

# Austin, Curtis

**Contents: Documents of Dr. Curtis J. Austin's book promotion in 2006**

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- **2006-12 Yazoo Library Association flyer - Dr. Austin will autograph his new book at Ricks Library on December 6, 2006**

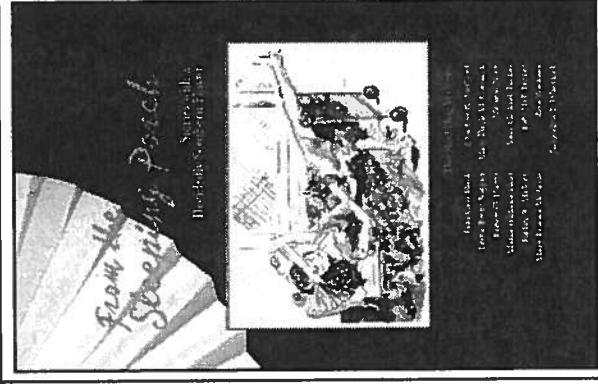
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**Location: Vertical Files at Ricks Memorial Library of the Yazoo Library Association  
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# BOOKSHELF

## Southern Miss professor's book on Black Panthers a good study

Queens Hill Press kicks off its publication of *From the Sleeping Porch* with a book signing and a wine and cheese party at Lemuria Bookstore in Banner Hall November 17 from 5:00 p.m. to 7:00 p.m. The party continues at Yellow Dog Bookstore on Main Street in Madison on the following Saturday from 2:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m. *From the Sleeping Porch* is an anthology of short fiction, showcasing Mississippi writers. Jackson residents Lottie Boggan and Judy Tucker established Queens Hill for the purpose of giving a publishing option to southern writers.



Jackson Advocate News Service  
A University of Southern Mississippi history professor has chronicled the story of the rise of the Black Panther Party during the turbulent 1960s and how the forces of both violence and social justice intertwined to shape the organization.

Dr. Curtis Austin, who also serves as co-director for the Southern Miss Center for Oral History and Cultural Heritage, signed his new book *Up Against the Wall: Violence in the Making and Unmaking of the Black Panther Party* on Wednesday Nov. 8 at 1 p.m. at the Barnes & Noble Bookstore on campus.

His book, published by the University of Arkansas Press, came out as this year marks the 40th anniversary of the African-American civil rights organization. It includes a forward by Elbert "Big Man" Howard, an original member of the Black Panthers.

The creation of the Black Panther Party in 1966 was born from the union of Huey Newton and Bobby Seale and espoused a philosophy of self-defense, including armed resistance, against racist oppression and persecution of African-Americans. Although their militant stand was seen as a threat, including by then FBI Director J. Edgar Hoover, who described the group as one of the most dangerous internal threats to America's security, the Black Panthers also initiated a variety of social service programs that are models for mainstream outreach programs run by human service agencies today.

Austin said he started working on

*Against the Wall* is the culmination of his academic research and additional research in archives across the country, as well as interviews with former members of the party, he said.

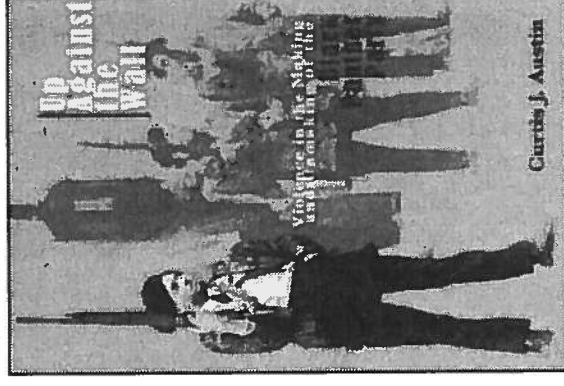
Because the book examines the role of violence in the party's rise and fall, most members of the party were initially hesitant about even being seen with Austin, he said.

"It took me about 10 years to track down various individuals and to earn enough of their trust for them to tell me the answers to the very sensitive questions I had to ask," Austin said. "Once a significant group of them decided that I did not work for the FBI after all, they began to open and to share party secrets that had heretofore gone undocumented."

Austin said *Up Against the Wall* examines how violence -- rhetorical and physical, psychological and imagined -- worked to contribute to both the organization's growth and death. It looks at how police raids and shootouts, government infiltration and assassination grew common as the party developed and expanded.

*Up Against the Wall* also examines the group's use of violent rhetoric, its emphasis on armed self-defense, and its redefinition of self-defense to include offensive actions. Along the way, the Black Panthers showed they were as concerned about the well-being of their community as its defense, organizing free breakfasts for school children programs and free health clinics, free pest services, free busing to prison programs, free programs addressing the needs of the elderly, free clothing programs, and a plethora of others that addressed the social needs of the communities where they established chapters.

*Up Against the Wall* has earned



Austin's book "powerfully demonstrates the centrality of violence in the historical trajectory and our historical memory of the Party" and further described it as "a serious, sober, and probing contribution to the ongoing project of historicizing and understanding the Party and its importance."

Austin said he was motivated to study the party because, prior to attending Southern Miss, he had not been taught about the various contours and realities of the civil rights movement.

"I was not aware of the legacy of struggle that others had left for us to learn from," he said.

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Jackson Advocate News Service

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Negative rap has overshadowed conscious rap, thus making it necessary to ask, "What is really going



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by Curtis J. Austin, Elbert "Big Man" Howard (Foreword)

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## Editorial Reviews

### Book Description

The story of the Black Panther Party's Pyrrhic Victory

Curtis J. Austin chronicles how violence brought about the founding of the Black Panther Party i Huey P. Newton and Bobby Seale, dominated its policies, and brought about the party's destruc one member after another—Eldridge Cleaver, Fred Hampton, Alex Rackley—left the party, was was imprisoned. Austin shows how the party's early emphasis in the 1960s on self-defense, tho needed in black communities at the time, left it open to mischaracterization, infiltration, and de by local, state, and federal police forces and government agencies. Austin carefully highlights th tension between advocates of a more radical position than the Panthers took, who insisted on n confrontation with the state and those, such as Newton and David Hilliard, who believed in mak community organizing and alliance building their first priorities.

Austin interviewed a number of party members who had heretofore remained silent. With the h these stories, Austin is able to put the violent history of the party in perspective and show that "survival" programs such as the Free Breakfast for Children program and Free Health Clinics he black communities they served to recognize their own bases of power and ability to save thems

### From the Back Cover

"We desperately need good historical scholarship about the Black Panther Party, and this strong a good place to start. Austin's focus on violence is a shrewd decision." —Tim Tyson, author of B DONE SIGN MY NAME and RADIO FREE DIXIE

"This book powerfully demonstrates the centrality of violence in the historical trajectory and our memory of the Party...A serious, sober, and probing contribution..." —Waldo Martin, CIVIL RIGH THE UNITED STATES: AN ENCYCLOPEDIA and THE MIND OF FREDERICK DOUGLASS

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## Product Details

**Hardcover:** 480 pages

**Publisher:** University of Arkansas Press (November 1, 2006)

**Language:** English

**ISBN:** 1557288275

**Product Dimensions:** 9.2 x 6.4 x 1.6 inches

**Shipping Weight:** 1.92 pounds (View shipping rates and policies)

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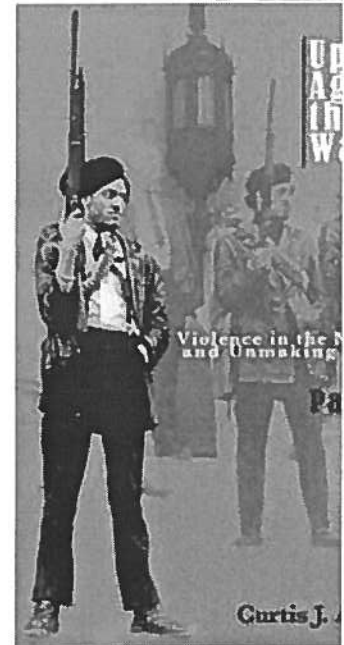
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## Up Against the Wall Violence in the Making and Unmaking of the Black Panther Party

**Curtis J. Austin**  
With a Foreword by Elbert "Big Man"  
Howard

**The story of the Black Panther Party's  
Pyrrhic victory**



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by Huey P. Newton and Bobby Seale, dominated its policies, and brought about the party's destruction as one member after another—Eldridge Cleaver, Fred Hampton, Alex Rackley—left the party, was or was imprisoned. Austin shows how the party's early emphasis in the 1960s on self-defense, though sorely needed in black communities at the time, left it open to mischaracterization, infiltration, and devastation by local, state, and federal police forces and government agencies. Austin carefully highlights the internal tension between advocates of a more radical position than the Panthers took, who insisted on militant confrontation with the state and those, such as Newton and David Hilliard, who believed in making community organizing and alliance building their first priorities.

Austin interviewed a number of party members who had heretofore remained silent. With the help of these stories, Austin is able to put the violent history of the party in perspective and show that the "survival" programs such as the Free Breakfast for Children program and Free Health Clinics helped the black communities they served to recognize their own bases of power and ability to save themselves.

"We desperately need good historical scholarship about the Black Panther Party and this strong history is a good place to start. Austin's focus on violence is a shrewd decision."

—Tim Tyson, author of *Blood Done Sign My Name* and *Radio Free*

"This book powerfully demonstrates the centrality of violence in the historical trajectory and our historical memory of the Party. . . . A serious, sober, and probing contribution to the ongoing project of historicizing and understanding the Party and its importance."

—Waldo Martin, *Civil Rights in the United States: An Encyclopedia and The Movement*  
*Frederick Douglass*

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November 2006  
6 x 9 488 pages, 20 photographs, 12 drawings, index  
\$34.95 cloth  
1-55728-827-5 (978-1-55728-827-1)

Curtis J. Austin is an assistant professor of history and codirector of the Center for Oral History and Cultural Heritage at the University of Southern Mississippi.

Elbert "Big Man" Howard was an original founding member of the Black Panther Party and editor of the Black Panther Party newspaper.

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YAZOO HERALD Dec 21, 2006 p.1

# Yazoo native to sign new book Wed.

By JASON PATTERSON  
Managing Editor

Author Curtis J. Austin will be returning home to Yazoo City on Wednesday.

Austin will sign copies of *Up Against the Wall: Violence in the Making and Unmaking of the Black Panther Party* at Ricks Memorial Library Wednesday at 11:30 a.m.

Austin is an assistant professor of history and codirector of the



Austin

center for Oral History and Cultural Heritage at the University of Southern Mississippi. He grew up in Yazoo City.

Assistant Library Director Janet Nail said Austin's book takes an objective look at an important part of the history of the 1960s in America.

"He is very balanced in his writing," Nail said. "He is neither attacking nor defending. He just presents the history."

Nail said she is looking forward to seeing Austin as her daughter went to school with him and her sons also remember him.

"He is to be commended for how much he has accomplished," Nail said. "His books have gotten great reviews."

Austin's book, published by the University of Arkansas Press, comes out as this year marks the 40th anniversary of the African-American civil rights organization. It includes a forward by Elbert "Big Man" Howard, an original member of the Black Panthers.

"It took me about 10 years to track down various individuals and to earn enough of their trust for them to tell me the answers to the very sensitive questions I had to ask," Austin said in a previous interview with the Southern Miss...

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"It took me about 10 years to track down various individuals and to earn enough of their trust for them to tell me the answers to the very sensitive questions I had to ask," Austin said in a previous interview with the Southern Miss public relations department. "Once a significant group of them decided that I did not work for the FBI after all, they began to open and to share party secrets that had heretofore gone undocumented."

Austin's book has earned praise from other scholars and authors, including Waldo Martin, author of *Civil Rights in the United States: An Encyclopedia*.

Martin's review said that Austin's book "powerfully demonstrates the centrality of violence in the historical trajectory and our historical memory of the Party" and also described the book as "a serious, sober, and probing contribution to the ongoing project of historicizing and understanding the Party and its importance."

## **YAZOO LIBRARY ASSOCIATION**

On Wednesday, December 6, 2006, Curtis Austin, Ph.D (Yazoo City High School, 1987) will be at the B.S. Ricks Memorial Library to discuss and to autograph his new book, UP AGAINST THE WALL: VIOLENCE IN THE MAKING AND UNMAKING OF THE BLACK PANTHER PARTY.

Dr. Austin, a native of Yazoo City and alumni of Yazoo City High School, is a professor of history at the University of Southern Mississippi.

Classes are welcome to attend the discussion in the Mississippi Chemical Conference Center on the corner of Powell and Washington Streets, at 11:00 a.m.

There will be refreshments and a chance to talk to Dr. Austin.