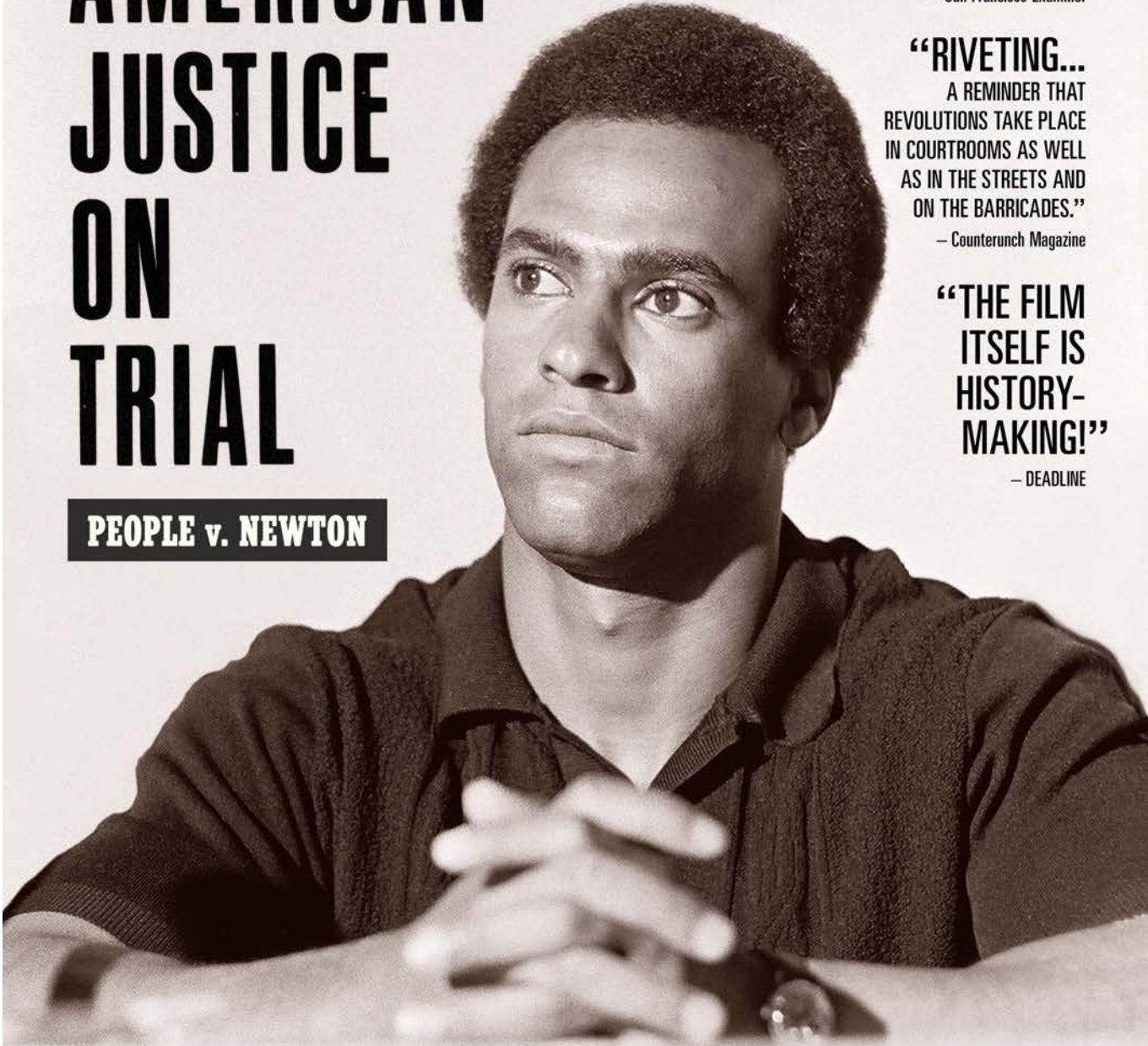




AMERICAN JUSTICE ON TRIAL

PEOPLE v. NEWTON



“GRIPPING, PROFOUND!”

— San Francisco Examiner

“RIVETING...

A REMINDER THAT REVOLUTIONS TAKE PLACE IN COURTROOMS AS WELL AS IN THE STREETS AND ON THE BARRICADES.”

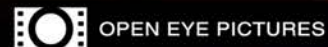
— Counterunch Magazine

“THE FILM ITSELF IS HISTORY-MAKING!”

— DEADLINE

AN OPEN EYE PICTURES PRODUCTION “AMERICAN JUSTICE ON TRIAL: PEOPLE V. NEWTON”
IN ASSOCIATION WITH ARC OF JUSTICE PRODUCTIONS AND FILMS WITH A PURPOSE BASED ON A BOOK BY LISE PEARLMAN
CAMERA & EDITING ANDREW ABRAHAMS MUSIC JOHN LISSAUER SKETCH ART CHRISTINE CORNELL CO-EXECUTIVE PRODUCER SANDRA EVERS-MANLY
EXECUTIVE PRODUCERS PETER BENVENUTI AND JONATHAN LOGAN CO-PRODUCERS ABBY GINZBERG AND ROBERT RICHTER
PRODUCED BY LISE PEARLMAN DIRECTED BY HERB FERRETTE PRODUCED & DIRECTED BY ANDREW ABRAHAMS

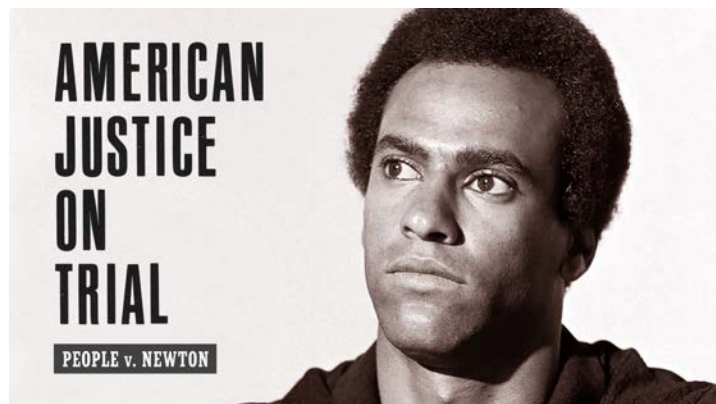
JUSTICEMOVIE.COM



American Justice on Trial

People v. Newton

World Premiere **San Francisco International Festival**, April 2022



- Documentary, 39:50 min, 2022
- Directed by **Andrew Abrahams & Herb Ferrette**
- Produced by **Lise Pearlman & Andrew Abrahams**
- Co-Produced by **Abby Ginzberg & Robert Richter**
- Executive Producers **Peter Benvenuti & Jonathan Logan**
- Co-Executive Producer **Sandra Evers-Manly**
- A production of **Open Eye Pictures**
- In association with **Arc of Justice Productions & Films with a Purpose**
- Website: **JusticeMovie.com**
- Press Inquiries: **mrussell@michaelrussellgroup.com**

Logline

The untold story behind the murder trial of Black Panther leader Huey P. Newton. The landmark case that put racism on the stand.

Short Synopsis

In one of the “trials of the century” that still reverberates today, Black Panther leader Huey P. Newton faced the death penalty for killing a white policeman in a late-night car stop in 1967 Oakland. While Newton and his maverick attorneys boldly indicted racism in the courts and the country, and a groundbreaking jury led by a historic Black foreman deliberated Newton’s fate, the streets of Oakland and the nation were set to explode if the jury, as expected, returned a verdict of murder.

Synopsis

AMERICAN JUSTICE ON TRIAL tells the forgotten story of the death penalty case that put racism on trial in a U.S. courtroom in the fall of 1968. Huey P. Newton, Black Panther Party co-founder, was accused of killing a white policeman and wounding another after a pre-dawn car stop in Oakland. Newton himself suffered a near-fatal wound. As the trial neared its end, J. Edgar Hoover branded the Black Panthers the greatest internal threat to American security. Earlier that year, the assassinations of Martin Luther King and Robert F. Kennedy rocked a nation already bitterly divided over the Vietnam War. As the jury deliberated Newton’s fate, America was a tinderbox waiting to explode.

At his trial, Newton and his maverick defense team led by Charles Garry and his then rare female co-counsel Fay Stender, defended the Panthers as a response to 400 years of racism and accused the policemen of racial profiling, insisting Newton had only acted in self-defense. Their unprecedented challenges to structural racism in the jury selection process were revolutionary and risky. If the Newton jury came back with the widely expected first degree murder verdict against the charismatic black militant, Newton would have faced the death penalty and national riots were anticipated. But Newton’s defense team redefined a “jury of one’s peers,” and a groundbreaking diverse jury headed by pioneering Black foreman David Harper delivered a shocking verdict that still reverberates today.

Personnel



Andrew Abrahams, Director/Producer

President of Open Eye Pictures, Andrew (also credited as Andy Abrahams Wilson) is a two-time Oscar-shortlisted producer/director of non-fiction films. Andrew studied journalism and cultural anthropology at Northwestern University and received an MA in visual anthropology from USC where he also studied at the School of Cinema. His approach emphasizes visual imagery as a way to bridge disparate parts, peoples and ideas. While his work takes on controversial and underserved themes, he uses the filmmaking process as an opportunity to encourage compassion and action. Premiering at Tribeca and released theatrically, his acclaimed UNDER OUR SKIN was the recipient of seven best documentary awards at international film festivals and was an Academy Award semifinalist for Best Documentary Feature. The ITVS-funded film THE GROVE was broadcast nationally on PBS and was awarded Best Documentary at the Seattle Lesbian & Gay Film Festival. His Italian production ALFREDO'S FIRE (IL FUOCO DI ALFREDO) premiered at the Santa Barbara International Film Festival and won a CINE Best Independent Documentary jury award. Andrew's debut film BUBBEH LEE & ME was acquired by HBO and has been considered a classic in LGBT Jewish film. A recipient of a Pew Charitable Trust Fellowship in Dance/Media, he is the two-time Grand Prize recipient at the Dance on Camera Film Festival for RETURNING HOME and POSITIVE MOTION, both showcasing legendary dance artist Anna Halprin. Andrew is a past board director of the Jewish Film Institute and member of the Academy of Television Arts & Sciences. He has been recognized by the Marin Arts Council as Outstanding Artist, and by the Academy of Motion Pictures Arts and Sciences for Outstanding Documentary Achievement.



Herb Ferrette, Director

Herb is an award-winning filmmaker and editor with years of experience in the communications industry. He's a seven-time regional Emmy winner and 12-time nominee. He received a National Emmy nomination in the category of Individual Achievement in a Craft. Herb's editing work has been recognized internationally, including the feature documentary STABLE LIFE, awarded Best Feature at the San Jose Cinequest Festival, Grand Jury Prize at San Antonio Cinefest, a nomination for a regional Emmy, and a national PBS broadcast on America ReFramed. He was honored at Sundance for THE FIGHT IN THE FIELDS about acclaimed immigration activist Cesar Chaves. He won a Gold Medal at the New York Film Festival with a project for the Discovery Channel, and in the San Diego International Latino Film Festival, RACE IS THE PLACE won Best Feature Documentary and premiered as the season opener for PBS's Independent Lens. Herb recently edited videos on the Black Panthers for the Oakland Museum. He has edited and managed post-production for some of the Bay Area's leading documentary producers whose programs air on national and local PBS, Discovery Channel, MSNBC and WNET's Expose.

Directors' Statement

George Floyd was a tipping point, but racial profiling and excessive force against black people by police has been a reality in the U.S. for decades. It was the fulcrum of the 1968 Huey Newton trial which AMERICAN JUSTICE ON TRIAL depicts, and which the Black Panthers—co-founded by Newton—rallied against. The great lesson from People v. Newton was the importance of diversity among all players in the criminal justice system, including police, juries, attorneys and judges. Diversity brings out better results. The Huey Newton trial was groundbreaking in shepherding this notion in the legal system, when a radically diverse jury, a black jury foreman, and the acknowledgment of racism in the legal system itself were seen as pivotal in creating a fairer trial and fairer outcome. In this light, our decision to have a white and black director matched the media and message of the film: diversity brings out better results. The points of view of both directors, sometimes clashing, always revelatory, made for a better, more authentic and representative film. In such a diverse milieu, sharing a spectrum of viewpoints and lived experience, it is easier to come to compromise, consensus and solutions, rather than get entrenched in one's own biases and grievances. Our film is about real-world solutions, not just problems.



Lise Pearlman, Producer/Creator

A retired judge, Lise wrote three prize-winning books related to this documentary: *The Sky's The Limit: People v. Newton*; the companion book for this project that incorporates the perspectives of key film interviewees, *American Justice on Trial: People v. Newton*; and a biography of Newton's pioneering female lawyer, *Call Me Phaedra: The Life & Times of Movement Lawyer Fay Stender*. Lise is also the President of Arc of Justice Productions, Inc., the nonprofit that initiated this film project. She previously was Executive Producer for two shorts by filmmaker Abby Ginzberg. Lise was an undergraduate in Yale's first class to include women. She moved to the Bay Area for law school and has lived most of her career in Oakland where the Black Panther Party was headquartered and Newton faced trial.



Abby Ginzberg, Co-Producer

A Peabody award-winning director, Abby has been producing documentaries about race and social justice for over 35 years. Her most recent film, *BARBARA LEE: SPEAKING TRUTH TO POWER* won the NAACP Image Award for Outstanding documentary. *WAGING CHANGE* won Best Documentary at the UNAFF Festival and Best in Show of the Accolade Global Film Competition. *AND THEN THEY CAME FOR US* won the Silver Gavel award for Best Documentary and was broadcast on public television. Abby co-produced and co-directed (with Frank Dawson) *AGENTS OF CHANGE* which won the Jury and Audience awards for Best Documentary at the Pan African Film Festival and was broadcast nationally on public television. *SOFT VENGEANCE: ALBIE SACHS AND THE NEW SOUTH AFRICA* won a Peabody award and four film festival audience awards. Abby was the Consulting Producer on *THE BARBER OF BIRMINGHAM*, a short documentary which premiered at Sundance and received an Oscar nomination.



Robert Richter, Co-Producer

For the past fifty years Bob has been a distinguished producer, director and writer focusing on making documentaries on the important social issues of our time. He is the winner of three DuPont Columbia Journalism Awards, a national Emmy, and has twice been nominated for Academy Award in the Best Documentary short category. He is a member of the Motion Picture Academy's documentary branch and was president for ten years of the former nationwide 5,000-member Association of Independent and Video Filmmakers. Bob got his start in regional journalism in Portland, OR before embarking on a career at CBS.



Charles Hobson, Consulting Producer

A pioneer in African-American television programming, Charles founded Vanguard Documentaries. His distinguished career spanned four decades, including extensive work with PBS and the BBC. Several of his films received major NEH grants. Charles won numerous Emmys for producing groundbreaking programs including *INSIDE BEDFORD-STUYVESANT* and the television series *LIKE IT IS*. Charles also received the Japan Prize "Special Citation," and Millimeter Magazine ranked him as one of the fifty top producers in the film and television industry. Among his many other credits were *FROM JUMPSTREET; A STORY OF BLACK MUSIC* (PBS Series); *THE AFRICANS* (co-produced with BBC); *GLOBAL LINKS* (co-produced with the World Bank for PBS). Charles was also a Fulbright Scholar. He passed away in 2020.



Jonathan Logan, Executive Producer

Jonathan is the founder and CEO of the Jonathan Logan Family Foundation, which supports documentary film, investigative journalism and arts & culture. The Foundation is based in Berkeley, CA and has supported documentary films including *A Decent Home* by Sara Terry, *Crip Camp* by James LeBrecht and Nicole Newnham, *FRONTLINE's American Reckoning* by Yoruba Richen and Brad Lichtenstein, *Welcome to Chechnya* by David France and *Barbara Lee: Speaking Truth to Power* by Abby Ginzberg. The Foundation also supports the documentary field through organizations such as the Catapult Film Fund, Chicken & Egg Pictures, the International Documentary Association and the Berkeley Film Foundation, as well as documentary film programs at Spelman College and the University of Chicago.



Peter Benvenuti, Executive Producer

Peter has been a California bankruptcy lawyer for nearly 50 years. After more than three decades as a partner in large law firms based in San Francisco or with offices in New York City, Peter left “big law” to co-found Keller & Benvenuti, a prominent San Francisco business bankruptcy law boutique. He became partner emeritus there in 2021. Peter is a Fellow of the American College of Bankruptcy, and has been an active member and held leadership positions in a variety of professional and court-related organizations. Peter is a graduate of Harvard College and U.C. Berkeley Law School. He is the husband of author and producer Lise Pearlman. The couple met in law school and were married the same weekend as their law school graduation. *AMERICAN JUSTICE ON TRIAL* is his first and only foray into filmmaking.



Sandra Evers-Manly, Co-Executive Producer

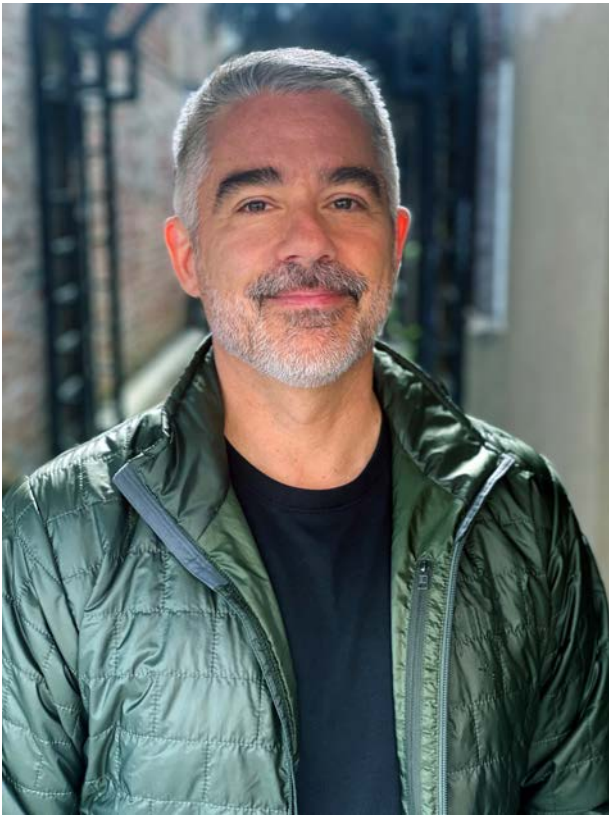
In 1996, Sandra founded the Black Hollywood Education and Resource Center to remove the veil of invisibility that shrouds African Americans and other diverse groups from the main stage, and to spotlight diversity and the stellar contributions of black film and television artists who brought dignity and professionalism to even the most menial of roles. One of the programs of BHERC is the annual African American Film Marketplace & Short Film Showcase in Los Angeles. Sandra is the executive producer of five short films on the impact of gang violence as well as the Academy Award-nominated short film, *LAST BREEZE OF SUMMER*. She has developed an animated series, *IMANI: THE SUPER LITTLE ENGINEER*, which introduces girls and students of color to the world of engineering and other STEM fields. Sandra also founded a new

initiative called “Films with A Purpose” which has produced several thought-provoking films bringing awareness to such issues as bullying, aging out of foster care system, homelessness, and key historical events.

Honors

- Shortlisted, Best Documentary Short, 95th Academy Awards
- Winner, Best Documentary, Athens International Monthly Film Festival
- Winner, Outstanding Achievement, Cult Critic Movies Awards
- Winner, Best Short Documentary, Yale in Hollywood Fest
- Winner, Best Short Documentary, Bright International Film Festival
- Winner, Jury Award, Indigo Moon Film Festival
- Winner, Best Short Documentary, Universal Movie Awards
- Nominee, Best Mid-length Documentary, San Francisco International Film Festival

Art Available



Andrew Abrahams, Director/Producer



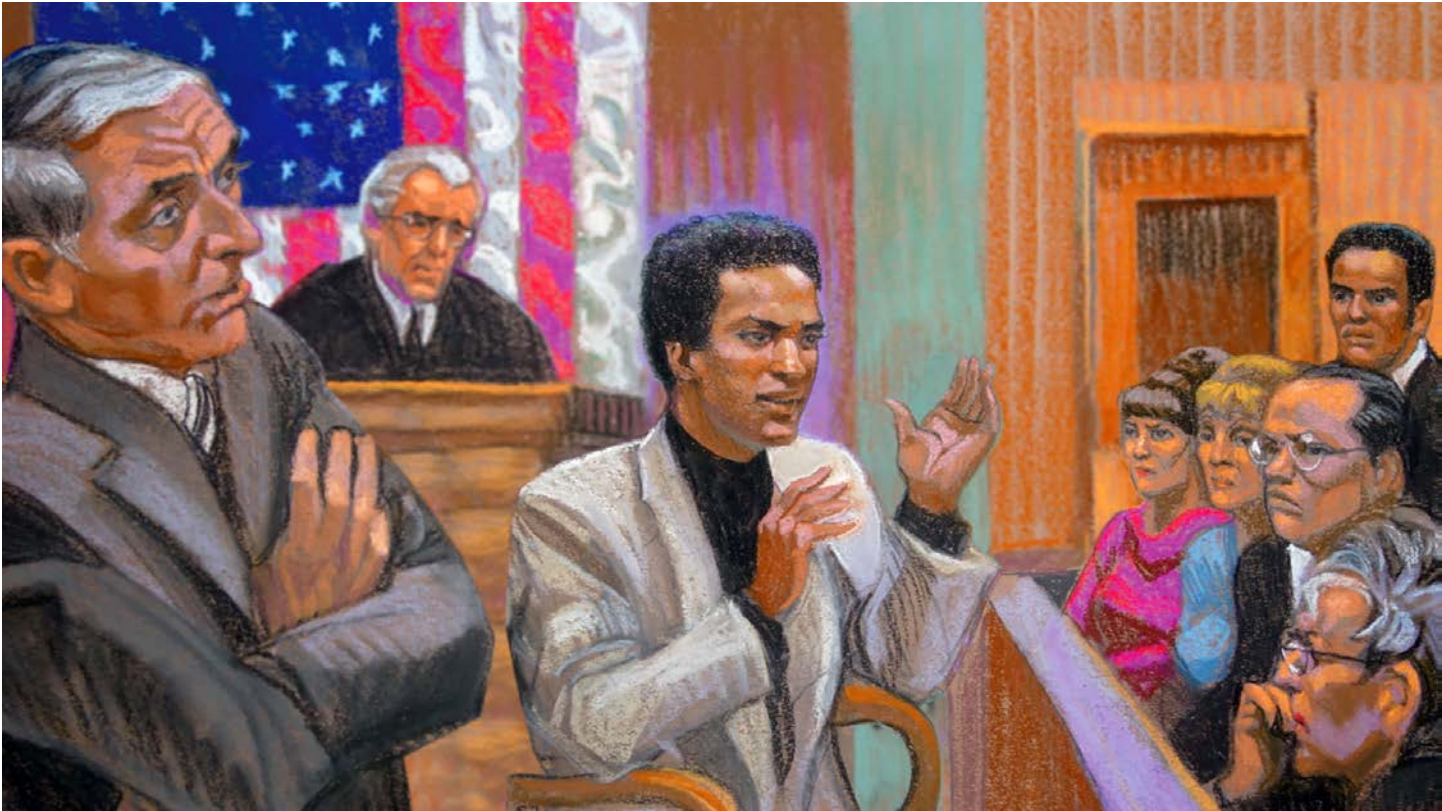
Herb Ferrette, Director



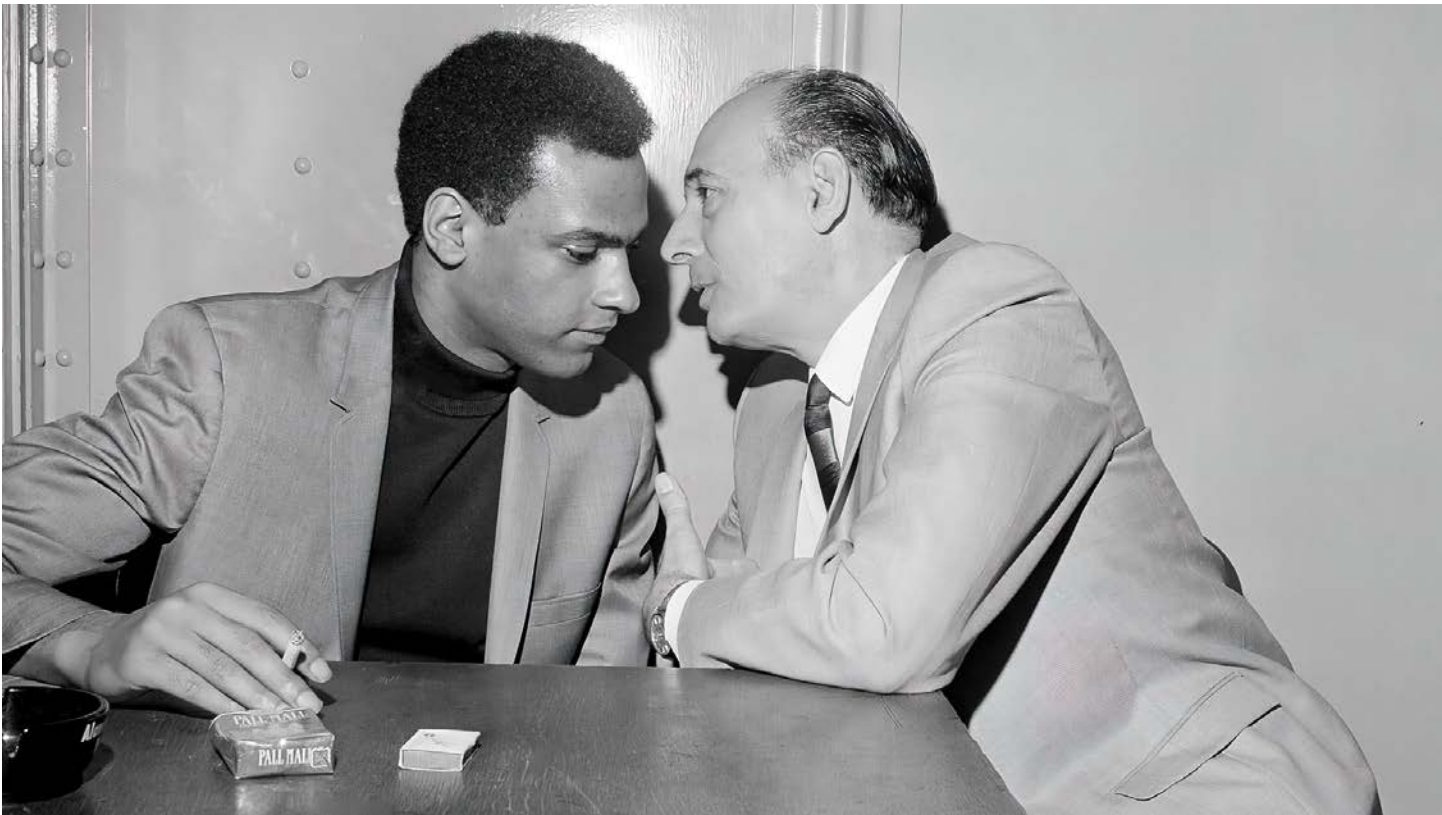
Photo by Ilka Hartmann – Huey Newton and his defense team Charles Garry & Fay Stender hold a press conference after the verdict



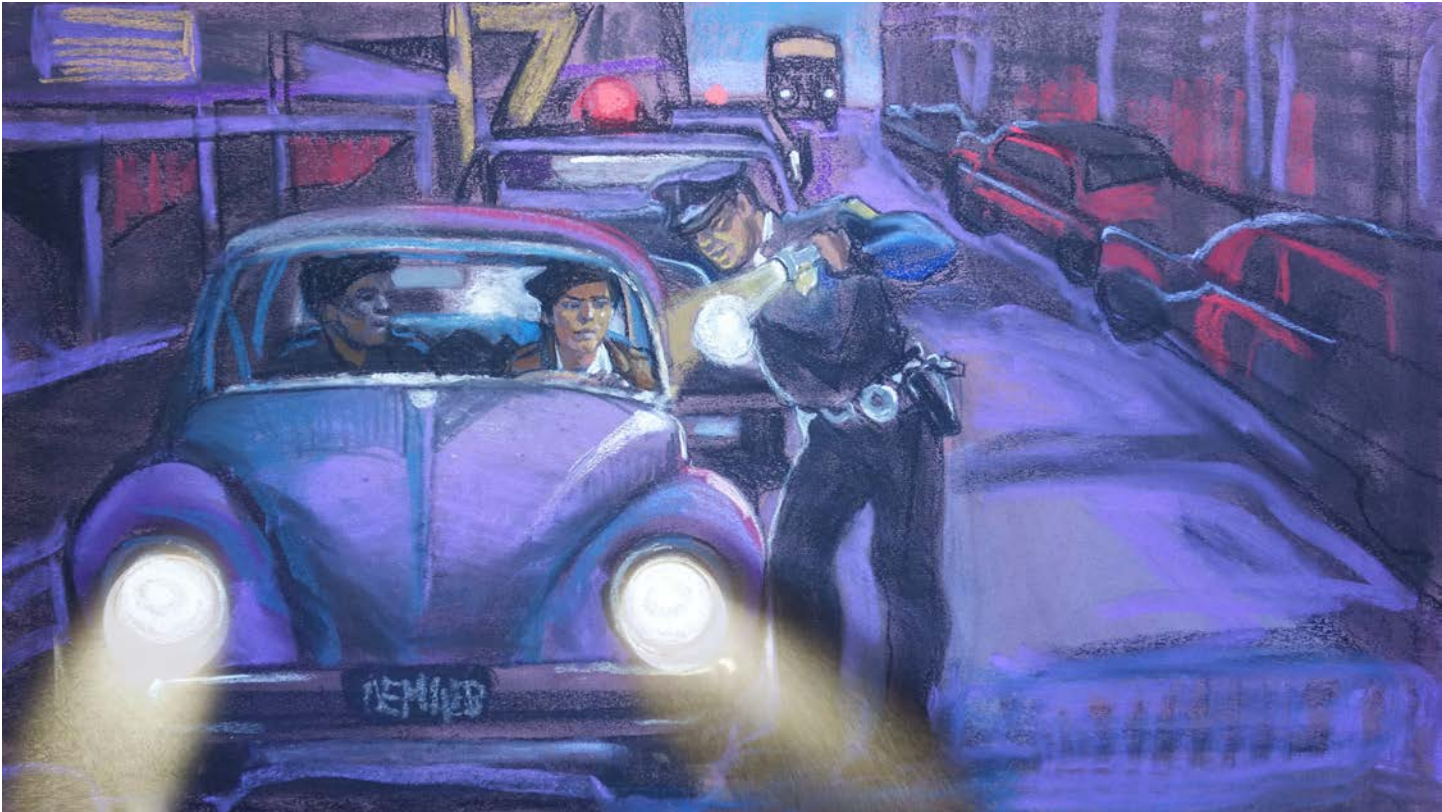
Courtesy Succession Varda – Protestors outside the Alameda County courthouse during the trial



Sketch by Christine Cornell – Huey Newton lectures to the jury about racism in America while defense attorney Charles Garry looks on



Courtesy Associated Press – Huey Newton in jail meeting with Defense Attorney Charles Garry



Sketch by Christine Cornell – Huey Newton is stopped while driving in 1967 in Oakland by Officer John Frey during the incident that precipitated the trial