

Excerpt from Oral History Interview with Byron Booth

Byron Booth was interviewed by Keith Rice and Dr. Karin Stanford on October 3, 2016 for the African American Life in Los Angeles Oral History Project. Booth, an unaffiliated member of the Black Panther Party, assisted in protection of Party members in the Chino prison he was held in. In this clip Booth explains escaping from prison, purchasing a plane ticket to Miami, and hijacking the plane to get out of the United States.

Transcript:

BB: Eventually, the pilot made an announcement that they were approaching Miami, and that it would be landing pretty soon. That's when I called the waitress over, or stewardess; what do you call it on a plane? Stewardess? Called the stewardess over, said, I'd like a glass of water. She said, "Feeling a little queasy are you?" I said, "Yes I am." So she turned to go to the little booth towards the cabin, to get the water, I got up and followed her, stepped inside, pulled a gun, and stuck it in her back. Told her, I said, "Let's go to the cabin." Clinton came up behind me to watch my back. We got to the cabin door. She grabbed the door like it was locked and she couldn't open it and was fumbling with the door. I guess the navigators sitting inside thought she couldn't get in and got up and opened the door. So we pushed our way in, and I said, "I'm your new captain here." Three white guys, they're all sittin' there; the pilot, the copilot, and navigator, they lookin' at me. I'm holding the waitress around the waist. Clinton is busy with some tape-type taping dynamite to the, to the walls of the plane, and the navigator said, "Well, maybe you can let the stewardess go back in the cabin." So I let her go. He sat down in a— what is it called, the jump seat on a plane for a navigator?

He's a few feet from me, sitting on the edge of the chair like he was ready to jump me, or something. So, I pointed the gun at him, took a box of bullets out of my pocket, set it on the little table in front of me; I said, "When you jump you're ready to die." So he sat back and relaxed. The pilot, meanwhile, had taken a microphone, was saying something into the phone. I got up and said, "Hand me the phone," I took the phone, I said, "Ladies and gentlemen, this is your new captain speaking. Just relax. We're gonna have a holiday in Cuba," gave him the phone back.