

Excerpt from Oral History Interview with Deacon Alexander

Interviewed by Dr. Karin Stanford and Keith Rice for the Tom & Ethel Bradley Center's Black Power Oral History project in 2019, Alexander grew up in a very politically and socially active communist family. In this clip he discusses his introduction to the Southern California chapter of the Black Panther Party, and the financial support he received for the Communist Party.

Transcript:

KR: How long did you been hearing about the Southern California Chapter, do you know?

DA: Almost from the start. Bunchy alerted me, and others, that we talking about the idea of building a chapter down here—came as soon as he started—the very first person that I had an opportunity to meet because Bunchy wanted me to meet him was about boy by the name of Lewis. Tommy Lewis.

KR: I've heard that name.

KS: That's the one who—

DA: He was murdered on the corner of Montclair and Adams.

KS: Tommy Lewis, the one who Wayne called Monkey Man.

DA: Bartholomews.

KS: With the Bartholomews.

DA: Yeah, I met—

KS: Woah.

DA: Because he wanted me to show Tommy how to avoid the draft, and I had an office on Central Avenue and 76th Street; and the name of the office is called Black Resistance Against Wars for Oppression, and he wanted me to counsel Tommy in terms of how to stay out of the draft; and so I was you know and, of course, Bunchy was the executive director of the teen post at 79th and Central, and his recruits basically came from that source; that and the streets

KR: I've never heard that before. You kind of just went over this office building you had. What was that?

DA: It was called Black Resistance Against Wars for Oppression. It was an organization that was put together by me and funded indirectly—I would have to say the Communist Party. Now the story for the exact money goes like this. I went up to Hollywood to pick up a check in order to pay for the rent of the office. I think Angela Davis was with me at the time. As I recall, this is uh sixty—. Yeah, yeah, she was with me because I didn't know how to get out. I didn't know how to necessarily get up there and the cars that I had I don't think was gonna make the hills, so I knocked on the door. A maid came and says, "Are you Mr. Alexander?" I says, "Yes ma'am. I'm Mr. Alexander." She says, "Come on in," and I went in and a man came. Do you know who that man was? That man was Dalton Trumbo.

KR: He was blacklisted.

DA: Blacklisted.

KS: Yes.

KR: The director.

DA: Director of Spartacus.

KR: Yes.

DA: And Dalton Trumbo says, "I'm going to be your financier as long as you operate the office there. I have friends that, you know, that asked me to take care of the financing." I said, "Well, thank you. Is there any way you could mail that money? This trip is a little tedious, no problem." And so I got a check in the mail, I think was about \$65-\$70 a week or something like that, and that's how I survived.