

Letter to the 13th Precinct Everywhere

David Gaynes

1970

At first he just wanted us to pull our car over to the curb.

Deciding to milk the scene for all it was worth, he changed his mind—"Just get out of the car right here—hands up! Put your mother-fuckin' hands on the roof and don't MOVE!!"

His partner jumped out of the wagon and walked down the road a few feet to talk to one of the undercover state troopers that had been harassing the entire neighborhood for a month and who had undoubtedly set us up for the bust that morning.

For ten minutes we stood frozen against our car in the 20-degree morning chill. Mr. and Mrs. amerikkka nearly crashed into themselves as they drove up the expressway exit to come upon Mike, Joe and me looking just as degenerate as we do when not held under arrest at gun-point.

Five more pig-cars came, blue lights flashing, burning down one-way roads the wrong way and slithering to tire-peeling halt.

Out of each car jumped angry pigs with riot guns in hand. They quickly surrounded the three of us. Within moments we were searched and handcuffed. Our car-keys snatched, the car searched inside and out.

Showing a total disregard for their own jive laws, they searched our trunk and illegally seized two M-1 carbines that were stored in the legally prescribed manner.

The police surveillance and harassment that is a part of everyday life in oppressed neighborhoods had been out of control in our Warren-Forest neighborhood for weeks. A tremendous tension had been building between the police and the community, spurred by the fact that police had been shot at with increasing regularity and that 34 sticks of dynamite had been found on March 5 in the women's washroom of the 13th precinct station on Woodward Ave., just a few blocks away.

Neighborhood people had gotten accustomed to being watched and followed. All of us living in the Detroit White Panther commune had our every move watched by the pigs. We drove carefully, always signaling, and were careful not to be caught alone in the alleys. Day and night the "Protectors of Liberty" sat in unmarked cars by the curb or in the parking lot across the freeway and peered at us through binoculars, jotting down on their clipboards whatever-it-is they write to make the world safe for democracy.

Fortunately for us, a number of our brothers and sisters witnessed the March 12 rip-off. They raced back to our home, just 150 yards back from the Forest and Lodge freeway intersection where we were being placed in a precinct-support car and whisked off to jail.

The initial confrontation took place at 8:00 am. By 8:30 we were in the bullpen.

Brothers and sisters on the outside were frantically calling everyone who could help spring us out; lawyers and friends who could help with bail money.

The contrast between the situation outside and inside the station was ironic. We spent the morning digging on our solidarity with one another, checking out the station (as much as we could see from the pen), being regaled by the pigs' buffoonery and pitching pennies.

Our friends on the outside were considerably less at ease and with good reason. For the first thirty minutes after we were picked up, the desk man refused to acknowledge to callers that we were in the station. As a result, people had visions of us being beaten bloody in some back-alley. To compound matters, they later learned what the pigs refused to tell us; we were being held on charges of attempting to bomb.

That's an awfully heavy rap.

Perhaps if we had known that, we would have been more alarmed. I doubt even that. It was all too clear from the beginning that this was an escalation of harassment hurled against our neighborhood in general, and in particular the White Panther Party, of which the three of us are members.

"The spirit of THE PEOPLE is stronger than the pigs' technology."

This was amply proven to us that morning. From the beginning we were being illegally terrorized by a group of men who have transcended even the piggish boundaries established by the state and use their facilities to work out their paranoid vendettas as neo-cowboys. We were threatened with illegal blackjacks, told we would spend ten years in jail, denied our mandatory phone-calls, interrogated by the senile and slobbering Red Squad (Special Investigation Bureau) and in general, forced to listen to a mob of armed cretins talk about us.

But we knew that lawyers were on their way, and that as soon as they arrived the pigs would have to let us walk free. At noon, that's exactly what happened. Peoples' lawyers Dennis James and Marc Stickgold came to set things straight, and after a brief conference (at which there was no doubt some high-level hair-tearing on the part of the police) we were reluctantly allowed to leave with all charges against us dropped.

What is serious about this incident is not what happened, but what could have happened and what will continue to happen. Everything that the pigs did was emphatically illegal. As of this writing, our property is being illegally held and we entertain no illusions of its speedy return.

But we are not special, nor are we alone in being victimized. The Red Squad made it very clear to us that it is open season on all radicals, hippies, dissidents and poor people in our area. "We're gonna have to start kickin' down white folks' doors now!," one of the pigs said. "We're gonna bring all of you in."

Understand, people; we are all guilty until found innocent (by people who assume we are guilty in the first place!). Guilty of crimes against repression and regimentation.

The clown interrogating me had the nerve to snatch away the piece of paper listing my rights; "Pretend you didn't just see this sheet of paper!," he blustered when I rightfully refused to be interrogated and intimidated.

"Power to the people—if you waz people you'd have power, like us!!" This was the response one pig had to the dream of all oppressed people.

Beware!! Be strong!! Struggle and support those who fall prey in the struggle!

As one pig so beautifully summed it up: "I don't give a damn about the laws."

Right on, honest motherfucker!

Related in this issue

Poem by Joshua Newton [FE 101, March 19-April 1, 1970]

fifth Estate

David Gaynes
Letter to the 13th Precinct Everywhere
1970

<https://www.fifthestate.org/archive/101-march-19-april-1-1970/letter-to-the-13th-precinct>
Fifth Estate #101, March 19-April 1, 1970

fifthestate.anarchistlibraries.net