

THE 5th INTERNATIONAL BLACK PANTHER FILM FESTIVAL COMES TO PHILADELPHIA

By Dr. Yvonne King

In 1966, Huey P. Newton and Bobby Seale, two young African American men started the Black Panther Party, an organization that inspired youth to articulate the wants and beliefs of the black community through the group's Ten Point Platform and Program; create and sustain programs that served the people's needs; and defy a government that failed to meet those needs. For this they were harassed, brutalized, wrongfully accused and imprisoned, and even killed.

Many today, particularly our youth, do not know the stories told by and about the extraordinary Black Panthers of that tremendously defiant period in this country's history. Fortunately, two former Black Panthers – Kathleen Cleaver and Jamal Joseph – founded the International Black Panther Film Festival (IBPFF) in 2000 to “capture the imagination of a new generation.” Since their first Festival in Harlem, in association with the Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, the IBPFF has held annual Film Fests in different cities drawing youth, intellectuals, activists and artists of different age groups and races.

The IBPFF, in association with Art Sanctuary, will come to the Church of the Advocate at 18th and Diamond Streets, Philadelphia, on Sunday, February 20, 2005, from 2:00 to 8:00 p.m. In addition to three films with interviews of Assata Shakur, in exile in Cuba and Philadelphia Panthers on the 1970 police raids here, there will be 5 “shorts” featuring members of the Central Committee, the New York 21, other political prisoners –

including Mumia Abu Jamal and Russell Shoats that will play repeatedly. Barbara Easley Cox, former Black Panther and convener of the 5th IBPFF has also secured the Black Panther Party Photo Exhibit “Louder Than Words” from California, which will be presented by its custodian and collector, former Black Panther Billy X Jennings. Jennings is also the founder of It’s About Time, an organization dedicated to preserving the legacy of the Black Panther Party, and editor of a newsletter by the same name.

In the tradition of past Black Panther Film Fests, there will be a panel discussion, which this year will be moderated by the well-known journalist and editor of the Neighborhood Leader, Heshimu Jaramogi. Considering his extensive knowledge of the 1960s and 70s based on both his involvement and research, we look forward to an informative and insightful panel discussion by four former Panthers that worked in chapters on the west and east coasts, as well as the Midwest. Kathleen Cleaver, the first Communications Secretary and member of the Central Committee and Jamal Joseph, a former member of the New York chapter and co-defendant of the Panther 21 will be joined by former Panthers William Brown and Yvonne King of chapters in Philadelphia and Chicago, respectively; and Professor Charles Jones, editor of The Black Panther Party [Reconconsidered], an anthology by and about Black Panthers.

We hope that you will join us with Art Sanctuary on February 20th at 2:00 at the Church of the Advocate to help capture the imagination of a new generation.