



BIOGRAPHIES

killed in that incident. And it wound up being that, I believe four members of the Black Panther Party were convicted in that case.

So that discredited the Detroit chapter of the party a great deal. So that chapter was shut down.

When I joined in 1972, the chapter had been reinstituted. But at that point in time, a lot of the men in the party were locked up. There were not a lot of brothers. There were more sisters during the Detroit chapter at the time. So one of the things that I did when I first joined the Black Panther Party in Detroit was to be one of the people who drove a van, a car. We had the free busing to prisons program, and we didn't actually have a real bus. We used cars. And I was one of the few people in the Detroit chapter at that time who had a valid drivers licence.

So we would take people up to the. At that time, it was at the Michigan State prison in Jackson, Michigan. Back in the early seventies. Jackson State prison in Lansing, Michigan, was the largest prison in the United States at the time in terms of the number of people who were incarcerated. Now, that's not true anymore and that prison has since been broken down into several different prisons in Michigan.

So I would drive family members and friends up to the prison to visit their relatives. As I said before, I was a sheltered preacher's daughter. I had never in my life been inside a jail, let alone a prison, until I drove people up to the prison to visit their relatives. And so the first time I went into the prison, you know, I almost literally had the wind knocked out of me. I had never seen a situation like this before. This was a men's prison, and all these men were locked up, and there was all this kind of, like, noise, and all these human beings were locked up and behind bars.

I had never, ever seen anything like that in my life, although I had. I saw the news coverage of what happened at Attica, but I had never myself, personally, been in that situation to see it, so I had to get a hold of myself. Because you're a black panther. You're supposed to be tough. All I wanted to do was cry, but I couldn't cry. I said "You are a Black Panther. You will not cry now." So I kept it together. So you asked me what it was like.

That was one of the things it was like. It was like for me to walk into a prison for the first time and to see how black people were being locked up and mistreated and abused. That was an experience that I had had when I joined the Black Panther party after the Detroit chapter relocated to Oakland. There were many people on the central committee of the party.

