



## BIOGRAPHIES

### JoNina Ervin, 1958 - JoNina Speaks (2022)

*Transcribed by the editor from Episode 8 of the Black Autonomy Podcast*

**Lorenzo Kom'Boa Ervin:** In this episode, we'll be talking to JoNina Ervin, co host of the Black Autonomy podcast and a former member of the Black Panther Party, about her life and experiences of nearly 50 years in the Black liberation struggle in america.

You were the last editor of the Black panther party newspaper, but before that, you were the southern preachers kid in Missouri here. Can you tell us, you know, a little bit about that trajectory and what radicalised you to the point that you joined the Black Panther Party?

**JoNina Ervin:** Well, I grew up in Jefferson City, Missouri, and during the time I was growing up, the civil rights movement, and a little bit later, the black Power movement was coming into four. I remember being a kid, and I watched on television some little elementary school kids being beaten up and having dogs sicked on them by cops in Birmingham, Alabama.

This would have been about 1963. I wasn't quite 15 years old, and I remember being astounded, seeing these little kids who were out there protesting. And some of them were the age of my youngest sister, who's ten years younger than me. And I was just so moved by that. And I said, well, if these little kids can get out here, I can do something, too. I mean, I'm 14-15 years old. And then not long after that, the three girls got killed in the church in Birmingham, Alabama. And there were different things that were happening. I was seeing things that involved young kids my age, and I wanted to get involved.

My own history also involves, in Jefferson City, Missouri, where I grew up, that I was among the first black kids to integrate the public schools in Jefferson City. The Supreme Court decision, Brown versus the board of education, came down in May of 54. And then in 1956, when I was eight years old and I was starting third grade, they integrated the public school in Jefferson City. And I was really young.

