



# Passion still burns in revolutionary

By CHRIS MORRIS

THE revolutionary spirit of Black Panther artist Emory Douglas was on show in his art work and his arguments at the Dunedin Public Art Gallery on Saturday.

Mr Douglas — the first and only Minister of Culture for the Black Panther movement — is the Elam International Artist in Residence at the University of Auckland.

He was in Dunedin for a presentation of his work spanning the turbulent period of United States history in the 1960s and 1970s.

Mr Douglas explained the thinking behind his images, many of which adorned *The Black Panther* newspaper during the civil rights movement and took aim at police, politicians and poverty in the United States, as well as conflicts from Vietnam to the Middle East.

Some of Mr Douglas' works used humour to underscore messages of solidarity and justice, while others were brutal in their directness.

Former US president Richard Nixon was shown in one image with a swastika on his forehead, standing in front of Nazi leader Adolf Hitler and under the title "class brothers".

Mr Douglas detailed the violence and fear of the period, but also the success of some of the Black Panther social programmes, including early-morning breakfasts cooked by party members for impoverished children to eat before school.

"We said children need to go to school not on an empty stomach. We were feeding hungry children all over the country. We were feeding more hungry children than the US Govern-

ment," he said.

It appeared Mr Douglas had lost little of his revolutionary passion as he explained the thinking behind an image attacking private-sector involvement in the US penal system.

In the US, the system created an incentive for private companies to keep prisoners lining up to be locked up, in turn creating a profit motive for innocent people to be framed, he argued.

"It's about profit," he said, prompting a cry of "right on" from the audience.

Told by a member of the audience New Zealand's Government favoured some private-sector involvement in prisons, Mr Douglas was quick in his response.

"Well, you have got to do something about it," he said.

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An art revolution . . . Emory Douglas explains at a presentation at the Dunedin Public Art Gallery on Saturday the thinking behind one of the images he prepared for the Black Panther Party.

PHOTO: CRAIG BAXTER



# Black Panther artist on visit

By SARAH HARVEY

FOR Dunedin woman Mere Montgomery, today is the chance to meet one of the men behind a movement which has helped shape her life.

Emory Douglas, the official artist of the United States' Black Panther Party and its first and only Minister of Culture, is in Dunedin today to speak at the Dunedin Public Art Gallery about the art of revolution.

Mr Douglas is the Elam International Artist in Residence at The University of Auckland.

In the 1970s Mrs Montgomery became involved with the New Zealand Polynesian Panthers, a group which sought to emulate the work done in the social justice area by its American counterpart.

When the group started in Auckland, Mrs Montgomery, who now works for a Govern-

ment social work agency, was still in high school, but was acutely aware of the social injustice which faced many Pacific Island immigrants to New Zealand.

The group set up homework centres to help disadvantaged youth from, what were at the time, the poor suburbs of Grey Lynn and Ponsonby. It accessed legal aid, before legal aid was officially set up, took elderly women to visit family and visited prisoners at Mt Eden and Paremoremo.

In 1973 Mrs Montgomery moved to Dunedin to study law and started the Dunedin Polynesian Panthers, becoming distracted from her degree with the pull towards social justice.

The group had about 10 dedicated members who would visit prisoners, organise legal aid and who set up an educa-

tion centre in Burns Hall.

Mrs Montgomery said Maori and Pacific Islanders in Dunedin soon came to recognise her "afro" hair and that she

was the woman to go to for help.

She said the group was aware it was watched by the SIS and scrutinised by police, who would make friends with her pakeha flatmates so they could get close to her.

People accused her of inciting "racial disharmony" but she became known as an advocate for people throughout the city. The group "petered out" when Mrs Montgomery was married.

● Emory Douglas and Fiona Jack of the Elam School of Art, University of Auckland, will speak at 3pm today.



History . . . Mere Montgomery speaks about her involvement with the Polynesian Panthers.

PHOTO: GERARD O'BRIEN