

The Oakland Tribune (Oakland, CA)
August 17, 2004 Tuesday
Muslim bakery leader confirmed dead
BYLINE: By Harry Harris and Chauncey Bailey - STAFF WRITERS
SECTION: MORE LOCAL NEWS
LENGTH: 917 words

OAKLAND -- A man found buried in a shallow grave last month in the Oakland hills was identified Monday as Waajid Aljawaad Bey, 51, president and chief executive officer of Your Black Muslim Bakery, police said.

Police would not say how Bey, who assumed leadership of the bakery after the death of Yusuf Bey in September, had died. But Sgt. Bruce Brock said police are investigating the case "as a definite homicide."

He would not say whether police think Bey was killed elsewhere before being buried at the site or was killed there and then buried.

And while police are certain Bey was deliberately killed, Brock said despite a great deal of speculation, "we're not sure of a motive at this time."

Some bakery insiders have feared that Bey's fate may be related to rivalries and a power play in the wake of Yusuf Bey's death from cancer in 2003.

Although Bey never really discussed his Muslim activities with relatives, family members "are quite sure [the death] had something to do with him taking over" the organization, said a relative who asked not to be named.

Bey's badly decomposed remains were discovered July 20 by a dog being walked by its owner on a fire trail that runs off the 8200 block of Fontaine Street near King Estates Middle School.

Because of the circumstances surrounding the discovery of the body, it was classified as a homicide at the time, the city's 46th.

Brock said police had an idea the man might be Bey, who had been reported missing to police Feb. 29. But it still took a combination of biological testing and other evidence to confirm it was Bey.

Brock said several relatives, friends and associates of Bey already have been questioned as part of the missing person's case.

They will be interviewed again, and others will be questioned for the first time as the case "has expanded because it is a homicide investigation," Brock said.

Relatives described Bey, the oldest of eight children, as a "great person who was respectful and always there to do whatever he could for us, big or small. He was always the big brother."

Bey, a widower with no children, grew up in Texas and played football in college. A hand injury ended a promising football career, and Bey, whose birth name was Carl Hambrick, moved to California when he was 21.

He loved cooking and had a longtime career as a head waiter at a San Francisco hotel. He also worked as a bartender and briefly as an accountant after getting his degree from Golden Gate University.

Raised in the Pentacostal church, Bey converted to the Muslim faith more than a decade ago because of their strong beliefs and culture, the relative said.

Bey was last seen about 5 p.m. Feb. 27 when he dropped off an associate near 23rd Avenue and East 23rd Street in East Oakland.

He told the associate he was going to get some sleep and go to the bakery, at 5832 San Pablo Ave., but he never showed up. He also did not show up for work that night at a downtown business where the Bey organization provides security.

He was reported missing to police Feb. 29.

He was never seen or heard from again. Police searched his house on 21st Street, but nothing was in disarray, although a television was on.

His car was found at the house.

Before Yusuf Bey's death, Waajid Bey had been the business manager for the bakery since the early 1990s and was one of Yusuf Bey's most trusted advisers. An agreement established by the board of directors allowed Waajid Bey to take over as CEO and president of the diversified business empire after Yusuf Bey's death.

On Monday, workers continued to run the bakery's main office and outlet in the 5800 block of San Pablo Avenue. Under red and white awnings, a sign proclaimed veggie burgers have "the taste of the hereafter."

Inside, a "missing" flier regarding Waajid Bey was still posted by the front door and by walls where there are large photos and drawings of Yusuf Bey and his "teacher and leader," the late Elijah Muhammad, founder of the Black Muslims, which evolved into what is now the Nation of Islam.

"I'm surprised and saddened ... as everyone is with the organization," said Donald Cunningham, 72, as he sat at a sidewalk table in front of the outlet. "I've only been here since December. He was our president. A servant of God is gone. We all worked together."

Other bakery staffers declined comment about Waajid Bey but were eager to learn about where he was found and when.

No one wanted to discuss who will now lead the operation, saying that was inappropriate at this time of mourning.

Some members of the organization -- a network of housing, a school and storefront retail businesses, including a security service -- had been actively looking for Bey and conducting their own internal investigation as to who may have been responsible or somehow linked to his disappearance.

Some believed privately there was a brewing struggle for control or direction of the operation after Yusuf Bey's death by people who had either left the business willingly or been banned and wanted to return; some of Bey's biological children; some who had earned the "Bey" surname because of their good deeds for the community; and those who felt Waajid Bey should be replaced by someone else.

Oakland police and Crime Stoppers of Oakland is offering up to \$10,000 in reward money for information leading to the arrest of the killer or killers. Anyone with information is asked to call police at 238-3821 or Crime Stoppers at 238-6946.

The Oakland Tribune (Oakland, CA)
October 2, 2003 Thursday
Oakland Muslim leader Bey dies;
He was known for work in African-American community
BYLINE: By Chauncey Bailey, STAFF WRITER
SECTION: LOCAL & REGIONAL NEWS
LENGTH: 787 words
DATELINE: OAKLAND

Yusuf Bey, the controversial and charismatic black Muslim leader who infuriated some while inspiring others, died late Tuesday.

Bey died at 10:07 p.m. at Alta Bates Summit Medical Center in Berkeley, according to family members. He was 67.

On Wednesday, a statement was issued by his family highlighting his accomplishments.

The cause of death was not immediately known but Bey was suffering from cancer, according to his attorney, who had sought to delay court proceedings on his behalf earlier this year.

Bey had been facing charges he raped a girl under age 14 in 1994 and 1995. Similar charges from three other women were dropped this year after the U.S. Supreme Court ruled as unconstitutional a California law allowing prosecution of cases before 1988.

While many blacks, especially women, criticized Bey for allegedly taking advantage of young girls who had come to work for him many years ago, other African Americans continued to praise him for creating jobs and hiring or mentoring wayward young people.

Bey's lawyer, Lorna Patton Brown, said he was being targeted because he is a leader in the black Muslim community.

A strong proponent of black pride and self-help, Bey operated Your Black Muslim Bakery and a number of other enterprises -- apartments, a school, a dry cleaners, a supermarket, a security company and other small businesses started by his followers and financed by Bey who often provided seed money.

"We cannot depend on the white man to hire our people, we have to do it," Bey said often, during his weekly sermons, "True Solutions," on Soul Beat Television.

Bey would always greet his visitors by saying "As-salaam alaikum" [Arabic for "peace be with you"]. Other Muslims would respond "Wa-alaikum salaam" ["I return that peace."].

Black men wearing dark business suits and bow ties were part of his security force and courtroom entourage.

After the rape charges reached court, the Nation of Islam's Oakland representative, Minister Keith Muhammad, was chosen to replace Bey as vice president of Black Men First.

Bey was an ardent follower of the teachings of the late Elijah Muhammad, founder of the Black Muslims which became the Nation of Islam. Bey displayed Muhammad's photograph at his bakery.

Yusuf Bey was born as Joseph Samuels in Greenville, Texas, on Dec. 21, 1935 and moved to Oakland with his family when he was five. He joined the Air Force at 17 and served for four years. He later worked in warehousing and then studied cosmetology. He then relocated to Santa Barbara where he owned his own salon.

In 1962, he embraced Islam and the teachings of Elijah Muhammad, leader of the Black Muslims, which would evolve into what is now called the Nation of Islam.

Bey turned to Muhammad's book "How To Eat To Live" as a guide when he decided to open "Your Bakery" in 1968, which was later changed to "Your Black Muslim Bakery."

His weekly television program called True Solutions was taped during meetings at the bakery's main office and production facility, at 5832 San Pablo Ave.

"We have been here over 30 years and not once have we had a burglary," he said once. "This is because the black community respects what we are doing for our people.

"We are bringing our people jobs and hope. The white man is not going to do this for you."

His strident rhetoric made many blacks uncomfortable and they called his separatist teachings racist and not embracing.

Bey said his rhetoric was misinterpreted by a "racist" white media and other major institutions. "I do not hate white people. I just have a deep love for my people, black people," he has said.

Many men and women carry the Bey surname in Oakland.

"When you do good deeds in the black community you are given the Bey name," said Mustafa Bey, a lawyer. "Dr. Bey had many adopted sons. We believe in what he was doing for the community ... hiring young brothers who have come out of jail that no one else will give opportunities, finding housing for people and helping others to start their own businesses."

"Elijah Muhammad taught us to do for self and love self and kind ... don't hate your black brother. The white man puts drugs and guns in our community to destroy us," Bey said recently.

Some of Bey's businesses have failed. In 1996, Nadir Bey, another of Bey's adopted sons, started E.M. ["Elijah Muhammad"] Health Services after securing a city loan. The plan was to offer home health care but the loan was not repaid.

"They [officials] will always go after someone like me or Dr. Bey who are trying to uplift our people," Nadir Bey said.

A funeral service for Bey will be held at 11 a.m. Friday at Allen Temple Baptist Church, 8501 International Blvd.

The Oakland Tribune (Oakland, CA)
July 15, 2003 Tuesday
D.A. files new charges against Bey;
25 additional allegations are called 'discriminatory and vindictive' by defense attorney
BYLINE: By Chauncey Bailey, STAFF WRITER
SECTION: MORE LOCAL NEWS
LENGTH: 454 words
DATELINE: OAKLAND

Prosecutors in the case against Black Muslim leader Yusuf Bey have filed 25 additional charges - including rape, apparently intent on showing a clear pattern of sexual abuse against a minor.

The case centers on the remaining alleged molestation victim after authorities agreed to drop complaints from three other women in light of a recent U.S. Supreme Court ruling that struck down as unconstitutional a California law allowing prosecutors to pursue molestation cases that occurred before 1988.

The Alameda County District Attorney's Office increased the number of counts from 2 to 27, Bey's attorney, Lorna Patton Brown, said Monday.

Deputy District Attorney Teresa Ortega said most of the new charges fall under the criminal categories of lewd and lascivious conduct by force with someone under age 14, forced oral copulation and rape.

Brown told Alameda County Superior Court Judge Larry Goodman on Monday that the remaining complaints are "selective ... discriminatory and vindictive because [Bey] is a leader of Your Black Muslim Bakery."

Brown also said she will again ask that the remaining complaint be dismissed due to lack of evidence.

Goodman set Aug. 20 at 3:30 p.m. for the next hearing in the case.

Walking with a cane and wearing a dark suit and a fez, Bey was in court Monday and again accompanied by his supporters from the Black Muslim Bakery. They wore dark business suits and bow ties -- symbols of "service to the community" and first introduced by the late Elijah Muhammad, founder of what is today the Nation of Islam.

Bey, looking thinner, has not always attended hearings, citing poor health.

Asked about Bey's health, Brown said Bey was relieved to learn about the U.S. Supreme Court ruling "but the stress [from this case] is back."

Bey, 67, who is free on \$1 million bail, originally faced 27 felony counts involving acts allegedly committed against four girls who had been employed at the bakery on San Pablo Avenue in North Oakland.

Bey still faces a civil lawsuit filed by Oakland attorney David Washington, who is representing three women. The civil lawsuit alleges 13 causes of action, including three counts of sexual assault.

Bey's supporters say he is being targeted because he has worked for black economic development, hired ex-convicts and urged African Americans to fight discrimination by supporting enterprises created and controlled by blacks.

His critics say Bey should be held accountable for any criminal acts and pressure, particularly from black women, prompted him to resign as vice president of Black Men First, a self-help organization formed by pastors and community leaders in response to the surge in homicides in Oakland.

The Oakland Tribune (Oakland, CA)
July 8, 2003 Tuesday

D.A. to drop three cases against Bey;
Oakland religious leader still faces civil suit, criminal charges involving one alleged victim
BYLINE: By Robert Gammon and Chauncey Bailey, STAFF WRITERS
SECTION: LOCAL & REGIONAL NEWS
LENGTH: 1196 words
DATELINE: OAKLAND

The Alameda County District Attorney's Office said Monday it plans to press forward on just one of the four child molestation cases charged against black Muslim leader Yusuf Bey, as the result of a recent U.S. Supreme Court decision.

Meanwhile, three of the women Bey allegedly molested for years while they were young girls filed a sweeping lawsuit Monday against Bey, his company, his bakery, two of his wives, three county social workers and the county itself. Two of the three alleged victims who filed the suit will see their criminal cases against Bey dismissed next week.

"For them, this lawsuit is the only sense of justice they will ever have because of what happened in the Supreme Court," said David Washington, the women's Oakland-based attorney.

Washington was referring to the high court's June 26 decision that essentially barred all criminal prosecutions against alleged child molesters for crimes committed before 1988. The court said a 1994 California law allowing prosecutors to circumvent original filing deadlines in child molestation cases is unconstitutional.

The ruling has prompted prosecutors from around the state to dismiss child molestation cases and will lead to numerous child molestation convictions being overturned.

In three of the four cases originally filed against Bey, the owner of Your Black Muslim Bakery, he is accused of molesting three women when they were children in the late 1970s and early 1980s. It is those three cases that will be dropped at an Oakland hearing on July 14, said Assistant District Attorney Teresa Ortega.

"We have to follow the law," Ortega said Monday, following a brief court appearance before Alameda County Superior Court Judge Larry Goodman.

Bey, 67, will be formally charged and arraigned in connection with the fourth child molestation case at the same July 14 hearing, Ortega said. That case stems from sexual assault allegations from 1994 and 1995 that prosecutors say is not affected by the Supreme Court's ruling.

Bey, who is free on \$1 million bail, originally faced 27 total felony criminal counts in connection with the four cases. Those charges carried an automatic life sentence if Bey was convicted.

Ortega said her office has not yet determined how many total felony counts Bey will now face in the lone remaining case, or whether the district attorney will still seek a life sentence.

Attendance at hearings

She said the court also is scheduled to determine July 14 whether Bey should be required to attend future hearings. His doctor testified in a previous court hearing that he is dying of cancer. His attorney contends Bey is too sick to endure court proceedings, even though prosecutors have noted that he has continued to appear on his cable-access television show.

Bey's attorney, Lorna Patton Brown, said she is "very pleased with the Supreme Court decision." Brown had been seeking a dismissal of all the complaints. Bey was not in court Monday.

Bey was forced to resign last fall as vice president of Black Men First -- formed in response to the surge in black-on-black homicides -- after black women complained to organizers.

In the lawsuit filed Monday in Alameda County Superior Court in Oakland, the three women -- who all identify themselves as "Jane Does" -- allege Bey regularly raped them, defecated on them and forced them to drink his urine, while continually threatening to kill them if they ever told.

Two of the girls were sisters, ages 10 and 11, when they were brought to live with Bey in 1978 by their father, a Bey follower. The girls were kept under the foster care of one of Bey's wives, Nora Bey, who is also a defendant in the lawsuit. The third girl came to Bey for a job in 1994 at his Your Black Muslim Bakery on San Pablo Avenue in North Oakland.

Tests confirm fatherhood

The women allege in the lawsuit that county social workers should have realized over the years something was wrong when the girls started getting pregnant and having babies. The girls said they did not tell social workers Bey was the father because they feared him. Recent paternity tests have confirmed Bey was the father of at least one of the babies, according to reports.

"The county just turned a blind eye to all of this," said Washington, the women's attorney. "There were all kinds of red flags. But they never followed through. It's almost like they didn't care."

Washington also said the father of two of the girls says he whisked them away from Bey early on and took them to Lake Tahoe. But when Bey found out, Alameda County Social Services returned the girls to Bey, despite what the father told them about Bey, Washington said.

The three social workers named as defendants in the case are Cathy Samuels, Shari Unitab and Muriel Boykins.

County Counsel Richard Winnie said the county investigated the women's allegations after they filed a \$10 million claim against the county Jan. 31, 2003.

"We had a pretty extensive investigation of their claim," said Winnie, adding that the county determined their claims were without merit "factually and legally." The county Board of Supervisors denied the women's claims March 12 without comment.

Winnie said he had not seen the lawsuit, but he indicated the county may seek to have it dismissed under the same general legal theory employed in the recent Supreme Court decision.

Although the court dealt specifically with criminal law in its June 26 decision, the women's lawsuit was filed under a similar California civil law extending the statutory deadline in civil cases.

Under that law, an alleged molestation victim is allowed during 2003 a one-time shot at filing a lawsuit against a public agency for a past incident. Typically, such suits are barred unless claims are filed within six months of the original molestation, Washington acknowledged.

But Washington argued that even if the courts strike down California's civil law as well, the women's case against the county and Bey should continue because they said the women were forced by Bey to keep the alleged molestations secret. As a result, the children could not meet the statutory deadline, he argued.

"I'm sure there will be litigation over this," Washington said.

Civil charges

The lawsuit alleges 13 total causes of action, including three counts of sexual assault -- one for each of the women [the fourth alleged victim has not filed suit]. Other civil charges in the lawsuit include negligent infliction of emotional distress, racketeering and denial of civil rights.

As is typical, the lawsuit does not specify monetary damages. Such damages will be revealed at a later court proceeding.

Bey's lawyer, Brown, said at Monday's hearing she had just obtained a copy of the civil lawsuit and did not comment.

A half dozen of Bey's supporters from Your Black Muslim Bakery were in court and left after Brown spoke with reporters. Bey's supporters say he is being targeted by racist forces because of the work he has done in the black community -- hiring ex-convicts, starting businesses and creating jobs, providing housing opportunities and teaching self-respect and independence.

The Oakland Tribune (Oakland, CA)

December 25, 2002 Wednesday

Local Islamic leader picked to replace Bey;

Organization, spurred by city's homicides, reaffirms its Muslim-Christian roots

BYLINE: By Chauncey Bailey, STAFF WRITER

SECTION: LOCAL NEWS

LENGTH: 608 words

DATELINE: OAKLAND

Members of Black Men First have chosen a local Nation of Islam leader to replace Yusuf Bey, a move organizers hope will keep together a coalition of Muslims and Christians needed to make the fledging grass-roots organization relevant and effective in the African-American community.

"I'm honored to be selected as vice president of Black Men First," said Minister Keith Muhammad of Mosque 26 in Oakland. "But titles are not important. We have work to do. I'm about doing the work."

The organization was formed by pastors and community leaders in response to the rise in black-on-black homicides in Oakland.

Earlier this year, the Rev. Bob Jackson, pastor of Acts Full Gospel Church, was named the group's president and Bey, owner of Your Black Muslim Bakery, was selected vice president. However, Bey resigned due to pressures on the organization after he was charged with 27 felony counts involving alleged sexual abuse of four teenage girls. The case will return to court Jan. 14.

Bey's high-profile involvement with the organization had been criticized by black women, who also chided black elected officials for giving Bey a standing ovation, during a recent meeting, for his crime-fighting efforts in West Oakland.

Many Black Men First meeting participants -- including pastors and other Christians -- support Jackson because of the work he has done at Acts Full Gospel, one of the city's largest black churches with about 5,000 members.

But others say Muslims often connect more with wayward black youths. According to a recent survey by Newsweek, three of every five new converts to Islam in the United States are African American, and many have just been released from the nation's prisons.

When Jackson opened one meeting with a prayer, a Muslim in the audience interjected, saying an Islamic reading also should be permitted. Jackson agreed. A similar objection was raised once as community patrols were pre-paring to leave from the Acts Full Church parking lot.

Now the meetings feature silent prayers, to avoid religious preference.

Muhammad has urged members to use a "community service pledge adopted by attendees of the Million Man March" in 1995, a landmark event organized by Nation of Islam leader Louis Farrakhan.

The pledge is now recited at Black Men First meetings.

Darnell Levingston, a member of the African American Emergency Task Force On AIDS, said it was important to replace Bey with another Muslim.

"In our community, people either go to a Christian church or a Mosque, so this brings both of those groups together," Levingston said.

"Black Muslims help young black males when they get out of jail and they are respected, and Jackson has the Men of Valor program," which provides social services for parolees, Levingston added.

Jackson said he also plans to meet with black women to address their concerns that Black Men First is a male chauvinist group. "We need a black male organization to find solutions for helping other black males," he said.

At its December monthly meeting, the organization agreed to focus on getting information about job training to the unemployed, compile a list of all 4,000 black-owned businesses in Oakland, and work on a flier to be distributed to at-risk young people by community patrol members who have said residents want information about housing and jobs.

The next meeting will be 10 a.m. Jan. 11 at Castlemont High School.

Alameda County Supervisors Nate Miley and Keith Carson were not present at the December meeting of Black Men First. Neither was Bey or Vice Mayor Larry Reid, who has agreed to help with economic development plans.

The Oakland Tribune (Oakland, CA)

October 1, 2002 Tuesday

Blacks take their counsel to the streets;

Organization aims to combat surge of homicides among young African-American men

BYLINE: By Chauncey Bailey, STAFF WRITER

SECTION: HEADLINE NEWS

LENGTH: 928 words

DATELINE: OAKLAND

It's Friday night, and a basketball game is being played at the East Oakland Youth Development Center. The score is 33 to 30, and the gym is filled with young black men.

But just outside the gym there's a different kind of hustle happening. Wearing a black leather jacket and a gold chain, a man called "Chris" is supervising other young black men who are selling drugs nearby.

Chris, 34, says he lives in the hills but works here in the flatlands. He is chatting with some older black men who are part of a 12-man patrol near 82nd Avenue and International Boulevard, men who are trying to turn him away from drug dealing.

"Can you come to a meeting?" one man asks him.

"How long?" Chris asks.

"Two hours."

"What? You know how much money I can make in two hours?"

What would it take to get him off the streets? "A job that pays \$700 a week," Chris says.

This is one of the 10 street patrols working with Black Men First, a new organization that hopes to improve the lives of black men and push for community development. The group was formed in response to the surge in Oakland homicides this year and the fact most victims and suspects were African-American men.

The volunteers met at 6 p.m. in the parking lot of Acts Full Gospel Church before getting into cars that headed for various parts of Oakland. About 70 men showed up Friday night.

The patrol along International Boulevard from 78th to 85th avenues grows when members of the Nation of Islam, car-

rying copies of the Final Call newspaper, join at 81st Avenue and International Boulevard.

George Pearson, a physician's assistant, is in the patrol. He wears dreadlocks and a Negro League baseball jacket. "We have to get out here and talk to these young brothers," says Pearson, 48. "That's what this is all about. It's good to see some professional black men out here."

A young, homeless black man pushing a grocery cart with his belongings inside is stopped next. He's heading for a relative's home to spend the night. He is told about the next Black Men First meeting 10 a.m. Oct. 12 at Castlemont High School. Useful information

There may be information about housing and jobs, he learns. Check out Men of Valor, a self-help program at Acts Full church, he is told.

Several cars drive by and motorists honk. "Black Men First," someone yells. A patrol member holds up one index finger with a clenched fist -- the adopted sign of Black Men First.

"The O.G.'s [original gangsters or older men] are smoked out and not helping anyone," says Herman Lane, 28, sitting on a bus stop bench near the youth center. He interacts with the patrol. The men want to know what the "brothers" on the streets need. "Jobs. More recreation for young people," Lane replies.

Cleveland Pratt, 54, is the patrol's captain. He wears a red baseball cap and listens intently.

"This is great. You guys need to be out here more often," says Grady Williams, who greets the patrol. He learns more about the campaign from local business owner Nedir Bey, also a patrol member, who wears a business suit. Bey shakes the hands of strangers and tells them about the organization.

"We need jobs and more businesses," Bey says. He speaks in front of the Ebony Beauty Supply, owned by Chong Kim, who is Asian American.

Supporting local business

Blacks should support local businesses, patrol members say, and more stores should be owned by blacks.

They stop at Happy Home Seafood and order plates of red snapper, prawns and fries, with soft drinks and a slice of pie, which three men share at a table on the sidewalk. The owner, Bashir Salaam, is African American and talks about Islam and how he met Elijah Muhammad of the Black Muslim movement in the 1970s.

On future patrols, members will distribute fliers about services, programs and possible leads on housing or jobs found by other Black Men First committees.

"We have to offer men something," says Bey, who is working on an import-export business with African nations.

He has worked with Yusef Bey, owner of Your Black Muslim Bakery, who helps blacks set up their own enterprises. Nedir Bey is among a number of young black men on whom Yusef Bey has bestowed the Bey surname because of noteworthy community services.

Yusef Bey, vice president of Black Men First, was recently in the news after being charged in Alameda County Superior Court with one felony count of a lewd act on a child under 14.

Visit to 'Ghost Town'

Yusef Bey joined the first patrols several weeks ago when they went into high-crime areas of East Oakland and a section West Oakland calls "Ghost Town." The neighborhood got the name because dozens of young men have died violently there over the years. Most of the deaths were drug-related.

During the last Black Men First meeting, a call went out for more men to join the patrols, and more did sign up. Although there was also a suggestion to have a police car near each walking patrol, that didn't sit well with organizers, said Rob Hanna, chairman of the patrols. "That wouldn't be connecting with the community, that would be disconnecting," Hanna says.

The next Black Men First meeting will assess the patrols' effectiveness. "This was our second one and the turnout was much bigger," Hanna says.

"I just want to make a difference," says Cliff Gahagan, 47, who has written a book called "Why Should I Be Called A Nigger" and is part of a campaign to get young people to stop using the racial slur. He is walking with the patrol along International Boulevard. "We have to do something," he says.

The Oakland Tribune (Oakland, CA)
September 27, 2002 Friday
Black Muslim leader Bey appears in county court;
African-American group debates his resignation
BYLINE: By Chauncey Bailey , STAFF WRITER
SECTION: LOCAL NEWS
LENGTH: 628 words
DATELINE: OAKLAND

Outspoken black Muslim leader Yusef Bey appeared in court Thursday on allegations he fathered the child of a 13-year-old girl. Meanwhile, debate intensified over whether he should resign from a new coalition formed to improve the lives of young African-American men.

Bey's appearance in Alameda County Superior Court to face one felony count of a lewd act on a child under 14 was brief, and he left without comment. But the issue has generated a lot of discussion within the African-American community.

The matter was continued until 9 a.m. Thursday at the courthouse, 661 Washington St.

Bey, 66, had posted \$50,000 bail following his arrest Sept. 19. Police said their investigation is continuing and urged people with information to call 238-7910.

Bey was joined by his attorney, Andrew Dosa of Alameda, who declined to talk about the case and has asked his client also to remain silent.

Last week's revelations about the young woman, now 34, also has angered many blacks, who say Bey should step down as vice president of Black Men First, an organization formed in response to a surge of homicides with the goal of helping African-American males and pushing for more community development.

Many African Americans, especially women, are disturbed that some black males, including community leaders, have been supportive of Bey following the allegations. They say the new organization lacks credibility as long as Bey is a high-profile member.

'He should resign'

"I think he should resign until he clears up his legal matter," said Stacy Wilson of Oakland.

The Rev. Ken Chambers of Westside Missionary Baptist Church said, "I'm praying for Dr. Bey and the young woman and the family."

Supporters of Bey point out he has helped many people rebuild shattered lives -- including men released from prison without skills or hope -- by providing jobs, housing and spiritual guidance.

In court, a somber Bey wore a dark gray pinstriped suit, dark bow tie and a Muslim fez [cap].

Five Muslim women, their hair covered by traditional Islamic scarves, entered first. They were followed later by dozens of Bey's stern-faced male followers, clad in dark business suits, crisp white shirts and bow ties. Many were young.

Reporters kept away

As Bey left the courtroom his supporters surrounded him, keeping reporters away. One man held his hand over the lens of a television news camera. There was some scuffling and icy stares as the men used their bodies to clear a way for Bey while keeping away others who were also heading for a bank of elevators.

"No comment," said Bey when asked in the hallway whether he had a statement.

"No comment at this time," Bey said when asked outside whether he was going to resign as vice president of Black Men First.

Outside, Bey's supporters were positioned to escort him -- or provide security for him -- from the building to his car. A female Muslim told a reporter, "You're not going to get close to him, he has too much protection."

On San Pablo Avenue, where Bey's Black Muslim Bakery is headquartered, across the street from a private school also run by his supporters, visitors were greeted by watchful young men on the sidewalk.

The bakery is where Bey employs many blacks and holds meetings on Thursdays to recruit more and speak to his followers about building the organization for the benefit of the black community.

Followers remain devoted

His followers remain devoted to a man they say has changed their lives and is working to uplift others.

Critics say he has sinned and should pay.

SoulBeat [KSBT Channel 27] is continuing to air Bey's show, "True Solutions," and so far has not allowed any discussion of Bey on any of the privately owned channel's numerous talk shows.

The Oakland Tribune (Oakland, CA)

September 22, 2002 Sunday

Accused black leader given support;

Third meeting of Black Men First backs Bey, urges attendees to join patrols of 23 high crime neighborhoods

BYLINE: By Chauncey Bailey , STAFF WRITER

SECTION: LOCAL NEWS

LENGTH: 792 words

DATELINE: OAKLAND

Hundreds of African-American men greeted Yusef Bey with a standing ovation when he rose to speak Saturday in East Oakland.

Bey was charged last week with one felony count of a lewd act on a child under 14, alleging he fathered a child 20 years ago with a then-13-year-old girl.

"I'm honored to have your support. ... We need to gain political power," said Bey during the third meeting of Black Men First, an organization recently formed to improve the lives of black males in light of Oakland's soaring homicide rate and persistent poverty.

Bey, 66, did not offer to resign from his position as vice president of the organization, and was not asked to do so. Instead, he was embraced by the organization, which drew its largest turnout to date -- nearly 1,000 -- to Castlemont High School.

"You can make bad choices," said Bey, without referring to his case. Bey and his attorney have declined to comment on that. "My apologies are to God Allah. If He can forgive me, I'm going back to work for my community."

Earlier, during a taped broadcast of his Soul Beat cable TV show Saturday, Bey said, "I only fear being without God. Life is full of challenges. Humans make mistakes." He urged black men to stop selling drugs and find honest jobs.

Bey refused to give a statement to police when he was arrested last Thursday. He brought a cashier's check to pay the bail and was freed a few hours after being processed at the Oakland City Jail.

Police said they have DNA evidence confirming Bey is the father of the child, who was born in June 1982, 10 days before the mother turned 14. Police said he is also the father of the woman's two other children, one 18 and the other 15, but the criminal charge against him only concerns the oldest child.

In the flatland neighborhoods of East Oakland other blacks also voiced support for Bey, owner of Your Black Muslim Bakeries. "It's a trick by the enemy because he's doing something positive for the black community," said Arleta Bass.

"Everyone makes mistakes," said Sheliah Daniels. "Why did it take her so long so come forward?"

Dorothy Jean McCoy said, "That was 20 years ago ... and in my great-grandmother's day people married and had children when they were 12 or 13."

Billy Tillis added, "He takes care of his children and they live a clean, religious life."

Jayla Richardson, 26, and her mother, Melba, also declined to be critical of Bey. "Jesus is the only one I know who is perfect," said Jayla.

The few African Americans who expressed concern were middle-class residents in the hills who declined to comment publicly. "She was only 13," said one woman.

"Leaders have to be held to standards," said one man.

A Christian pastor said he hoped Bey would take a leave of absence and return later. "We should pray for him and the mother," he said.

No one at the Black Men First meeting, however, spoke against Bey. Attendees were urged to register blacks to vote and men were asked to show up at the parking lot of Acts Full Gospel Church, 1034 66th Ave., next Friday at 6 p.m. and join community patrols, where teams of concerned men will try to reach out to at-risk black males in 23 high-crime neighborhoods across the city.

Nine areas were targeted last week.

Among officials at the meeting were police Chief Richard Word -- who sat next to Bey on the stage -- Vice Mayor Larry Reid and Alameda County Supervisor Keith Carson.

There were also discussions of economic development plans for mostly black neighborhoods from 94th Avenue to 98th Avenue along International Boulevard, down Seminary Avenue, and along MacArthur Boulevard from 73rd Avenue to the San Leandro line. Attendees said current and future black-owned businesses need to be supported to create jobs. And there was a call to find more jobs in the trades for young people who may need training.

Participants at Saturday's meeting, led by Bob Jackson, pastor of Acts Full Gospel Church, agreed to follow the oath created at the Million Man March in 1995 where attendees agreed to refrain from violence and work for building stronger communities economically.

"We want to put 'neighbor' back in the 'hood'," said Jackson. He also informed the group that he declined to give Bill Simon, the Republican candidate for governor, permission to address his church until Simon releases his plan for black economic development to the Black Men First organization.

"It's not about supporting a Republican or a Democrat," Jackson said. "We want to know what they are going to do for the black community."

Reid said he will put that same question to Gov. Gray Davis, who was slated to visit East Oakland Saturday afternoon. The organization agreed to meet again in two weeks at the high school.

The Oakland Tribune (Oakland, CA)
September 8, 2002 Sunday
Black men act to halt violence on city streets;
Oaklanders agree to form nonprofit, help youth in high-crime areas
BYLINE: By Chauncey Bailey , STAFF WRITER
SECTION: LOCAL NEWS
LENGTH: 693 words
DATELINE: OAKLAND

Reacting to a surge in homicides, African-American men agreed Saturday to undergo training and go into high-crime neighborhoods and redirect young, black males who are hanging out.

The second meeting of Black Men First at Castlemont High School attracted more attendees than the 500 at an initial session last month, which was convened by Pastors of Oakland, a local group of clergy representing 50 churches.

Participants agreed to form a number of committees, collect annual dues of \$25, form a political caucus and create a nonprofit entity.

Black-on-black crime, however, is what prompted many to attend.

Oakland has recorded 78 homicides so far this year. There were only 61 at this time last year. The majority of the victims and suspects are African-American males.

Reginald Lee, 44, of East Oakland said he was ready to sign up for the community patrols Saturday. "I've been there. Done that," said Lee, referring to growing up in tough neighborhoods. "There's too much senseless killing. Being a black man, these young guys can relate to me."

On Wednesday at 7 p.m., the men will meet at Acts Full Gospel Church, 1034 66th Ave., for the first training meeting. Bob Jackson, pastor of the church, and president of Black Men First, stressed: "We just can't go out there. We have to be trained."

Young people will be told

about available services or programs.

"Our first priority has to be stopping the killing of young, black men and then offer them alternatives -- we have to hire them," said Yusef Bey, owner of Your Black Muslim Bakery and vice president of the newly-formed organization.

The organization agreed to adopt a logo -- a black number 1 -- that will be placed outside all of Oakland's 4,100 African-American-owned businesses as part of a campaign to recirculate dollars among blacks so more of those businesses can generate jobs.

Proponents said Oakland blacks have to take a lesson from Chinatown and the Fruitvale district where Asians and Hispanics create jobs through their own self-sustaining economies.

Among those who were at the meeting were Oakland police Chief Richard Word, Alameda County Supervisor Keith Carson and Vice Mayor Larry Reid, who agreed to head a committee on economic development in the black community. Financial experts are going to be called in to review proposals, said Ray Leon, Reid's aide.

Oakland NAACP President Shannon Reeves joined a panel on stage in the school auditorium and sat next to Keith Muhammad, from the Nation of Islam, other clergy and representatives from 100 Black Men of Oakland, Inc., a civic organization, Omega Psi Phi fraternity and other community groups.

Art Clark, a local architect, agreed to start drafting plans for a youth center that would offer recreational programs. Will Bass, a business consultant, also joined the panel, adding to the mix of professionals who sat with blue-collar men.

"I'm here because we have to come together as black men," said Salahudin Ali Akbar. "We need to do something about all the homeless and open a detox center so people can be cleaned up and given new life."

Other committees will focus on voter education and registration to create a black voting bloc that can put pressure on City Hall; mentoring and schools, computer technology, and other areas.

"If you want to make a suggestion," said Jackson, "you have to be willing to serve as the temporary chairman of a committee to work on it."

"We can't expect the politicians or the police to do the job. We have to do it. This is our problem. We have to solve it."

Health is another issue and the organization urged men to attend a prostate cancer screening event next Saturday at 11 a.m. at Verdes Carter Park, at 98th and Bancroft avenues hosted by Healthy Oakland, a nonprofit that will also distribute 1,500 bags of groceries to the needy.

Toward the end of the two-hour meeting, the gathering rose and chanted "black men first ... black men first."

Bey and Jackson each contributed \$1,000 and others stepped up to pay their dues or join committees.

The next meeting was set for Sept. 21 at 10 a.m. at Castlemont High School.

The Oakland Tribune (Oakland, CA)
August 27, 2002 Tuesday
Black Men First picks leaders;
Organization aims to turn African-American youth from life of crime
BYLINE: By Chauncey Bailey , STAFF WRITER
SECTION: LOCAL NEWS
LENGTH: 250 words
DATELINE: OAKLAND

A new organization aimed at improving the lives of young black men named itself Black Men First, selected leaders and set goals at a meeting Saturday at Castlemont High School.

The 500 people who attended chose Pastor Bob Jackson of Acts Full Gospel Church to be president and Muslim community leader Yusef Bey as vice president.

The next meeting was set for 10 a.m. Sept. 7 at Castlemont, 8601 MacArthur Blvd.

One of the group's priorities is to help young, black males so they will turn from a life of crime.

Black residents often point to a leadership void after more than a decade of having African-American mayors. They also note there has been an exodus of many African Americans from the city. They talk of lost political power and a lack of economic clout.

Jackson leads one of the city's largest black churches. Some members of his congregation reach out to help young people with a campaign called SWAT -- Spreading the Word Across Town. Jackson helped organize the recent march to City Hall, which attracted 4,000 people.

He wants black men to join his Men of Valor program, which he says has turned young men around and made them productive with new values.

Bey, a former mayoral candidate, is owner of the Your Black Muslim bakeries. During meetings, he urges black men who have just been released from jail to join others who want to start or support black businesses.

"People will try to divide us, but we have one thing in common: We are black men," Bey said.

The Oakland Tribune (Oakland, CA)

August 25, 2002 Sunday

Homicide rate rallies 500 men to seek answers;

Leading blacks meet to craft grass-roots agenda for youth trapped in web of violence, drugs

BYLINE: By Chauncey Bailey , STAFF WRITER

SECTION: HEADLINE NEWS

LENGTH: 685 words

DATELINE: OAKLAND

Five hundred black men filled the auditorium at Castlemont High School in East Oakland Saturday to begin crafting a grass-roots political, social and economic agenda in response to the city's soaring homicide rate.

One man suggested the group call itself the "Black Knights of Oakland."

There were calls for school reforms, support for black-owned businesses, more mentoring and putting pressure on City Hall.

Pastor Bob Jackson of Acts Full Gospel Church convened what will be a series of town hall meetings -- driven by the need to come up with solutions and strategies to redirect young, black males who are caught up in a culture of violence and drugs, which police say contributes to homicides.

Joining Jackson on a panel were other clergy and representatives from the Oakland Bay Area chapter of the service group 100 Black Men, health professionals and civic leaders.

"It's all about economics and power," said Yusef Bey, owner of Your Black Muslim Bakeries.

"We need one leader and we need unity."

He suggested Jackson be that person to present an agenda to City Hall.

The assembled also were critical of the Nov. 5 measure to hire 100 new police officers. However, Joe Debro said officials should make sure if it passes that "60 to 70 percent of the hires should be Oakland residents."

"It's going to take meetings like this with a broad spectrum of the community [to get results]," said Derrick Nesbitt, a local real estate agent, from a seat at the rear of the room. "And we are going to have to interface with young people in the community."

Phillip Johnson of Oakland said, "We have to stop blaming others for our problems and our leaders have to step out front. There are jobs out here as truck drivers, but we need skills."

Nadir Bey, a local business owner, said city officials should be asked to put up a \$100 million bond a year for 10 years for black economic development because large sums of money are being earmarked to clean up Lake Merritt and hire more police.

Organizers said since mostly black males are being killed in Oakland, African-American males must come up with realistic strategies.

The meeting was a follow-up to the Release the Peace conference held earlier this year at Laney College, according to members of the Pastors of Oakland, an organization of local clergy.

Before the forum started, Darnel Livingston held up a sign that said "Stop Black On Black Violence." He later passed the microphone from one side of the meeting to another so many voices could be heard.

During Saturday's meeting, dozens raised their hands to speak and Jackson took notes.

Terry Brown said he wants to see the N-word banned in Oakland and urged young blacks to start referring to each other as "king or sir."

Shaykh Ahmad of the Islamic Community of Light in Oakland called for a black political party and more voting.

Sean Conner, who is on his way to college, and was a member of the city's Youth Commission, was also on the panel. "How many of you have mentored a young person? How many have voted?" He looked at the raised hands and said, "More of you have voted than mentored."

There were also calls for more black males teachers, and auto shop classes to train young males for jobs.

Ed Dillard, president, Oakland Black Board of Trade and Commerce, said there are 4,375 black-owned businesses in Oakland but only 365 have employees. "We need to support our own businesses so they can hire more young people," Dillard said.

George Pearson, a medical assistant, said, "We need to show these young men on the corners that there are other options..."

Cliff Gahangan, a local author, said, "Go into these communities and you see people living in terror ... they are afraid of the drug dealers. We have to say to the churches, 'let's get thousands of men to go in with information about services.'"

Donald Lacy of the Lovelife Foundation said young thugs often have business skills that need to be redirected. "Let's help them get their own businesses. Let's allow them to say 'sling [sell] stocks not rocks' [crack cocaine]."