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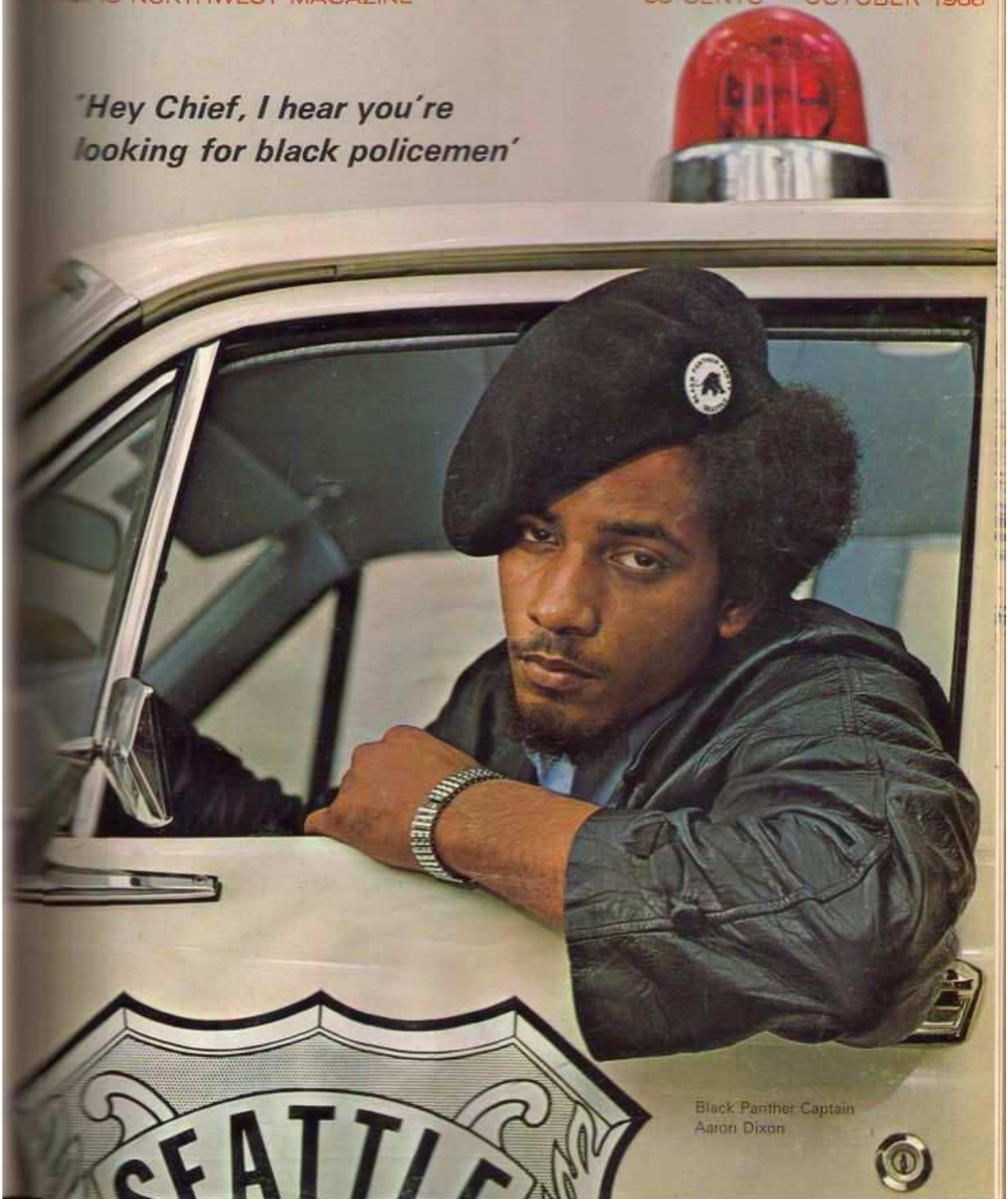
'Hey Chief, I hear you're looking for black policemen'



Black Panther Captain
Aaron Dixon

BLACK PANTHERS ON THE PROWL

by Patrick Douglas

The address could hardly be less imposing. The numerals over the narrow doorway on 34th Avenue read 1127½. To the right of the doorway is a plate-glass window filled with posters of angry-looking young men, and behind the window is a 12-by-15-foot room that contains three battered desks, a small stereo set and a mimeograph machine. During most of the day, the room is seldom inhabited by more than four or five people. The anonymity of these quarters is, however, misleading, for at night they serve as a meeting place for members of the local chapter of the Black Panther Party, a growing national organization which may soon take over the leadership of the increasingly violent Negro revolution.

The Seattle Black Panthers came into being last spring after three militant youths were arrested for leading a sit-in at Franklin High School on March 29. Although more than 75 students had participated in the demonstration, indictments were sought against only five, including Aaron Dixon, Carl Miller and Larry Gossett, all of whom were members of the Black Student Union at the U. of W. and of the Student Non-

Coordinating Committee (SNCC).

With the same get-tough behavior that has marked his handling of other explosive racial [*Seattle*, September, 1968], King County Prosecutor Charles O. Carroll asked that bail be set at $1,250 for Dixon and at [illegible] for Miller and Gossett—a request which Justice Court Judge Evangeline [illegible] readily complied. The next day, attorneys for the defendants filed a writ of habeas corpus, arguing that the establishment of such high levels of bail was a violation of both the state and federal constitutions. Presiding Judge Frank James of Superior Court agreed to hear their appeal, and at the conclusion of the hearing, released all the defendants on their personal recognizance"—an action which brought wild applause from the predominantly black audience and which, according to informed sources, threw the county prosecutor into a rage.

Immediately after their release from jail, Dixon and Miller—along with Dixon's younger brother, Elmer, and another SNCC member, E. J. Brisker—flew to San Francisco. There, they attended the Western Regional Black Youth Conference, which decided that SNCC would merge with the recently formed Black Panther Party. On the second day of the conference, the four Seattle blacks took a bus over to Oakland to attend the funeral of Bobby Hutton, a young Panther who had been shot by Oakland police, and that night they heard an address by Robert Seale, who, along with Huey Newton, had organized the Oakland Panthers some 18 months earlier. "Seale was very angry about the shooting of Hutton," recalls Dixon, "and his suggestion that we stop talking and start acting made quite an impression on everyone. After he had finished speaking, the four of us decided to start a Black Panther Party in Seattle."

Around the end of April, Seale himself flew up to Seattle to give his official blessing to the fledgling chapter. He appointed Aaron Dixon "captain" and, in addition, appointed representatives to recruit members from the U. of W. and from Garfield and Franklin High Schools. "Before he left," says Dixon, "he gave me a stack of things to read, such as France Fanon's *Wretched of the Earth*, Mao Tse Tung's *Red Book*, and Che Guevara's *Guerilla Warfare*." For the next month, Dixon and his "brothers" drummed up support in the schools and on the street corners, and toward the end of May they held a public meeting in a warehouse at the corner of 28th and Madison. The meeting was attended by 52 young blacks—"a good many more," says Dixon, "than I had expected." Less than a month after this meeting, the Panthers moved into their present headquarters on 34th Avenue.

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On the right-hand wall of these quarters is a cartoon which, as well as any other single document, describes the policies of the Black Panther Party—and which, in more general terms, reveals why this past summer's racial violence was so different from that of the previous year. The drawing shows a young black being apprehended by a pair of well-armed "pigs" (the Panther term for policemen, whose physiognomy, in Panther caricatures, always looks decidedly porcine). Meanwhile, just around the corner, a trio of heavily armed Panthers is coming to his rescue. "No more riots," reads the cryptic caption. "Two's and three's."

This cartoon, like others posted in the headquarters, was clipped from The Black Panther, *a bi-weekly newspaper published at the party's headquarters in Oakland. (The paper has not appeared in recent months because most party leaders are in jail.) In addition to providing a running account of the Panther-versus-pig battle in the Oakland area, the publication serves as an organ of general revolutionary propaganda:*

> We start with the basic definition [reads a "Black Paper" by Eldridge Cleaver, the party's Minister of Information, a member of the staff of *Ramparts Magazine* and the author of *Soul on Ice—Seattle*, June, 1968] that black people in America are a colonized people in every sense of the term and that white America is an organized Imperialist force holding black people in colonial bondage. From this definition our task becomes clearer: what we need is a revolution in the white mother country and national liberation for the black colony.

The actual methods of this revolution are suggested in the paper's account of an incident in Pittsburgh, California, in which a half-dozen white policemen—whom the Panthers regard simply as occupation troops—were wounded by sniper fire. "Their uprising," reads the account, "put six honkies [the militant Negro's derisive name for whites] out of commission; only one brother was injured; and no black people were killed. From now on, planned, organized rebellion is the only way we carry on our revolution."

The goal of this revolution is theoretically spelled out in the party's Ten-Point Program—which demands such steps as "an immediate end to police brutality," as well as a "United Nations-supervised plebiscite to be held throughout the black colony. . . for the purpose of determining the will of black people as to their national destiny"—but a more coherent description of the party's immediate aims is contained in a monthly Review *sent out from Oakland last June:*

> It seems to us [says the *Review*] that black power, while perhaps lacking the emotional appeal of nationalism, can become an extremely important unifying force around which a program embracing both reform and revolution can be worked out. Such a program would have to include two interrelated aspects: First, a demand for complete black control over all the institutions which actually function in the ghetto—police, schools, businesses (the latter, including rental housing, should be taken over by cooperatives rather than by private businessmen). Second, a large WPA-type program to provide jobs at decent wages for all who need them. . . .
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> One final question [the *Review* concludes]: if significant successes were achieved through a program of this kind, would the result not be to turn the whole black movement into reformist channels and purge it of its revolutionary character? The danger of course exists. But. . .it should not be overestimated. . . . United States blacks are in a very real sense part of the Third World which can survive and develop only by carrying through to the end the revolutionary people's war against United States imperialism.

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Aaron Dixon, the 19-year-old captain of the Seattle Panthers, does not like to talk to reporters—or, for that matter, to anyone. Seated in a booth in Bob's Cafe, located at 12th and Madison, he sprawls his six-foot, cat-like frame down the length of the bench and occasionally picks up a copy of the Sunday *P-I* and turns absentmindedly through the pages.

It is not that Dixon is intentionally rude. According to Tom Gayton, a black law student at the U. of W. who, this past summer, managed the ACLU's new office in the Central Area, "Dixon is a very sensitive person who has become involved in the Panthers out of his deep concern for his people. He really feels that all blacks are his

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brothers."

Like many revolutionaries, the Panther captain does not come from the bottom of the economic ladder. (Huey Newton, who completed a year of law school, has a similar background.) Born in Chicago, Dixon moved to Seattle at the age of nine, and today he lives with his family in a comfortable, if modest, white two-story house on 33rd Avenue, about two blocks away from the Panther headquarters. Dixon's father, a pleasant, soft-spoken man of 44, works as an illustrator at Boeing, and this fall Dixon begins his second year as an English major at the U. of W. He confirms that part of the money for his education is being supplied by a $200 poetry scholarship awarded him by a local Negro women's group, but he is loath to talk about his literary pursuits—or about his activities as a revolutionary. All information must be elicited by direct and pointed questions.

REPORTER: Does the Seattle Black Panther Party still keep in close touch with the parent group in Oakland?
DIXON: Oh sure.
REPORTER: How is this done?
DIXON: I fly down there every couple of weeks, or sometimes I go to New York.
REPORTER: To talk about party strategy?
DIXON: Yes.
REPORTER: Some people have said that during this past summer the Seattle Panthers tried to cool it. Is that true?
DIXON: No. That story was invented by the white press.
REPORTER: Well, what *did* you do?
DIXON: We merely tried to teach the people the proper method of revolution.

(The reporter recalls the following scene: It is early July and a Panther rally is being held on the steps of Garfield High School. One of the Panther leaders is speaking over a microphone in protest against the conviction of Dixon, Gossett and Miller in the Franklin sit-in trial; gathered around him is a group of about 150 young blacks and, on the edge of the crowd, a couple of ACLU lawyers. Suddenly, there is a terrific crash, and the crowd turns to see a group of teenagers at the Bulldog Drive-In across the street throwing rocks at a TV newswagon.

("Look at those stupid kids!" yells the Panther speaker, almost in tears. "They're just going to get shot by the pigs. If you're ready to fight, don't throw rocks in broad daylight; get yourself a gun and go out at night!")

REPORTER: Your organization was originally called the Black Panther Party for Self-Defense. Is it still designed only for defense, or might you eventually take the offensive?
DIXON: As Huey has explained, the panther never attacks first, but when he is backed into a corner, he will strike back viciously.
REPORTER: Then I suppose it all depends on how you define 'backed into a corner.'
DIXON: Yes. You see, we've been backed into a corner for the last 400 years, so anything we do now is defensive.

Two gun-toting Panthers stand guard [illegible] secret meeting held in [illegible]script Central Area house.

REPORTER: Over at your headquarters yesterday, I heard someone mention 'quiet-side activities.' What are they?
DIXON: Well, suppose this restaurant were up one night and nobody saw who did it. That would be a quiet-side activity. That's the way to fight a revolution.

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Despite the inflammatory nature of some of their tactics against the white community—or at least of their rhetoric—the Panthers are not racists. The Oakland chapter, for example, recently formed an alliance with the predominantly white Peace and Freedom Party, enabling the latter group to gain enough signatures to place its candidates on the California ballot. In return for this assistance, the Peace and Freedom Party endorsed a slate of Black Panther political candidates headed by Eldridge Cleaver, who is running for President of the United States.

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SCENE: A conference of the Washington State Peace and Freedom Party in the basement of the University Methodist Temple. There are about 75 delegates in attendance, most of them old-line Wobblies from places like Everett and Olympia, plus a smattering of SDS-types from the U. of W. Dixon, who was supposed to speak at the beginning of the convention but who arrived about an hour late, is sitting off to one side along with E.J. Brisker and Carl Miller.

The conference is not exactly lively. The most heated discussion so far has been about whether the party's platform should refer to the two major political parties as the "Democratic and Republican Parties" or simply as the "Democratic-Republican Party," the argument for the latter choice being that the two groups are so similar as to be indistinguishable.

Finally, one of the delegates insists that it is high time to hear from the Panthers, and the chairman consents. Amid loud applause, Dixon walks slowly to the microphone, looking quite menacing behind a pair of heavy dark glasses.

"The Black Panthers," says Dixon, "are ready right now to form an alliance with the Peace and Freedom Party, but I don't think that you are ready to join up with us. Before that can happen, you people have to grasp the concept of armed revolution, and from what I've seen today, all you want to do is sit around and talk."

A man in the audience raises his hand, and Dixon nods in his direction.

"Have you ever heard of democracy?" asks the delegate.

"No," replies Dixon. "No I haven't."

Another hand goes up. "I think you should remember," says a white-haired man from Everett, "that this organization is named the Peace and Freedom Party. All of your talk about violence sounds very reactionary."

Dixon leans angrily toward the microphone. "And you," he shouts, "must understand that political power comes out of the barrel of a gun. You can't have power unless you have something to back it up!"

The audience bursts into loud—and prolonged—applause, and Dixon walks confidently back to his seat. A few minutes later, the delegates to the conference—with only a few dissenting votes—endorse the Panther candidates: Eldridge Cleaver for President of the U.S., and E.J. Brisker and Panther Captain Curtis Harris for the Washington State Legislature.

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The Panthers, of course, have little hope of winning any elections; but then, they don't really need to. For the underlying strength of the Black Panther Party is based on forces which are far more predictable than the whim of the voters.

The most significant of these forces is historical. A year ago, in an article examining the challenge to the established Negro leaders by the newly-emerging militants ["The Riot That Almost Happened," Seattle, October, 1967], this writer pointed out that all modern social revolutions have been made up of a series of well-defined stages:

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first comes a moderate, middle-class movement, then a violent, radical "reign of terror," and finally, a conservative reaction and partial restoration of the status quo ante. *Moreover, in all the revolutions that have occurred since 1917, the radical phase has been directed by the same type of organization—a small, well-trained body of hardened revolutionaries.*

In this country, the moderate, nonviolent phase of the Negro revolution was led nationally by The Reverend Martin Luther King and locally by The Reverend John Adams, a former classmate of King at Boston University. But now, Adams has moved to another city (Watts, no less), and King, of course, is dead. As a result, there exists, both nationally and locally, a power vacuum in the black revolution. Enter the Panthers.

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SCENE: The East Madison YMCA, where Alfred Cowles, Executive Secretary of the State Board Against Discrimination, has called a Black Unity meeting to which all members of Seattle's Negro community have been invited. In response, a crowd of more than 200 people has turned out. Unfortunately they are anything but united. In fact, the meeting is in chaos. Black-shirted Panthers are shouting at white-shirted lawyers; housewives are shouting at Model Cities officials. Finally, someone proposes that the group set up a temporary steering committee, and after a stormy voting session, a committee chairman is duly elected. His name is Aaron Dixon.

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"In effect," says one Negro who attended the meeting, "the Black Establishment handed the reins over to the Panthers, represented by a 19-year-old boy. It was a strange situation. The Panthers wanted only to have a voice in the proceedings, not to lead them, yet leadership was forced upon them by the crowd. The Establishment people, on the other hand, were motivated both by a recognition that the Panthers could no longer be ignored and by a desire to give them just enough rope to hang themselves."

As it turned out, the calculations of the Establishment members were more right than wrong. "No sooner had Aaron taken over the mike," continues this source, "than he started preaching all that party crap about revolution, and immediately half the audience tuned him out. The fact is that while Aaron may be a very romantic figure to the kids on the street, he does not yet have the maturity, the experience or the speaking ability to direct and organize large numbers of people. And, in contrast to Oakland," he adds, "this is true of Seattle's Panther leadership in general."

The lack of party organization is readily apparent to anyone visiting the Panther office, where, in all truth, very little seems to happen. (This statement should not be taken categorically, however, because whenever anything important is *afoot, white visitors are always asked to leave.) Most of the time, the headquarters serve as a sort of*

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PANTHERS *continued*

indoor street corner, where the Panthers hang around, drink Dr. Pepper, slap each other on the shoulder, and generally just enjoy being Panthers. Meanwhile, grandiose party schemes remain largely unfulfilled: the political campaign is lagging, a long-planned system for distributing party leaflets is still not in operation, and a fashion show which the female Panthers planned for September 1 somehow never quite materialized.

In a larger sense, however, the Panthers may be important not so much for what they do as for what they represent, and in this sense they have already accomplished quite a bit. "The Panthers," explains Tom Gayton, the young Negro law student, "are the alter ego of every black man in Seattle, and as such have served to bring deep-seated racial frustrations to the surface."

"The chief significance of the Panthers," adds Mike Rosen, an ACLU attorney who is defending Carl Miller in the Franklin sit-in appeal, "is that they have made all black people aware of the racial bias of both the police department and the courts; this accomplishment, plus the Panthers' extremely militant stand on these questions, has shifted the attitudes of the whole black community significantly toward the left."

Thus, residents of the Central Area are beginning to regard the Panthers quite differently from the way most white people regard them. "All the white store owners around here are scared to death of those boys," says Mrs. Ruby Robinson, who lives across the street from the Panther headquarters, "but that's sure not the way I feel. In fact I sleep real sound now that the Panthers have moved in. I have the feeling that they're always around and that if they ever saw anybody trying to break into my house, they'd run over and chase him off."

Other black residents expressed similar feelings last month after a group of 15 Panthers—10 of them carrying unloaded rifles—marched into the office of the principal of Rainier Beach Junior-Senior High School to protest the beating of three black students by a large crowd of whites. (As of this writing, the school was relatively calm, but the atmosphere there was still so tense that anything could happen.) "Frankly," says Mrs. John Warren, the mother of one of the black students who was attacked, "before this happened I felt the Panthers had blown the issue of white racism all out of proportion, but now I feel that what the Panthers are doing is right. They are trying to make people see that the racial situation in Seattle is much worse than most people think it is.

"What's more," she goes on, "the Panthers have told my son they will try to protect him, and I really believe that they will. I'm beginning to doubt that he will be protected by the police. After this incident I talked to the patrolman on duty there, and he admitted that just before the trouble broke out, the white boys involved had crowded around his car and asked him what he would do if they started a fight with a 'bunch of niggers.' He said he told them not to do that because it was against the law. But when I asked him what he did next, he replied, 'I drove around the block.' After I finished talking to the policeman I immediately phoned the Panther office and told them how grateful I was for what they had done."

"The Black Panthers," explains Tom Gayton, "have become sort of an unofficial protective agency. People come to them with all sorts of problems, ranging from eviction notices to kids in trouble with the police. There's a feeling in the ghetto that the Panthers are on the side of the underdog, and as far as I'm concerned, this is all to the good." Gayton's view is endorsed by Superior Court Judge Charles Z. Smith, himself an Establishment Negro. "At least locally," says Smith, "the Panthers have the potential of developing into a positive force in the community, both politically and socially."

If the potential which Judge Smith sees in the Panthers is eventually realized, the main reason will undoubtedly be the strong action

The Panthers, shown here in a recent honor guard for a funeral, stand tall in the eyes of Central Area children.

tion the party holds for young people. The reasons for this attraction are not hard to discover. For one thing, the Black Panthers are today the only *significant organization—with the exception of the campus Black Student Union—among Negro youngsters; for another, the Panthers' militancy reflects the increasingly militant stand taken by so many young people—white as well as black—against the established order. As a result, the Panthers have become the folk-heroes of the ghetto. Young kids hang around the headquarters begging for Panther buttons, 10-year-old boys dress up in berets and black leather jackets, and teenage girls talk about the Panthers in tones of awe and reverence.*

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Joanne Ellis, a member of the party's female corps, is young, effervescent, pretty and bright, and as far as she is concerned, the Panthers are simply "very, very beautiful." Seated now in a booth in the Pancake House on Madison Street, she pours a spoonful of sugar into her cup of coffee and then reaches up to touch the Panther button pinned to the shoulder of her blue knit shirt.

Like most of the Panthers, Joanne comes from what is generally termed a "lower-middle-class background"—her father works as a laborer at Lockheed Shipyards—and, like most black youngsters, she regards the race question differently from the way her parents do. "Both of them come from the South," she says "and they've been brainwashed by the white man—just like every other black person over 40. My father is a follower of the teachings of Martin Luther King, especially his emphasis on non-violence and peace. What he doesn't understand is that in this country, peace can only come through war." She frowns. "That's a bummer, really, but that's the way it is in America.

"I remember last year in school," she continues, "there was only one page in the history book about black people, and all it talked about was how much the *Nee*-gro had improved himself since the Civil War and how much things like sports had done for the *Nee*-gro. What a bunch of junk. I used to get in arguments with my white teacher about this, and he would go into a long harangue and then I would say five words and make him look stupid and everybody would laugh at him and then he would get mad and make me stay after school.

"Every morning," Joanne goes on, "he used to make us pledge allegiance to the flag, but I have this one friend who's a communist and he refused to stand up for the pledge and some of the rest of us stayed seated with him, and so the teacher decided that since we wouldn't pledge allegiance correctly, we wouldn't do it at all. The next morning, though, he showed us a film on patriotism. It showed the typical American family; a white mother and father and a nice white boy and girl who all went to a baseball game, and just before the game started, they all stood up and put their hands over their hearts and sang the Star Spangled Banner. How ridiculous can you get? White kids may feel patriotic towards *their* country, but I don't feel that I *have* a country."

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It was this feeling of alienation, [illegible] Joanne, which prompted her to join the Panthers. "I first heard about the party," she recalls, "from my older sister Betty, who's 20 and works at Boeing—ugh. She showed me the Ten-Point Program and it looked very nice, and then we went to one of the public meetings they hold Tuesday nights at Madrona Presbyterian Church, and that same evening we decided to join. For awhile I wasn't very active, but then I started studying the Program and attending the classes at the Panther office. Eventually I started going there nearly every day. The party became my life."

Surprisingly, though Joanne has two older brothers to whom she is very close, neither of them is a Panther. "I don't know why exactly," she says, "but both of them are very bright and very individualistic, and they only do things they really want to do. Jim, for example, who's a senior at Franklin, just got back from a drive down to California, and Clarence, who's 22, is sort of a typical hippie. He spends a lot of time in the Haight District. I guess they feel the Panthers are sort of narrow in their thinking.

"But the party," she quickly adds, "is not a clique. I've always hated cliques—those groups of girls who would get together and say, 'Okay, tomorrow we're all going to wear plaid, or green, or whatever.' If I thought the Panthers had become a clique, I'd be the first to leave." She hesitates. "Or would I?" She looks down at her coffee cup, which is still full. "I don't know why I ordered coffee. I don't even like it. No, I wouldn't leave. That wouldn't be very loyal. No, I'd stay and help bring the party back to what it is right now—a group which teaches unselfish love for all black people and which struggles to win their freedom."

Eventually, says Joanne, this task will require that black people stage a violent revolution. "I don't know when it will come," she says. "Some people say a year or two, some say five. I just hope I'm around when it does."

Will she herself fight? "I don't know," she answers. "I guess when the revolution comes, I'll want to have a gun. Right now I don't own one because I could never keep it at home, but maybe if my sister gets her own apartment, I can keep one there. The thought of it scares me a little, since I've never shot a gun before—but I'll have to get one eventually. How can you fight in a revolution if you don't have a gun?"

And when the revolution is over, what will things be like then? "I'm not sure really," she says, "because I don't know all the party teachings on this. But I believe that when the revolution is over, we will finally have a country. I don't know yet what it will be like, but we will have a country, you and I."

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Not all the Panthers are as articulate as Joanne Ellis; in fact, most of them are not. Yet, in his own way, each party member exudes much the same revolutionary fervor that she does.

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Membership in the party is open to any black person 16 years of age or older; the only additional stipulation is that each prospective member own at least one weapon. (Apparently this requirement was waived in the case of Joanne.) At present, claims Dixon, the party has roughly 100 members, but it is doubtful that more than half of these are active participants.

Once they have registered with the party secretary, all new members begin a six-week training program. Unlike other black nationalist groups, the Panthers give scant attention to the teaching of Negro civilization. "Culture is nice," says Dixon, "but it won't save your life"; instead, new recruits devote their time to such basic activities as weekly target practice, as well as to classes in "internal education."

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SCENE: The Panther headquarters, where one such class is just beginning. E.J. Brisker, the party's lieutenant of education, is questioning a group of three girls and five boys on their attitudes toward the police.

"The trouble," says a young Garfield co-ed with a bristling, "natural" hair-do, "is that there are so few black people on the force, and the few that *are* are not in touch with the black people. It's gotten to the point where nobody wants to be a pig anymore."

"What we need," says one young male, "is for *black* people to police the ghetto. Maybe the city could even pay the Panthers to do this."

"Yeah," says Brisker, "that's a good idea. But this won't happen tomorrow. Do you think Mayor Braman is ready to put Panthers on his payroll?"

The youth laughs. "Naw man," he says, "not *him*."

"Right," says Brisker. "So what we have to do, first of all, is to educate the people, since a lot of them still don't realize how bad the pigs are. Why, if one of us were to zap [i.e., shoot] a pig tomorrow and then run into a black man's house, that man is just liable to turn us in. We've got to have it so that we can run into any house in the ghetto and they will hide us and feed us for as long as we need to stay there—just like the Viet Cong."

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After this initial training period, the female members of the party, who operate under the command of a captain named Maude Allen, devote most of their time to office work and to organizing fund-raising dances. Meanwhile, their male counterparts, who by this time have begun wearing the Panther uniform of black beret and black leather jacket and using the closed-fist Panther salute, devote their time—in theory at least—to calisthenics and target practice.

Given the Panthers' obvious affection for guns—an affection which borders on fetishism—many white Seattleites have concluded that their organization is no more than a street gang, a sort of western version of Chicago's Blackstone Rangers. This is not the case. Nearly all the Panthers, of course,

are young—the ages vary between 16 and 24—but most either attend Garfield High or the U. of W. or hold a steady job. "The Panthers," says Mike Rosen, "are not dropouts, and they are certainly not hoods. They are a group with a purpose. They're like the white students who marched off to Mississippi a few years ago. Like them, the Panthers have become fed up with the rhetoric of their parents because they see it hasn't changed anything. They believe that change will be produced only by the threat of violence."

Tom Gayton, the young Negro law student, holds a similar view. "The Black Panthers," he says, "are not intellectually inclined; they are a purely activist organization. You will never hear people in the Panther headquarters discuss metaphysical theories of revolution."

This impression is borne out in conversations with individual party members. Invariably, the dialogue becomes a Panther monologue made up of the standard set of party phrases: "the racist dog pig. . . the white racist system . . . political power through the barrel of a gun . . . the Ten-Point Program . . . educating the masses . . . undying love for all black people . . . peace through war . . . ," etc.

Yet, in a larger sense, to accuse the Panthers of being non-intellectual is to accuse them on grounds that are mostly irrelevant. In fact, the characteristics which make the Panthers less than fascinating as individuals—that is, their singlemindedness, their repetitiousness and their penchant for oversimplification—are exactly those which make them potentially so effective as revolutionaries.

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SCENE: The Madrona playground, just down the street from the party's headquarters, where a group of 25 Panthers is drilling. The following day they will form half the honor guard at the funeral of a Panther who was shot by another black man following a quarrel. As Jimmy Davis, an ex-serviceman, begins barking commands, a light rain starts to fall.

"Panthers!. . .Atten-*hut*! . . . A-bout *face*! . . . Left *face*! . . . Right *face*! . . . A-bout *face*! . . . A-bout *face*! . . . Forward *March*! *Hut*, two, three, four, *hut*, two, three, four. Column left . . . *March*! . . . *Hut*, two, three, four. . . ."

For more than an hour the Panthers march up and down the playground, which eventually becomes an ocean of mud. Finally, Davis marches the squad onto a paved area and brings it to a halt. As he does so, there is a flash of lightning and a loud clap of thunder, and the light rain becomes a downpour.

"Panthers! . . . Pa-rade *rest*!"

As Davis walks back a few paces, Aaron Dixon steps forward to address the group. The rain is coming down in great sheets now, but nobody makes a move to break ranks.

"I see," shouts Dixon, leaning forward to make himself heard, "that some of the brothers who were supposed to be here today did not show up—they're off somewhere jiving. The Black Panther Party," he continues, "cannot have people who go off

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A harsh militarism that turns off black intellectuals

...they're supposed to be drilling. ...ght to be disciplined. Right?"

"...!" comes the reply.

"...are the soldiers of the Black Libera... ...army, and this is the only army you ...in. Is that right?

"...

"...can't hear you. Is that right?"

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"...at right?"

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"...at right?"

"...

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"...practice of such harsh militarism—a ...right out of the Army's basic ...program—is, of course, another ex... ...for the party's lack of appeal to ...intellectuals. "I would imagine," says ...Young, "that this is why Carl Miller, ...former Seattle head of SNCC and a ...of the U. of W. Black Student ...and Larry Gossett, the Union's ...regional coordinator, are seldom ...in the Panthers. They're not at all ...by the sound of marching feet."

...theless, it would be a mistake to ...that there is any sort of schism ...the Black Panther Party and the ...Student Union; in fact, the reverse is ...J. Brisker, the party's lieutenant of ..., for example, is the head of the ...at the U. of W., and Aaron Dixon and ...Elmer, as well as a number of other ..., are staunch Union members.

"...a few weeks," points out Robert ..., a Panther who entered the U. of ... as well as the Black Student Union this ... "The concept of a party-union alliance ...expanded with the establishment of ...chapters at Garfield and Franklin High ... The members of these chapters will ...members of the Black Panther Party, ... if the school administrations do not ...their demands—say, for the teaching of ...history and culture—then the Panthers ...will step in." Meanwhile, at the U. ... Law School, an organization of black ...students is being formed at the instiga... ...of Tom Gayton, whose cousin, Philip ..., has recently assumed his duties as ...the Negro member of the U.'s football ...staff and as an assistant to the U.'s ...dent for community relations. ..." says Tom Gayton, "we will ... in cooperation with the BSU, and ..., in turn, will be working closely with ...thers. It could be a formidable ..."

...indeed. In effect, the University ...a pool of intellectual leadership,

continued

and the Panthers will provide a pow... in the ghetto—as well as more black ... for the U. of W. Avers one Panther ... revolutionary's dream."

It is unlikely, of course, that Ame... ever witness a full-scale black revo... The growing Negro middle class is ... to any such development, and should ... revolt break out, white society is ... tionably strong enough to crush it. ... may well occur, however, is an outb... small-scale, urban guerilla warfare ... the black middle class might give p... even active support, and against wh... white society would find it diffi... defend itself—unless, of course, the ... were prepared to employ Vietnam ta... home and thereby "destroy the co... order to save them."

Most black people feel that the like... of such an outbreak depends almost e... on the actions of white people. If the ... majority accepts the present black m... with a measure of understanding, ... possible—just possible—*that the Negr... lution can break the historical pat... violence and proceed in a peaceful f... If, however, white society deals harsh... the black militants, the inevitable re... be not "law and order" but a dizzying ... of violence. Unfortunately, the white ... ity's present course of action—and, ... ally, its reaction to the growth of the ... Panthers—seems almost designed to p... a racial conflagration.*

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The most likely spot for the first ... break of violence is Oakland, where ... Panthers have been involved in a ... battle with police ever since their ... inception. At present, there are two ... *célèbres* among Oakland Panthers: one ... shooting of Bobby Hutton, the other ... recent conviction of Huey Newton ... voluntary manslaughter.

The shooting of Hutton occurred ... April 6 (two days after the assassination ... Martin Luther King) when Oakland po... after the wounding of two of their p... men by an as yet unidentified g... cornered a group of nine Panthers in a ... frame house. After police had filled ... house with tear gas, the Panthers ag... surrender, and the 17-year-old Hutton ... ped through the door. Reportedly, so... then yelled, "He's got a gun!" and the p... shot him dead, only to discover later ... had been unarmed. Two of the other ... thers, including Eldridge Cleaver, ... wounded, and all eight survivors are cu... ly awaiting trial on charges of attem... murder.

The arrest of Newton took place ... October after police had stopped his ca... an Oakland street. When Newton was ... ed outside, a gun battle erupted in ... Newton was wounded and one patr... was killed. At present, Newton's co... is being appealed, and the Oakland Pa... vow that if his appeal is denied, "the s... the limit."

The situation in Seattle is not ye...

...but the same ingredients are clearly ... One of these ingredients is the ... practice (borrowed from Oakland) ...sionally following police cars around ... ghetto and then stepping out into the ... whenever the policemen stop to ques... a Negro. "Our purpose," explains ..., "is merely to prevent police bru... and to advise the suspect of his ..." But the police do not regard the ... with such equanimity, for recently ... appear to have been harassing the ... at every turn.

...most common police tactic is "satur... patrolling" of the area around Panther ...arters. "I've been living in this house ... years," says Mrs. Ruby Robinson, ...ady who lives across the street from the ...office, "and up until recently I used to ... maybe three or four police cars a day. ...since the Panthers moved in, I've seen ... *but* police cars—in fact, one day I ... a total of 66. Lately, this practice ...creased some because so many of us ... neighborhood have complained, but ...mber of cars patrolling this street is ...ridiculously high."

...ation patrolling is only the most ... form of police harassment. The ... direct forms are employed against the ... themselves. For example, one even... July, Curtis Harris, the co-captain of ... Seattle Panthers and a brother-in-law of ... Dixon, was driving along Madison ... with three other Panthers when he ... that he was being followed by a ... car. "When we stopped at a red light," ... Harris, "they pulled up beside us and ... a good look at our faces, and then ... the light changed, they followed us ... until we turned into the parking lot ... from the Blue Post Tavern at Madison ...17th." The four Panthers then entered ...tavern, but a short time later, following a ... incident between a white customer ... a Negro, they left the tavern and ... to their car.

"About three minutes later," says Harris, ...teen pig cars arrived on the scene, but ... of converging on the tavern, they all ... around us. In one of the cars were ... two pigs who had followed us earlier ... evening. The pigs," Harris continues, ...ered us out of our car, and then they ... to search it. In the glove compartment ... found a small pocket knife about two ... a half inches long, and behind the back ... they found a short piece of rubber hose ... my kid had been playing with that ...noon." Following these discoveries, ... was arrested and charged with carry... a "concealed weapon" and a "dangerous ...pon." His trial has been set for the ...th of this month.

...on Dixon has had similar experiences. ... first arrest occurred last December 29, ... three months before the Panthers ... formed. "I had attended a dance at the ... Madison YMCA," recalls Dixon, "and ... the crowd was leaving, some of the ...ger kids started throwing rocks at cars. ...n the pigs arrived, everbody ran except ... *don't run*—and since I was wearing a ... jacket, they took me in."

continued

"On the way to the station," [illegible] continues, "they called me 'bastard' and 'motherfucker,' and said they had just been waiting for something like this to happen for a long time. Then one of them told me he wished I would say something smart so he could kill me." When they reached the station, Dixon was charged with "inciting to riot"—later changed to "loud and boisterous behavior"—but when the case came to court the judge suspended action provided that Dixon stay out of trouble for the next six months.

Dixon did not, of course, "stay out of trouble." Less than three months later he was arrested in connection with the Franklin sit-in, and on June 13, Dixon, along with Larry Gossett and Carl Miller, was found guilty of unlawful assembly. On July 3, Judge James Dore gave each of them the maximum sentence of six months in jail. This case is now being appealed (the hearing is set for the 22nd of this month), and if Judge Dore's decision is upheld, Dixon will not only have to serve this sentence, but will go to court to stand trial for "loud and boisterous behavior."

Toward the end of July, Dixon was apprehended on a more serious charge. On the afternoon of Monday, July 29, [illegible] policemen entered the Panther headquarters and arrested both Dixon and Harris. Although Prosecutor Carroll, who had initiated the action, informed the press almost immediately that the pair was being arrested for possession of a stolen typewriter, he delayed filing charges in Superior Court until the following day. The next morning Harris was released, and Dixon was charged with grand larceny. Judge Story Birdsong complied with Carroll's request that bail be set at $3,000.

The typewriter in question is one which supposedly disappeared from the OEO legal services center around the middle of July. In any case, it is unclear just how the police knew they would find it at Panther headquarters; some officers claim they were tipped off by an anonymous informant, but the Panthers themselves assert that just prior to Dixon's arrest, the police broke into the headquarters, stole more than 100 membership cards and took down the serial numbers of all the typewriters. Then, they say, the police simply checked these numbers against those on the department's list of stolen goods. Dixon, for his part, does not claim that the typewriter might have been stolen; he merely points out that the typewriter, like all the other articles in the Panther office, was donated by residents of the Central Area and that he had no way of knowing about its origins.

An hour or so after the arrest of Dixon and Harris, word went out from the Panther office that unless both were released at once "the sky is the limit." Upon hearing of the threat, Dixon immediately dictated a message to his lawyer, William L. Dwyer, and that night the message was read at a rally which the Panthers held on the steps of

Garfield High. "To say that the sky is the limit," went the message, "is a beautiful thing—if we can back it up. But as it is, we will only jeopardize the lives of masses of black people. Remember that it took the Oakland Panthers nine months of organizing before they were able to make this threat. Many of us here in Seattle will have to go to jail before we are ready." Dixon's admonition undoubtedly helped to cool the ghetto, but even so, nine people—including seven policemen—were injured by rocks and gunfire before the night was over.

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"Seattle's law enforcement officials," says Tom Gayton, "are familiar with a few Panther leaders, and they think that if they can break these people, they will have broken the Panthers and the whole militant movement. But what they don't realize is that without the moderating influence of these few leaders—and especially of Aaron Dixon—things would be a lot worse. The younger kids, especially, are willing to go to any lengths—including the adoption of a 'kill or be killed' policy—and they are very impatient."

Given the explosive potential of the present situation, then, the obvious question is what can be done. First of all, it is imperative that judges who are trying cases involving black militants take a more balanced view of their task; clearly, imposing a six-month jail sentence for staging a minor sit-in is excessive. (An even more basic cause of racial injustice in the courts—the conduct of the Prosecuting Attorney—was covered in last month's Seattle Magazine.)

Also criticized by the Panthers—and in no uncertain terms—is Police Chief Frank Ramon. The Panthers are not alone in bitterly attacking him. This August, during a closed meeting between Mayor Braman and 30 of the older, "establishment" Negroes (no militants were invited, explained Braman, because he was already familiar with their *views), Dr. James E. Moore, a Negro dentist, demanded Ramon's removal, and he was immediately supported by Walter Hundley, head of the local Model Cities program, and by Donald Phelps, principal of Bellevue Junior High School. Not a word was spoken in Ramon's defense; in fact, the Negroes urged that the police department be revamped from top to bottom. According to Aaron Dixon, however, it is doubtful that even such sweeping changes as these—assuming that they are made at all—will come in time to avert more violence.*

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It is late afternoon now in Bob's Cafe, and Dixon, obviously tired of the interview, is lying almost prone in the booth.

REPORTER: Just one more question, Aaron. Huey Newton was quoted in the *New York Times Magazine* last year as saying he was certain that before long he would be killed. Do you have the same premonition?

DIXON (raising up on his elbow just enough to peer over the tabletop): All revolutionaries know they will be killed, so one day soon, I will die, too.

REPORTER: Are you afraid?

DIXON: No. □