



Participants at film debut of Black Panther Party Film, from left to right: Big Man, Billy X, Richard Aloki, Erica Huggins and Congresswoman Barbara Lee.

African Diaspora Museum Debuts Film "Merritt College, Home of the Black Panthers"

By Wade Woods

The Museum of African Diaspora debuted the Film "Merritt College, Home of the Black Panthers" to a packed hall Saturday night. Congresswomen Barbara Lee introduced the film and spoke about her memories of the Black Panther Party.

The film chronicles the birth of the panthers at Merritt College in Oakland during the politically and socially turbulent times of the late 1960s. The story was told through rare interviews with original party members and other key players who were Merritt student and featured original artwork from the many panther publications as well as rarely seen photos.

At the screening were some original party members, Big Man, Billy X, Erica Huggins and the panther's first Asian Member, Richard Aoki.

Congresswoman Lee said she learned the art of political organizing working with the panthers on political campaigns. She is taking the film to Washington, D.C. to show at an annual gathering of the Congressional Black Caucus. "The

Black Panthers have not gotten their due, and it's about time that they get the recognition that they deserve," she said.

The film, which is about 50 minutes long, also chronicles a famous confrontation with authorities, when the panthers went to Sacramento and entered the chambers of the State Legislature with rifles, defending their legal right to bear arms. The incident gained the party national and international media attention.

The film also featured some of the party's activities, including its breakfast for kids program and its program of following police to monitor arrests in the Black community.

The Black Panther Party also has a photo exhibition currently at the San Francisco Public Library, which will run throughout Black History Month.

The Bank of America made a grant to the Museum of the African Diaspora, which will allow people free admission the month of February. The museum is located at 685 Mission at Third Street. For information, call the museum at (415) 358-7200.

"Where there is no vision the people will perish..." Proverbs 29:18

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