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BABA

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Bard College

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BABA

Senior Project Submitted to
The Division of Social Studies
of Bard College

by
Nova Muhammad

Annandale-on-Hudson, New York

May 2024

Artist Statement

BABA is a documentary that explores the life and legacy of my grandfather, Baba Ahmed T'Chaka Zulu Obafemi, through the perspectives of my grandmother, my aunt, and my father. With the aid of archived materials such as audio recorded speeches, videos, and images, BABA inspects the political journey of Ahmed particularly throughout the 1970s, 80s, and 90s. As a founding member of the New Afrikan People's Organization and The Malcolm X Grassroots Movement, Ahmed became a notable organizer and speaker in the Black revolutionary communities of New York, Alabama, Georgia, and beyond. Although his primary focus was in the liberation of Black people in the United States, Ahmed was also involved in the international political sphere, fighting for the rights of Palestinians, Chicano-Mexicanos, Puerto Ricans, South Africans, Cubans, Azanians, Indigenous peoples of all backgrounds, and more. The documentary aims to highlight the wider scope of the communities Ahmed reached, while also developing a deeper understanding of the consequences of getting involved in revolutionary action under an oppressive government. BABA details how the U.S government targeted and surveilled not only Ahmed, but also his children and comrades, as a result of his outspoken political leadership. Even with the threat of government surveillance looming over Ahmed and our family, there was never a moment where the fight for liberation of all peoples was halted. This documentary acts as an educational piece, to spread knowledge of what it meant to be a Black revolutionary in the twentieth century, and a call to action, to encourage the future generation of revolutionaries to never give up.

At Bard, I have had the opportunity to take courses in a variety of disciplines, including film. In addition, I've also been able to work for multiple initiatives dedicated to bettering the livelihood of incarcerated individuals, and decarceration as a whole, in New York State. A key theme throughout the film is the mass incarceration of political revolutionaries in the United States. My work with decarceration efforts in New York, directly connects to the excessive occurrence of political prisoners in the U.S that the documentary subjects discuss. I never imagined that my senior project would be a film, as I have had no exposure to filmmaking prior to attending Bard, but in my experiences here I've developed a greater appreciation and understanding for visual aids as a means for social justice action. I view this documentary not only as an ode to my grandfather, but an ode to my time at Bard and all that I've embarked on while studying here.