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“The Black Power Mixtape 1967-1975”

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09.08.11-10.15.11 *Third Streaming*

During the past fifteen years, scholars have dramatically revised our understanding of the American civil rights and Black Power movements, proposing answers to questions such as: When did each begin and end? What traits, if any, do they share? What is the relative importance of acknowledged leaders and lesser-known participants? Historians including Charles Payne, Martha Biondi, Thomas Sugrue, and Peniel Joseph have crafted nuanced portraits of both movements' protest dynamics and the merits of the gains each made. The visual record of the era, however, has not been given an equivalent boost, which makes the recent discovery of hours of documentary footage captured by Swedish television journalists all the more special. That material has been transformed into *The Black Power Mixtape 1967–1975* (2011), the feature-length documentary on which this exhibition of film stills, related footage, and ephemera is based.

The images selected for stills focus primarily on Black Power leaders. We see Angela Davis as a glamorous antihero, two dour officers at her elbows; Bobby Seale and Stokely Carmichael coolly addressing unseen gatherings; and Kathleen Cleaver next to a typewriter, taking a break from crafting revolution's message to pensively drag on a cigarette. A small monitor displaying unused film footage contrasts this hero worship with images of children carousing in unkempt streets, cops cruising down sweltering avenues, and little boys in suits marching out of a school building.

There is, perhaps surprisingly, a precedent for the Swedish investigation of American social problems. Economist and sociologist Gunnar Myrdal's 1944 study of American race relations, *An American Dilemma*, permanently inflected the conversation on civil rights and was even cited by the Supreme Court in *Brown v. Board of Education*. While *The Black Power Mixtape* doesn't aspire to the same influence, it is nonetheless a welcome addition to the body of evidence documenting a turbulent period in our recent past, one whose meaning is still up for reevaluation.

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