

**“STILL BURNING”  
Play Review by Billy X Jennings**

**“Still Burning” is a wonderful play, created and performed by students at the Oakland School for the Arts, depicting the history and growth of the Black Panther Party. I would like to thank the entire cast for their fantastic and enthusiastic job. The students researched the subject matter and conducted several personal interviews with Panthers and descendants of Panthers that became the basis/material for the script.**

**Victor Talmadge did a great job as director and Joyce Lu for all the work she did to make this happen.**

**The play depicts various characters who are mostly young people growing up during the 60’s in Oakland, CA. It demonstrates their involvement with the social issues of the time, such as, police brutality, the Vietnam War, decent education and drugs. There was particular concern about the War due to the military draft. Not only does this play reflect the philosophy of the Black Panther Party, but woven within is the outlook of the Oakland Police Department during this time.**

**The music selections are a direct reflection of the 60’s or 70’s. They include Curtis Mayfield, Marvin Gaye and Earth, Wind and Fire. The subject matter included what it took to become a Panther, the duties and responsibilities of a Panther, the political education and the Survival Programs of the Black Panther Party. The play also dealt with general issues of race relations and class attitudes.**

**Not only did this play discuss problems, but it also addressed solutions; especially regarding community volunteerism and responsibility. It demonstrated how young people worked within their communities to improve peoples’ lives. At one point, even the police admit that the social programs of the Black Panther Party did a lot of good in their communities.**

**“Still Burning” is worthy of being seen by a larger audience. It is a valuable learning tool, helping to breakdown myths about the Black Panther Party. It reflects a significant part of Oakland history. Hopefully, the play can be performed during the upcoming year, marking the 40<sup>th</sup> year anniversary of the founding of the Black Panther Party and during Black History Month.**

# STILL BURNING

A play developed from the words of former Black Panthers and their descendants



THEATRE DEPARTMENT



## Student Staff

- Stage Manager.....Sophia Andrews
- Assistant Stage Manager.....Zeneya Gadlin
- Scenic Design.....Ian Murphy
- Costume Design.....Ebony Burton
- Lighting Design.....Quinn Whitaker
- Poster Design.....Danielle Allen and Mary Blake-Booth
- Lobby Display.....Mariela Salvador, Terrance Banks and Nick Kalish
- House Manager (Friday).....Quiana Webster
- House Manager (Saturday).....Jenevieve Harrison
- House Manager (Sunday).....Linterrio Babers
- Stage Crew.....Production Design Students
- Front-of-House Staff.....Arts Management Students

## Faculty

- Theatre Department Chair.....Josy Miller
- Guest Artist.....Victor Talmadge
- Dance Department Chair.....Reginald Ray Savage
- Visual Arts and Design Department Chair.....Kimberly J. Scott
- Arts Management Department Chair.....Tom Haygood
- Arts Management Department Faculty.....Agustin Luna

## Administration

- Director.....Loni Berry
- Assistant Director (Arts).....Jason Miller
- Assistant Director (Academics).....Taura Musgrove
- Middle School Principal.....Kay Anderson
- Student Affairs Director.....Giselle Hendrie
- Director of Admissions.....Uday Joshi
- Director of Facilities.....Freddy Porter
- Director of Technology.....David Smith
- Director of Finance.....Laurie Cooperman
- Graphic Designer.....Todd Zimmer

FRIDAY	DECEMBER	9 - 8 pm
SATURDAY	DECEMBER	10 - 8 pm
SUNDAY	DECEMBER	11 - 11 pm

BIG TOP THEATER

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# STILL BURNING

Conceived by Victor Talmadge

Created, written and arranged by Victor Talmadge and Joyce Lu  
with the assistance of the students of The Panther Project at  
Oakland School for the Arts.

Directed by Victor Talmadge

Assistant Directed by Joyce Lu

Choreography by Reginald Ray-Savage

## Cast

CK.....	Terry Stanley
BD.....	Caelayn Edwards
BD Understudy.....	Vincent Waldron
BX.....	Evelyn Griffin
Panther.....	Sharolyn Terrell
Bobby H.....	Neicsa Jackson
JR.....	Amaya Keller
	Mychal Skipper
JK.....	Neiman Scott
AK.....	Shannon Matesky
	Mychal Skipper
	Amaya Keller
CN.....	Madison Montoya
	Arielle Levine
	Annie Freitas
	Zalena Chavis
ED.....	Jay Treanna Watts
	Oceane Hooks-Camiller
	Imani Bryan

Theatre is by its very nature a collaborative art form. As with any art form, the creative process is as important as the final result. Our process was unusual. We video taped interviews of former Black Panthers and their descendents, transcribed and edited those interviews, and developed a script. In the truest of collaborative spirits, the students who have participated in this project were able to be involved in the creation of a play from its inception. They have worked as collaborators in the purest sense of the word, and in an unusually compressed period of time. Normally, a play that is *already* written is rehearsed and performed in a two-month period. These remarkable students have helped to write, rehearse and perform STILL BURNING in just *ten weeks*. I am humbled by their effort.

When I first suggested this project to Mr. Berry, he immediately saw the possibilities. I thank him for providing the opportunity to produce a play that bears witness to the rich history of the people of Oakland, that connects the past community with its present and future. Likewise, without the support and encouragement of both Mr. Miller and Mrs. Miller, this very ambitious experiment would not have come to fruition. I am also indebted to Ms. Joyce Lu, my Assistant Director, whose talent, hard work and keen eye have been an integral part of the success of this venture. Finally, I applaud the students whom you will see on stage tonight. Their courage in embracing a process that was unfamiliar has touched me deeply. They have taught me much. I am reminded of a saying from the Bible:

"A person has three names,  
One he is born with,  
One others give him,  
And one he must earn for himself."

Tonight, these very talented students have earned their third name. Thank you for sharing this evening with us.

Victor Talmadge

### We wish to thank and attribute the following resources:

Still Burning: A play developed from the words of former Black Panther Party members: Billy X Jennings, Cyrus Keller and their descendents, Eisa Davis, Teshaga Hagopian, Amaya Keller, Jafar Keller, & Catherine Newman

Special thanks to Mr. J. Ream.

One direct quote from Huey P. Newton from Berkeley in the Sixties Producer/Director: Mark Kitchell. California Newsreel 1990 118 minutes.

"What We Want, What We Believe: October 1966 Black Panther Party Platform and Program." The Black Panthers Speak. Ed. Philip S. Foner. Cambridge: Da Capo Press, 1970, 2-3.

Williams, Shirley. "Black Child's Pledge." The Black Panthers Speak. Ed. Philip S. Foner. Cambridge: Da Capo Press, 1970, 24. First Published in The Black Panther Oct. 26, 1968.

Fabio, Sarah Webster. "Free By Any Means Necessary." The Black Panthers Speak. Ed. Philip S. Foner. Cambridge: Da Capo Press, 1970, 20-21. First Published in The Black Panther May 18, 1968.





