

The Black Power Mixtape 1967-1975



ABOUT THE FILM

Logline

The Black Power Mixtape examines the evolution of the Black Power Movement in the black community and Diaspora from 1967 to 1975. The film combines music, startling 16mm footage (lying undiscovered in the cellar of Swedish Television for 30 years), and contemporary audio interviews from leading African-American artists, activists, musicians and scholars.

Synopsis

The Black Power Mixtape is an archive- and music- driven documentary that examines the evolution of the Black Power Movement in the African-American community and Diaspora from 1967 to 1975. Combining startlingly fresh and meaningful 16mm footage that had been lying undiscovered in the cellar of Swedish Television for the past 30 years, with contemporary audio interviews from leading African-American artists, activists, musicians and scholars, Mixtape looks at the people, society, culture and style that fuelled a change. Utilizing an innovative format that riffs on the popular 70s mixtape format, the Black Power Mixtape is a cinematic and musical journey into the ghettos of America.

At the end of the Sixties and into the early Seventies, Swedish interest in the US Civil Rights Movement and the US anti-war movement peaked. With a combination of commitment and naiveté, Swedish filmmakers traveled across the Atlantic to explore the Black Power Movement, which was being alternately ignored or portrayed in the US media as a violent, nascent

terrorist movement. Despite the obstacles they were confronted with, both from the conservative white American power establishment and from radicalized Movement members themselves, the Swedish filmmakers did not cease their investigation and ultimately formed bonds with key figures in the BPM, based on their common objective of realizing equal rights for all.

Filmmaker Göran Hugo Olsson brings this newly discovered footage to light and introduces it to a new generation across the world in a penetrating examination “ through the lens of Swedish filmmakers “ of the Black Power Movement from 1967-1975, and its worldwide resonance.

About the Story and Production

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That the film is told from the Swedish perspective lends it a unique advantage “ it establishes the era, place and its

perspective cleanly and clearly, and without bringing the kind of loaded assumptions or baggage to the subject matter that have long kept the story of the Movement from mainstream discussion. Where the earlier US Civil Rights Movement has been recognized if somewhat sanitized, the Black Power Movement has been historically vilified on the one hand and fetishized on the other. Its legacy has not been properly contextualized, and its influence on other liberation struggles and political movements has been virtually erased. The film emphasizes intimate and reflective moments with the intention of situating the Movement both in its domestic and international context, while at the same time introducing contemporary perspectives on its successes and failures, its resonance and importance today.

Filmed interviews include such figures as Stokely Carmichael, Eldridge Cleaver, Bobby Seale, and Angela Davis when she was in prison, as well as footage from Lars Ulvestam's televised film *Harlem: Voices, Faces*. (When that film aired in Sweden, the embarrassed US Ambassador to Sweden demanded and was granted airtime on Swedish Television to explain away the film's "many flaws".)

Audio interviews with key contemporary figures complement the archival and create a formal mosaic that is uplifting and moving in its impact, introducing a new generation to a dynamic progressive movement for change. Utilizing an innovative format that riffs on the popular 70s "mixtape", the *Black Power Mixtape* film is a cinematic and musical journey into the ghettos of America that features some of the country's most innovative recording artists.

At its heart, *The Black Power Mixtape* is a story about empowerment. It's a moving and inspirational vehicle that takes the audience on a journey through the specific time period of 1967-1975 and the pressing issues of concern then (the Vietnam war, failing public schools, drug addiction, record levels of incarceration, extreme poverty, lack of

government accountability and the pervasiveness of structural racism) while at the same time organically provoking deep questions about where Americans find themselves and the country today.

With the clear objective of introducing a new generation to the Black Power Movement, the filmmaker worked with some of today's most talented artists (including Ahmir "Questlove" Thompson, Omar Mas Keith, and The Roots) to create a soundtrack that complements and enhances the form and content of the film.

As the Movement went far beyond the purely political, the film also takes us on a cinematic journey into the styles, culture, fashion and more deeply " questions of identity that were critical to the empowerment and education of subsequent generations.

Featuring appearances by:

Stokely Carmichael (later Kwame Ture)(1941-1998): Leader of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC), later "Honorary Prime Minister" of the Black Panther Party

Eldridge Cleaver (1935-1998): Minister of Information of the Black Panther Party

Huey P. Newton (1942-1989): Co-founder and leader of the Black Panther Party

Emile de Antonio (1919-1989): Director and Producer of documentary films, detailing political or social events

Featuring appearances and audio commentary by:

Harry Belafonte: singer, recording artist, actor and activist

Kathleen Cleaver: Communications Secretary, Black Panther Party, professor

Bobby Seale: Co-founder of the Black Panther Party

Angela Davis: political activist, professor and author

Featuring contemporary audio commentary by:

Erykah Badu: recording artist

Robin Kelley: professor, author

Talib Kweli: hip-hop recording artist

Melvin Van Peebles: actor, director

Ahmir "Questlove" Thompson: music producer, DJ, drummer
for The Roots

Sonia Sanchez: poet, professor, associated with the Black Arts
Movement