

MEDIA CONTACT:

Scott Horton Communications

510-229-9739

Bluescott260@hotmail.com

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**BARBARA LEE AND ELIHU HARRIS LECTURE SERIES PRESENTS
BLACK PANTHER PARTY MEMBER, ACTIVIST AND AUTHOR VIRTUAL
MURRELL SEPT. 16 AT MERRITT COLLEGE**

Oakland, CA, August 23, 2023--The Barbara Lee and Elihu Harris Lecture Series presents a conversation with **Virtual Murrell** on Saturday, September 16, at 7 pm in the Huey P. Newton and Bobby Seale Student Lounge at Merritt College in Oakland. The event is co-produced by the Martin Luther King Jr. Freedom Center and the Peralta Community College District. To reserve free tickets, call the Freedom Center office at (510) 434-3988.

Murrell is a former member of the Black Panther Party for Self Defense, a dynamic leader, political figure, advisor and author who has been active for six decades organizing and helping protect and promote democracy. He has been celebrated by Black Panther Party members and founders for his organizing skills, attention to detail and compelling public speaking talent. Murrell began his life's work as an organizer while a student at Merritt College in the 1960s, and it is fitting he returns to Merritt for this lecture.

Bobby Seale has spoken of Mr. Murrell as follows: "Virtual Murrell has been a personal friend of me and my family since 1962. He and I were the leaders and founders of one of the first Black student activist organizations in the country. Moreover, we also co-founded one of the first Black history and Black Studies programs. It could not have been done without the leadership abilities and roles of Virtual Murrell."

Rodney Carlisle, Professor Emeritus, Rutgers University, has written about Murrell's recently published book, *In Pursuit of America's Promise: Memoirs of a Black Panther*, "This memoir is a remarkable achievement for several reasons. It is a fascinating first person account by An African American leader and political figure whose personal career and observations span the decades from the 1960s to the first decade of the 21st century. As a young student leader at Merritt College in Oakland, California, Virtual Murrell knew and worked with Bobby Seale and Huey Newton, and others associated with the formation of the Black Panther Party.

"Later, as a political adviser and activist, he worked a wide variety of Black leaders in the Democratic Party, throughout the state of California, and in Washington D.C. with a long career spanning the 20th century and the first years of the 21st century. For readers familiar or unfamiliar with the story of "Black Radicalism" as well as the more centrist positions of Black leadership in those decades, his book provides an intimate first hand account.

"More broadly, however, Murrell's comments on the situation of African Americans in the late 20th century and early 21st century will be interesting not only to contemporary readers who seek to understand the interplay of race issues and politics, but as an historical document for later generations. Rather than presenting these complex issues "from the outside" as a sociologist or a historian, the issues and developments are described by an active, perceptive, and interesting "participant".

"At the same time, Murrell brings a "long view" that is, he is familiar with African American leadership and history from the period of the American Civil War to the present, and his observations on leaders ranging from the well-known, like W.E.B. Dubois, to the obscure like Monroe Trotter, add a dimension to his work that is unusual, interesting and compelling."

About the Barbara Lee and Elihu Harris Lecture Series and the Martin Luther King Jr. Freedom Center

The Barbara Lee and Elihu Harris Lecture Series, co-produced by the Martin Luther King Jr. Freedom Center and Peralta Community College District, promotes an ample exchange of ideas to help inspire and move forward new leadership and servanthship. The Lecture Series is a longstanding public forum that invites civic leaders from all sectors to respond to Dr. King's still-pressing question, "Where do we go from here: chaos or community."

Broad East Bay audiences of all ages are exposed to some of our nation's most courageous and exemplary civil and human rights figures, engaging in creative solutions and challenges to some of the most perplexing issues facing our communities today: economic inequity, voter disenfranchisement, systemic racism, violence in schools and neighborhoods, police brutality, and the contradictions and ramifications of extreme poverty.

Lectures are organized by the youth and staff at the Freedom Center, with a focus on promoting ideas and actions rooted in principles of nonviolence, and lessons from some of our nation's most significant civil rights struggles.

Civic engagement at the Martin Luther King Jr Freedom Center brings together individuals and organizations of diverse ages, races and socioeconomic backgrounds, working side-by-side for a healthy democracy.

The Freedom Center brings best practices from the nation's Civil Rights Movement to the forefront in community education, training, and practice, building strong

community partnerships with proven results.

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