

## **Call for Papers and Panels: The Fire Every Time: Reframing Black Power across the Twentieth Century and Beyond**

In his 1963 collection of essays, *The Fire Next Time*, James Baldwin reflected on the expulsion of African Americans from the “American Dream” of economic opportunity, political equality, and social belonging. Rather than be daunted by what Baldwin called “the center of this dreadful storm, this vast confusion,” he connected the present and future struggles of Black people to their past: “I know that what I’m asking is impossible. But in our time, as in every time, the impossible is least that one can demand—and one is, after all, emboldened by the spectacle of human history in general, and American Negro history in particular, for it testifies to nothing less than the perpetual achievement of the impossible.” In our contemporary age where some have claimed that the nation has achieved the “impossible” through the election of Barack Obama, the nation’s first African American president, we ask scholars, activists, and artists to reconceptualize the twentieth century through the lens of past, present, and future struggles for Black Power, which in the words of James Baldwin spread as a “fire” every time.

On September 21<sup>st</sup> & 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2012, the College of Charleston’s Avery Research Center for African American History and Culture will host a public history symposium and community event on the topic of “The Fire Every Time: Reframing Black Power Across the Twentieth Century and Beyond”. Over the past decade, historians have employed the concept of the “long Civil Rights Movement” to rethink who is included as part of the civil rights revolution, where the civil rights revolution occurred beyond traditional narratives of the American South, and to re-conceptualize the Civil Rights Movement’s typical periodization to include struggles for civil rights before 1954 and well beyond 1968.

The “Black Power” tradition, on the other hand, is generally typecast by popular narrative conventions as radical, violent, and ultimately self-defeating. Despite years of scholarship proving otherwise, Black Power is too often cast by the public as an aberration of the “long Civil Rights Movement,” a destructive interruption and a politically ineffectual movement that derailed the civil rights agenda and ended in white backlash, conservative retrenchment, urban unrest, and lost “dreams” for activists and communities of marginalized peoples.

Recent scholarship, however, has begun to rethink the meaning, geographical placement, periodization, and effect of “Black Power” as having deep historical roots in marginalized communities with a profound and far more positive legacy than conventional and public narratives would otherwise suggest. This conference will bring together activists, historians, scholars of Africana studies, political theorists, literary scholars, critical gender and sexuality studies scholars, critical race theorists and legal historians, and educators and students to discuss the ways in which this new emerging subfield, what Dr. Peniel Joseph has called “Black Power Studies,” is challenging the traditional historical narratives for the twentieth century.

The Avery Research Center seeks contributors to discuss the meaning of “Black Power” in the broader context of American, African-American, and Pan-African history at the local, national, and international levels and across the twentieth century. We hope to expand the periodization of Black Power beyond the traditional narrative to include a variety of experiences and struggles over the course of the twentieth century. We seek papers that consider the Movement’s:

- intellectual and social protest origins, particularly Pan-Africanism, the Nation of Islam, and Garveyism;
- transnational and global aims, relationships, and global impact;
- engagement with foreign policy, anti-colonialism, and anti-war protests;
- role in reshaping state power, as reflected in such state institutions as the military, the prison, and the nation’s educational system;
- political and social alliances with other minority groups in the demand for social justice;
- implications for social justice and remedies for poverty;
- concern for Black families and manhood;
- central role for Black women, feminism/womanism, gender identity, sexuality, and equity;
- influence on the Black Arts Movement and the establishment of Black Studies programs across the United States; and

- struggles to expose and eradicate police brutality, racial injustices in the nation's laws and politics, and mass incarceration.

We welcome papers and complete panel sessions related to these themes and others from faculty, artists, filmmakers, graduate students, and public history professionals. Because of the overlapping nature of themes, we expect that some presentations will be interdisciplinary in nature, and we encourage proposals that examine Black Power from many intersections such as race and sexuality, Black identity and nationalism, or social justice and human rights.

As Avery is a historical museum, an archive, and a research center, we will feature a juried art competition and exhibition on Black Power. We will also feature the exhibition, "All Me: The Life and Art of Winifred Rembert," whose colorful art depicts scenes and themes from the time he spent on prison chain gangs in Georgia.

This symposium brings together activists, members of the community, students, and academics to inquire what "Black Power" means, how we should chart its narrative over the course of the twentieth century, and implications for current political and socioeconomic narratives. By doing so, we will begin to reconsider how "Black Power" shaped not only the African-American experience, but how it informed key historical narratives that frame both the history of the nation and transnational movements.

The deadline for proposals is June 1, 2012; completed papers are due by August 1, 2012. Please send all paper and panel proposals to [chasert@cofc.edu](mailto:chasert@cofc.edu) with your name, institution, title, email address, presentation title, and format along with a 150-word abstract, brief bio, and recent CV. Please put "Black Power" in your subject line. Presentations will be limited to twenty minutes.

Information regarding registration, lodging, and symposium schedule will be available on the Avery Research Center's Web site beginning in May 2012.

Contact information:

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