments drove white radicals out of public life and ruined them financially. They thus attempted, with considerable success, to intimidate those liberals or moderates who might otherwise have criticized the cold war, brinkmanship, intervention in the Dominican Republic, "police action" in Korea, and other aspects of U.S. foreign policy.

In the late 1960's the FBI and its allies in state, county and local "justice" departments are murdering and incarcerating black radicals. They have been largely successful in destroying almost the entire original leadership but seem to prove less successful in thereby intimidating the black community as a whole. They may even, finally, be unsuccessful in altogether silencing or diverting serious white supporters of this desperate struggle for freedom and equality—a struggle which cannot be won without reversing the whole reactionary trend of American life today.

Since the murder of Malcolm X on February 21, 1965, the most consistent, effective and class conscious leadership of the Black community has unquestionably been that of the Black Panthers—a name chosen because the panther is reputed never to make an unprovoked attack but to defend itself ferociously whenever it is attacked.

The Black Panther Party for Self Defense was organized in Oakland, California, during the spring of 1966 by two young men: Huey Newton (now serving the third year of a 14 year sentence after a more-than-questionable verdict of "voluntary manslaughter" handed down by a handpicked and hard-pressed jury, with only one Black member—a bank executive and former army officer), and Bobby Seale (recently in headlines as the first American to be gagged, chained and kicked in the groin by government officials in an open court of law during a public trial).

At its inception the Black Panther Party appeared primarily as an armed association (carrying rifles and other unconcealed weapons was then legal in California) for community protection against the notorious Oakland police. This initial pattern was somewhat like that set by the Louisiana Deacons and other armed Negro groups in the Deep South, organized for defense after the murder of James Chaney, Andrew Goodman, Michael Schwerner, Viola Luizzo, and other civil rights workers.

In a widely publicized incident that fall, Huey Newton, Bobby Seale and a half dozen other young Panthers calmly faced down a carload of traditionally trigger-happy ghetto police outside their Oakland headquarters and projected the picture of armed Blacks which has remained their dominant image for both Black and White America—a common image with very different connotations for the two worlds.

Despite the increasing frequency with which, for the past few years, instances of police homicide—shots fired at fleeing ghetto youngsters, the shooting of Black men by drunken police in bars, deliberate murder in the course of a private traffic altercation between an off-duty policeman and a Black civilian citizen—have been reported in every large northern city, the average white man or woman still thinks of physical danger *from* the police as a remote exceptional phenomenon. But as reported in *Political Science Quarterly* for June, 1968:

Of the southcentral Los Angeles residents [a black neighborhood] interviewed by the U.C.L.A. Institute of Government and Public Affairs, 47 per cent had seen police brutality, 43 per cent knew someone so mistreated, and 9 per cent had themselves been victims. According to data gathered by the American Civil Liberties Union, the situation is just as bad, if not worse, in Boston, Chicago and New Orleans.

Here in New York a discrepancy of 47 more homicides reported by the Medical Examiner's Office for October, 1969 than by the New York City Police Department was explained at the Chief Medical Examiner's office as due to their inclusion of "abortion malpractice, police homicides against criminals, assaults where we may

feel a person was beaten to death but the police may think otherwise." (*Manhattan Tribune*, 12/20/69)

A commission to analyze the causes of violence and the means of prevention, set up under the chairmanship of Milton S. Eisenhower at the Center for the Study of Law and Society in Berkeley, University of California August 28, 1968, submitted its report March 21, 1969. In discussing black militancy its report said:

The Black Panther Party has been repeatedly harassed by police. After the conviction of the party's leader, Huey P. Newton, for manslaughter in the death of a white policeman, Oakland police fired into the Black Panther office with rifles and shotguns presumably because they felt that a conviction for first-degree murder would have been more appropriate. On September 4, a group of 150 whites, allegedly including a number of off-duty policemen, attacked a group of Panthers and their white supporters in the Brooklyn Criminal Court building. The confrontation between the Panthers and some elements of the police has become a feud verging on open warfare. This warfare highlights the fact that for the black citizen, the policeman has long since ceased to be—if indeed he ever was—a neutral symbol of law and order. Studies of the police emphasize that their attitudes and behavior toward blacks differ vastly from those taken toward whites. Similar studies show that blacks perceive the police as hostile, prejudiced, and corrupt. In the ghetto disorders of the past few years, blacks have often been exposed to indiscriminate police assaults and, not infrequently, to gratuitous brutality. Many ghetto blacks see the police as an occupying army; one of the Panthers' major demands is for stationing UN observers in the ghettos to monitor police conduct.

In view of these facts, the adoption of the idea of self-defense is not surprising. Again, in America self-defense has always been considered an honorable principle, and the refusal to bow before police harassment strikes a responsive chord in ghetto communities, especially among the young.

It is therefore little wonder that early in 1967 Eldridge Cleaver's first sight of an armed guard of Black Panthers, organized to escort Betty Shabazz (Malcolm X's widow) on her appearance at Black House, San Francisco, seemed to him:

The most beautiful sight I had ever seen. Four Black men wearing black berets, powder-blue shirts, black leather jackets, black trousers, shiny black shoes—and each with a gun! In front was Huey P. Newton [later shot in the stomach while unarmed, framed on the charge of murdering a policeman, and kept chained to his hospital bed during surgery] . . . Beside him was Bobby Seale [later bound, gagged and beaten in open court while on trial for "conspiracy" in what was subsequently declared a mistrial, and now sentenced to four years for contempt of court in protesting that mistrial]. A few steps behind Seale was Bobby Hutton [a 16-year-old soon thereafter shot down in cold blood by the police after he emerged, hands raised, in response to a police demand] . . . Where was my mind at? Blown!

Cleaver's reaction to this "fearsome" picture of "Black Men With Guns" reminded at least one middle-aged reader of a poem written by a Spanish Loyalist in 1937. It begins: "A specter is haunting Europe" and concludes "A specter is haunting Europe. We call him—Comrade."

Eldridge Cleaver, who then joined the Black Panther Party for Self Defense as Minister of Information, is himself now an expatriate refugee, forced to leave the country to escape a trumped-up charge of breaking parole on the last day of his probation—a charge admittedly intended to return him to jail for 15 years.

But although the promise of armed self-defense captured the imagination of Black ghetto dwellers all over the U.S., it was, from the beginning, only one part of the program of the Black Panther Party. "We want an immediate end to police brutality and murder of Black people" was and is No. 7 of the 10 points in the basic platform drawn up by Bobby Seale and Huey Newton in 1966. (See p. 12 for complete program and platform.) Early in 1967 the Party had already dropped "for Self Defense" from its title as too narrow a description of its objectives and was deep in such varied activities as protesting rent evictions, demanding school traffic lights, informing welfare recipients of their legal rights, teaching classes in American history, and, especially, providing over 2,000 needy Black children in Oakland alone with substantial hot breakfasts every day. Similar programs were soon instituted in Chicago, New York and many other cities.

Huey Newton, in an interview cited as authentic by Jerome H. Skolnick, Director of Task Force on Violent Aspects of Protest and Confrontation of the National Commission on the Causes and Prevention of Violence, spoke of the Panthers' relationship with the children of the ghetto. He said:

We have the Panther Youth Corps, kids from the age of about ten to thirteen. And after school I would teach them history and tutor them in mathematics, and it all started because the kids have always been very enthusiastic, and they always identify with the Panther. We have this office . . . and the kids would gather up outside because I wouldn't let them inside the office because we had weapons inside, and because I didn't want them hurt or fooling around with the weapons . . . So finally I organized them . . . as a Panther group, but to get in, they would have to show that they were working very industrious in school, because Panthers always get the highest grades in school. . . . I would have them every report card period give me their report cards to see how they were progressing.

Skolnick himself concludes this section of his report, published in *The Politics of Protest* in 1969, by saying:

The Black Panther Party has remained defensive and has been given credit for keeping Oakland cool after the assassination of Martin Luther King, but this has not stemmed from any desire on their part to suppress black protest in the community. Rather, it has stemmed from a sense that the police are waiting for a chance to shoot down blacks in the streets. Continued harassment by the police makes self-defense a necessary element of militant action for the Panthers and for similar groups, such as the Black Liberators in St. Louis.

Why then have the Black Panthers been the target of concentrated violent attack, from the Golden Gate to the Statue of Liberty, by police officers, district attorneys and judges, all using blatantly illegal as well as legal and semi-legal means? Why have they been singled out for slander in the mass media, with the endorsement not only of such neo-Fascists as J. Edgar Hoover, Attorney General Mitchell and Vice President Spiro Agnew, but also that of white liberals, Reform Democrats and Anti-Nixon Republicans? (Until this last terrifying police massacre in Chicago December 4, 1969, followed by the outrageous open police violence in Los Angeles the very next day, conservative Black leadership also fed the flames of fear and prejudice. These new horrors have apparently been too much for Roy Wilkins or Whitney Young to stomach and both have now joined an independent investigation undertaken by Black Congressmen.)

But these last attacks are hardly worse in degree than, and not at all different in kind from, many other attacks to which the Black Panther Party has been exposed for well over a year. Gene Marine, senior editor of *Ramparts*, devotes a considerable part of his 225-page *The Black Panthers* published in June, 1969, to a detailed account of incident after incident of unprovoked, often fatal, police violence, transparent legal frameups, and wildly distorted newspaper stories. In these stories, lies deliberately fashioned of whole cloth are left uncorrected to die in print but to live in their readers' minds. One typical example worthy of Joe McCarthy at his worst must here suffice: In February, 1969 the millionaire Mayor of San Francisco, Joseph Alioto, told a Presbyterian convention that the Black Panthers "encouraged violence." Challenged from the audience by the Director of the Commission on Religion and Race, the Mayor retorted: "Have you ever read the ten commandments of the Black Panther Party? . . . Did you like that section about robbing and raping?" Their "commandments," which the Panthers call the "8 Points of Attention" and print in every issue of their weekly newspaper, read:

- 1) Speak politely.
- 2) Pay fairly for what you buy.
- 3) Return everything you borrow.
- 4) Pay for anything you damage.
- 5) Do not hit or swear at people.
- 6) Do not damage property or crops of the poor, oppressed masses.
- 7) Do not take liberties with women.
- 8) If we ever have to take captives do not ill-treat them.

But it is a safe bet that no one in the audience had a copy with which to refute the Mayor's big lie.

[This is the same Mayor Alioto who recently admitted a kickback in a two million dollar fee to the Attorney General's staff in Washington, D.C.]

Ronald Steel, writing in the *New York Review* for Sept. 11, 1969, says:

Vilified and distorted by the press, which has little understanding of their program, they are generally viewed as an anarchistic band of gun-toting, white-hating thugs. This allows the police and federal officials to abridge their constitutional rights in a way they would not dare to use against whites. Provocation, false arrests, trumped-up charges, illegal detention, barbaric treatment, excessive bail, and even legal murder—this is everyday treatment for the Panthers. They have been defined as threatening to white society, and therefore beyond the normal protection of the law.

Is it likely that members of a white political organization, even the Ku Klux Klan, would be rounded up in the middle of the night, thrown into jails, dispersed around the city, kept under maximum security and even solitary confinement, detained in prison for months on exorbitant bail for a crime that was never committed, and charged with plotting irrational actions, without the liberal press voicing its indignation? Yet this is precisely what happened to the New York twenty-one. If you let it happen to us, the Panthers are saying to white liberals, it will happen to anyone who dissents. After the lessons of Chicago and Berkeley, white radicals, at least, are beginning to believe the Panther contention that we're all niggers now.

The American Civil Liberties Union, on December 12, 1969, issued a release listing 48 major police-Panther incidents in 1968 and 1969. The introductory statement from its compilers in the American Civil Liberties Union office of Southern California reads in part:

This chronology is not complete; on December 5, Charles Garry, who has represented the Panthers in a number of legal cases, told newsmen that since January 1, 1969, 28 members of the Black Panther Party (BPP) had been killed by police. The attached chronology lists but 12 Panthers killed and 12 wounded since October 28, 1967.

But before we look at a summary of these crimes (p. 13) and at the details of the case most important to us as New Yorkers—that of the 21 Black Panthers indicted for “conspiracy” and held here in our city in the most barbarous conditions for over \$2,000,000 bail, or as the Panthers say, “ransom money,”—we must return to the question of why this concerted attack. Why did J. Edgar Hoover declare that the revolutionary stand taken by many members of extremist black nationalist organizations—the Panthers—made it necessary for the FBI to intensify its intelligence operations in this field through the penetration of these groups with informants and “sources” [FBI-ese for electronic bugging]?

Why did Attorney General Mitchell rule last January that “the Panthers are a threat to national security and thus subject to FBI wiretapping? Why should even Spiro Agnew get into the act by announcing that the Panthers are a “completely irresponsible, anarchistic group of criminals”?

Admittedly the Black Panthers are a well organized, self-disciplined active group with growing roots in the Black communities of many northern cities and some promising contacts among Black trade unionists in basic industries. But there were and are many other militant Black nationalist groups and there were and are a comparable minority of dedicated white activists ready to take heroic and, if necessary, illegal steps in attempts to force a withdrawal from Vietnam. Why then are the Panthers singled out for a continuing attack which has killed or imprisoned practically every state and national leader, destroyed and plundered almost every local headquarters, and forced those members still at liberty—now almost all women and teenagers—to devote their time and energy to the search for ransom money and legal defense funds?

The answer is simple. J. Edgar Hoover, James A. Mitchell and Spiro Agnew's fears are justified. The Black Panthers, for all their limitations, do at the moment represent the only serious threat to racist capitalism in the United States. They must be destroyed, not because they *are* nationalists, but because they are *not* isolationists; they must be destroyed because they combine socialist insight with

immediate demand for racial justice; above all, they must be destroyed because they are the only radical group with significant ties to, and influence on, those Americans who have literally nothing to lose.

Despite the myth of "Black racism" sedulously nurtured by the press, Black Panther leaders have, each in their own way, always emphasized the relation of class and race, of economics and culture, of the need for a common struggle in which Blacks and Whites would participate as allies.

Huey Newton expressed this understanding by saying that of course the struggle is a class struggle but in the United States inevitably class wears the mark of race. In an early pamphlet, "Huey Newton Talks to the Movement," he discussed at some length black and white relationships. He said:

We don't suffer in the hangup of a skin color. We don't hate white people; we hate the oppressor. And if the oppressor happens to be white then we hate him. When he stops oppressing us then we no longer hate him. And right now in America you have the slave-master being a white group. We are pushing him out of office through revolution in this country. I think the responsibility of the white revolutionary will be to aid us in this. And when we are attacked by the police or by the military then it will be up to the white mother country radicals to attack the murderers and to respond as we respond, to follow our program. . . .

The resistance by white radicals in Berkeley during the past three nights is a good indication that the white radicals are on the way home. They have identified their enemies. The white radicals have integrated theory with practice. They realize the American system is the real enemy but in order to attack the American system they must attack the ordinary cop. In order to attack the educational system they must attack the ordinary teacher. Just as the Vietnamese people to attack the American system must attack the ordinary soldier.

In his open letter to Stokely Carmichael, published in *Ramparts* August, 1969, Eldridge Cleaver wrote:

You have never been able to distinguish the history of the Black Panther Party from the history of the organization of which you were once the chairman—the Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee. It is understandable that you can have such fears of black organizations being controlled, or partly controlled, by whites, because most of your years in SNCC were spent under precisely those conditions. But the Black Panther Party has never been in that situation. Because we have never had to wrest control of our organization out of the hands of whites, we have not been shackled with the type of paranoid fear that was developed by you cats in SNCC. Therefore we are able to sit down with whites and hammer out solutions to our common problems without trembling in our boots about whether or not we might get taken over in the process. It has always seemed to be that you belittle the intelligence of your black brothers and sisters when you constantly warn them that they had better beware of white folks. After all, you are not the only black person out of Babylon who has been victimized by white racism. . . .

Within the ranks of your Black United Front you wanted to include the Cultural Nationalists, the Black Capitalists, and the Professional Uncle Toms, even though it was precisely these three groups who were working to murder your shit even before it broke wind. . . . You were unable to distinguish your friends from your enemies because all you could see was the color of the cat's skin. In short, your habit of looking at the world through black-colored glasses would lead you, on the domestic level, to close ranks with such enemies of black people as James Farmer, Whitney Young, Roy Wilkins and Ron Karenga; and on the international level you would end up in the same bag with Papa Doc Duvalier, Joseph Mobuto, and Haile Selassie. Yes, we opposed that shit then and we oppose it now even more strongly, especially since the Nixon Administration has stolen your program from you and, I think, included you out.

Bobby Seale, a speaker rather than a writer, has repeated in a hundred different ways on a hundred different platforms his hope voiced at the Free Huey Rally on May Day, 1969:

We're just waiting for this racism to break down when we see the poor white Appalachians up in the mountains copy our same Ten Point Platform and Program and go forth to destroy the Nixons, the Reagans, and the pig Aliotos. When the party says "Power to the People," we ain't jiving a pound.

A month later, addressing a student demonstration at Houston University in Texas, he said:

Those who attack people are aggressors and wrong. They must be stopped by the people. It is a class struggle, not a race struggle. We don't dig black capitalism either. . . .

Fred Hampton, then awaiting sentence for the alleged theft of 710 ice cream bars and since released on bail and murdered in his bed by the Chicago police, wrote in a letter from prison May 26, 1969:

As I sit here this morning awaiting to be sentenced in a very few hours, my mind is on one thing and one thing only; that is, the international proletarian revolution must go on and that no one feels sorry for me. If I'm told to serve life, then I'm prepared to do that. I have no life to give other than a life for the people. LET ALL TESTS OF REVOLUTION CONFRONT ME. THOSE THAT I AM NOT READY FOR I WILL BECOME READY FOR. PEOPLE UNITE.

Dave Hilliard, chief of staff, is now under indictment for having threatened the President's life when he said in the course of a public speech: "We will kill Richard Nixon, we will kill *any* motherfucker that stands in the way of our freedom." Speaking less rhetorically and more literally at a labor conference, reported in *The Black Panther*, Sunday, May 11, 1969, he said:

So that we see the necessity for solving the problem only because we're workers and only because we know that in order to destroy this oppressive system, we have to all unite around some common desires or some common goals. So that the one thing that we have in common, be we European, or Afro-American, is that we are the exploited class. . . . So that the whole concept of our independent Black workers union would not serve as the instrument to solve the problems of capitalism or to solve the problems of exploitation, to solve the problems of a 36 or 48 hour work week.

One of the few members of the Black Panther Central Committee not yet killed, jailed or indicted by the police is David Cox. In a recent interview with a reporter from *The Rag*, student newspaper of the University of Texas, he was asked: "Do you see frame-ups like the Bobby Seale arrest . . . as a coordinated nationwide effort to crush the Black militant groups?" He answered:

I would change one word there. To stop ANY people who are moving to implement changes within the community. There is a nationwide conspiracy upon the part of the power structure and its lackeys like J. Edgar Hog, Mayor Dailey in Chicago, and Mayor Fascioso Mussolini Alioto in San Francisco, there's definitely a conspiracy nationwide to stop that. Bobby Seale is a prime example of that. Our Chairman of the Black Panther Party who was kidnapped.

Parenthetically, it may be remarked that this attitude which poses such a threat to the time-honored technique of "divide and rule" has already borne first fruit in alliances with the Puerto Rican Young Lords, the Appalachian Young Patriots and other similar groups.

There are of course many white groups explicitly identifying themselves as socialists and/or communists whose analysis and theoretical perspective resemble those of the Black Panther Party, but whose central committee sleep safely in their beds. Few of these, however, offer leadership in direct action and none of them has any really effective contact with those truly on the edge of desperation, ready "to set their lives on any chance—to mend it or be rid of it."

There is one further vital difference between even the most militant and determined young student or peace activist and such groups as the Panthers. A Black radical summarized it when he said, "If a Yippie gets tired of it all, he can change his jeans, cut off his hair and go home. What can I take off and where would I go?" Hoover, Mitchell and Agnew are correct in feeling that reaction cannot contain such a movement; it must attempt to destroy it.

Perhaps to realize more fully the extraordinary promise of this beginning and the hope such a party holds for revolutionary development, one should consider it in comparison with its immediate predecessor, the first step toward an independent organization by Malcolm X after he had broken with Elijah Muhammad's Muslims. His general perspective was then much the same as that of Huey Newton, Bobby

Seale and Eldridge Cleaver. In fact, they all in varying degrees were somewhat his disciples. He had discarded Muhammad's doctrinaire antiwhite Muslim mythology after his return from Islam and had moved toward militant organization. Three days before his assassination (in what many believe was a CIA plot), he said, at Columbia University: "The Negro revolution is not a racial revolt. We are interested in practicing brotherhood with anyone really interested in living according to it." And earlier that same week, he said at a meeting in Harlem:

We nationalists used to think we were militant. We were just dogmatic. It didn't bring us anything.

Now I know it's smarter to say you're going to shoot a man for what he is doing to you than because he is white. If you attack him because he is white, you give him no out. He can't stop being white. We've got to give the man a chance. He probably won't take it, the snake. But we've got to give him a chance.

But in contrast to the Black Panther Party, where new leadership springs up virtually overnight after every murder or arrest, Malcolm X's incipient organization was, at the time of his assassination, still very much a one-man show with no brother remotely able to carry it on after his death. Nor was he, any more than anyone else, aware of the fact immediately sensed by the Black Panther Party's founders, that the "justice" department, with the police in the front ranks, would be the tangible enemy and the system's central weapon for repression in the immediate future.

To call the United States today "fascist" involves certain questions of reformulation, although in the Panther's definition of the term, "capitalism plus racism," it seems accurate enough. But to call the U.S. a police state is now an increasingly exact description. To have understood the newly central position of "law enforcement officers" in this new age of reaction, and to have turned the cutting edge of resistance directly against the occupying army in the ghetto showed a sort of political genius—the kind of genius for which Joan of Arc was burnt.

The unanimity with which gauleiters in the administration, from every City Hall to the White House, have been able to use this force against the new upsurge of militancy and self-organization is terrifying. And of course the front line fighters in the ghettos continue to be its first victims.

Nothing we do can bring back those already murdered in the United States, any more than our most urgent peace efforts can restore to life those massacred in Vietnam. But there is much we can do to defend those now under attack and protect future fighters—including perhaps ourselves. We can move to rescue those held "for ransom" and to help those whom the enemy's timetable marks for destruction tomorrow or the day after.

The survivors arrested after the slaughter in Chicago—the survivors arrested after the attack on their headquarters in Los Angeles—the 21 survivors unconstitutionally imprisoned in New York today—demand our all-out support. Here is a brief summary of the New York case and the things we must do to meet its needs.

New York's Responsibility— The Case of the 21

Despite intense infiltration, electronic bugging, an extraordinary number of "search and seize" raids with or without warrant on the flimsiest of pretexts, there has been no shred of evidence offered in any one of a dozen cities linking the Panthers' theory or practice to mass violence, destruction of property or terrorist action. Yet here in New York City, in the early hours of a spring morning, over 200 heavily armed police arrested 10 men and 2 women, none of whom offered the slightest resistance, on the always suspect charge of "conspiracy."

Before the arrest began District Attorney Frank Hogan had already leaked the news to the press that he had uncovered an appalling mass conspiracy to bomb and destroy property and lives all over the city.

By 1 a.m. that same day—Wednesday, April 1, 1969—an obliging grand jury had indicted the 12 who had been arrested, and 7 more named by the DA, on a 12-count indictment for "conspiring to murder New York City policemen and to dynamite five mid-town department stores, a police precinct, six railroad rights-of-way and the New York Botanical Gardens" (or, as *The Black Panther* put it, "6,000 tulip bulbs"). No actual act at all was charged. Bail was immediately set at a hundred thousand dollars for each alleged conspirator.

In addition to demanding this exceptionally high bail the DA's office warned all bondsmen not to write bonds for the defendants. One bondsman told a defense lawyer that he could not—dared not—make bail without specific approval from the prosecution.

The next day, April 3, the police visited the mother of a 17-year-old high school student, frightening her so that she telephoned his older brother, Lee Berry, then in the hospital, asking him to deal with them. He called the police and offered to answer their questions in the hospital. Mr. Berry is a disabled veteran recently returned with an honorable discharge after almost a year's service in Vietnam. He suffers from serious service-induced epilepsy and was undergoing treatment when the police arrived at the hospital. They dragged him from his bed telling the doctor that he was "a murderer, an arsonist and a Black Panther," handcuffed him, and took him to the station house. Despite the fact that he was nowhere mentioned in the indictment and that his brother, seeing his name in the paper, surrendered to the police next day and was released on \$10,000 bail, Mr. Berry was held in jail, forced to sleep on a bed without a mattress, and kept in conditions which brought on repeated seizures. His complaints to the prison doctor that he was receiving insufficient medication elicited only a storm of racist abuse. Finally he collapsed and was transferred to Bellevue where he now lies in a coma.

All the prisoners have been subjected to exceptionally harsh and punitive treatment; in addition the conditions of their imprisonment make it impossible for them to confer together or hold reasonable consultations about their defense with their attorneys.

The men have been assigned to five different prisons in four boroughs; the women are in the Women's House of Detention, 6th Avenue and 8th Street, Manhattan.

The men are all kept under 24-hour surveillance in their cells with lights burning day and night and are often forced to submit to hourly visits of inspection so that it is impossible for them to sleep or even rest. They are forbidden the use of recreational facilities, television or reading material.

Their lawyers finally succeeded in getting a hearing on reduction of bail three and a half months after their arrest—August 13, 1969. The report of the hearing in the next day's *New York Times* makes it clear that even the judge was amazed at the enormous bail demanded in view of the nature of the defendants. The report reads:

Lawyers representing 14 alleged Black Panther party members argued in Federal Court yesterday that the state's money bail system was unconstitutional.

They also charged that "excessive bail" up to \$100,000 in which their clients are held deprived them of their freedom and ability to prepare properly for trial, merely because they are poor.

Convicted murderers in New York who can afford \$25,000 and \$35,000 have been permitted to go free pending appeal, said William M. Kunstler, one of the lawyers, adding that most of the Black Panther defendants had no prior criminal records.

Mrs. Elizabeth DuBois, appearing as "friend of the court" on behalf of the N.A.A.C.P. Legal Defense and Educational Fund, argued:

"If a person able to supply \$100,000 has a right to be set free these defendants do."

District Judge Edmund L. Palmieri commented that it "would overturn some of our very fundamental concepts" to deal with the questions as suggested by the lawyers, although he conceded that "the poor are disadvantaged by the system."

Mrs. DuBois, Mr. Kunstler and Gerald Lefcourt, another attorney, cited several decisions that they said had set a precedent for a Federal Court to direct a state court to reduce bail.

Judge Palmieri asked Assistant District Attorney Joseph A. Phillips whether it was true that some of the defendants had no prior records.

Mr. Phillips replied that "each defendant is responsible for acts of all the others in a conspiracy."

"Once you prove it beyond a reasonable doubt after a trial in court," Judge Palmieri commented.

"If you assume these defendants are innocent for all purposes," Mr. Phillips answered, "then there should not have been any indictment."

"It is necessary for me to point out," Judge Palmieri said, "that their guilt has not been proved," and he asked again about individual criminal records. "You just can't deal with these defendants as a conglomerate."

After searching through his records, Mr. Phillips informed the judge that one of the defendants had a record of three arrests.

"Arrests, no convictions?" asked the judge, and the spectators, Panther sympathizers who jammed the courtroom, laughed and applauded.

Further questioning by the judge elicited the information that the arrests had been for petty offenses, and "at least 8 or 10 years old."

The spectators laughed, and the judge barely suppressed a smile when Mr. Phillips said that another of the defendants was guilty of living with a man she was not legally married to.

Judge Palmieri directed Mr. Phillips to provide him with previous records of all defendants, and reserved decision on the plea for lower bail.

The defendants are charged with a conspiracy to blow up department stores and railroad tracks, and murder policemen. Ten are held in bail of \$100,000 each, two in \$50,000 and one in \$25,000. One is free on \$10,000 bail.

Despite the excellent record of almost all the defendants and the lack of any evidence of a probable intention to break bail, the judge evidently felt it impolitic to resist the pressure of the DA's office and the defendants are till held for "ransom money" to the tune of almost \$100,000 each.

One of the two women is Joan Bird, a twenty-year-old teaching assistant at PS 175 and evening student of nursing at the Bronx Community College. She was graduated with honors from Cathedral High School and had no previous conviction. She is held for \$100,000.

The other woman prisoner is Afeni Shakur (Alice Williams), a twenty-two-year-old writer. She had handled a kindergarten class during the teacher's strike of 1968. Before that she had been employed by the Manpower Training Commission and had never been arrested before. She was held for \$100,000 bail.

The three oldest men are Robert Collier, thirty-two, Curtis Powell, thirty-three, and Clark Squire, thirty-two.

Mr. Collier is married and has one child. He was employed as staff director of the Tompkins Square Community Center until its funds were cut off in January, 1969, and was to be re-employed there as soon as the process of refunding by the Urban Coalition was completed. He had been recommended as a member of the Lower

East Side Planning Board No. 3 by Percy Sutton, Borough President of Manhattan. His bail was set at \$100,000.

Dr. Curtis Powell is married and has two children. His wife was six months pregnant at the time of his arrest and gave birth prematurely shortly thereafter. He was not permitted to visit her in the hospital even after the infant had died there. Dr. Powell is a biochemist engaged in cancer research at Columbia Presbyterian Medical Center. His \$14,000 annual salary ceased at the time of his arrest and his family has had to apply for relief. He received an honorable discharge from the army after serving in the Korean war. He has no prior police record. His bail was set at \$50,000.

Ali Bey Hassan (Mr. John J. Casson), thirty-one years old, was employed by the Black Panther Party as a community educator and organizer. He has no previous Lumumba Abdul Shakur, twenty-six years old, was employed by the Harlem Community Council. His wife and three children are left totally without resources. Bail, \$100,000.

Mr. Lee Berry, married, twenty-five years old, is now seriously ill because of the interruption of his treatment for epilepsy. Since his discharge from the army with a 70% liability he has worked as a photographer and actor. He has no previous record. His bail was set at \$100,000.

Mr. Walter Johnson, twenty-four, worked as a grocery clerk. He had no previous arrests or convictions. Bail, \$100,000.

Mr. Richard Moore, twenty-four, is married and works as a photo letterer operator and artist. He has had one previous conviction. Bail, \$100,000.

Michael Tabor, twenty-two, is married and his wife was arrested with him although she is nowhere mentioned in the indictment. He was employed as an artist by the Black Panther Party. He had one previous conviction. Bail, \$50,000.

Alan McKiever, 19, Eddie Josephs, 17, and Lonnie Epps, 17, are students at Benjamin Franklin, Evander Childs and Long Island High Schools. The first two are held for bail of \$100,000 and \$25,000. Lonnie Epps had been released on a bail bond of \$10,000.

Five men named in the indictment have not been located and two are being held in connection with another case in New Jersey.

In May, after failing to secure any substantial reduction of bail or any improvement in the conditions of imprisonment, Gerald Lefcourt, one of the attorneys for the defense, filed several important motions which are still pending. The first, stripped of some legal verbiage, reads as follows:

Notice of Motion for an order respecting the conditions of defendants' incarceration and the exercise of their right to counsel and to prepare for trial

Here Lefcourt sought for an order:

(a) directing the Commissioner of Corrections to bring together in one room in an institution under his control all the defendants for the purpose of affording the defendants adequate opportunity to prepare for trial and consult with counsel in the exercise of their Sixth and Fourteenth Amendment rights under the U.S. Constitution;

(b) directing the Commissioner of Correction and his agents

(1) to release the defendants Powell, Berry, Collier, Moore, Casson, Shakur, Tabor and Squires from 24-hour lock-up;

(2) to permit said defendants their normal rights to access to library facilities, television and recreation;

(3) to permit the defendant Powell the exercise of his full marital right to be visited daily by his wife;

(4) to transfer the defendant Berry to a hospital for treatment of his epileptic seizures;

(5) to permit the defendant Casson his rights to visit with his wife.

(6) to turn off the lights in the cells in which the defendants Casson, Shakur, Tabor, Squires, and Johnson are incarcerated during the night time hours; and

(7) to cease and desist from visiting any punishment on all defendants herein prior to trial;

(c) directing the Commissioner of Corrections and his agents from reading any correspondence between attorneys and defendants herein;

(d) directing the District Attorney, Police Department and Department of Corrections to refrain from and/or cease and desist from any and all kinds of surveillance and harassment of the attorneys for the defendants herein, including but not limited to, surveillance of conferences between the defendants and their attorneys while the defendants are incarcerated.

[As this goes to press in January, 1970, most of the charges made in the above motion have been accepted by the court, which ordered the physical conditions of imprisonment ameliorated. The relief came too late for Mr. Berry who is on the critical list at Bellevue.]

Mr. Lefcourt also filed a series of motions further detailing and objecting to the "sadistic conditions of imprisonment which have been visited upon the defendants with the design . . . of destroying them physically and psychologically." He mentions the authorities' eavesdropping on confidential counselor-client consultations; the incarceration of the defendants in four different boroughs so that ten separate applications for the reduction of bail have had to be commenced in Manhattan, Brooklyn, Queens and the Bronx. Finally he filed a motion charging that the District Attorney, Frank Hogan:

the prosecutor in the case herein, personally conducted a press conference prior to the arraignment of all the defendants herein and as a result of said press conference, widespread prejudicial publicity in all the media resulted.

He further charged:

That Hogan utilized and authorized "unidentified spokesmen" to divulge prejudicial pre-trial information to the media with the design and aim of deliberately violating defendants' rights to a fair trial, and that Hogan, through his agents, acting alone or in concert with members of the Police Department, alerted representatives of the media, including photographers, to accompany and attend law enforcement officers who arrested the defendants so as to gain publicity gravely detrimental to the defendants' case.

He also declared:

That unknown agents of the Police Department have engaged in a systematic practice of developing news stories in the media which are prejudicial to the fair trial rights of the defendants.

As a result of these and other actions of law enforcement officials widespread media coverage of the defendants' arrests and pre-trial proceedings have resulted.

Mr. Lefcourt's motion had attached to it 21 lurid stories planted in the *Times*, the *Post* and the *News* between April 2 and May 27, 1969. He concludes:

The contents of these stories, the photographs used with them the screaming headlines—even the pictures of the District Attorney before the microphone of NBC—clearly indicate that the trial of this case has been carried on in the media so as to influence the ultimate decision and thus to violate the rights of the defendants to a fair trial.

Indeed the whole press hysteria which has been generated by the People is reminiscent of the 1950's and the era of witch hunts; it is also reminiscent of the atmosphere that existed during the trial of Sacco and Vanzetti and Dr. Sam Sheppard, to name but a few of the celebrated victims of trial by prejudice.

With little assistance from the broad liberal and civil rights movement the Panthers and their lawyers have fought heroically for the last nine months and have been successful in halting the DA's attempt to railroad the case through immediately after the initial arrests. (His original time table actually called for a trial four weeks after indictment, to be completed before the summer court recess.) Their resources are now totally exhausted and new attacks are mounted in Chicago, Los Angeles, New Haven—everywhere in the United States every day. We must build a broad defense movement here in New York which can inform the public, bring pressure on the city administration and raise funds for necessary legal expenses.

In a recorded talk during the early days of the Black Panther Party, Chairman Bobby Seale told how its platform had been drawn up, and presented the 10 point program. This has been reprinted substantially unchanged, in virtually every issue of the *Black Panther* since under the title:

Black Panther Party
Platform and Program

WHAT WE WANT
WHAT WE BELIEVE

Bobby Seale speaking:

"Now, when we first organized the Black Panther Party for Self-Defense, Huey said, 'Bobby, we're going to draw up a basic platform . . . that the mothers who struggled hard to raise us, that the fathers who worked hard to feed us, that the young brothers in school who come out of school semi-literate, saying and reading broken words, that all of these can read . . .'

"Huey said, 'First we want freedom, we want power to determine the destiny of our black communities.

" 'Number two: We want full employment for our people.

" 'Number three: We want housing fit for shelter of human beings.

" 'Number four: We want all black men to be exempt from military service.

" 'Number five: We want decent education for our black people in our communities that teaches us the true nature of this decadent, racist society and that teaches black people and our young black brothers and sisters their place in the society, for if they didn't know their place in society and in the world, they can't relate to anything else.

" 'Number six: We want an end to the robbery by the white racist businessmen of black people in their community.

" 'Number seven: We want an immediate end to police brutality and murder of black people.

" 'Number eight: We want all black men held in city, county, state and Federal jails to be released because they have not had a fair trial because they've been tried by all-white juries, and that's just like being tried in Nazi Germany, being a Jew.

" 'Number nine: We want black people when brought to trial to be tried by members of their peer group, and a peer being one who comes from the same economic, social, religious, historical and racial background . . . they would have to choose black people from the black community to sit upon the jury. They would have to choose some of them mothers who have been working twenty years in Miss Anne's kitchen, scrubbing floors like my mother has done. They'd have to choose some of them hard-working fathers . . . some of those brothers who stand on the block out there wondering where they're going to get a gig . . .'

"And number ten: Huey said, let's summarize it: 'We want land, we want bread, we want housing, we want clothing, we want education, we want justice, and we want peace.'"

"What's the newest grief?"

"That of an hour's age doth hiss the speaker; each minute teems a new one."

Macbeth, Act IV, Scene 3.

The 23 items given below are taken from 48 major police-Panther "incidents" listed by the American Civil Liberties Union in a press release dated December 12, 1969. These 23 were selected because even without knowledge of any disputed facts the illegal and violent part played by federal, state and/or local law enforcement officers is clear in each of them. In every case serious damage was done to people or property or both, violence was used by the police, and charges were either never preferred or finally dropped. Meanwhile the victims had been harassed, injured and compelled to waste time, money and energy.

The concluding summary is excerpted from an article in the *New York Times* for Sunday, December 21, 1969.

1968

- Jan. 16 — San Francisco police, without warrant, raid the home of Eldridge Cleaver. No arrests are made.
- Feb. 25 — Bobby and Artie Seale are arrested in their own home by Oakland police without warrant. Charges of "conspiracy to murder" made against Bobby Seale are dropped. A year later the arrests for "conspiracy to riot" are ruled illegal and dropped on 1/29/69. Four other Panthers arrested near the Seale home on the same pretext are released. Charges against two are dropped. The other two had been killed by that time.
- Apr. 6 — Cleaver, David Hilliard and six others are charged with the "attempted murder" of two Oakland policemen. Charges are dropped by the district attorney. Bobby Hutton is shot and killed by police after surrendering in an alleged "shoot-out."
- Sept. 12-13— Denver police arrest seven juveniles as "delinquent" and three Panthers as "contributing." Panthers are all released for lack of any testimony against them.
- Sept. 12-13 — Denver police arrest one Panther and kill another for alleged sniping. No one else was injured.
- Sept. Colorado chairman of the BPP is arrested for arson. No evidence is offered for the charge and it is finally dismissed.
- Nov. 19 — Eight Panthers are arrested on charges of shooting at police. Charges are dropped against seven. One is charged with the robbery of a service station in San Francisco.
- Dec. 28 — Panther Headquarters in Jersey City is firebombed by "2 white men wearing police style uniforms."

1969

- Apr. 2 — 21 persons identified by police as Panthers are arrested in New York for conspiracy to blow up the botanical gardens, department stores, etc. No overt act is charged. No one had any recent or serious police record. Bail was set at over \$2 million.
- Apr. 28 — San Francisco police, using tear gas, raid BPP headquarters and arrest sixteen. Twelve are released with no charges filed. Four are finally charged with "illegal use of sound equipment."
- May 1 — Los Angeles police raid Los Angeles BPP headquarters, seize weapons and arrest eleven. All eleven released with no charges filed.
- June 3 — FBI in Chicago raid BPP headquarters and arrest eight present for "harboring a fugitive." No fugitive is found. Police confiscate money, membership lists, literature. All eight are released with no charges filed.

- Confiscated material is *not* returned. Chicago police had cordoned off area in advance.
- June 4 — Detroit police raid BPP headquarters and arrest three, charging office worker Anita Hartman with possession of stolen goods. All three released; Hartman indictment dropped.
- June 5 — Denver police raid BPP headquarters and arrest ten. Two are held on federal warrants charging flight to avoid New Haven prosecution. Eight released with no charges filed.
- June 5 — BPP lieutenant in Santa Ana is arrested by police, charged with shooting an officer and held for a month. Charge dropped 7/6/69.
- June 6 — Sacramento police using tear gas raid BPP headquarters "in search of alleged sniper." No sniper found. Headquarters wrecked. Mayor condemns wanton destruction of food, office equipment, etc.
- July 31 — Police raid BPP headquarters in Chicago. Headquarters is totally destroyed. Three wounded Panthers are arrested for "attempted murder, aggravated assault, resisting arrest" during the raid.
- Sept. 4 — San Diego police raid BPP headquarters "in search of murder suspect" who is not found. Seize weapons and ammunition.
- Sept. 20 — Black Panther member Walter Toure Pope is killed by two Los Angeles policemen who claim he had fired on them.
- Dec. 3 — David Hilliard, only Panther leader alive and free, arrested for threatening the life of President Nixon when Hilliard said (in the course of a public speech), "We will kill Richard Nixon—we will kill *any* mother-fucker that stands in the way of our freedom."
- Dec. 4 — Illinois Black Panther Chairman, Fred Hampton, and Peoria leader Mark Clark are killed by massive shooting raid of police on Hampton's apartment (see detailed account of massacre, p.). Four other Panthers are seriously wounded. Two police injured.
- Dec. 8 — Police raid BPP headquarters in Los Angeles. Three Panthers are wounded. 21 are arrested in coordinated raids in three different locations including pregnant woman who suffers a miscarriage.

Chicago—The "war" between the Black Panther party and the police—a series of clashes that has resulted in the death, injury or arrest of a number of Panthers—has all but decimated the party's leadership and has raised a host of disturbing questions.

Last Friday, Jerris Leonard, head of the Justice Department's Civil Rights Division, announced that he would head a special Justice Department task force to investigate whether the civil rights of two Black Panthers were violated when they were killed in a pre-dawn raid here. [Mr. Leonard had, earlier, publicly declared: "The Black Panthers are nothing but hoodlums and we've got to get them."]

...
The announcement, which brought the number of official and unofficial investigations of the slaying to eight, was a recognition that very serious doubts had been raised about the police version of the raid, and that there was growing belief that the avowedly revolutionary Panthers had been singled out for special attention by law enforcement agencies.

But the Justice Department's action was greeted with skepticism in some quarters because of a growing feeling, particularly in the black community, that the Federal Administration has had a hand in the recent wave of raids, arrests and shoot-outs involving the Panthers.

...
The Panthers charge that the Justice Department is leading a national conspiracy to wipe them out. In recent weeks, their contention has been echoed by more moderate civil rights leaders, including Roy Wilkins, executive director of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, who has said that the recent incidents "take on the aspect of a police vendetta."

And Jay A. Miller, executive director of the Illinois division of the American Civil Liberties Union, said Mr. Leonard told him last spring that "the Black Panthers are nothing but hoodlums and we've got to get them."

The Justice Department has issued a carefully worded statement saying that it has "never had any policy of concerted activity with local police in order to harass any member of the Black Panther Party."

[Yet J. Edgar Hoover, testifying before a House subcommittee on the need of more funds, described one of his functions vis-a-vis the Panthers by saying:

In addition, where pertinent, state and local authorities have been kept advised of information gathered in this field and the prompt dissemination of such information often enables them to take preventive measures to forestall acts of violence as it develops.]

But the attitude of the Administration toward the organization is clear. Vice President Agnew, who frequently says bluntly what his colleagues may muffle in officialese, has called the Panthers a "completely irresponsible, anarchistic group of criminals."

After Attorney General John N. Mitchell took over the Justice Department last January, he ruled that the Panthers were a threat to national security and thus subject to Federal Bureau of Investigation wiretapping under the controversial—and as yet untested—"Mitchell doctrine."

The Government actions appear to have at least contributed to a climate of opinion among local police, who hardly need encouragement to go after the flamboyant militants, that a virtual open season has been declared on the Panthers.

Throughout the summer and fall there had been raids, usually in the pre-dawn hours, on Panther offices and apartments in cities across the country. Usually the offices were torn apart in the process, and frequently charges, made after the raid, were later dropped for lack of evidence.

On Dec. 4, police assigned to the Cook County State's Attorney's office raided a West Side apartment at 4:40 a.m., and in the process Fred Hampton, the 21-year-old chairman of the Illinois Panthers and regarded as one of the most effective leaders still in circulation, and another black Panther were shot to death.

...
There were no bullet holes visible in the places where the police said they were in the cramped five-room apartment, but there were many bullet holes in the places where the Panthers were. This made some persons suspicious. [A few days later Hanrahan released photos purporting to support the police story. Press reports in Chicago and picture blow-ups proved the photos to be falsely labelled. Properly re-labelled they unequivocally supported the Panthers' account.] There were widespread demands for an investigation. A citizens group, which includes former Attorney General Ramsey Clark and former Supreme Court Justice Arthur Goldberg, has been formed to look into the Hampton slaying as well as other clashes between the police and Panthers.

The immediate effect of the incidents in Chicago and elsewhere has been a rallying of

support for the Panthers by more moderate black organizations and by members of all segments of the Negro community who have previously felt little attraction for the Panthers' revolutionary doctrine.

A well-dressed Negro mother summed up the feeling of the black community here as she walked with her family to a packed rally in a church a few days after the shooting.

"They came in and killed Fred Hampton," she said in a soft, very warm tone. "And if they can do it to him, they can do it to any of us."

Today, as we enter on a new decade, the conscience and concern of white liberals have begun to stir. The American Civil Liberties Union has undertaken a nation-wide survey and declares:

The record of police actions across the country against the Black Panther Party forms a prima facie case for the conclusion that law enforcement officials are waging a drive against the black militant organization resulting in various civil liberties violations. . . . in one New York case the arresting officer acknowledged that he had no evidence but had been instructed to "get on the books" the arrest of a particular Panther who was already on the books of an adjoining county. . . .

ACLU affiliates in New York and Indiana report infiltration by government informants into black groups thought to be Panthers for purposes of entrapment. The evidence indicates that government agents have attempted to induce black militants to burglarize, in one case offering automatic weapons, in another providing a map of the likely target, a getaway car and the offer of weapons. . . .

Other police actions which bear out charges of harassment are reported from Chicago where police and FBI agents undertook a June 4th dawn raid on Panther headquarters with an arrest warrant for George Sams, but no search warrant. Upon smashing down the door of the office and failing to find George Sams, enforcement officials broke up furniture, confiscated literature, lists of donors and petitions and arrested eight Panthers on charges so flimsy they were later dismissed. The following day a similar raid was made in Detroit, the door broken down, documents photographed, three Panthers arrested on specious charges and later released.

. . . high national officials, by their statements and actions, have helped to create the climate of oppression and have encouraged local police to institute the crack-down.

Concluding this report at a press interview in New York on December 19 the Executive Director of the ACLU warned that such police excesses could lead to a police state. Those of us who remember the indifference of the silent majority in Germany to the first "police excesses" against the Jews in the early thirties, or the unconcern of the silent majority in the United States when the UnAmerican Activities Committee hounded "communist sympathizers" here in the fifties, need no argument to convince us that liberty is indivisible. Indeed, we have already seen, in Mayor Daley's Chicago, police violence officially employed against white Reform Democrats as well as black radicals.

But to recognize this danger to the bill of rights and ourselves is considerably less than half our responsibility. The case of the Black Panthers involves more than a general question of civil liberties. It involves a brutal legal lynching of those who champion the most oppressed and most desperate Americans. Racism is the ugliest and worst evil in American life. Those of us in the white community who do not want to be a party to it must join in combatting it. As Eldridge Cleaver says, "If you are not part of the solution you are part of the problem." Silence today means complicity. Let us break that silence and together defend human dignity.

A CALL TO CONSCIENCE

As citizens of the United States and residents of New York City, we have observed with anger and frustration the upsurge of racism, the accelerating separation of the races in the last year, and the callous disregard by our Mayor and City officialdom of the just demands of our Negro and Puerto Rican citizens.

Racism is at the heart of the refusal of New York to come to grips with the unbearable conditions of life imposed upon a million and a half New Yorkers.

We refuse to permit our city to continue down the disastrous path of Birmingham, Alabama; Jackson, Mississippi; and Albany, Georgia. Our racism differs from that of Birmingham, Jackson and Albany only in the hypocrisy of our public utterances.

In the name of the "Open City", we have permitted housing segregation to grow through public and private building. We have ignored the rat-infested, neglected slums and winked at those who profit from the overcrowding and deterioration made possible by enforced segregation.

In the name of "School Integration", we have paired eight schools while continuing to build and plan for the construction of hundreds of new segregated schools; we tolerate a dual system that favors the privileged and keeps fully half of our public school children imprisoned in inferior ghetto schools. 85 percent of the eighth graders in the segregated schools cannot read and write above the fifth grade level.

We declare a "War on Poverty" while permitting discrimination in employment and less than subsistence wages for Negro and Puerto Rican workers. Both Governor Rockefeller and Mayor Wagner have evaded enforcing non-discrimination clauses even on the very government contracts which they award.

We turn our backs on the youth of our city, while nearly 40 percent of the Negro and Puerto Rican teenagers are out of work and despair of ever finding a job. And then we remain silent while the public press daily attacks the youth of the ghettos as hoodlums.

When the people of the Harlems of our city inevitably rise up to demand redress of their grievances, we greet them with official indifference, public hysteria and police bullets.

By day the white community profits through segregation;
by night the white community walks in fear of the real
and imagined terrors it has evoked.

The Negro community is fighting these evils. Whoever in the white community is silent today is in fact condoning them. We call on those citizens of New York who have been silent only because they could not find a way to make their voices heard, to come together, in the spirit of the Abolitionist societies of a hundred years ago, to expose the nature of our segregated way of life and do all that may be necessary to change it.

CHARTER GROUP FOR A PLEDGE OF CONSCIENCE
January 1, 1965

CHARTER GROUP FOR A PLEDGE OF CONSCIENCE

P.O. Box 346, Cathedral Station, N. Y., N. Y. 10025

COMMITMENT

1. I recognize the responsibility of the white community for racial discrimination and for overcoming the conditions caused by it.
2. I believe we must attack these evils at home, in our own community New York City.
3. I pledge to promote whatever measures may be necessary, in concert with others of like mind, to abolish these evils here.

.....
signature

.....
date

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