

Faces and Phases of Black Power

The week in November that we were putting this issue commemorating Black History Month to bed, two African American image makers took over the mainstream media spotlight with unprecedented power: Spike Lee, with the premiere of his long-awaited *Malcolm X*, began guiding millions of American moviegoers on the intellectual and spiritual journey of the martyred nationalist leader, and Bryant Gumbel took his morning network *Today Show* audience on a week-long journey to Mother Africa. By the time this issue of EMERGE reaches our readers,

another media event, celebrating a later phase of the African American past, will have occurred: the publication and promotion of two memoirs looking back at the Black Panther Party (see "All Power to the People" by Herb Boyd, page 40).

"It wasn't a gang, a clique, or a club, but an actual political organization founded by a college student [Huey Newton] and his comrade [Bobby Seale]," explained Butch Innis, who agreed to be photographed for our cover in his old Panther regalia. (The shot

was taken by Jacques Chenet, the photographer responsible for the photo of Louis Farrakhan on the cover of our April '92 issue, the year's best-seller.) Back in 1968, when he served in the Corona, N.Y. branch of the Black Panther Party as lieutenant of information, Innis was known as Bullwhip. In Queens, and later in the Harlem branch and the Bronx ministry of information, Bullwhip worked with dedicated and disciplined Panther brothers and sisters who sponsored free breakfasts, outreach health clinics, and free clothing drives. The ensuing years have not dampened Innis's commitment to activism, but the context of his activity has changed along with the times. Today he works in city government on youth programs. "Once a Panther always a Panther," he declares. "A lot of us [original Panthers] work in social services now. Back then, as Panthers, we did what the government should have been doing in the first place. We were the seedlings of Malcolm, and the organization taught us to continue to serve the people by any means necessary."

For at least one former Panther the necessary means include the hallowed halls of Congress. He is Chicago's Bobby Rush (D., Ill.), who also served as an adviser to the Clinton campaign. Rush is among the 17 congressional representatives who will have joined Capitol Hill's "new black pack" and will contribute to the 103rd Congress, the most diverse in the history of our government (see "Primed for a New Era" by Sam Fulwood III, page 47). Strange and wonderful and different, how the seedlings of Malcolm grow.

—SUSAN McHENRY

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