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*BLACK POWER TO BLACK PEOPLE: BRANDING THE BLACK PANTHER PARTY AT THE POSTER HOUSE MUSEUM NYC*

By Rohan Zhou-Lee

In Chelsea, NY, a large room in the Poster House museum fills with the soulful sounds of Black Panther Elaine Brown's album *Seize The Time*. Inside stands Black Panther Party poster art, a political party dedicated to Black liberation. "I want people to walk in here and have a sense of pride," says Es-pranza Humphrey of the exhibit, *Black Power to Black People: Branding the Black Panther Party*, "it's about Black power and it's for Black people." Humphrey is the first and only Black woman curator at Poster House.

The exhibit consists of posters, prints, photographs, and newspapers related to Black empowerment from the Merrill C. Berman Collection. It begins with jarring red images of Black minstrelsy contrasted with the iconic black and white poster of party co-founder Huey P. Newton sitting stoically in a peacock chair with a black beret, leather jacket, spear and rifle. Humphrey shows the Panthers' representations of Black people in powerful positions against oppressive and stereotypical white media depictions. "He shows ownership of the image of Blackness," she said.

Arranged thematically, each section chronicles Black Panthers' triumphs and struggles. The exhibit showcases Black empowerment while exposing historic police brutality and government corruption. Black Power to Black Women posters, highlighting Black Panther women are highlighted in the exhibition. Some of the posters are by Emory Douglas, former Minister of Culture and Revolutionary Artist for the Black Panther Party, now an internationally celebrated artist.

Between the 1960s and 1980s, the Black Panthers organized national campaigns focused on holistic justice for Black people; universal food care, literature access, and healthcare. Notable figures in the movement featured in the exhibition are Bradley Lomax, who co-led the 1977 *504 Sit-In*, the longest known protest in a federal building to ensure government funding for the disabled community, and Angela Davis, openly queer and leading philosopher of feminist ideology. The party inspired similar uprisings worldwide, such as the Dalit Panthers of South Asia and the Polynesian Panthers of Aotearoa (New Zealand.)



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“I want Black people to come in here and resonate with the message of Black power and really think about how we can have joy in the idea of Black power,” said Humphrey. “There’s space for Black stories within cultural institutions. There should always be a place for Black people in museums.”

*Black Power to Black People: Branding the Black Panther Party runs through Sept 10, 2023 at the Poster House, 119 W. 23rd Street New York, NY 10011.*