

# McCoy speaks on history of the Black Panthers

◆After the film *Panther*, the director of counseling discusses his involvement with the group



Ernest McCoy talks to students in the Leak room after a showing of *Panther*.

PHOTO BY BECCA LEE

BY ALLISON STRIZAK  
Staff Writer

*Panther*, the powerful narrative film of Melvin Van Peeble's involvement in the Black Panther Party, humanizes an area in history shrouded by a veil of violence and insurrection.

Last Tuesday, the psychology club and the African-American cultural society sponsored a showing of the film, followed by a discussion with director of counseling Ernest McCoy concerning his personal involvement in the party.

From the movement's tumultuous beginnings in the summer of love to the tragic destruction just a few years later, *Panther* helps weave a tale of the social and political injustice which plagued the black community and the steps taken to end it.

With a sound-track bubbling over

with the legends of funk, and a revolutionary calling heralding back to the days when people stood up and fought back, *Panther* tells the story of the heroic efforts of men like Huey Newton, Eldridge Cleaver, and Bobby Seale in style. This film brings to life, in a very powerful manner, their manifesto of "power to the people."

Although the final outcome is tragic, *Panther* helps retell a story of intellect, action and unity—elements, which kindled a powerful and influential movement.

As McCoy explained, there were some good sides and some bad ones to this story.

"It was an organization that functioned with a lot of dysfunctions," he said. "A lot of people got shot up, a lot got killed."

Yet as McCoy went on to say, it was a movement whose main directive was to help protect the commu-

nity. "People were riding by shooting at people," he said, "and the Panther organization said we have to put a stop to this, so it was basically a defense process."

McCoy worked as the director of the community action program. His work involved helping kids get jobs and working at Sing Sing prison, bringing in information. He says he joined the party because he, "enjoyed the work, meeting people and wearing the leather coat."

He was 26 at the time of his enrollment. He became involved with the Party when, as he put it, "I heard on the block guys standing around and talking and I became interested in what they had to say, so I said can I come to a meeting and they said sure."

McCoy soon found he "liked the comradery, the conversation and the fact that someone was watching my back."

"Let me say it wasn't a glamorous position or job. It was more as I've stated—a process of defense and protecting people and feeding people and

giving some sense of pride to a group of people who at one point had a sense of being beaten down. The people we defended were black and white, Hispanic and Latino, people who were down and out. It wasn't a color thing for me, it was a people thing for me and I liked that," stated McCoy.

McCoy is aware of the fact it was his involvement in the Black Panther Party and his position as the director of the community action program along with his work in Sing Sing prison which helped him get clean and sober. His sobriety allowed him to continue along an avenue of guidance and education.

The Black Panther movement has been heralded as one of the most powerful grass roots revolutions in the United States, and McCoy does not feel another revolution like it is possible. "I don't think that could happen again because the violence isn't there," he said.

What's left are those who participated in the movement, the movies that bring their efforts to life, and the lessons they provide for us to learn.

## the week in Campus Ministries

Daily: Unprogrammed worship.  
8:05 a.m.-8:20 a.m. Hut.

### Friday, February 27

Noon: GCRO Brown Bag  
Lunch discussion on educational concerns for the hungry Hut.

7:30 p.m.: Friday Fireside Worship, Hindu traditions, led by Ajay and Neelam Bhardwaj. Hut.

### Sunday, March 1

9:15 a.m.: College meeting for worship with Elgina Manuel, director of residential life. Moon Room.

7:00 p.m.: Catholic Mass. Gallery.

7:00 p.m.: QLSP Worship. Moon Room.

8:00 p.m.: Student A.A. meeting. Hut

### Monday, March 2

3:30 p.m.: GCRO Meeting. Hut.

4:00 p.m. Tea and discussion with Ched Myers: "Activism and Spirituality."

7:30 p.m. Public presentation by Ched Myers: "Binding the strong man: a political reading of Jesus." Gallery.

8:30 p.m.: Fellowship of Christian Athletes. Boren Lounge.

### Tuesday, March 3

5:15 p.m.: Episcopal Eucharist.

8:30 p.m.: New Generation Ministries. Boren Lounge.

### Wednesday, March 4

5:30 p.m.: Midweek meeting for worship. Hut.

8:30 p.m.: InterVarsity Christian Fellowship. Boren Lounge.

9:00 p.m.: Unitarian-Universalist students. Hut.

### Thursday, March 5

Noon: Grief process group. Hut.

### Friday, March 6

Spring work trips begin: Cherokee, Goat Lady farm, Tompkins farm and Open Door Community.

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