



The War Before: The True Life Story of Becoming a Black Panther, Keeping the Faith in Prison, and Fighting for Those Left Behind

Safiya Bukhari

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In 1968, Safiya Bukhari witnessed an NYPD officer harassing a Black Panther for selling the organization's newspaper on a Harlem street corner. The young pre-med student felt compelled to intervene in defense of the Panther's First Amendment right; she ended up handcuffed and thrown into the back of a police car.

The War Before traces Bukhari's lifelong commitment as an advocate for the rights of the oppressed. Following her journey from middle-class student to Black Panther to political prisoner, these writings provide an intimate view of a woman wrestling with the issues of her time—the troubled legacy of the Panthers, misogyny in the movement, her decision to convert to Islam, the incarceration of outspoken radicals, and the families left behind. Her account unfolds with immediacy and passion, showing how the struggles of social justice movements have paved the way for the progress of today.

Born in Harlem, **Safiya Bukhari** joined the Black Panther Party in 1969. Imprisoned for nine years on a robbery and murder charge, Bukhari was released in 1999 and went on to co-found the New York Free Mumia Abu-Jamal Coalition and other organizations advocating for the release of political prisoners. She died in 2003 at the age of 53.

Laura Whitehorn has been a political activist since the 1960s. She spent 14 years in prison for the Resistance Conspiracy case. Released in 1999, she lives in New York City.

Wonda Jones is the daughter of Safiya Bukhari.

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