

# Reactions to the Verdict: Joy, Surprise and Silence

By MICHAEL T. KAUFMAN

Where reactions to the acquittal of the Black Panthers were freely offered around the city and the country, they were generally ones of joy and surprise.

For the most part, those who might be expected to disagree with the verdict kept their views to themselves.

About the only real expression of sadness came from Joseph A. Phillips, the assistant district attorney who prosecuted the eight-month case. Shortly after the verdict, he sat in his office telling the undercover policemen who testified that they should not regard the verdict as any reflection on their work.

"These men have done their jobs well," he said.

On the verdict itself, Mr. Phillips said:

"We felt we had a very, very strong case, and we were very surprised at the verdict. We were particularly surprised that the jury could evaluate the very complicated evidence in just two hours. There were 12 charges. The judge took three days to charge the jury. The summations took three weeks, the evidence took over six months."

### Unexpected by Defense

Speaking for the battery of defense lawyers, Gerald Lefkowitz said that none of the lawyers felt that all 12 defendants would be cleared on all counts. He said he viewed the decision as a rejection of recent Government all the way from J. Edgar Hoover down to the secret police of New York City.

The reactions of those who were essentially of two kinds: those who thought the verdict had been reached despite an unfair trial, and those who thought it attested to the efficacy of the judicial system.

For example in New Haven, where he is defending Bobby G. Seale, the chairman of the Black Panther party, Charles R. Garry, the party's counsel, had this to say:

"It took these—what I consider a good people's jury, with all those black men and women

on the jury and some real decent people — to be the conscience of the community, to get around the fascist police-state conduct of the prosecutor as well as the judge."

But Jack Greenberg, counsel director of the N.A.A.C.P. Legal Defense and Education Fund, commented:

"I think it's just fantastic. It really runs contrary to the popular preconceptions. It's an indication that the jury system is considering the facts and the law."

And Jeff Greenup, president of the New York chapter of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, said he hoped "this will show those on all sides that it is possible to get a fair shake within the system."

"One lesson the prosecution can learn," he went on, "is that the fact that you disagree with somebody is no reason to put them in jail. It should also tell black militants that it's not necessarily so that they can't get a fair trial."

In the streets of Harlem there was undisguised jubilation at the verdict. On 135th Street, Elmer... beamed in approval when told of the decision. "All I can say is I'm glad they were acquitted."

At the Barbershop Sal on the same street, the owner, Herbert Jackson, remarked: "They shouldn't have been in jail to start with. They put them in there for nothing. The Government is just a bunch of liars."

And a man who said he had heard that the verdict was "a good thing" for whites and blacks.

"Maybe it's now heading a bit in the favor of black people," he added.

The following persons and organizations indicated that they would have no comment on the verdict:

Kingman Brewster Jr., the president of Yale, who was quoted widely last spring as saying he was "skeptical" that black revolutionaries could get a fair trial in this country.