

Meet the Watsonville Brown Berets

Written by Davey D ID2573

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One thing that we should note about the Bay Area is that it's the home of political activism and movements. As the immigration debate rages on, we should note the increased visibility of the Watsonville Brown Berets.

The Berets of course have a long and rich history that dates back to the 1960s. But like their comrades in the Black Panther Party, they saw their influence and ranks diminished by the Cointelpro tactics of the FBI.

In 1967, young Chicanas and Chicanos from the barrios of East Los Angeles came together and established the Brown Berets in order to address issues that were impacting their communities negatively. The Brown Berets fought against police harassment, inadequate public schools and education, the lack of political representation and the Vietnam War draft. The Brown Berets became a symbol of resistance and hope within the Chicana and Chicano community and flourished throughout the barrios of this country.

Influenced by the legacy of this organization and similar conditions that existed in the "60s, a group of Watsonville students decided to reactivate the Brown Berets in 1994. The Watsonville Brown Berets studied that history, linked up with the founders and OGs of the past and re-borned the Berets in 1994 after the tragic killing of a young Latina. After putting in work for more than a decade, the Brown Berets have been in the forefront of helping elevate the mind state of troubled youth, and they've been knee deep in the immigration debate.

Incorporating indigenous spirituality and international liberation struggles, the Watsonville Brown Berets are one of the most active local youth organizations fighting for progressive change and barrio peace. In recent months they've hooked up with Immortal Technique, who is doing a big event April 17 in Watsonville along with "Lyrical Swords" author Adisa Banjoko. Also in the building will be Chairman Fred Hampton Jr. and his organization, the POCC.

Last night, during Immortal Technique's show in downtown Oakland, Hampton along with the POCC showed up at least 20-25 deep with local cats from West Oakland, POCC members and local Muslims. They came out on stage and spoke to the sold out crowd and got everybody hyped as Hampton spoke about the need for us to be on the same page and support this struggle over immigration alongside our Latino brothers and sisters who are catching hell from all sides.

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He also wanted to clear the air and make it known that there are many who are out and about putting in work and making sure that there are bridges being built and refortified with Black and Brown communities. This was in stark contrast with the overwhelming silence we have seen by many in the Civil Rights community. Hampton's remarks rebuffed the type of divisive rhetoric that has been given a platform by mainstream media for conservative so-called Black leaders.

Brothers like Banjoko and Hampton have been very clear about showing their support and offering up keen decisive analysis as to why the Black community should be out supporting their Brown brothers and sisters in this ongoing saga surrounding immigration. This has been a welcome change from the rhetoric raised by some who feel that the Latino brothers and sisters who we see working the fields or selling oranges on the side of the freeway are somehow going to take away jobs from Black folks. What jobs is the question one may ask.

For more info, check out the websites www.brownberets.info/welcome/ and www.myspace.com/brownberets

Peep out the interview Davey did with the Brown Berets and find out what they are about at www.odeo.com/audio/1039627/view

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