

# FROM PANTHER 21 TO 21ST CENTURY REVOLUTIONS

by Latoya Lee

In 1966 in Oakland, California, Black community college students Bobby Seale and Huey Newton armed themselves, began patrolling the police and promised to end police brutality within Black neighborhoods in cities throughout the nation. Eventually, this revolutionary movement would become the Black Panther Party (BPP), a community-based organization that would position itself as an official challenge to American imperialism, with chapters in 68 cities and powerful allies around the world.

In commemoration of the 52nd anniversary of the founding of the BPP, we invite you to explore its history and politics as well as its connection to present-day social/political activism at an open forum panel discussion. Given the present climate involving police violence within inner city communities and the organization of the Black Lives Matter movement, this history takes on increased relevance.

Speakers include **Sekou Odinga**, a founding member of the Black Panther Party (Harlem Chapter) who has continued to build awareness of and advocate for the release of Political Prisoners and Prisoners of War; **dequi kioni-sadiki**, a Black feminist, educator for Liberation, artist, poet, chair of the Malcolm X Commemoration Committee, as well as prisoner and human rights activist who focuses on issues of political/mass imprisonment; and **Matt Meyer**, a Senior Research Scholar at the University of Massachusetts/Amherst Resistance Studies Initiative with a life-long pursuit of bridging gaps between academics and activists.

**The event is February 23 from 6-9pm at ArtRage Gallery (505 Hawley Ave., Syracuse).** All are welcome to this free event.

The three are speaking across the country. They are also promoting a book, *Look for Me in the Whirlwind: From the Panther 21 to 21st Century Revolutions*, edited by dequi kioni-sadiki, Matt Meyer and Cyril "Bullwhip" Innis Jr., with essays by Sekou Odinga and others. It is a history of the Panther 21, with new commentary and insights for today.

## About the Book

In the era of Black Lives Matter, this chronicle of the Black Panther 21—the group charged in 1969 with conspiracy to commit violent acts in what became the longest trial in New York history—is more relevant than ever.

In the tumultuous year of 1969, amid music festivals and moon landings, assassinations and million-person antiwar mobilizations, 21 members of the militant New York branch of the BPP were rounded up and indicted on multiple charges of violent acts and conspiracies. They were charged with plans to blow up a variety of sites—from a police station in Manhattan to the Queens offices of the Board of Education to the Bronx Botanical Gardens. Though some among the NY Panther 21 had hardly even met one another, the group was gathered together as an obvious

attempt by the FBI, in cooperation with city and state authorities, to discredit, disrupt, and destroy the organization which was attracting so many young people across the world. In the ensuing preparation for a trial that would become the longest and most expensive in New York's history at the time, information came out about the FBI's illegal Counterintelligence Program



Panther 21 member Sekou Odinga is one of the speakers at an event on February 23 from 6-9pm to be held at ArtRage Gallery.

(COINTELPRO), as members of the BPP were assassinated, forced into exile, framed, and set against each other.

## More About the Speakers

**Sekou Odinga** was a member of Malcolm X's Organization of Afro-American Unity, a founding member of the Black Panther International Section, and a member of the NY Panther 21. A citizen of the Republic of New Afrika and combatant of the Black Liberation Army, Sekou was captured in October 1981, spending 33 years behind bars. He was convicted in 1984 of charges related to his alleged involvement in the escape of Assata Shakur from prison and a Brink's armored car robbery. Since his release in November 2014, he has remained a stalwart fighter for justice and for the release of all political prisoners.

**dequi kioni-sadiki** is the chair of the Malcolm X Commemoration Committee and was a leader of the Sekou Odinga Defense Committee, which waged a successful campaign for the release of her husband. A tireless coalition-builder and organizer, dequi produces "Where We Live" on WBAI-Radio, Pacifica, is an educator with the NYC Department of Education and is a member of the Jericho Movement to Free All Political Prisoners.

**Matt Meyer**, an educator, activist and author, is the War Resisters International Africa Support Network Coordinator, and a United Nations/ECOSOC representative of the International Peace Research Association. Matt continues the fight for marginalized groups through the founding of a research delegation on the re-integration and treatment of child soldiers in West and Central Africa. ♻️

*Latoya is a sociology professor at SUNY Oswego and has been active in bringing these speakers to Central New York.*