

All Power to the People: Graphics of the Black Panther Part - 1966-1974

This Week

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Now in the Multicultural Center

by Amanda Hinnant

The Multicultural Center is now housing a dynamic and informative exhibit entitled "All Power to the People: Graphics of the Black Panther Party 1966-1974," collected by the Center for the Study of Political Graphics. The exhibit, to be featured for the remainder of February, offers a wide range of subject matter, imagery, and language; from a poster promoting the Black Panther Party free breakfast program for school children, to a warrant for the arrest of Richard Nixon; from a Dutch poster demanding Angela Davis' freedom, to a poster decrying the injustices of the fascist Oakland pigs.

Several artists contributed to the graphics of the Black Panthers. Emory Douglas, the Minister of Culture for the Black Panthers, visualized much of the party's ideology and used art to educate and provoke action. The graphics were the central means by which the party could disseminate ideas and images. Carol A. Wells, the executive director of the Center for the Study of Political Graphics, writes of the Panthers, "Their art is part of a long activist and art historical tradition of protest graphics. The Panther graphics are raw and aggressive. They are rarely exhibited, not because of a lack of aesthetic value, but because of their damning critique of capitalism and imperialism."

One indication of the breadth of this show is the wealth of information found in a nook next to the fireplace on the second floor. This corner displays four enlarged photocopies regarding FBI counterintelligence operations against two prominent black power organizations, the Black Panthers and The United Slaves (U.S.). The FBI mandated the distribution of four bureau-drawn cartoons to key members of the Panthers depicting Ron (Maulana) Karenga, the head of the U.S., as a threat to the B.P.P. Tension between the two groups arose due to ideological differences; the Panthers were revolutionary

internationalists focussed on class oppression and struggle while the U.S. were black cultural nationalists. To further exacerbate this tension, the FBI distributed the cartoons after a shootout at U.C.L.A. where Bunchy Carter and John Huggins, both Panthers, were murdered by members of the United Slaves. This small corner of the exhibit includes two of these cartoons, as well as the FBI memoranda implementing their production.

The information garnered from this small corner featuring the FBI operations exemplifies how this exhibit provides for a basic understanding of the Black Panther Party. Copies of The Black Panther newspaper are dispersed about the walls, covering variegated issues such as: the Black Panther platform for the People's Free Health Center; a boycott on lettuce; Native American liberation; the Latino Seven; the genocidal sterilization of mothers; unemployment for black Vietnam Vets; and Huey Newton's offering of troops to National Liberating Forces in South Vietnam to fight American imperialism. The many headlines of The Black Panther show the party's attempt to unify a variety of revolutionary struggles in the United States and elsewhere.

Multicultural Center Director Czerny Brasuell, urges students to view the exhibit. She says, "it's an important show. These graphics were created before most of the students were born, but the issues are not so removed from their time period, these are issues that we are still grappling with today. These are rare posters that are not likely to be viewed by students, unless they take the effort to see them now." To further indicate the vitality of this exhibit, Wells writes, "These graphics provide a critical tool for those who would write a more complete history of this period, its issues and its art. They remind us that our action can and must make a difference."

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