This talk examines how former Black Panther Party Communications Secretary Kathleen Neal Cleaver has used photography to make ‘home’ in the world. Through close examination of a family photography album made by Cleaver of her family’s time living in exile in Algeria and France, 1969-1972, and drawing on Raiford’s three years of working with Cleaver leading a team organizing and cataloguing her vast personal photography archive, (since acquired by Emory University in Spring 2020), Raiford considers the everyday image making practices that a public figure committed to improving the conditions of Black lives globally has engaged to imagine, identify, create, fabulate, inhabit, leave and, sometimes, destroy ‘home’. While Cleaver’s photography collection broadly, and the family album specifically, have great political and historical significance, enriching our knowledge about the Black Panther Party, the work of Black internationalism in the era of Black Power, and gender politics in the context of Black revolutionary struggles, it is perhaps best understood as a family archive. Thus, Raiford reads the Algiers album as a Black-woman authored text, a model that offers an affective and personal history of a movement that has been conveyed primarily as historical document. Its form as a family album forces us to reckon with the messiness of movement and cannot deny the failures and disappointments of family relations — whether a difficult marriage, a growing community of exiles, family as a metaphor for nationalism or as a map of intergenerational kinship ties — as well as the possibilities and limitations of photography itself.

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