

Huey P Newton - 'Spirit of the Panther

Written by Robert ID2283

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In the 1960's, at a time when Americans were recalibrating their morals, when what was acceptable treatment of women and blacks was being completely revisited and the nation's core values were being challenged, perhaps no group was a better advocate of radical change than the Black Panthers.

Founded in Oakland by Huey P. Newton, Bobby Seale and David Hilliard exactly four decades ago, the Panthers grew from a grassroots students movement to America's most recognized and feared political party, propelling Huey's name to a level only matched by Malcolm X before him and Nelson Mandela after.

No stranger to controversy, Huey and the Black Panthers even took the African-American freedom struggle to an international stage after a 1971 visit to meet Chairman Mao in China. Huey made further global headlines alongside arch US rivals Che Guevara and Fidel Castro in 1973, when Huey fled to Cuba to avoid being jailed in the States for a wrongful murder accusation (as did Huey colleague Assata Shakur in 1979).

Known to youth today as the godmother of the best-selling rap musician of all time, westcoast hip-hop rap icon Tupac Amaru Shakur, Assata remains in Cuba under US exile while her brother, Tupac's father figure Dr. Mutulu Shakur, is entering the 19th year of his imprisonment for activities in support of the Black Panther Party, making Huey an immediate bridge between the civil rights and hip-hop generations.

Huey's 'spirit of the Panther' is the first authorized biography on the life, legacy, and intellectual history of Black Panther leader Huey P. Newton, written by former Panther Chief of Staff David Hilliard with a forward from Huey's widow Fredrika Newton.

As Chief of Staff of the Black Panther Party for Self-Defense, Hilliard was actively involved in every major activity of the best-recognized and most feared international organization of the 1960s and '70s. First as childhood classmates, later as young adult comrades, and now as Executive Director of his foundation, Hilliard maintains a close association with Newton even in the fields of film (Spike Lee's "Huey P. Newton Story" starring Roger Guenveur Smith), clothing (the Huey Foundation's "Spirit of 66" imprint) and hip-hop (Hilliard's Black Panther Records and Panther Fugitives youth rap group).

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"Malcolm X talked about the right to defend ourselves by any means necessary, and we're going to create the personification of his dreams," said Huey in a 1966 conversation with David Hilliard. "A Panther never attacks unless an aggressor attacks him first or completely backs him into a corner - what better name for our new movement than the Black Panther Party for Self Defense."

"Huey - Spirit of the Panther" is out now on Avalon Publishing.

For more about Huey P. Newton or David Hilliard visit their www.BlackPanther.org and www.BlackPantherTours.com web sites.