

Fred Hampton remembered in New York

written by Stephen Millies
December 29, 2019



From left: Baba Zayid Mohammad, Brother

Shep Olugbala, Carlito Rovira and former political prisoner Tarik Haskins. SLL photo by Stephen Millies

People came to The People's Forum in Midtown Manhattan on Dec. 20 to honor the memory of Fred Hampton on the 50th anniversary of his assassination. The chairman of the Illinois Black Panther Party was just 21 years old when he was murdered in his bed on Dec. 4, 1969, by Chicago police.

Hampton's Black Panther comrade Mark Clark was also killed in the early morning police raid.

The event was a fundraiser for the Black Panther political prisoner Jalil Muntaqim, who has been imprisoned for 48 years. Muntaqim has just been denied parole for the 13th time.

A documentary was shown of Chairman Fred Hampton defending himself at a people's trial after being accused of distributing hundreds of frozen desserts from an ice cream truck to children. The people's jury found the charismatic revolutionary not guilty.

Movie scenes included Fred Hampton speaking about how poor people need socialism.

The documentary, which was shown in sections, showed the bloody apartment where Hampton and Clark were murdered. Also shown was Cook County State's Attorney Edward Hanrahan lying through his teeth.

Helping Hanrahan lie was the Chicago Tribune, which showed a photo of a door allegedly filled with bullet holes from guns fired by the Panthers at the police. These "bullet holes" were actually nails. A grand jury determined that the police fired 99

shots at the Panthers — yet it refused to indict any of the cops.

At the time of the raid, Akua Njeri was over eight months pregnant with her and Fred Hampton's son, Fred Hampton Jr. Njeri told how a cop deliberately shot Fred Hampton in the head to make sure he was dead.

'Fred Hampton was a communist'

Black Panther Party veteran Sadiki "Brother Shep" Olugbala spoke about Hampton's contribution to the struggle and about other Panthers who were killed by racist police. He urged people to write to New York Gov. Andrew Cuomo and ask him to release Jalil Muntaqim.

Young Lords Party veteran Carlito Rovira talked about how Puerto Ricans were demonized in the 1960s and 1970s just like Mexican people are attacked today by Trump and other bigots. It was the Black community that defended Puerto Rican people.

Both Brother Shep and Rovira emphasized Fred Hampton's efforts to unify poor and working people of all backgrounds against the billionaires and their cops. This was the original Rainbow Coalition.

An example was a Chicago street gang called the Young Lords, which joined the revolutionary struggle under Hampton's influence. The FBI worked overtime to get the different movements to attack each other.

Rovira said that "Fred Hampton was a communist. ... When they smashed the Black Panther Party, the struggle was set back. Long live the memory of Fred Hampton!"

Longtime activist and poet Baba Zayid Muhammad emphasized that we need that unity today.

Black Panther Party community worker and human rights attorney King Downing Esq. spoke via a computer link. He explained how the Panthers helped pioneer testing for sickle cell disease.

Downing presented film footage of Fred Hampton's grave site in Louisiana, which had been desecrated by bigots. The Hampton family had been friends of Emmet Till's family. The 14-year-old Till had been tortured to death in Mississippi in 1955 by Roy Bryant and J.W. Milam, who were acquitted by their fellow racists.

Fred Hampton and Mark Clark will never be forgotten.

The writer attended Fred Hampton's funeral.

