



arouse dissent, he became a self-taught student of law and took part in a successful lawsuit challenging the authorities' suppression of his beliefs.

In one letter from prison he writes, "Although to some the struggle of a Black high school drop-out acting as his own attorney against the massive coercive power of this State may seem like a futile struggle, there is no doubt in my mind of the ultimate defeat of my oppressors." In many ways, the legal struggles he waged were setting a precedent, and Sostre was only just kicking off a series of strategic challenges that would make considerable and historic gains for people in prison.

After his release from prison in 1964, Sostre opened the Afro-Asian Bookstore in Buffalo, New York. Having undergone a political transformation in prison himself, Sostre likened his journey to Malcolm X. However, upon observing the Black power politics among the youth on the outside, Sostre parted ways with the Nation Of Islam. His bookstore would become a place where he cultivated resistance for an entire community. He sold radical books covering topics like Black nationalism and communism.

He grew to be recognized as an educator among community members who used his shop as a space for learning and fellowship. This was at odds with the Buffalo Police Department who threatened Sostre for his actions. He was politicizing Black youth at a time when the state was increasingly concerned and surveilling proponents of anti-capitalist, Black empowerment across the United States.

"Defy white authority!"

During the "long, hot summer" of 1967, Black uprisings took place around the nation. Rebellions flared in response to the many manifestations of institutional racism like unemployment, housing discrimination and police brutality. The unending police repression of Black America happening in the streets was a direct challenge to racist state violence. It was around this time that the infamous police threat, "When the looting starts, the shooting starts" was uttered by the Miami police chief as well.

When revolt hit Buffalo, Sostre was there doing the work he knew best: teaching, distributing radical literature to the Black community — especially young people — and providing context to the situation at hand. Sostre organized through education and supported the uprising using the methods he had learned from the orators, teachers and street-level militants during his youth in Harlem. His bookstore became safe haven where people could escape tear gas and police brutality. He would give out lessons and liberation literature to the people hiding in

