

GRAPHICS AND ART OF THE BLACK PANTHER PARTY NEWSPAPER

It's About Time welcomes you to the latest in a series of exhibits featuring the legacy of the Black Panther Party (BPP). This current exhibit features the covers of the Black Panther Party newspapers from 1967 to 1974. Most of the artwork in the newspapers was done by Emory Douglas, revolutionary artist and former Minister of Culture of the BPP.

The Black Panther Party newspaper was the main vehicle for delivering ideas and information to the community. The first issue was a 4-page mimeographed newsletter about the murder of Denzil Dowell as a result of police brutality. The BPP gained nationwide attention when they went to Sacramento to protest the Mulford Act, an attempt to restrict the right for armed patrols in the community. Then with the arrest of Huey P. Newton and the movement to free him, the paper quickly grew to a full featured newspaper with a distribution of 250,000 a week distributed throughout the country and the world. The paper sold for 25 cents, and featured community, national and world news. The paper was also known for its analysis of the liberation struggles here and around the world.

We do not see political art around us like there were in the 1960's and 1970's, when the black liberation movement, anti-Vietnam war movement and anti-apartheid movement were in full swing. We need to keep this history alive for our young people, to let them know that there were and are ongoing serious struggles and movements in the United States and worldwide. The art of this era depicted the social and political issues important to the community. We hope this exhibit serves as a catalyst to motivate people to take a stand against racism, imperialism and police brutality, and to sustain social programs needed by the people. In a society where art often becomes an investment commodity for the rich, there is a tendency to restrict the scope of "appropriate" artistic subject matter. Only a small percentage of art actually reflects real social and political issues. The art of Emory Douglas stresses themes of resistance, struggle against racism, oppression and exploitation, as well as the joys that life offers and the richness of a people's cultural heritage and history. We should remember the famous quote by Bertolt Brecht that "Art is not a mirror with which to reflect reality, but a hammer with which to shape it."