



BIOGRAPHIES

We advocated for an independent civilian review board with broad legal power, with a well funded over sight patrol, the copwatch, as the “eyes and ears” of the board. We would use the investigative tactics of the police against them. A brother by the name of Diop Kamal, who heads the Police Complaint Center in Florida, is already doing it. He, along with the Black Panther Party, was our inspiration.

The line that the rightists like to use is “well, if you aren’t doing anything wrong, you have nothing to worry about.” This what we would say to the police when they would pitch a fit about us filming them.

I cannot talk specifically about our tactics, since some of them are still in use by Copwatch volunteers throughout the world. I would advise folks to learn the law, learn how to use a camera under pressure, get in shape and stay in shape, fix any legal contradictions you may have before you go deal with their contradictions (pay your fines, do your time, etc), learn the investigative techniques of the world’s law enforcement agencies, surround yourself with lawyers and media people, read (and re-read) Sun-Tzu’s “The Art of War” or Mao’s “On Protracted Warfare,” and plan, plan, plan. And be prepared to be killed in action; Copwatching is serious business and is not to be taken lightly.

How do you look at some of the criticism of Copwatch work today?

Every Copwatch is different in every city. I believe that over time a uniform standard will develop. For me, the current standard of service to the people has been firmly established by the Police Complaint Center (www.policabuse.org). Ultimately, it’s a question of what a cop watch actually does day to day and what community a cop watch actually serves. If it is limited to just the large demonstrations involving the “usual suspects,” then its obviously not keeping it real. If it’s only a cop watch in name, limited to informational forums, harassing politicians, and doing its own demonstrations, then its not keeping it real. All of the above are important, however the cop watch is most needed and effective when it serves the interests of people of color, primarily, in a real and tangible way.

As I see it, the real test of a Copwatch’s validity is measured by how many beatings and killings of the most directly affected are actually prevented. If the people the cop watch serves and the organization itself can look back after a year and say, “see, because of our vigilance in the streets, in the courts, in the media, and in the halls of government, no one has been hospitalized or died at the hands of the police in the past year!” or, “because of our vigilance in the streets, in the courts, in the media, and in the halls of government, not one police officer has gotten away with assaulting or killing anyone in the ‘hood or on the campus!” then all will have to

