



The Black Power Mixtape 1967-1975 Discussion Guide

Director: Göran Olsson

Year: 2011

Time: 100 min

You might know this director from:

Concerning Violence (2014)

Am I Black Enough For You (2009)

FILM SUMMARY

More than three decades after it was shot, a treasure trove of footage was discovered in the Swedish Public Service Broadcasting (SVT) archives. Filmmaker Göran Olsson stumbled upon the material and created THE BLACK POWER MIXTAPE 1967-1975, viewing America's Black Power movement through a white European lens.

Featuring interviews with leading voices from that time, including Stokely Carmichael and Angela Davis, along with commentary from some of today's most influential black activists, THE BLACK POWER MIXTAPE is an intimate look at the seminal Black Power movement during a turbulent American decade. The film tracks the passive beginnings of the movement for racial equality as it transforms into a more aggressive battle, leading to a reconsideration of the definition of extremism, as well as the roots of violence in equality movements.

The Black Panther Party's "black is beautiful" call to arms was fuelled by a number of factors, including a tone-deaf government, racist police forces, a bleak future for black Vietnam veterans, and a feeling of disconnect from Martin Luther King's largely passive civil rights movement.

While the film offers a rich and varied tale, it is a mere fragment of the powerful and controversial movement. But the story of black America and the fight for equality remains as relevant today as it did 40 years ago, and THE BLACK POWER MIXTAPE offers the opportunity to understand the movement from a unique perspective.

FILM THEMES

THE BLACK POWER MIXTAPE examines volatile race issues that continue to extend deep into the bloodstream of American society. The film sheds light on how black America was viewed through a European eye.

THE EVOLUTION OF A MOVEMENT

When Martin Luther King Jr., more than 100 years after slavery was abolished, preached passive peaceful protest, he brought the fight for black equality into the mainstream. The Black Power movement took this even further, actively seeking to empower a race by encouraging self-love, believing that when blacks loved and honored themselves, they could no longer accept second-class citizenship and institutionalized abuse. Black Panthers insisted that true change equaled the taking up of arms and demanding equal rights once and for all.

EXTREMISM?

Black Americans have faced white aggression since they first arrived, enslaved, on America's shores nearly 400 years ago. The Black Power movement signaled a new era, where blacks would no longer lay down and accept the paltry offerings of white society and its power structure. By meeting violence with violence, activists were accused of extremism. The very definition of extremism took on new meaning, as it became a term of propaganda used by whites to defend their continued reign of abuse after blacks finally decided that enough was enough, that human equality should finally be manifested in society.

FOREIGN EYES ON AN AMERICAN BATTLE

In the words of Talib Kweti, "Harlem is the complete metaphor for the black experience in America." As a group of Swedes travel on a tour bus through New York City's famed Harlem neighborhood, we are reminded of the filmmakers behind THE BLACK POWER MIXTAPE. The foreigners asked questions that whites weren't asking at the time, and they extracted information that American filmmakers might not have been able to access. As the Swedish filmmakers engage with a capitalist, 'every-man-for-himself' society, we witness the white European reaction to what was, and remains, America's troubling racial issues.

A MESSAGE FOR ALL

From gays to feminists, many minority groups embraced the rhetoric of the Black Power movement. Beyond a race issue, the message preached by Black Power was one of self-love, honor, equality, and respect, a message that resounded deeply with many of those facing injustice and repression. The movement, with the power and strength it first put forth in the 1960s, still acts as an important role model for many contemporary social movements.

"If you're not prepared to go to jail or die, you're not ready for the Black Panthers."

Bobby Seale

"The worst crime that could ever be committed on mankind is ignorance."

QuestLove

"A black man is supposed to have no feelings. If he tries to defend himself, then he is an extremist."

Malcolm X

FILM FACTS:

- THE BLACK POWER MIXTAPE won a number of awards, including the World Cinema Documentary Film Editing Award at Sundance. It has also been nominated for an additional four awards, including Best Documentary at the Black Reel Awards.
- Swedish Director Göran Hugo Olsson was researching footage for a movie on Philadelphia soul music in the 1970s when he came across the lost footage of Stokely Carmichael's Stockholm speech, as well as Angela Davis' interview in jail. These, along with a plethora of other material he discovered, led to the making of THE BLACK POWER MIXTAPE.
- Stokely Carmichael was the first person to use the term Black Power as a social and political slogan, mentioning it in a speech in 1966.
- Angela Davis, a leader of the Communist Party USA in the 1960s and closely related to the Black Panther Party, ran for U.S. Vice-President in 1980 and 1984 alongside Gus Hall.
- During the Attica Prison riot of 1971, 54% of the prison population were black American, with more than 2000 men incarcerated in a space designed for 1200. Rioting inmates demanded political rights and better living conditions. Approximately 1,000 prisoners held 42 staff members hostage. By the end of the uprising, 43 people were dead, 33 of them inmates.
- The Black Panther Party was active between 1966 and 1982. The Panthers were ideologically focused on socialist revolution without racial exclusivity. The party was most known for their armed patrols, which evaluated police officers' behavior. Also widely noted was the Free Breakfast for School Children Program, which began in Oakland, California, eventually spreading across the U.S., feeding 10,000 children every morning.
- When describing those who filmed the footage used in THE BLACK POWER MIXTAPE, Olsson separated them into two camps: "Young filmmakers sympathetic to the cause in North America, and those fueled by the injustices of the war in Vietnam in a global struggle for a better world."
- The New Black Panther Party (NBPP) has been heavily criticized as a virulently racist and anti-Semitic organization. The original Black Panther Party, who contest the hijacking of the Black Panther name and symbol, reject the NBPP as a racist hate group. Founded in Dallas, the group is especially active on the American East Coast.
- THE BLACK POWER MIXTAPE 1967-1975 was published in book format in February 2014, with a foreword by Danny Glover, who also co-produced the film. The book contains historical speeches and interviews along with commentary by many of those involved in the film.

WAYS TO INFLUENCE

1. Share this film. Consider hosting a film night and discussing the film afterward.
2. Stay informed about contemporary race issues by logging on to [ColorLines](#), a website containing a comprehensive overview of race injustice and ways to get involved.
3. Read Angela Davis's first book, "If They Come in the Morning: Voices of Resistance", which she penned in prison. The book examines the notion of the political prisoner and racial injustice in general.
4. Learn more about the [Anti-Racist Alliance](#), which aims to "undo structural racism in our lifetime."

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Documentaries provide the perfect topic for meaningful conversations. If you want to talk about the things that matter with people that matter then pick a film, invite your friends, and watch & discuss together. It's as easy as that.

Influence Film Club – We are the conversation after the film.