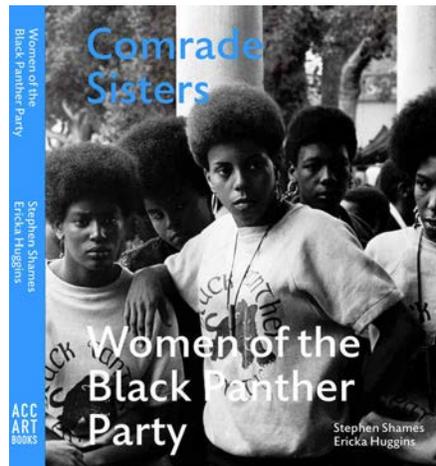


COMRADE SISTERS:
WOMEN OF THE BLACK PANTHER PARTY
BY STEPHEN SHAMES AND ERICKA HUGGINS

Preface by Angela Davis
Afterword by Alicia Garza

+ *Contributions by 50 women Party members and their families.*

National Book Tour to Cities including Oakland, San Francisco, Berkeley, Los Angeles, Seattle, Portland, Washington, D.C., New York, Philadelphia, Boston, Chicago, and Winston-Salem will launch October 10, 2022.



ACC ART BOOKS (October 10, 2022)

“This stunning collection of historical photographs, complemented by contemporary conversations with women members of the Black Panther Party, reminds us that women were literally the heart of this new political approach to Black freedom.” – Angela Davis

Many of us have heard these three words: Black Panther Party. Some know the Party’s history as a movement for the social, political, economic, and spiritual upliftment of Black and indigenous people of color – but to this day, few know the story of the backbone of the Party: the women.

It’s estimated that six out of ten Panther Party members were women. While these remarkable women of all ages and diverse backgrounds were regularly making headlines agitating, protesting, and organizing, these same women were building communities and enacting social justice, providing food, housing, education, healthcare, and more to the people. *Comrade Sisters* is their story.

A long time coming, *Comrade Sisters* is the first book to tell the story of the women of the Black Panther Party. In the age of George Floyd and Black Lives Matter, the issues and solutions raised in this unique and powerful book are as relevant today as when the Black Panther Party was founded in Oakland, California on October 15, 1966.

Interwoven throughout the book are 110 photographs by celebrated photojournalist Stephen Shames who was a 19-year-old college student at Berkeley when he first met the BPP in 1966. With the complete trust of the Black Panther Party behind him, Stephen was given unprecedented access to take photographs not only of the protests and rallies, but also behind-the-scenes moments that provide a fuller, more nuanced portrait of the lives of the women Party members with their families and serving their communities. This marks Stephen’s third photo book about the Black Panthers and includes many never before published images of the women of the BPP.



Left: March 31, 1972, Oakland, California, USA: Testing for Sickle Cell Anemia at Community Survival Conference. **Right:** 1972 Oakland, California, USA: Ruby Moore, Sickle Cell Tester, pricks a man’s finger to test for Sickle Cell during Bobby Seale’s campaign for Mayor of Oakland.

Ericka Huggins, an early Party member and leader along with Bobby Seale and Huey Newton, has written a moving introductory text, sharing what drew so many women to the Party and focusing on their monumental work on behalf of the most vulnerable citizens. Most importantly, *Comrade Sisters* includes contributions from over fifty former women members and their families – some well-known, others not – who vividly recall their personal experiences from that time.

Ericka notes, “One book is not large enough to tell all of their stories—their tales of compassion and solidarity in the face of oppression could fill volumes. Yet, represented here is the organized, coordinated and sustained effort made by those who managed the multi-layered community services of the BPP, including grassroots campaigns to seat mayors, assemblypersons, judges, and neighborhood councils. I am honored to be the weaver who brings this tapestry of stories to the printed page.”



Left: Black Panther children in a classroom with their teacher Evon Carter, widow of Alprentice Bunchy Carter, at the Intercommunal Youth Institute, the Black Panther school. Right: 1971 Oakland, California, USA: Black Panther Gloria Abernathy sells the Black Panther newspaper at the Mayfair supermarket boycott. Tamara Lacey holds a Sickle Cell Anemia poster.

Following is a small sampling of excerpts from the voices of the Comrade Sisters:

Gloria Abernathy-Berkeley, Richmond, Oakland Chapter (Pictured Above Right)

“At the West Oakland Community Center, we were a hub of neighborhood activity with lots of daily visitors—local, national, international—and lots of children. People in the community, neighbors, comrades, and our children: we were all a big family. Despite all we were going through, I felt loved and safe. Walking through the Projects on my way to the laundromat (we had a free clothing program), I could hear people yell out from their windows and doors, “Hey, panther girl, hey, panther girl!” I couldn’t see them, but they were watching out for us.”



Left: 1970, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, USA: Panthers March through West Philadelphia. **Right:** March 31, 1972, Oakland, California, USA: Children of members of the Black Panther party at the Black Community Survival Conference.

Claudia Chesson Williams, Corona, Queens Chapter, NY / Harlem Branch, NY

“My most memorable work was the Political Education classes. We taught those classes outside of the Harlem office, on the street. These were the most rewarding moments for me. I was about 5’1”, 93 pounds. I was little, but I became big when I stepped out of that office onto that sidewalk. I was also scared to death, because people of all walks of life showed up. Jamal Joseph, my good brother, showed me how to find my voice, my strength. Once I did find my voice, well—it was on and poppin”.



Left: March 31, 1972, Oakland, California, USA: Black Panther Central Committee Member Ericka Huggins laughs after a Black Community Survival Conference rally. Ericka is the widow of slain Panther John Huggins. She later headed the New Haven branch of the party. **Center:** 1972, Oakland, California, USA: Breakfast for Children Program run by the Black Panther Party. The breakfast program gave nourishment and love to children before school. **Right:** 1970, New York, New York, USA: Afeni Shakur inside the Black Panther’s Harlem office.

Rosita Holland Thomas—Seattle Chapter, WA

“My most memorable work was waking up early and going to serve at one of our five breakfast locations, selling party newspapers on a regular basis, working in the medical clinic, and helping with the Free Bussing to Prisons Program for families of incarcerated women and men. I absolutely loved working with the community members who would come and volunteer to feed the children hot breakfast every day. Seeing those beautiful faces come and eat and then go to school... I knew that was going to make for a better day for them, because they were fed a warm breakfast. Our children should not go to school hungry. Our children need to have their brains and their spirit nourished.”



Left: May 1, 1969, San Francisco, California, USA: men and women at a May Day Free Huey rally in front of the Federal Building. **Right:** March, 1972 Oakland, California, USA: Panther Free Food Program. Party members prepare bags of food for distribution at the Oakland Coliseum during the Black Community Survival Conference.

Photographs © Stephen Shames.

In the Afterword, **Alicia Garza, co-founder of Black Lives Matters**, writes about the BPP’s legacy: “Their work lives on today. From schools to health clinics to childcare programs, much of their innovation and imagination persists, memorialized in institutions and practices which remain rooted in a deep love for the people, a desire to celebrate and cherish and invest in the present and the potential of us. To meet the needs of our communities ourselves that are cruelly being denied to us. Wherever there was denigration and degradation, the women of the Black Panther Party for Self Defense worked to restore dignity and resilience.

National Book Tour / Public Programming:

Details about an accompanying national book tour will be announced in the coming weeks. The supporting events, which will include book signings, talks, and panel discussions, will kick off on October 10, 2022 in Oakland, the birthplace of the Party, and continue through fall 2022, and winter 2023 to coincide with Black History Month (February) and Women’s History Month. (March). Participants in the public programming will include the co-authors and the women of the BPP.

About the Authors:

Ericka Huggins is an activist, former political prisoner, and leader in the Black Panther Party. She has devoted her life to the equitable treatment of all human beings, beyond the boundaries of race, age, culture, class, gender, sexual orientation, ability and status associated with citizenship. For the past 40 years she has lectured across the country and internationally. She spent 14 years in the Black Panther Party, and eight years as Director of the renowned Oakland Community School (1973-1981).

Stephen Shames has authored 15 monographs, and his images are in the permanent collections of 40 museums and foundations. His work is dedicated to promoting social change and sharing the stories of those who are frequently overlooked by society. His two previous Panther books are *Power to the People: The World of the Black Panthers* by Stephen Shames and Bobby Seale (Abrams, 2016) and *The Black Panthers* (Aperture, 2006).

About the Publisher:

Founded over 50 years ago in the UK, ACC Art Books is both a publisher and a global distributor of books on all aspects of the arts, including fine art, architecture, design, fashion, photography, food, contemporary lifestyle, and popular culture. The company represents some of the world’s finest arts publishers, including museums, trade, and professional, providing clients with a comprehensive program of sales, marketing, and fulfillment services. ACC Art Books has offices in Woodbridge, England, and in New York City. For more information, go [here](#).

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