

Black Panther Party Film Festival - Philly 2005

Travel Log:

After talking with Barbara Cox in Philly, I hopped a flight to NY headed to the BPP Film Festival in Philly. This was my first trip to the city of "Brotherly Love" (Ha Ha), better known as Rizzo City (named after the former Racist, former chief of police and mayor of Philly during the 70's and 80's.

I arrived in NY and stayed the night with brother Mitch Mitchell. I had a full program for the next day. I went to Brooklyn to visit Wanda, daughter of Safiya Bukhari, to spend some time with her and I collected some photo's of Safiya to use on our website. While visiting Wanda, Thomas "Blood" McCreary came over and we had a nice get together.

After I left Wanda's I went over to visit Ashanti Alston at the Critical Resistances office. He also had photos of Safiya he loaned me, and he talked about his recent visit to Mexico where he stayed for 6 months and lost 30 lbs. Ashanti also told me the he has had several speaking engagements in Canada. The day went fast, but not before I made it to 125th St to shop.

Friday, February 18th I hopped a bus to Philly and Barbara was there to pick me up. She gave me a short tour of downtown and we went to get some real Philly Cheesesteaks. We arrived at Barbara's house, right across the street from the location of the Film Festival: Church of the Advocates. This church has a long history of being involved in the struggle of Blacks fighting racism and fighting for justice. In 1970 the Black Panther Party used this same church for part of the People's Revolutionary Constitutional Convention.

Soon after I arrived, Dr. Yvonne King of the Chicago chapter came over to visit. She is living in Philly now and was also working on the Film Festival. I hadn't seen her in over 25 years. She has been living in Africa for the last 12 years. She has been a helpful resource to It's About Time by providing information about the Chicago and Philly BPP Chapters. At about 3:30 Barbara and Yvonne dropped me off at WURD Radio to be on a talk show with Sultan Ahmad (Big Herman). Also on the show would be Dr. Charles Jones, James (Bubba) Young from NY and New Haven office, Stretch from the Philly office, and Paula Brown of the Philly office. I found out that Paula was one of the leaders of the Million Women March that took place a few years ago. Audrey Jones of the Boston Chapter and the George Jackson Clinic was also on the panel and is currently writing a book about the Boston BPP Chapter.

The radio show lasted 3 hours and a lot of people called in to ask questions. We promoted the Film Festival and talked about the BPP in Philly. Frank Rizzo, Mumia's case, and other dedicated rank and file Party members. They show left me high on the people.

After the show, Sultan took us all out to dinner at Malcolm's Seafood. Omar Barbour and his beautiful friend were already there. The dinner turned into an event in itself after the owner came over to the table to honor us. Some of the customers began to come over to the table and tell us stories about themselves and the Panther Party. A few people sold the Black Panther Newspaper and a couple of people even went to the Liberation School when they were young. It is a very good feeling when people you don't know honor you.

Saturday went fast. I went down to visit Cleo, Ron, BJ and Michael Garvey (the #1199 crew) at their hotel and then attended a Marcus Garvey event at the Philly Museum for African Americans. The event was very powerful and went into the history of this great man and the many things he accomplished. He is the very root that ties us together. Dinner time Paula and Audrey picked me up and we went to Bailal Garden Restaurant, another spot Sultan lined us up with. The same crew as the night before minus Brother Stretch talked for hours and enjoyed the excellent food. We all departed and Sultan dropped me off at Barbara's. We turned on the TV to watch the Hopkins fight. People in Philly love this brother.

Sunday morning started slowly but picked up speed around 12:00pm. People started arriving at Barbara's at about 1:00. I started setting up the photo display with the help of church staff and members of Art Sanctuary (co-sponsors). Within no time, the church was full of people, a cross section of people from ages 15-65. The people were really into the Party and the videos were a good choice: Panthers Speak; Yesterday is Not Too Soon, an interview with Assata Shakur; On the Prowl the BPP in Philadelphia PA and a host of shorts: Off the Pig, Call me Nuh, Maroon/Russell Shoats. There was a panel discussion with Q&A.

The display was a hit and many people asked me a lot of questions about the Party. The many things the party was involved in really amazed the young people. It is important to have events such as this because it gives the younger generation and people in general a feeling of connectedness to the struggle. It shows that the power of the BPP is still strong. I was glad I was invited by the Film Festival Staff to bring out the BPP photo exhibit.

After the Film Festival we all went over to Barbara's and there must have been over 50 Panthers there. Don Cox called and I had a chance to talk to him. Mumia gave the opening statement for the Film Festival. Barbara Cox did an outstanding job handling everything from people arriving and cooking the food to hosting the Festival. Barbara you did good.

Black Panther Party Film Festival - October 2005 will be in Oakland and Berkeley, CA More details upcoming!