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## Maine Campus Black Panther Party chair traces organization's past

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• Speech

# Black Panther Party chair traces organization's past

By Peter Cook  
Staff Writer

He said at that time, the country had misconceptions about African Americans. See SEALE on page 4

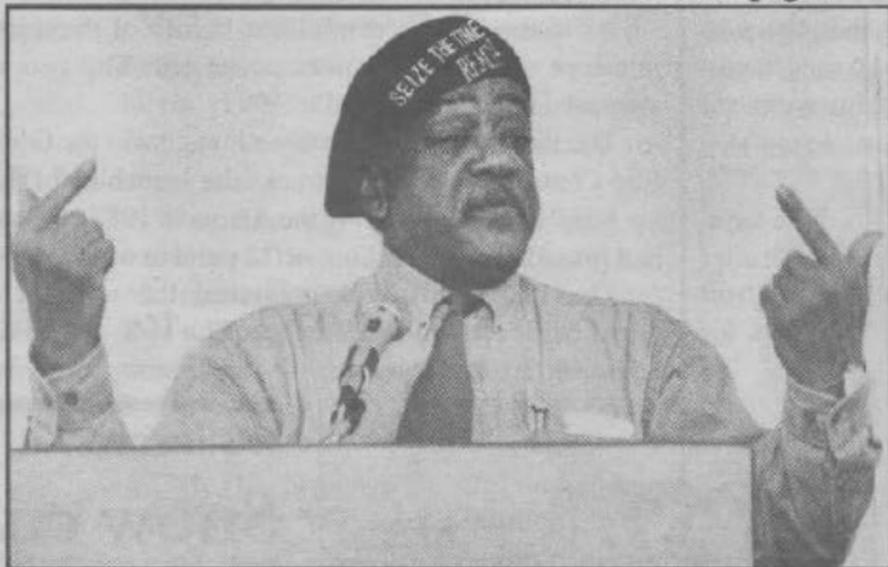
Bobby Seale, a founder of the Black Panther Party in the late 60s, spoke last night at Wells Commons about the history of the organization.

The Multicultural Student Affairs office and The Black Student Union sponsored the speech.

Seale began by talking about the movie "Panther," released last year.

"I had absolutely nothing to do with the production of that film," he said, "and 90 percent of it never happened." He went on to recount the history of the BPP.

Seale said in 1962, he had no politics. He had just gotten out of the Air Force and was going to college.



Bobby Seale, co-founder and chairman of the Black Panther Party, speaks at Wells Commons Tuesday night. (Gagne Photo.)

"In high school, they were teaching bullshit about African American people's history," he said.

Seale said that when he took anthropology courses in college, he discovered that much of the class did not deal with truth about African-American people. At the time, Seale said, it was still being taught that African-Americans were inferior to those of European descent.

Seale said his research into the history of his people was part of what led him to found the BPP.

"We were not a bunch of hoodlums, as a bunch of the politicians tried to sell to you," he said.

He met Huey Newton, co-founder of the movement, at college when they were in a class together and Newton suggested the term Africanoid as an alternative to terms such as Negroid. This impressed Seale, and he approached Newton to suggest the idea of forming an organization to keep African-Americans out of the Vietnam War.

"Why should we fight in the goddamn war? We figured no Vietnamese had ever called us nigger," he said.

The party was founded in October of 1966. "The early meetings took place in my house, and the 10-point program was written before we had a name for the organization," he said. The 10-point program was a list of the BPP's beliefs.

Seale said the BPP were not about black power, as has been portrayed, but "believed in all power for all people."

The party grew to 75 members within the first year and by the end of 1968, had over 5,000. They ran food giveaways, free health clinics and breakfast programs for children.

He now runs a community organization based in Pennsylvania that helps youth and works to ease racial tension.

"Racism grows out of some dumb, stupid insidious fear," he said. "When you put us all together, we are basically only two percent different."

Elix Brown, a senior finance major at UMaine, liked the speech.

"Basically, he told it like it was and didn't hold anything back."

He said that in this day of political correctness, Seale may offend some, but "he told the truth. You've got to respect that."