

**THE COMMEMORATOR & IT'S ABOUT TIME PRESENT.....  
BLACK PANTHER HISTORY MONTH**



**LANEY COLLEGE  
23RD & 24TH**

**OAKLAND  
BLACK PANTHER PARTY HISTORY MONTH**

**OCT.**

**'09**



# On The Importance of Black Panther Party History Month

BY LARRY PINKNEY

The month of October is Black Panther Party History Month. Let's examine why this is.

The Black Panther Party was founded in October of 1966, by two serious, politically conscious and concerned Merritt College students, Huey P. Newton and Bobby Seale, in Oakland, California. The Black Panther Party was founded in response to massive human rights abuses by the police and government in Oakland, Ca., and in Black communities

throughout the United States.

While the Black Panther Party believed strongly in standing up against the racist oppression and oppressors in Black communities, one of its primary missions was to serve the specific needs of every day people in the communities. Thus, the Black Panther Party established numerous community programs locally and/or nationally--including, free breakfast programs, free medical / clinic programs, free shoe programs, and free busing to prisons programs so that families in the community could visit incarcerated relatives. Moreover, with an emphasis upon education that was truly relevant to community youth, the Black Panther Party established and operated the Oakland Community School (OCS) staffed with Party members and other community educators who literally volunteered their time to teach classes on a regular basis. These foregoing examples are just a few (of many) instances of how the Black Panther Party served the people for many years, after its formation in October,

1966.

Women and men Black Panther Party members were also very active politically on college and university campuses around this nation including in California, at UC Berkeley, San Francisco State, UCLA, and City College of San Francisco, etc. to name just a few. The Black Panther Party believed in an "education" that addressed the true needs of students and the wider community.

"Grasping what has been achieved in the past is an important foundation upon which to build for the present and the future. Without this foundation we are but directionless leaves, blowing in the wind." The challenges of racism, poverty, joblessness, police brutality, and unjust U.S. wars abroad, etc., are still very much with us today, and it is imperative to remember that the Black Panther Party, as an active, national political organization did its utmost to address these challenges.

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## SACRAMENTO BLACK PANTHER MONTH BOOK FAIR



OCTOBER IS BLACK PANTHER PARTY HISTORY MONTH  
AND THE IT'S ABOUT TIME COMMITTEE IS  
HOSTING A BOOK FAIR AT PANGAEA CAFE,  
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# Keepers of the Flame

Grasping what has been achieved in the past is an important foundation upon which to build for the present and the future. Without this foundation we are but directionless leaves, blowing in the wind.

The Black Panther Party awakened a radicalized political consciousness in the United States and throughout the world, whose impact is multi generational and continues down to this very day. Two veterans of that era and of "the [Black Panther] Party" are today utilizing both art and history as a means of linking the not-so-distant past with the pressing concerns and ongoing political struggle of the present. These two persons are artist extraordinaire and former national Minister of Culture of the Black Panther Party, Emory Douglas, and premier historian and former Black Panther Party member, Billy X Jennings.

Brothers Emory and Billy X both made it quite clear to this writer that they have been, and are continuing, to work in concert with many other sisters and brothers to educate and "inspire" the generations of today and the future. It is in this vein that the ongoing stories of Emory Douglas and Billy X Jennings are presented to you, the reader. May you too be inspired...

No successful political movement, party, or organization can effectively function in a vacuum. There are various components needed to sustain, nurture, and spread it. Art is one of those components that plays a significant role in this regard. With respect to the Black Panther Party and beyond, the art of Emory Douglas shaped and crystallized the imaginations and political consciousness of an entire generation of Black, Brown, Red, Yellow, and White peoples, nationally and around the world. The relatively recently released book titled, *Black Panther: The Revolutionary Art of Emory Douglas* [Edited by Sam Durant and Published by

Rizzoli Publications], presents 225 images that definitively illustrate the power and increasing significance of Emory's art. There is an adage which says that 'the proof of the pudding is in the taste.' Indeed, this book makes that point poignantly clear in the case of the art work of Emory.

Complementing Emory's art is the stalwart work of Billy X Jennings, whose visionary understanding of and commitment to preserving the enormously important legacy of the Black Panther Party is manifested on the It's About Time website at [www.itsabouttimebpp.com](http://www.itsabouttimebpp.com) of which Billy X is the primary architect. Virtually any and everything of significance, pertaining to the sisters and brothers of the Black Panther Party and its continuing legacy today, is to be found on the It's About Time website. Among his many tasks in the Black Panther Party, Billy X served as the assistant to the late Brother Huey P. Newton, and is now and has for many years been, putting former [Black Panther] Party members and/or their families in touch with one another while re-

searching, sharing, and spreading the true legacy of the Black Panther Party nationally and internationally. Notwithstanding the hard work of the former national leadership of the [Black Panther] Party, Brother Billy X correctly emphasizes that there would have been no Black Panther Party without the brothers and sisters of its "rank and file," many of whom made the ultimate sacrifice in the struggle by giving their very lives, while others still today are languishing in U.S. prisons.

Nevertheless, the legacy and enormous impact and

relevance today of the former Black Panther Party and the ongoing struggle for justice are, in fact, inseparably intertwined. This is why, for example, the 'George Jackson Lives' Photo & Mixed Media Exhibit, which will be on view from September 21 - October 19, 2008 at the New Black World in West Oakland, California, [sponsored by It's About Time and Marcel Diallo] is already causing much excitement and anticipation. It is very important to note that the aforementioned exhibit is "the first George Jackson exhibit in America." It will include videos, numerous photos, and period articles from the Oakland Tribune, the San Francisco Chronicle, The San Francisco Sun Reporter, The Black Panther Paper, The Berkeley Barb, The Berkeley Tribe, LIFE Magazine, TIME etc. The late George Jackson was an internationally known member of the Black Panther Party and the author of the two best selling books titled, *Blood in My Eye*, and *Soledad Brother: The Prison Letters of George Jackson*. He was ultimately murdered by prison guards at San Quentin prison

## The November Coalition



"Assuming recent incarceration rates remain unchanged, over one in four (28.5%) African-American men can expect to serve time in prison."  
— Source: Bureau of Justice Statistics, U.S. Department of Justice

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in August of 1971. [Reference the It's About Time website for more information on the exhibit and George Jackson].

Also, on October 17 & 18, 2008, in Atlanta, Georgia, there will be an 'Arts & Culture Conference of the Black Panther Party' where, among other things, there will be an art exhibit of Emory Douglas. The exhibit will be located at the Southwest Arts Center, The Auburn Library, of Georgia State University. However, it must be reiterated that 'the impact and relevance today of the former Black Panther Party and the ongoing struggle for justice are in fact inseparably intertwined.' Thus, at the conference, there will be workshops including one wherein former U.S. Congresswoman & current 'Power To The People' U.S. Presidential candidate - Sister Cynthia McKinney, along with noted author, law professor, and former national Secretary of Communications for the Black Panther Party - Sister Kathleen Cleaver will be discussing the infamous [and no doubt ongoing U.S. Government

program to "neutralize, frame, discredit, imprison" and/or "murder" political activists] known as COINTELPRO i.e. the Counter Intelligence Program. The current cases of the "SF8" (San Francisco), the "Angola 3" (Louisiana), and the "Omaha 2" (Nebraska) are three cases of imprisoned veteran Black Panthers today that are related to infamous U.S. Government COINTELPRO activities. [Reference the It's About Time website for further information].

The international dimensions and impact of the Black Panther Party, are further highlighted by the fact that poet, musician, activist, and former member of the Black Panther Party - Sister Charlotte O'Neal will be traveling to the conference from where she lives in Tanzania, East Africa. Additionally, it should be noted that the week after the Atlanta conference, there will be a major exhibit on the Black Panther Party in Manchester, England from the 30th of October into March, 2008. Subsequently, Brother Emory Douglas will be making a presentation in London, Eng-

land, at the London School of Economics, prior to traveling to Cologne, Germany, where he will make an additional presentation.

It is noteworthy that October is Black Panther History Month and it will be observed by persons not only in the United States, but also in Africa, Europe, and elsewhere on the globe. The legacy lives and is embodied in today's ongoing struggles for social, economic, and political justice.

In conjunction with today's ongoing struggle and the legacy of the Black Panther Party, Brother Billy X noted that, "People don't realize that [for example], the [Black Panther] Party also worked with and supported [labor] unions" including "the MUNI [transportation] union of municipal drivers in San Francisco, the [automobile workers] union in Fremont [CA], the ATF [American Teachers / Association Federation]", etc. There continue to be many unknown and positive dimensions to the legacy of the Black Panther Party that relate directly to the struggles of the pres-

## SHOWDOWN IN DESIRE

the black panthers take a stand in new orleans



Orissa Arend

foreword by Charles E. Jones  
introduction by Curtis J. Austin

## Mother's Son



SKIP SHOCKLEY

ent day 21st Century. These are being shared and delineated to people far and wide by de facto Black Panther Party historian Billy X.

Both Brothers Emory Douglas and Billy X highlighted that they were and continue to be "inspired" by the Black Panther Party. Brother Emory put it this way: "I was inspired by what was going on [in the 1960s and 1970s] and fortunate enough to have the desire to want to do something and be a part of the movement, particularly the Black Panther Party, and my art work is a reflection of the ideology and the politics of the [Black Panther] Party. This art work would not have existed the way it was had it not been for the Black Panther Party." In fact, the young people of today who are doing with some of the same and/or similar issues that were being addressed when the Black Panther Party existed can, as Emory stated, draw upon his art work "to be inspired, not necessarily to duplicate it." In this, the 21st Century, the art of Emory Douglas continues to be in service to the people, young and old

alike.

Brother Billy X Jennings commented that: "Many of the social programs that exist in the United States today are watered down versions of programs started by the Black Panther Party, including medical programs, programs for prisoners, seniors programs, and community police review board programs as well as numerous other programs. They began with the Black Panther Party." Indeed, an example Brother Billy X noted is a dental program, originally started in Portland, Oregon, by the Black Panther Party, though no longer staffed by Black Panther Party members, "still functioning today." Thus, even though the Black Panther Party was ultimately physically "neutralized" and decimated, its accomplishments are nonetheless in many ways indelibly stamped on the political and social landscape and ongoing struggles of today. For a certainty, the true legacy of the Black Panther Party continues to "inspire."

The misconception held by some

that the Black Panther Party was strictly a male political organization is forthrightly dispelled by historian Billy X on the It's About Time website with a huge section (including subdivisions) devoted to "Women of the Black Panther Party" ([http://www.itsabouttimebpp.com/Women\\_BPP/salute\\_women\\_index.html](http://www.itsabouttimebpp.com/Women_BPP/salute_women_index.html)). There could have been no viable Black Panther Party without the many women who were an integral part of the rank and file and of its national leadership. Indeed, as Brother Billy X stated, "The It's About Time website of the Black Panther Party Legacy and Alumni serves a multitude of functions." Another of those functions was in evidence when, in the aftermath of hurricane Katrina, it served as a communications link, putting storm victims in touch with each other, be they former [Black Panther] Party members or not.

From the poignant, incomparable, and inspirational art work of Emory Douglas to the diligence and integrity of Billy X Jennings in preserving the true legacy of the Black Panther Par-

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Serious and committed political struggle is absolutely necessary,

but it is not a joy ride. It takes hard work and dedication. Many members of the Black Panther Party were murdered by the government and/or police. Others were wrongfully thrown in prison, and some still languish in various prisons nationwide to this very day in the 21st century. There are in fact numerous political prisoners in this nation, many of whom are in fact former members of the Black Panther Party.

The men and women of the Black Panther Party worked tirelessly for their / our communities. Moreover, the Black Panther Party also worked in conjunction with other people and organizations of color including the Chicano/a Brown Berets, the Puerto Rican Young Lords, the Chinese Voice Party, the Third World Liberation Front (TWLF), and others. The Black Panther Party had no problem also working in conjunction with certain White progressive organizations

such as the majority white Peace & Freedom Party. A powerful slogan of the Black Panther Party was, 'All Power To The People!', and indeed this is what the Black Panther Party struggled to make a reality.

Though the Black Panther Party was ultimately hideously and wrongfully physically decimated nationwide, there is perhaps, even today no single political organization in modern U.S. history that still evokes more joy, pride, hope, and debate than the Black Panther Party, whose legacy lives on.

In knowing and honoring the history and legacy of the Black Panther Party this month of October and beyond, we honor the very best in ourselves, for the struggle for economic and social justice continues!

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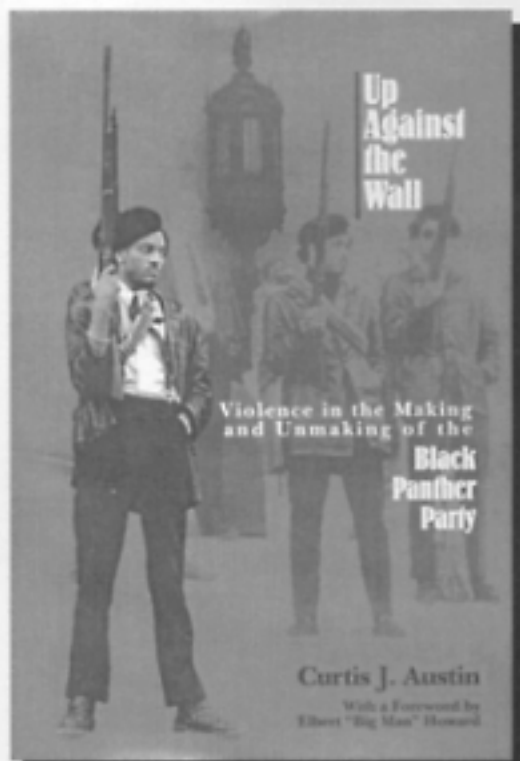
ty; the essence of our struggle - the struggle of Black, Brown, Red, Yellow and White peoples - continues to be that of attaining real economic, social, and political justice in our communities, our nation, and our world. Billy X Jennings and Emory Douglas, along with so many other sisters and brothers, remain true to the embodiment of this continuing struggle. They continue to inspire and challenge us. Can we do any less?

Onward then brothers and sisters!  
Onward...

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## UP AGAINST THE WALL BY DR. CURTIS J. AUSTIN