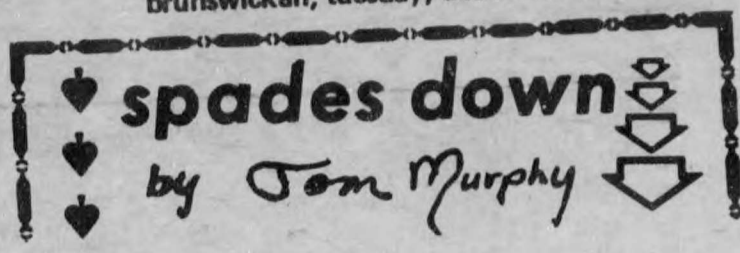


Halifax arrest may spark violence in black community



HALIFAX (CUP) — The arrest here Nov. 30 of Rosie Douglas, a McGill University student and organizer of last month's Black Writers' Congress, could spark violent reaction in the black community in Halifax.

Douglas was arrested for loitering after speaking to a group of young people in front of a Halifax ghetto night club.

According to black spokesmen, Halifax police have been watching the city's airport, train and bus stations to screen blacks arriving from out of town.

"The police have been telling blacks to avoid out of town brothers because they just want to cause trouble," said Douglas. He said Halifax cops told blacks not to deal with outsiders, rather to leave them for the cops to handle, and "so they've been on the lookout for people like me."

"Now, things are more tense than I've seen them here," said

Douglas.

About a month ago, members of the militant black national party, the Black Panthers, arrived in Halifax after being asked for organization help by local black leaders.

Stokely Carmichael and several other leaders of the Panthers' Eastern Command have been devoting much of their attention to organization in Halifax, which has the largest black ghetto in Canada.

Wadell Smith, a Panther organizer arrested in Halifax last week for illegal possession of a gun, said police "were tailing me for a long time. They were obviously out to nab me on anything."

"Smith's arrest upset the black community which held a meeting Saturday night to arrange for his defense and to set up an organizational structure in the ghetto. Douglas flew to Halifax from Montreal to speak at that meeting.

After the sessions, Douglas

was speaking to a group of younger people about community when a cop ordered them to disperse. In Halifax, no one under 16 is allowed on the streets after 9:30 and most of the group were not 16. One of the points Douglas had been making to them at the time was that white youths had recreation facilities to go to after 9:30 while black kids were forced to use the streets.

Douglas then moved the group to the steps of a night club and was ordered to disperse again. The club owner told cops he allowed the group on his steps but the cop said the kids were blocking traffic into the club. The club was closed at the time.

A few minutes later, police returned and busted Douglas.

"The captain at the desk (of the copshop) seemed to know me, although I had never been there before," said Douglas. "He said he had been expecting me before now."

THE ARREST OF ROSIE DOUGLAS

by norman cook

(Norman Cook is a sociology graduate student at McGill University.)

HALIFAX (CUP)— For Nova Scotia's 17,000 black people, Halifax has at best been a bleak and oppressive place. For these, my people, the dingy Brunswick Street Court has probably been bleaker and certainly more oppressive. A black man appeared in that court today.

Another will appear tomorrow. This is not unusual. However, these two men are very unusual. Brothers Wadell Smith and Rosie Douglas are black men who can deal with oppression. Rosie Douglas dealt with oppression today.

Jammed between two members of the tough Eastern Command of the Black Panthers, I watched Rosie Douglas begin to write a new chapter in the history of the black people in

Canada. Someone nearby suggested that the scene was reminiscent of another black oppression town: Oakland, California.

Rosie's court hearing was brief, but significant enough to be noted in some detail.

Magistrate: Are you Roosevelt Douglas?

Rosie: Yes, I am.

Magistrate: Where are you from?

Rosie: I am from Africa. I was brought into North America in chains by white men.

Magistrate: You are charged with loitering on Creighton Street after a Negro meeting in front of a night club in the presence of Negro people from Halifax. You were asked to move four times by an officer of the law and bluntly refused to move each time.

Rosie: The only charge that you can lay against me is a charge for being a black man.

Magistrate: A what?

Rosie: A black man... It is precisely because you and your police have refused to respect black people that you are making me a victim of your white racist laws.

Magistrate: What nonsense are you talking about? This court does not discriminate against any person on the basis of race, color, or creed. You should know that. Now, are you guilty or not guilty of that charge, Mr. Douglas?

Rosie: I was arrested because I am black. I am positively innocent of any charge of loitering. It seems to me to be a crime in this city to be black.

Magistrate: You will be tried on Thursday, December 5 at 3 pm. Meanwhile, you will remain on bail.

Rosie will appear as scheduled on Thursday.

Wadell Smith will appear tomorrow (Dec. 3). The feeling among black people around here is that neither will receive justice. But in a few short days the black people of Halifax have become very justice-minded. They are watching the proceedings closely. The trials of Rosie Douglas and Wadell Smith are far from over.

For the black people of this city, the trial of white Canada has just begun.

CHRISTMAS IN PRISON

It really hits you hard at Christmas -- being in prison. This will be my fourth Christmas coming up, so perhaps it will be a bit easier, but I don't think so. I wish Christmas would never come.

I can remember my first Christmas in this place. I was in here a little over two months, just getting to know the ropes. People could still tell that I was a rookie because my hair had just started to grow back in. The guys really made it rough on me. But things were coming easier.

About the fifteenth of December, the first snow fell. The yard was all slushed up, and a lot of the guys didn't have winter issue yet -- so a big cold epidemic followed. I reflected on the outside world where the snow would be bending the boughs on the trees. But I couldn't see a damn tree around me. Nothing but goddam slush in the asphalt yard.

I was never big on Christmas cards, but I always sent a few to my friends. I asked a guard where I could get a few cards. He just laughed. "What do you think this is sonny, a department store? You're here to do your time -- not waste it."

I became furious nearly to the point of tears. "Can't you guys be a little human?" Then I hit him.

That got me two days in the hole. Not much of a place to relax -- a concrete slab, a shit bucket, a twenty-five watt light that shines day and night, all squeezed into a little five by seven box. Food is really bad there. I also lost my letter privileges, which meant that I could only write one letter a month with permission. That screwed up December.

I thought about my mother, my girlfriend, about buying them gifts. (My father died when I was a kid.) I could well remember singing in the children's choir. I still like carols and bells and organ music. That seems to be so much in the spirit of things. But in prison, the guys weren't much for carolling. I think that Christmas is the time of lowest morale. Most of the men are thinking of their families or friends who they haven't seen in a long while. It is really depressing.

My first Christmas here, we put a tree in the gym. There wasn't much for decoration though. A girls' choir came in from one of the churches--but they sang to us. We didn't sing till the very last song. Most of us had colds and didn't feel like singing anyway. But the old guy next to me then--he died a few weeks ago from a heart attack--started to croak a few bars of Silent Night. Emotion compelled me to join in. And before you knew it, nearly every prisoner in the gym was singing Silent Night, Holy Night for all he was worth: It sure put a lump in my throat. Nothing like that has happened since.

I don't know what to do about this coming Christmas. I'd like to break out--but then again, who wouldn't? Besides, it is nearly impossible. And in a few years, I should be good for parole. No sense in mucking that up.

I got a letter this morning from my mother. My old girlfriend is getting married to someone else. First I heard of it. It makes you wonder--I care and then I don't care. Things get to be like that when you are in here a while. You're helpless, powerless and frustrated.

For Christmas, each prisoner gets a little treat box--candy, gum, apples, cigarettes. Some guys save this stuff for later on and use it for betting. I always finish mine within a week or so. Who knows, tomorrow, I could get a knife in the side.

Well, I am writing this little note to wish you all a merry little Christmas. And special greetings go to Norman Strax, who will be spending his Christmas this year as a prisoner. That makes two of us. Each to his own.

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