

Pscarella Sara

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Document analysis



DEMONSTRATION FOR HUEY P. NEWTON

BY STEPHEN SHAMES

ALAMEDA, CALIFORNIA • SEPTEMBER 5TH 1968

**THIS PHOTO WAS TAKEN BY STEPHEN SHAMES ON
SEPTEMBER 5TH, 1968.**

**IT CAPTURES ONE OF THE "FREE HUEY" RALLY
THAT TOOK PLACE IN FRONT OF THE ALAMEDA
COUNTY COURTHOUSE IN OAKLAND, CALIFORNIA.**

STEPHEN SHAMES

The photographer had a crucial role in representing from 1967 to 1973 not only the public face of the Black Panther Party, but also the private lives of its members. He devoted his life to raise awareness of social issues, especially child poverty and racism.

He stated : "I don't know how it happened, at one point I started. I wasn't a professional and I didn't quite know what I was doing."

Nowadays Shames' archive of Panther images is the largest in the world.

HUEY P. NEWTON

He was born in 1942 in Louisiana and moved to Oakland, California with his parents who were looking for better job opportunities. Newton grew up experiencing racism in school for his skin's colour and when he left high school he felt the need to prove wrong all those who tried to define him as a failure. Newton, while studying law at Oakland city college, became politicized, inspired by the writings of Mao Zedong, Chè Guevara and Malcom X. Back then, since there wasn't a party to represent the rights of the black community , he, along with Bobby Seale, founded, in October 1966, the Black Panther Party of which he became the minister of defense.

THE BLACK PANTHER PARTY

Newton and Sale wrote the "Black Panther Party Platform and Program" that expresses what were their main goals to fight for. They wanted full civil rights, equal employment opportunities, good educational facilities and mainly to fight police brutality against the black community.

WHY WAS HUEY P. NEWTON ARRESTED?

On October 28th, 1967, there was a falling-out between two Black Panthers, Newton and Gene McKInney and two police officers, Herbert Heanes and John Frey. The officers stopped Newton and McKInney's car and started investigating on the discrepancy between the driver and the registration of the vehicle and quarrel broke out , leading to Heanes and newton's bullet wounds and Frey's death. Newton and McKInney stopped Dell Ross' car to get to the Kaiser Hospital, where Newton was arrested the morning after.

THE TRIAL

The trial began on July 15, 1968 and ended on September 8, 1968, when Newton was sentenced from two to fifteen years for voluntary manslaughter. At the beginning of the trial the prosecutor Lowell Jensen charged Newton for having murdered officer Frey, kidnapped Dell Ross and shot officer Heanes. Jensen claimed that Newton had three good motives for committing those crimes: he was in possession of marijuana, he gave a false identification to the police officers and also was on probation at the time. Then, to avoid another felony charge, he willingly hurt, killed and kidnapped three different people.

Then, how was he able to avoid all of those charges?

Firstly, Newton claimed that he was no longer on probation at the time and since his probation officer could not remember if that was true or not, the issue was left unsolved.

The kidnapping charge was dismissed thanks to a tape conversation in which Ross admits that he lied about being held at gunpoint in the car by Newton.

A black bus driver, Henry Grier, as a witness, claimed to have seen Newton shooting Frey many times with a gun that he was hiding in his jacket, but Newton's defense attorney, Charles Garry, proved that the gun could not fit in the jacket he was wearing at the time and also that by the time Frey was killed, Newton was unconscious. Garry also brought the other Black Panthers member, McKinney, to trial where he refused to make a statement, which led to many doubts about Newton being the one who opened fire against the police officers. Last, but not least, it was also proved that the officer Frey was known for being racist and for taking advantage of his power against the black community.

"FREE HUEY" RALLIES

My document catches one of many demonstrations that occurred while Huey P. Newton was in jail. He was seen not just as the symbol of the movement but as its essence, the community felt the need of his liberation to start the revolution.

This is why it was very easy to consider his condition as the fate of the black community as a whole. His status was taken as an indicator of the blacks' oppression.

It has to be said that Newton owes his liberation to the people. The people who stuck with him through rough times because their cause and having a leader to guide them was the only thing that mattered. I believe that the Black Panthers began to idolatry Huey P. Newton as the one and only leader and almost felt lost without his guidance, but at the same time he was able to give them a strong sense of community along with the courage to fight for a better treatment and above all, for equal rights .

SITOGGRAPHY

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