IMPRISONED INTELLECTUALS

AMERICA'S POLITICAL PRISONERS WRITE ON LIFE, LIBERATION, AND REBELLION

Edited by

JOY JAMES

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This work is dedicated to those ancestors, elders, and youths who seek, struggle, and suffer for freedom; and to all who filter their desire to abolish slavery and social death through compassion for the fragility of life and love.

Contents

Preface

Divisive debates over who "qualifies" as a U.S. political prisoner, and what means should be used for liberation, have been raging for decades; obviously, they will not be resolved here. Still, deeply held views influenced my shaping of this project and the editing of many of the essays presented here. First, I find that definitions commonly used to discuss U.S. "political prisoners" tend to be overly inclusive and simplistic. Therefore, I reject the following as inherently limited designations for "political prisoner": any incarcerated individual who self-defines as such; anyone the state labels as a "criminal" or "terrorist"; and anyone the state politically discriminates against through differential enforcement of laws, racially and economically driven sentencing regimes, and prison treatment. Of course, the above categories apply to many of the writers in this volume. Yet that in itself is not what qualifies them as progressive "political prisoners"—for the question of political agency for a greater democracy remains to be addressed.

The refusal to politically romanticize criminals reflects narrow self-interest and broader communal goals. Regarding self-interest, the criminal for profit or entertainment (your neighbor, nephew, stockbroker, or statesman)—with less fervor than the white supremacists who engineered the 1995 Oklahoma City bombing or the religious extremists who executed the 1993 and 2001 World Trade Center bombings—furthers the demise of me and my kin. Black women demanding political, economic, intellectual, and sexual freedoms are considered legitimate "targets" by various insurrectionists of varied ideologies. Personal interests are compatible with political goals: Any group or individual seeking domination—whether racial, religious, and sexual or economic, political, and international—is the enemy of a liberated society.

Unlike progressive radicals and revolutionaries (politically, "radical" is not synonymous with "extremist"), reactionaries are restorers—rather than transform the current order, they seek to reimpose or reinvigorate old orders of supremacy. Reactionary political prisoners or prisoners of war (apprehended by the state, they can also be classified as "unlawful combatants" and so denied the protection of interna-

tional or national norms) are not the subject of this volume. In fact, the volume's contributors are designated not only "enemies of the state"[1] but also enemies of the reactionaries at war with the state.

As progressive political prisoners or prisoners of war, revolutionary "enemies of the state" differ from reactionary "enemies of the state." The former expand, while the latter oppose, democratic freedoms. (Centralizing power with corporate and military elites and violating human rights, the state has also proven itself an adversary to democracy.) Progressive "combatants" who resisted state repression in self-defensive or offensive acts that inadvertently caused the loss of life cannot be easily dismissed as "terrorists" by confining them—conceptually or physically—with racial, ideological, or religious supremacists.

One need not argue that the "enemy of my enemy is my friend." It is reasonable to refuse friendship to a "protective" imperialist state expanding police and war powers, a fearful society with slight regard for civilian losses or "collateral damage" that are not "white" or "American." Likewise, it is more than reasonable to condemn an insurrectionary terrorist (alter ego to a state terrorist?) who targets civilians in asymmetrical warfare.

The following writings by progressive political prisoners as intellectuals function as documentary history/political manifesto/theoretical treatises. This work chronicles the turbulent liberation struggles in the United States beginning and ending with spiritual prophets: respectively, Reverend Martin Luther King, Jr., and Lakota warrior and artist Leonard Peltier. The discussion (debate) of what constitutes a U.S. political prisoner is best understood within a larger historical context of repression and resistance. That context, unfortunately, cannot be adequately developed within the confines of this book. However, we can note four key aspects about the historical trajectory of rebellion from oppressed peoples within the United States.

First, throughout American history, "criminals" are racially invented in the public mind; thus, entire communities or peoples are "criminalized."[2] Criminality is considered to be nonconformity; nonconformity is often determined not merely by behavior but also by biology or appearance. Bodies that fail to conform to "whiteness" are treated differently under state or police gaze. Greater obedience is demanded from—and greater violence is used against—those whose physical difference marks them as offensive or threatening. Racially driven policing and sentencing for both social crime and political rebellion mean that African Americans don't do "white time." Compared to their European American counterparts, they disproportionately serve longer sentences under more severe conditions.

Second, the tradition of armed slave insurrections and maroon societies of indigenous and African fugitives in the Americas established a historical consciousness that would, a century later, infuse the women and men in the Black Panther Party, the Black Liberation Army, and the white anti-imperialist movements.[3] Likewise, the military resistance of indigenous peoples and leaders such as Chief Joseph, Sitting Bull, and Geronimo imprinted the American Indian Movement.

Third, as did the nineteenth-century slave and indigenous rebellions, twentieth-century anticolonial struggles tempered both pacifists and armed combatants. During the post–World War II era, traditional imperialism unraveled as the oppressed in Africa, Asia, and Latin America waged insurrections in national liberation movements that reverberated into the United States. Consequently, India's Mohandas Gandhi influenced Martin Luther King, Jr., while the Congo's freedom fighter and president Patrice Lumumba influenced Malcolm X. U.S. domestic rebellions were international in scope and effect as well. The U.S. government understood this as it developed its response through infamous and assassination-prone "intelligence programs" such as the Federal Bureau of Investigation's COINTELPRO[4] and the Central Intelligence Agency; both police institutions were used to destabilize domestic dissent.

Fourth, some readers might tend to overemphasize the discussions of armed struggle that appear prominently in the first half of this anthology. However, a careful reading of contemporary U.S. history reveals that radical organizations garnered wide support based on their ability to address the material needs and aspirations, as well as ideals, of their communities. For example, reservation, barrio, or urban youths were (and are) disaffected by and overwhelmed with frustration at dead-end jobs, poverty, inferior and disciplinary schooling, and police violence. It is logical then that the Black Panther Party, Brown Berets, Young Lords, Young Patriots, and American Indian Movement would have mass appeal among the young. While the majority media focused on the armed aspect of such groups, it was their free breakfast programs, free medical clinics, freedom schools, and social services that elicited wide support. They offered an alternative to the state; and by their massive appeal in oppressed communities, they presented the government with the real threat of popular insurrection guided by revolutionaries. Hence, the governmental fear which produced COINTELPRO's illegal, outrageous, and murderous acts also became a "rational choice" for maintaining dominance. Likewise when New York governor Nelson Rockefeller used the National Guard to brutally suppress the 1971 Attica prison rebellion, it was not just the physical assault (with makeshift knives and clubs) on state and police authority that was repelled, but the political agency of prisoners collectively organizing to demand safe and sanitary living conditions, decent food, and reasonable rather than "slave" wages for their labor. (The *Attica Manifesto* as well as other writings can be found on the *Imprisoned Intellectuals* website: www.rowmanlittlefield.com.)

When not waged as merely episodic raging against injustice, civil disobedience and rebellion inevitably raise the question, "What is revolutionary?" Of course, that question cannot be adequately addressed within the limited context of this collection (or likely any other). However, a few observations can be made. Revolutionaries are distinct from radicals and insurrectionists even when they share the same progressive desires to end military, racial, economic, or sexual domination. Revolution encompasses and surpasses radicalism and rebellion to pursue a greater objective: freedoms safeguarded by institutions. Rather than merely revolt against repressive hierarchies or disobey unjust laws and customs, revolutionary politics

seeks to build new structures and norms. Hence, revolutionaries are more feared than radicals or even insurrectionists (who tend to have little allegiance to the state) by governing structures and elites.

It is worth noting that neither crime nor violence is inherently revolutionary. (Capitalism in the Americas is predicated on the theft of land and labor and the mass murder of indigenous and African peoples.) Yet caged in penal sites because of criminal or violent acts, prisoners can be transformed into revolutionaries. Just as in civil society, state criminality and violence can transform law-abiding citizens into revolutionaries.

Not all rebels favor insurrection or revolution. Demands for a total transformation of the state are rarely sustained even among progressives, although such demands flare periodically with public outrage at government excess. What historian Vincent Harding notes of nineteenth-century slave-turned-abolitionist Frederick Douglass applies to twenty-first-century radicals and prison abolitionists:

> He could not—or would not—sharpen and maintain those occasional radical insights which at times had led him to see the involvement of the American people, the American institutions, and the American government in the steel-like web of racism, exploitative economics, and fear which formed the basic undergirding of slavery. For it was not the call to armed insurrection which was the hallmark of antebellum black radicalism, but a careful capacity to see the entire American government, and the institutions and population which it represented, as the basic foe of any serious black struggle, whatever its form might take. It was America, not simply slaveholders, which needed to be transformed, and above all the government and its institutions.[5]

This volume is based on the conviction—disturbing to many—that the United States and its governing institutions, not just its penal sites rife with human rights abuses, need to be transformed. Here, activists incarcerated for deeds criminalized by the United States appeal to the U.S. constitution, international law, morality, and religious faith to transform life on both sides of the razor wire. Insights into insurrection, rebellion, and liberation require that we engage with their works, both their contributions and contradictions. Refusing to position imprisoned intellectuals as icons, this collection presents them as gateways to avenues that bypass a pantheon in a difficult journey toward liberation movements.

NOTES

1. See the pamphlet by European American, anti-imperialist political prisoners Marilyn Buck, David Gilbert, and Laura Whitehorn, *Enemies of the State* (Brooklyn: Resistance in Brooklyn, 1999, 2d printing), editor's papers.

2. For analyses of how people are criminalized based on race, see Jerome G. Miller, *Search and Destroy: African American Males in the Criminal Justice System* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996); Luana Ross, *Inventing the Savage: The Social Construction of Native American Criminality* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1998); and Beth Richie, *Compelled to Crime* (New York: Routledge, 1995).

3. For scholarly works on the history of armed struggle against enslavement, see Vincent Harding, *There Is a River: The Black Struggle for Freedom in America* (New York: Vintage Books, 1983); Thomas Higginson, *Black Rebellion: A Selection from Travellers and Outlaws* (New York: Arno Press, 1969, rprt.; New York: Lee and Shepard Publishers, 1889); Herbert Aptheker, *American Negro Slave Revolts* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1944, 2d printing). For works on resistance to the criminalization of African Americans or "blackness," see Ida B. Wells, *Southern Horrors and Other Writings* (Boston: Bedford, 1997); Herbert Shapiro, *White Violence and Black Response: From Reconstruction to Montgomery* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1988). For an analysis exploring both nonviolence and armed struggle see Bill Sutherland and Matt Meyer, *Guns and Gandhi in Africa: Pan African Insights on Nonviolence, Armed Struggle and Liberation in Africa* (Trenton, N.J: Africa World Press, 2000).

4. See Athan Theoharis, *The FBI: An Annotated Bibliography and Research Guide* (New York: Garland Publishing, 1994); and John Stockwell, *In Search of Enemies: A CIA Story* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1978).

5. Harding, *There Is a River*, 200.

Acknowledgments

This book has taken its own bittersweet time. Over the last several years, it has gained in depth and range, benefiting from the growing works on and by imprisoned progressive authors.

First, acknowledgment to the incarcerated readers who, upon receiving copies of *States of Confinement: Policing, Detention, and Prisons* in 2000, politely thanked me for sending the anthology and then proceeded to critique me and the work for the omission of voices of imprisoned writers and an overemphasis on academic interpretations of policing and imprisonment.

In responding to the challenge to collect and edit the writings of progressive political prisoners, who speak for themselves and whose voices are not easily appropriated, many lent assistance. To those who helped in bringing this work to print and whose names I forget to mention, my apologies, and my thanks.

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Elizabeth Walsh, and Manuella Meyer to play instrumental roles in pulling this volume together. Students in the spring 2002 advanced seminar on prison intellectuals researched and drafted biographies for a number of contributors to this collection. In addition, Liz, Brady, Hana, and Chris were invaluable in organizing the spring 2002 conference, *Imprisoned Intellectuals: A Dialogue with Academics, Activists, and (Former) U.S. Political Prisoners on War, Dissent, and Social Justice*, held at Brown University. That gathering (with proceedings published in the journal *Social Justice*) provided an opportunity to reflect on this project and to make new friendships dedicated to justice.

Within and beyond the academic carceral, Beatrice Adderley, Elizabeth Amelia Hadley, Emily Blumenfeld, T. Denean Sharpley-Whiting, Claude Marks, Donna Willmott, Rob McBride, Laura Whitehorn, Susie Day, Dylan Rodriguez, Frank Wilderson, Susan Rosenberg, Mecke Nagel, and Bettina Aptheker assisted in the shaping of this work. My deepest appreciation to Laura Whitehorn, Frank Wilderson, Dylan Rodriguez, and Michael Hames-Garcia for their insightful contributions to the development of the introduction; also "thank you" to Susan Rosenberg and Bettina Aptheker for inspiration to write the preface. Obviously, I am solely responsible for whatever shortcomings appear in the preface and the introduction.

Laura Whitehorn and Susie Day, with tireless energy and vision, lent their considerable knowledge and editing skills toward strengthening this anthology. They, with Madrina and my other kin, sustained me through the long haul of gathering documents and essays, editing, worrying, and wondering about this collection as it evolved toward publication.

Working with patience, insight, and humor—and more patience—radical imprisoned intellectuals have offered and taught me much about critique, commitment, and courage, as well as pain and beauty, discipline and grace. Reading and rereading this collection, I encounter the generosity, frailties and strengths, contradictions and contributions of "disappeared" rebels and heretics, of prophets and soldiers and healers. I am reminded of the noncanonical Gnostic Gospels suppressed by state religion; the heart of this work seems to pulse with the Gospel of Thomas (113):

> The disciples said to Him, "When will the Kingdom come?" [Jesus said,] "It will not come by waiting for it."

Prologue

A New Declaration of Independence

Emma Goldman
July 1909

When, in the course of human development, existing institutions prove inadequate to the needs of man, when they serve merely to enslave, rob, and oppress mankind, the people have the eternal right to rebel against, and overthrow, these institutions.

The mere fact that these forces—inimical to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness—are legalized by statute laws, sanctified by divine rights, and enforced by political power in no way justifies their continued existence.

We hold these truths to be self-evident: that all human beings, irrespective of race, color, or sex, are born with the equal right to share at the table of life; that to secure this right, there must be established among men economic, social, and political freedom; we hold further that government exists but to maintain special privilege and property rights; that it coerces man into submission and therefore robs him of dignity, self-respect, and life.

The history of the American kings of capital and authority is the history of repeated crimes, injustice, oppression, outrage, and abuse, all aiming at the suppression of individual liberties and the exploitation of the people. A vast country, rich enough to supply all her children with all possible comforts, and insure well-being to all, is in the hands of a few, while the nameless millions are at the mercy of ruthless wealth gatherers, unscrupulous lawmakers, and corrupt politicians. Sturdy sons of America are forced to tramp the country in a fruitless search for bread, and many of her daughters are driven into the street, while thousands of tender children are daily sacrificed on the altar of Mammon. The reign of these kings is holding mankind in slavery, perpetuating poverty and disease, maintaining crime and corruption; it is fettering the spirit of liberty, throttling the voice of justice, and degrading and oppressing humanity. It is engaged in continual war and slaughter,

devastating the country and destroying the best and finest qualities of man; it nurtures superstition and ignorance, sows prejudice and strife, and turns the human family into a camp of Ishmaelites.

We, therefore, the liberty-loving men and women, realizing the great injustice and brutality of this state of affairs, earnestly and boldly do hereby declare that each and every individual is and ought to be free to own himself and to enjoy the full fruit of his labor; that man is absolved from all allegiance to the kings of authority and capital; that he has, by the very fact of his being, free access to the land and all means of production, and entire liberty of disposing of the fruits of his efforts; that each and every individual has the unquestionable and unabridgeable right of free and voluntary association with other equally sovereign individuals for economic, political, social, and all other purposes, and that to achieve this end man must emancipate himself from the sacredness of property, the respect for man-made law, the fear of the Church, the cowardice of public opinion, the stupid arrogance of national, racial, religious, and sex superiority, and from the narrow puritanical conception of human life. And for the support of this declaration, and with a firm reliance on the harmonious blending of man's social and individual tendencies, the lovers of liberty joyfully consecrate their uncompromising devotion, their energy and intelligence, their solidarity and their lives.

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NOTE

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Born on June 27, 1869, in Kovno Province, Russia, into a Jewish family that suffered under the anti-Semitic laws of that era, Emma Goldman immigrated to the United States with her sister Helena in 1886. There she adopted anarchist and radical feminist analyses, eventually becoming a powerful organizer, and leading the 1889 Cloak Maker Strike and the 1891 New York May Day demonstration. For "inciting a riot" that never materialized, Goldman served one year at Blackwell's Island Penitentiary in New York City. Soon after her release in 1894, Goldman voluntarily left the country. Upon returning to the United States, she embarked on an extensive national lecture tour between 1896 and 1899. Arrested frequently, she gained sympathizers at each engagement. Toward the end of her life, Goldman joined the Spanish struggle against fascism and Generalissimo Francisco Franco in 1936; while lecturing in support of the Spanish freedom movement, she suffered a stroke and died in Canada in 1940.

Introduction

Joy James

> Under a government which imprisons any unjustly, the true place for a just man is also a prison.
>
> —Henry David Thoreau

> It is the action, not the fruit of the action, that's important. You have to do the right thing. It may not be in your time that there will be any fruit, but that doesn't mean you stop doing the right thing. You may never know what results come from your action. But if you do nothing, there will be no result.
>
> —Mahatma Mohandas Gandhi

AMERICAN "PRISON NOTEBOOKS"

Antonio Gramsci, while imprisoned in Mussolini's Italy for his political beliefs and socialist activism, wrote in his *Prison Notebooks* that, "Every social group . . . creates together with itself, organically, one or more strata of intellectuals which give it homogeneity and an awareness of its own function not only in the economic but also in the social and political fields." For Gramsci, because everyone thinks critically and philosophically, everyone is an intellectual; but not everyone officially functions as such in society.[1]

In a stratified culture, one may superficially assume that only professional intellectuals, recognized writers and pundits in the public realm, academics, and policymakers constitute an intellectual formation. However, every group has an "organic" intellectual caste, one that functions as a vehicle to articulate, shape, and further the aspirations of its constituency.

Hence, the "public intellectual" encompasses the oft-forgotten "prison intellectual." That is, the imprisoned intellectual is a public intellectual who, like his or her highly visible and celebrated counterparts, reflects upon social meaning, dis-

cord, development, ethics, and justice. Prisons function as intellectual and political sites unauthorized by the state. Yet, when and where the imprisoned intellectual gives voice to the incarcerated or captive, those denied social justice and full democratic power on both sides of the concertina wire, then and there our stories of war and love shaping visions of freedom and fulfillment take on a new life—often a quite disturbing one.

In editing this volume of writings by imprisoned intellectuals, political prisoners in the contemporary United States, I gradually realized the impossibilities of filtering language in harrying and prophetic narratives. One cannot bring some definitive "academic" meaning to this collection, a gathering of words in resistance, words written by revolutionaries captured and detained—for days or years, decades or life—by the leviathan against which they rebelled. This is the leviathan to which most readers of this volume pledge their allegiance in some fashion or another—tithing to domestic and foreign policies that increase military and police powers, and concentrations of wealth and poverty. The rebels went to prison; and, passing through or surviving incarceration, they wrote as outlaw intellectuals with unique and controversial insights into idealism, warfare, and social justice.

When writing is a painful endeavor, marked by political struggle and despair as well as determination and courage, it is potentially transformative. Reading may also share (in an attenuated fashion) the impetus and ethos of the writing. Yet it will not necessarily compel the reader to moral and political acts. Author and academic Barbara Harlow cautions, "Reading prison writing must . . . demand a correspondingly activist counterapproach to that of passivity, aesthetic gratification, and the pleasures of consumption that are traditionally sanctioned by the academic disciplining of literature."[2] An "activist counterapproach" to the consumptive indifference is infrequent, but it does occur. If the circulation of rarely referenced or vilified "resistance literature" reflects the growing public interest in incarceration sites, intellectual and political dissent for social justice, and the possibilities of democratic transformations, then collections such as this should spark new debates about "reading" and activism and political theory.

Reading and editing, from the bipolar lens of academic and radical intellectual, I see that the purpose of this work was to foster or force an encounter between those in the so-called free world seeking personal and collective freedoms and those in captivity seeking liberation from economic, military, racial/sexual systems. Like all good and necessary encounters, this one between writers and readers is provocative and elicits more questions than can be answered within the confines of a book—even an anthology of critique, confrontation, and radical risk taking.

DEBATES, DISOBEDIENCE, AND DISSENT

Amid the debates about "political prisoners" in the United States, one can distinguish between those engaged in civil disobedience who identify as "loyal opposition"—and by their very dissent affirm the institutions of American democracy—and those so alienated by state violence and government betrayals of humanitarian and democratic ideals that their dissent chronicles their disaffection, and at times insurrection.[3] Such insurrection may also at times become (proto-)revolutionary.[4]

"Law abiding dissent" represents a political risk taking with broader social acceptance. This is largely due to its adherence to principles of nonviolent civil disobedience, widely shared moral values, and, sometimes, proximity to the very "corridors of (institutional) power" closed to the disenfranchised; such adherence spares dissenters the harshest of sentences. Although not emphasized in this volume, the narratives of influential political detainees offer important insights. For example, after being imprisoned for engaging in civil disobedience to protest U.S. military bombing practices on Vieques Island, Puerto Rico, Robert F. Kennedy, Jr. wrote:

> I arrived at my difficult decision to join the invasion of Vieques only after I was convinced that its people had exhausted every legal and political avenue to secure their rights. In my 18 years as a lawyer and environmental advocate for the Natural Resources Defense Council and the Riverkeeper movement, I had never engaged in an act of civil disobedience. As an attorney, I have a duty to uphold the law. But I also had a countervailing duty in this case. The bombardment of Vieques is bad military policy and disastrous for public health and the environment. But the most toxic residue of the Navy's history on Vieques is its impact on our democracy. The people I met there are United States citizens, but the Navy's abusive exercise of power on the island has left them demoralized, alienated and feeling that they are neither part of a democracy nor the beneficiaries of the American system of justice.[5]

Kennedy narrates that upon returning for trial, he encountered Reverend Jesse Jackson who was in Puerto Rico to support his wife, Jacqueline, while she served a ten-day jail sentence for protesting against military violations. Upon informing the civil rights leader of Kennedy's expectant wife Mary's insistence that her husband not take a deal to delay his sentencing, Kennedy recalls that Jackson responded, "Suffering is often the most powerful tool against injustice and oppression. If Jesus had plea-bargained the crucifixion, we wouldn't have the faith."

Unlike Kennedy, Jesse Jackson is a veteran of civil rights protest and civil disobedience. Leading demonstrations against domestic infractions such as "driving while black/brown" or "voting while black/brown," the former aide to Martin Luther King, Jr., has for decades vocally criticized U.S. foreign policy and vocally supported Palestinian self-determination and the abolition of apartheid states. In the 1980s, in solidarity with Nelson Mandela[6] and other South African political prisoners, Jackson encouraged U.S. citizens to trespass at the offices of South African government agencies. This civil disobedience, often by middle-class Americans, usually resulted in several hours of detention in city jails, and became seen as a "badge of honor" or rite of (political) passage. Such short-term (symbolic?) jailings prompt several observations. First, it is likely that it is not political incarceration per se that

is stigmatized but incarceration based on a refusal to suffer violence without resorting to armed self-defense; the choice of the latter surely leads to one's "disappearance" from conventional society and "respectable" politics. Second, even nonviolent conscientious objectors (COs) during World War II—who sought to "redeem" themselves as patriots by risking their lives as human guinea pigs in U.S. military medical experiments—and religious pacifists in the civil rights and antiwar movements that followed were disavowed once designated as "unpatriotic."

Consider that despite his adherence to Christian faith and Gandhian principles of nonviolent civil disobedience, Martin Luther King, Jr., lost considerable support and organizational funding from both white and black liberals after he publicly criticized imperialism (and capitalism) and the U.S. war against Vietnam.[7] What is largely condemned in American political culture is not the risk taking that leads to incarceration but the radicalism that rejects the validity of the nation-state itself and the legitimacy of its legal and moral standing. How does one reconcile the proximity and distance between the law-abiding loyalist and the pacifist or militarist radical who appear in the same courts, often using similar legal arguments, but with very different political intentions and consequences seem to stand a world apart in their dissent?

Diverse worlds or parallel universes hover about this volume. Contributors disagree about strategy and morality ("nonviolence or violence") and politics ("loyal or revolutionary"). Toward a work such as this, one intended to raise queries, eyebrows, and passions, there appear many questions and debates—particularly for those informed about and disaffected by the criminalization of dissidents amid state criminality and abuse of (police and war) powers. Many debates seem to center on the question of what constitutes shared community, one in struggle for commonly held ideals of justice, individual freedom, collective liberation, and material well-being in civil society marked by growing state control.

Radical philosophers have argued that street and prison gangs are forms of "civil society" conditioned by the state and government apparatuses' manipulation of the drug trade, control of territory, and deployment of police repression. Philosopher Michael Hames-Garcia raises cogent questions about the relationships between the incarcerated and those in the "free world," asking, "how might one situate the specifically intellectual activity of organic prison intellectuals in relation to the state? To what kind of 'civil society' or 'counterpublic' are prison intellectuals directing their writings and how is this audience [readership] positioned in relationship to the state?"[8]

State conditioning is not the only force destabilizing progressive politics. The prison movement has grown immensely over the last decades. Yet, it still has its own internal demons to fight concerning coalitions and efficacy. Activists as "official representatives" can invoke the political prisoner-as-icon in order to derail external and internal criticisms of their strategies, and wield surrogate iconic powers in an uncritical fashion. This raises the question of whether the imprisoned—as political "dependents" relying upon those outside to garner support—might engage in self-censorship concerning the limitations of their allies. Such "self-censorship" and self-conditioning work both ways. The privileged academic might hesitate to criticize a progressive "folk hero" sentenced to life or death in prison, although, in a culture that widely disparages prisoners, the repercussions of academic criticisms seem to be fairly limited. This suggests additional queries about the nature of "parity" between political prisoners and their political allies: In theory and practice, the imprisoned intellectual can be ideologically "frozen" in or physically "freed" by the work of non-incarcerated academics and activists.

Scholar Dylan Rodriguez questions whether, given the constraints, an imprisoned intellectual can truly become a "public intellectual." Arguing that while in prison such writers are "disabled from meaningful participation in the interpretation and 'translation' of their works," Rodriguez references "radical/revolutionary intellectuals whose praxis is in irreconcilable opposition to the very historical and political logic of the 'public' (civil society) as it exists for the endorsement of their virtual (and biological) death." I both agree and disagree with this assessment. True, the general or mainstream public constitutes a mostly hostile or indifferent readership and respondent. Yet, there are multiple "publics" and varied "civil societies"; the "public sphere" is shaped, to varying degrees, by whoever enter as engagees. The intent of imprisoned intellectuals to influence "the public" in its multiple formations is a complicated proposition but a real endeavor. No monolithic "radical political prisoner" exists. Despite shared antiracist and anti-imperialist politics, U.S. political prisoners differ in identity, ideology, and strategy. Rodriguez, though, makes an essential point about how imprisoned intellectuals are "read": "[T]here is a rather widespread, normalized *disavowal* of the political and theoretical substance of the work generated by imprisoned radical intellectuals."[9]

This "abolitionist" assertion is further complicated if we consider how contemporary racism and penal captivity likely evolved from within a historical colonial–settler state built upon, and enriched by, anti-Indigenous genocide and African enslavement. Some contributors to this volume argue in their respective chapters that there is a "normalized disavowal" of the presence of (radical or independent) blacks or Indians in conventional "civil society." Hence, they call for some form(s) of independence or autonomy from what they view as an enveloping and destructive formation (what some have called an "empire"). The racially marked political prisoner tends to be most forgotten, and to serve the longest sentences. Some of the longest sentences and most violent punishments have been meted out to African and Native Americans in the Black Panther Party or American Indian Movement and their allies, and Puerto Rican *independentistas*. To rationalize the sentences and punishments by pointing to the advocacy or use of armed struggle or armed self-defense by some of the incarcerated ignores the fact that a number of those slain or incarcerated (for decades) were innocent of charges. Their innocence is attested to, as in the cases of Fred Hampton and Mark Clark, who were slain, and Dhoruba Bin Wahad and Geronimo ji-Jaga (Pratt), who were finally released in the 1990s, by

the multimillion-dollar settlements paid out by the U.S. government, ostensibly for wrongful deaths and incarcerations.

It is assumed that some readers of this volume will be critical of the "prison industrial complex," and so, to varying degrees, self-identify as "abolitionists." The most militant wing of the twenty-first-century abolitionist movement will likely be that antiracist minority who argues that the abolition of the death penalty, and of (human rights abuses in) prisons and Immigration and Naturalization Services (INS) detention centers, and of the widespread racial bias in sentencing, merely addresses the *symptoms* of a pervasive disease. Revolutionary abolitionists offer their own readings, drawing insights from contemporary battles and historical lessons (following the Civil War, Congress abolished slavery to sanction the convict prison lease system and sharecropping, new forms of legal servitude to be endured and fought by African Americans for one hundred years).

In the wake of the New York Police Department's brutality against people of African descent—viscerally recorded in the 1997 beating-rape of Abner Louima, and the 1999 firing of forty-one shots at Amadou Diallo—theorist Frank Wilderson, III, writes:

> [I]f we are to follow [Frantz] Fanon's analysis [in *The Wretched of the Earth*], and the gestures toward this understanding in some of the work of imprisoned intellectuals, then we have to come to grips with the fact that, for Black people, civil society *itself*—rather than its abuses or shortcomings—is a state of emergency. . . . In "The Avant-Garde of White Supremacy," [Steve] Martinot and [Jared] Sexton assert the primacy of Fanon's Manichean zones (without the promise of higher unity) even in the face of American integration. . . . this Manichean delirium manifests itself by way of the US paradigm of policing which (re)produces, repetitively, the inside/outside, the civil society/black world, by virtue of the difference between those bodies that don't magnetize bullets and those bodies that do. "Police impunity serves to distinguish between . . . those whose human being is put permanently in question and those for whom it goes without saying" (Martinot and Sexton, 8). . . . Whiteness then, and by extension civil society . . . must be first understood as a social formation of contemporaries who do not magnetize bullets.[10]

Whether pacifist or militarist, responding to violence and racism in domestic or foreign policy, these works will remain suspect and heatedly debated by many in the public realm. Fine. Our goal here was to ensure that they not remain largely overlooked or erased. Paradoxically, those most passionately seeking collective liberation—from racial or economic or military dominance—are those most likely to lose their individual freedoms. The captive/free dichotomy is a paradox rich in irony: imprisoned intellectuals, the most intensely monitored and repressed by the state's police apparatus, might in fact be those most free of state conditioning. Existing not merely as the output of "victims" of state responses to radical opposition, the analyses of imprisoned intellectuals both deconstruct dominant ideologies and

reconstruct new strategies for humanity. Their writings proffer reactive and proactive readings of struggle and freedom.

So the questions and answers continue. "How do you make the 'disappeared' (the captive rebel, the impoverished, the racialized, the addicted, the 'queer') reappear?" "When is a democracy not a democracy?" "Have slavery, surrogate forms of captivity, and social death[11] been reinstated through the Thirteenth Amendment?"[12] "To what degree does self-critique in liberation movements prevent radical responses to state and racial violence from becoming self-inflicted wounds?" This collection raises and addresses queries and explores the implications of responses.

TRACING A HISTORICAL TRAJECTORY

The United States has a long and terrible history of confinement and disappearance of those it racially and politically targets. Include those captives in slavery and on reservations, and it becomes a longer narrative of torture and resistance. W. E. B. Du Bois notes in *Black Reconstruction in America* how over 200,000 African Americans served in combat during the Civil War.[13] Their ancestral line included Denmark Vesey, Nat Turner, and Harriet Tubman and their political lineage, John Brown. With the rise of lynching after the aborted Reconstruction era, investigative journalist Ida B. Wells, armed with a pistol, vigorously organized against racial terror in which as many as ten thousand whites attended "parties" that roasted and dismembered black victims. There has always been resistance. The colonized, subaltern, and subjugated have continuously fought genocide and social death, and in battle called upon progenitors for guidance, and, in failure, for forgiveness.[14] Contemporary incarcerated writers and political theorists are no different. Housed in San Quentin, Vietnamese activist and author Mike Ngo writes of prisoners' forced complicity with authorities and his own shame in participating in the disciplinary machinery, alleviated when he finds comfort in conversation with slain prison writer, revolutionary strategist-turned-icon, George Jackson. For Ngo, if it does not destroy, imprisonment teaches power and political theorizing that emanate from intimacy with death: social, physical, sexual, emotional.[15] Intimacy with death, whether one's own or those prematurely engineered by the voracious appetites of expanding military-corporate power, is written all throughout the following pages: death in resistance to the Klan; death through assassination; death in battles with the police; death in opposition to U.S. military incursions and interventions; death in execution chambers; death on street corners; and death to the very concept of blind civic obedience and patriotic fervor. This intimacy is accompanied by death's companion, life, and, if not the inevitability of political and military victory for the rebels (who, in the phrase of Black Panther Party [BPP] cofounder Huey P. Newton, seemed to court "revolutionary suicide"), the possibility of liberation and freedom, and the certainty of striving for it.

The endemic flight from death in American culture (via its fetishism of youth,

technology, and immortality tied to materiality and science) indicates a marathon of avoidance politics and censorship. The disappearance of the incarcerated and the inhumane punishment for rebels suggest that intimacy with the imprisoned, particularly political prisoners, will be embraced and known by only a few. For many "law-abiding Americans" are (or socially seem) embarrassed by a family member's incarceration and the realities of political incarceration in their democracy. With some 2.5 million imprisoned or detained by the state, 70 percent of whom are African, Latino, Native, or Asian American, many families could claim this intimacy. Like families in denial, U.S. government officials fervently deny the existence of U.S. political prisoners. State employees do so by defining political militants as "criminals." Yet, who is the "criminal" whose crime is his or her physical opposition to state criminality (as determined by United Nations conventions, human rights law, and non-apartheid-based morality)—crimes against humanity in warfare and profiteering, crimes against the poor, against the racially subordinate, crimes against children, against women?[16] To address the issue of incarcerated intellectuals, one would have to examine the reasons for their incarceration; examine not just the acts of which they were accused and convicted (at times with court malfeasance), but their commitments. Perhaps discussions of political incarceration in the United States fail to register in conventional speech and education because of political ignorance and a moral reluctance to attain intimacy with life-and-death confrontations.

This volume, largely by writers incarcerated because of their legal or illegal, pacifist or violent resistance to repression, constantly references antiracism. African Americans constitute the greatest percentage not only of those incarcerated for crimes against private property, drug violations, and social violence, but also of those incarcerated for political acts (including armed struggle) in opposition to repression. As the largest contingent of (social and) political prisoners, African Americans tend to draw the longest sentences with fewer possibilities for clemency or parole. There is a specificity and temerity about black liberation struggles that relate to and infuse political prisoners in the United States. From enslaved insurrectionists to their multiethnic progeny, antiracism defines but does not dominate this collection. There remains the question(s) of gender, community, culture, art, spirituality. I read the connection of white anti-imperialists and peace activists, Puerto Rican *independentistas*, and Native American resistors through the black gaze. Hence, there are two sections to this volume, the first on black liberation, the second on internationalism and anti-imperialism. The importance of various struggles is not reduced to but is framed by the context of racial dynamics of state repression. Such a context raises another series of questions that also have no easy answers, ones that, hopefully, will be pursued in continuous, painstaking dialogue: "How and why do repressive conditions create a certain brand of intellectualism?" "What roles do the voices of incarcerated intellectuals play in moral and political thought and action, and social consciousness?" "What makes someone a political prisoner?" The last question, being the "easiest" to answer, reveals the varied debates waged among those who acknowledge the existence of political prisoners in the United States.

POLITICAL PRISONERS

There is a continuum of debate on who or what constitutes a political prisoner. The debate wages among prisoners themselves and among the non-incarcerated. A political prisoner can be someone who was put in prison for nonpolitical reasons but who became politicized in his or her thought and action while incarcerated. Incarceration is inherently political, but ideology plays a role. If everyone is a political prisoner then no one is. Although the meaning of who is a political prisoner appears to be expanding to include more structural critiques of the state at large, I reserve the use of (a somewhat awkward term) "political-econ" prisoners for those convicted of social crimes tied to property and drug-related crimes and whose disproportionate sentencing to prison rather than rehabilitation or community service is shaped by the political economy of racial and economic privilege and disenfranchisement. As a caste, political-econ prisoners can and do develop and refine their political critiques while incarcerated. (For example, of the contributors to this volume, Malcolm X, George Jackson, and Standing Deer were incarcerated for social crimes against property or people, and politicized as radicals within the penal site; also, paradoxically, youths who renounced their gang memberships and social crime, in order to bring about social change through the Black Panther Party, would find themselves later targeted and imprisoned for their political affiliations.) Those whose thoughts of social justice lead to commitments and acts in political confrontation with oppression acquire the standing of political prisoners. For those who (continue to) prey on others in physical and sexual assaults on children, women, and men, "political prisoners" would be an obscene register; for they do not manifest as liberatory agents but exist as merely one of many sources of danger to be confronted and quelled in a violent culture.

Victimization by a dominant culture and aggrandizing state is not sufficient to qualify one as a "political prisoner." Although the strategies vary concerning violence in resistance politics, if agency and morality are prerequisites shaping the political being, then we speak of a fragment of the incarcerated population, just as we would speak of a fragment of the non-incarcerated population. Here, our discussion centers on revolutionary and radical activists who also constitute intellectual formations influencing political contemporary culture. Some progressives assert that to construct an entity called "political prisoners" creates a dichotomy between a select group and the vast majority of prisoners, and thus in fact promotes a new form of elitism—the iconic prisoner. Yet, these men and women are different. They were different before their incarceration, marked by their critical thinking and confrontations with authoritarian structures and policies and violence. Also, they were and are treated differently by the state, often receiving the harshest of sentences,

relegated to solitary confinement or "lockdown" in control units so that they cannot "infect"—really infuse—other prisoners with their radical politics and aspirations for freedom.

Mondo we Langa (David Rice), incarcerated in Nebraska prisons for decades for a crime that he states he did not commit, one for which his attorneys argue that there is no physical evidence implicating him, writes in "Letter from the Inside":

> I know what I mean by "political prisoner": someone who, in the context of U.S. laws and court system, has been falsely tried and convicted of a criminal offense as a means of ending his or her political activities and making an example of the person for others who are espousing, or might espouse, ideas that those in power would find offensive. By this definition, I might be the only political prisoner in this joint. But in a broader sense, most people behind bars could be considered "political prisoners," inasmuch as the process of lawmaking, law-enforcing, and the criminal "justice" system are all driven by a political apparatus that is anti-people of color and anti-people of little economic means. At the same time though, many, if not most of the people who are locked up have acted in the interests of the very system that oppresses them and victimized people who, like themselves, are oppressed.[17]

Attorneys Michael E. Deutsch and Jan Susler describe in "Political Prisoners in the United States: The Hidden Reality" (1990) three types of political prisoners. For Deutsch and Susler U.S. political prisoners are

1. Foreign nationals whose political status or political activities against allies of U.S. imperialism (e.g., Israel, Great Britain, El Salvador) result in detention or imprisonment;
2. Members of U.S. oppressed nationalities (African Americans, Puerto Ricans, Chicano/Mexicanos, and Native Americans) who are prosecuted and imprisoned for political activities in furtherance of their [liberation] movements. . . . Included in these groups are anticolonial combatants or prisoners of war (POWs)—members of national liberation movements who as part of clandestine organizations have employed armed struggle as a means to achieve self-determination and independence for their nation and upon capture have the right, under the Additional Protocols of the Geneva Convention and the UN General Assembly Resolutions, to POW status and not to be tried as domestic criminals; and
3. White people who have acted in solidarity with the liberation movements of oppressed nationalities or against U.S. foreign or domestic policies.[18]

Deutsch and Susler offer a useful categorization of political prisoners; however, the first category could be expanded to include nonresident or immigrant detainees awaiting deportation. Following September 11, 2001, the sweeps of noncitizens legally organizing for workers' rights in Florida, mostly young people of South Asian origin, construct a new category—that of political prisoner awaiting deportation.

Although the United States has a history of deporting militants—Emma Goldman, Marcus Garvey, Claudia Jones, C. L. R. James—there appears a schism in alignment with "foreign" political prisoners housed in the United States and awaiting deportation to hostile nations and U.S. citizens who are political prisoners in other countries, as in the case of Lori Berenson, who has been incarcerated in Peru for years.[19] In radical politics around incarceration and the "prison-industrial-complex" most of the strategies regarding political prisoners have focused on the release campaigns of those incarcerated for decades, and rightly so. However, preventive measures and strategies to counter the increasing ability of the government to "disappear" political prisoners (as was the case following September 11 when Attorney General John Ashcroft held Sundiata Acoli, Philip Berrigan (who died of cancer in December 2002), and Marilyn Buck as well as other political prisoners incommunicado) do not appear clearly defined by advocates of prisoners' rights.[20]

In its 2002 letter to Governor George Pataki and the New York State Parole Board, the New York Task Force on Political Prisoners states that in Europe, Africa, and the United States,

> prisoners long incarcerated for their political beliefs and actions have been set free—and in their freedom, have given the world back some hope and dignity. The release, for example, of Nelson Mandela, who spent twenty-seven years in prison for revolutionary actions against [the apartheid government] . . . has proved a catalyst for healing and justice in South Africa.

Signatories, attorneys who work pro bono for the release campaign for political prisoners attest:

> These prisoners' convictions reflect as yet unresolved issues of civil, racial, and economic justice of the 1960s and 1970s, a time when thousands of people of all races, young and old, women and men, formed militant movements to demand fundamental social change. Their trials occurred during a time when their juries and the general public did not know that, in response to these movements, the government was engaging in illegal and unconstitutional acts—acts of infiltration and surveillance which, according to the government's own documents, carried over into the legal arena. Foremost in the government's campaign was the FBI's now-infamous Counter-Intelligence Program [COINTELPRO], condemned by a 1975 United States Senate Committee which became known as the "Church Committee" [named after Senator Frank Church (D-Idaho), the committee's proceedings were published in 1976].[21]
>
> The legal challenges brought by the prisoners referenced in this letter have been denied, primarily due to the 1996 federal law drastically limiting prisoners' access to *habeas corpus*. Heartbreakingly for their families and communities, some of these prisoners have repeatedly been denied parole because of their political views or offenses—despite the fact that they more than meet current parole standards. . . . Some of the actions for which these men were convicted were taken in response to severe social repression and government misconduct. Some convictions, for example, arose directly from the targeting of activists by COINTELPRO. Others sought to defend themselves

and their communities from police violence [or drug dealers]. All of them devoted their hearts, their minds, and their lives to working for a world of justice, peace, and human equality. Whatever one's opinion of their political beliefs or alleged actions, not one of these men was motivated by personal gain. All have served enough time and all would be a credit to their communities if released.[22]

The imprisonment of those seeking social and political change in the United States is as old as its elite-based democracy rooted in slavery, anti-Indian genocidal wars, and "manifest destiny." Yet the attempts to bring the voices of imprisoned intellectuals to the general society and petition for their release remain a constant (re)invention of strategic interventions, using the language of "rehabilitation" commingled with the language of rebellious resistance.

ANTHOLOGIZING IMPRISONED INTELLECTUALS

Prisons constitute one of the most controversial and contested sites in a democratic society. The United States has the highest incarceration rate in the industrialized world, with over two million people in jails, prisons, and detention centers; with over three thousand on death row, it is also one of the few developed countries that continues to deploy the death penalty. Examining intellectuals whose analyses of U.S. society, politics, culture, and social justice are rarely referenced in conventional political speech or academic discourse, this anthology takes shape along the contours of a body of outlawed "public intellectuals" offering incisive critiques of our society and shared (in)humanity. The brief biographies introducing each chapter contextualize these writings in opposition to state policies that support racism, war, imperialism, corporate capitalism, and globalization. Like the accompanying biographies, a number of these essays by writer-activists incarcerated because of their political beliefs and acts (some released by President Bill Clinton on his last day of office, others working as educators and activists behind bars) are far too brief to fully detail and explore the conditions of their political radicalism and imprisonment. However, references are provided to help the reader further explore controversial liberation praxes from the civil rights/black power, women's, gay/lesbian, American Indian, Puerto Rican Independence, and antiwar movements based on radical democracy and revolutionary struggle.

We begin with European anarchist Emma Goldman's "A New Declaration of Independence" as a contrast to calls for "patriotism" as unquestioning obedience to the state. We end with the poem "Incommunicado" by Marilyn Buck, written after September 11, 2001, during and following her weeks of detention in solitary confinement without access to attorneys or family on the orders of Attorney General John Ashcroft.[23] Buck, imprisoned in the 1980s for her work with the militant sectors of the black liberation movement, of course, has no actual or ideological connections with reactionary al-Qaeda forces. Yet, the foreign war on terrorism

provided an excellent opportunity for expanding repressive measures in the United States.

Confrontations combating state censorship of dissent and critical voices reached their apex in the mass movements of the 1950s, 1960s, and early 1970s. In the post-enslavement era of the mid-twentieth century, the civil rights movements, referred to by some activists and academics as the "second Reconstruction" and by their more radical counterparts as the "second civil war," brought the new wave of protests and dissent. Arrested while organizing a bus boycott, Rosa Parks became briefly a political detainee. The young man whom she and the organizers of the bus boycott chose as their titular leader, largely because of his status as formally educated clergy and middle-class, was the Reverend Martin Luther King, Jr. His missive opens the first section of our collection of writings by imprisoned intellectuals.

Part I, Black Liberationists, begins with "Letter from Birmingham Jail," which was written the same year as the 1963 March on Washington where King gave his famous "I Have a Dream" speech-sermon; the same year that the Ku Klux Klan bombed a Birmingham, Alabama, church, killing four African American girls—Carole Robertson, Cynthia Wesley, Addie Mae Collins, Denise McNair—and the year of John F. Kennedy's assassination in Dallas, Texas.[24] In his open letter to clergy, King set forth an eloquent plea for support of an antiracist movement in which he had been active since 1955.[25] This anthology juxtaposes with King his peer and symbolic nemesis, Malik El-Shabazz, or Malcolm X. In chapter two, "The Ballot or the Bullet" (abridged), Malcolm X offers a critique of King's nonviolent activism. Although Malcolm X was not a "political prisoner" in the restrictive sense in which we use the term in this work, incarcerated as Malcolm Little for social crimes (including the "crimes" of burglary and of consorting with white women), he transformed or "reinvented" himself as a political agent while imprisoned. Politicized through his association (and later confrontation) with the Nation of Islam and his pilgrimage to Mecca, he influenced the growing militancy of the civil rights movement. Through his life, speeches, and writings—most notably, *The Autobiography of Malcolm X*—he achieved an iconic stature for many, including (political) prisoners. Constant police and FBI surveillance after he served his prison sentence likely increased his radical political and moral presence and inspired activists who would eventually become incarcerated, and in reflecting on his life, spirit, and death struggle to "reinvent" themselves as political agents, formulating a liberation praxis "by any means necessary." One year after Malcolm X's assassination, the Black Panther Party (for Self-Defense) was founded in 1966 in Oakland, California, by Huey P. Newton and Bobby Seale; armed resistance to police brutality became the most noted and "inflammatory" position of their emancipatory "10-Point Platform."

Angela Y. Davis would work with the Panthers but become better known as a communist and leader in the Soledad Brothers Defense Committee, a prisoners' rights organization cofounded by imprisoned Black Panther Field Marshall George Jackson. Davis was incarcerated in the early 1970s on charges related to George Jackson's younger brother Jonathan's attempt, using weapons registered in Davis's

name, to liberate African American prisoners from the Marin County Courthouse, a failed endeavor that Newton would describe later at the seventeen-year-old's funeral as "revolutionary suicide."

One year before her 1972 acquittal of all charges, Davis wrote from her prison cell "Political Prisoners, Prisons, and Black Liberation," which is published here as chapter three; this essay would appear in the volume she coedited with Bettina Aptheker, *If They Come in the Morning*. Also in that anthology, which has been out of print for some time, was first published this volume's chapters four and five, respectively by Huey P. Newton and George Jackson. In chapter four, "Prison, Where Is Thy Victory?" Newton distinguishes between types or classes of prisoners, reserving his highest consideration for the imprisoned who rebel against rather than acquiesce to domination and (racial) control. In "Towards the United Front," chapter five, George Jackson, self-identified militarist for liberation and a key theorist and proponent of armed struggle, argues for a multiracial formation, new relations of unity that transcend common divisions. The Black Panthers became the most confrontational of the antiracist radical groups of the late 1960s and early 1970s (following the disintegration of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee [SNCC]). Among the black militant formations, the Panthers developed some of the strongest allegiances with other racialized peoples, and the strongest ties with white radicals and revolutionaries.

The Panthers would also become the lightning rod for some of the government's most horrific forms of violent repression used against dissidents in the post–World War II era. In chapter six, former Panther Dhoruba Bin Wahad describes the deadly counterinsurgency program, COINTELPRO, initiated by J. Edgar Hoover and the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI). Decades before the BPP emerged, the FBI had destabilized progressives with violent means; but its violence would operate with virtually no restraint until the Black Panther Party and the American Indian Movement (AIM) were destroyed. "COINTELPRO and the Destruction of Black Leaders and Organizations" (abridged) presents the scenario in which state violence against the Black Panther Party and its membership had become routine. Bin Wahad argues that any revolutionary movement coincides with a cultural movement, but a cultural movement will not empower its people unless it is politicized. COINTELPRO succeeded because it halted the political consciousness of the Black Panther Party that coincided with the cultural awareness of "Black Power." Through violence, manipulation of the media, and disinformation campaigns, the FBI engaged in a twofold attack on the dissemination of information by black revolutionaries, destabilizing the public support base of the movement and then removing its leaders from public discourse through imprisonment, exile, or death.

State malfeasance and criminality in which the FBI participated included anonymous letters to Martin Luther King, Jr., urging that he commit suicide before his marital infidelities were publicized; the extra-judicial killings or assassinations of Chicago Panther leaders Fred Hampton and Mark Clark in December 1969; and the many killings during 1973–1976 of indigenous activists at the Pine Ridge reservation who aligned themselves with AIM. Such state violence provides a context and background for chapter seven, the excerpted "On the Black Liberation Army" (BLA) by Jalil Muntaqim. Muntaqim offers a brief historical snapshot of an underground military formation in battle with U.S. law enforcement, primarily on the East Coast. Although no theoretical justification for armed struggle appears in this succinct account of BLA activities, the historical trajectory of the COINTELPRO era of the early 1970s shapes the reasoning. Muntaqim's view stems from a different template than most, that of the slave insurrectionist, and so it shapes a unique worldview, one gazed upon, interacted with, but not fully experienced by the nonrebel or nonslave.

In chapter eight, "July 4th Address," a statement issued by former Black Panther and Black Liberation Army member Assata Shakur while she was in prison and on trial, evokes slave-turned-fugitive then abolitionist Frederick Douglass's 1852 "What to the Slave Is the Fourth of July" address. One of the few women leaders of the Black Panther Party (whose leadership was not tied to an influential male partner), Shakur would also become active in the military underground via the Black Liberation Army. Her memoir, *Assata: An Autobiography*, functions in a manner similar to the memoirs of King, Malcolm X, Davis, Newton, and Jackson: it highlights turbulent and dangerous times and personalizes the struggles and failings of revolutionaries and revolutionaries-in-waiting. For example, Shakur writes in her memoir:

> Some of the groups thought they could just pick up arms and struggle and that, somehow, people would see what they were doing and begin to struggle themselves. They wanted to engage in a do-or-die battle with power structure in amerika, even though they were weak and ill prepared for such a fight. But the most important factor is that armed struggle, by itself, can never bring about a revolution. Revolutionary war is a people's war.[26]

Unlike Shakur, Safiya Bukhari-Alston has (to date) not written a full-length memoir; yet, like Shakur, she was one of the few women leaders in the Black Liberation Army. Her autobiographical narrative, "Coming of Age: A Black Revolutionary," chapter nine, describes conditions unique to women political prisoners. A unit leader while underground, Bukhari-Alston encountered sexism in the party (as did Assata Shakur).

In chapter ten, "An Updated History of the New Afrikan Prison Struggle" (abridged), former Black Panther Sundiata Acoli provides a continuum of African American resistance to captivity and incarceration (the unabridged text places the enslavement era as foundational in this resistance). Acoli presents the Black Liberation Army as a "New Afrikan guerrilla organization" with mobile strike teams. Guerrilla warfare was seen as an inevitable counterresponse to U.S. "low-intensity warfare" against militants and radicals. Some members of the BLA identify as "prisoners of war" or POWs, viewing themselves as captive liberation fighters. The

Republic of New Afrika (RNA) stated its independence from the United States in 1968. BLA combatants subsequently declared that the U.S. courts had no jurisdiction over them. Acoli's historical discussions of "gang" formations in prisons as part of the prison struggles provide insight into their political nature and functions both in and outside of prison.

The idea of resisting all oppressive constraints—whether racism, sexism, heterosexism, or class/corporate privilege—is not uniformly shared in these essays. Women contributors tend to note sexism and heterosexism more so than the men (in this volume, white women are more vocal about the rights of gays and lesbians than black women are, perhaps because the former are writing at a later date when gay, lesbian, and bisexual rights are more publicly espoused). Although they fought for a more inclusive democracy, centralized, nondemocratic decision making—steeped in either patriarchal politics or a Leninist model of democratic centralism—was routinely practiced by Martin Luther King, Jr.'s Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC), Malcolm X's Nation of Islam (from which he was expelled in 1963–1964), Angela Davis's Communist Party USA (CPUSA) (from which she was expelled in 1991), and Huey P. Newton's faction of the Black Panther Party. A discussion of forgoing vanguard or elite formations and rigid fixations on a line of leadership is found in chapter eleven, "Anarchism and the Black Revolution" (abridged), by Lorenzo Komboa Ervin. In this chapter, Ervin, who organized with the BPP among other groups, is highly critical of what he perceives as its "Marxist-Leninist" rigidity and repressive authoritarianism. It is difficult at times to distinguish which Black Panther Party critics are referencing—East Coast or West Coast? Cleaver or Newton faction? Newton prior to or during drug addiction and criminal intrigues? Nonetheless, the BPP in general (as did political organizations such as the SCLC and CPUSA) embraced a wealth of contradictions that limited the agency and efficacy of its "rank and file."

What, then, constitutes leadership that can face and function against repressive state policies? Such issues are explored in chapter twelve, an essay by journalist Mumia Abu-Jamal, "Intellectuals and the Gallows." This essay was written while Abu-Jamal was facing a sentence of death. It is one of the few pieces in this anthology that directly confronts readers as non-incarcerated intellectuals, exploring their confines in a Foucauldian carceral that restricts their own resistance to a state that oversees life and death.

Part II, Internationalists and Anti-Imperialists, begins with chapter thirteen, "Genocide against the Black Nation in the U.S. Penal System" (abridged) by Mutulu Shakur, Anthony X. Bradshaw, Malik Dinguswa, Terry Long, Mark Cook, Adolfo Matos, and James Haskins. The chapter focuses on African American emancipation, yet appeals to the international community; and so, it provides a bridge between the two sections of this anthology, emphasizing historical links between African American activism and the interplay of domestic and foreign policies. This essay's argument follows in a tradition established by African American radicals in the post–World War II era: William Patterson and the Civil Rights Congress in

1951 presented to the United Nations their antilynching petition "We Charge Genocide," and Malcolm X in the 1960s appealed to the United Nations for redress from lynching and white supremacist policies in the United States.[27] Chapter fourteen, "The Struggle for Status under International Law" by Marilyn Buck, revisits themes raised by chapter thirteen in its reflections on the use of international law to address U.S. domestic human rights violations. Situating Buck within the tradition of radical white antiracism and armed resistance, a tradition that dates back to and precedes John Brown's antislavery militancy, lesbian activist Rita Bo Brown describes the parameters of white activism in the 1970s and 1980s in chapter fifteen, "White North American Political Prisoners." In chapter fifteen, Brown provides a comprehensive view that encompasses a number of political formations. Chapter sixteen, "On Trial" (abridged), by former Vietnam veteran Raymond Luc Levasseur, chronicles the militancy of another white anti-imperialist who invokes international law and human rights conventions in antiracist struggles. Levasseur argued in his opening trial statement for the dismissal of criminal charges under International Law; he was acquitted of charges at the conclusion of his trial. Rejecting the domestic criminal charges brought by the government, he asserted a morality based on human rights and freedom fighters criminalized for their oppositional politics. Maintaining that the U.S. government/corporations committed crimes against humanity, Levasseur catalogues the acts that led to his organizational response through the UFF (United Freedom Front) and Sam Melville/Jonathan Jackson Unit. The series of bombings against military targets attributed to these formations occurred a number of years after the bombings attributed to the Weather Underground, the militant splinter group from the Students for a Democratic Society (SDS).

"Letter to the Weathermen," chapter seventeen, is a response by a Christian pacifist militant, Catholic priest Daniel Berrigan. Berrigan and his brother Philip, also a Catholic priest involved in activist resistance during the 1970s and 1980s and beyond, were heavily influenced by Martin Luther King, Jr., and the "peaceful" confrontation of state repression by the civil rights movement. Philip Berrigan would go on to cofound the Plowshares community where Michele Naar-Obed would become radicalized and, as a mother and peace activist, write the pamphlet excerpted here as chapter eighteen, "Maternal Convictions: A Mother Beats a Missile into a Plowshare." In "Maternal Convictions," Naar-Obed recounts her growing spiritual and political awareness for peace activism that entailed civil disobedience and illegal actions, and her multiple "short-term" incarcerations.

Women have varied responses in their resistance to U.S. militarism and warfare; not all of course are gendered as pacifist. "Dykes and Fags Want to Know: Interview with Lesbian Political Prisoners," chapter nineteen, was conducted in 1990–1991 by QUISP (Queer women and men United in Support of Political Prisoners). This interview focuses on Linda Evans, Susan Rosenberg, and Laura Whitehorn, women who spent years incarcerated because of their political beliefs and acts. Whitehorn completed her sentence and was released in 1999. Evans and Rosenberg were

granted presidential clemency by President Bill Clinton in 2001. In 1999, Clinton had granted clemency to eleven of fifteen Puerto Rican *independentistas* or nationalists who had been imprisoned for years (included in those receiving clemency was Elizam Escobar). Clinton's release of *independentistas* did not signal the end of imprisonment for advocates and agitators for freeing Puerto Rico from its status as a colonial possession of the United States. In chapter twenty, "This Is Enough!" educator José Solís Jordan, incarcerated in Florida and later placed under detention in Puerto Rico, writes of the historical struggle for Puerto Rican independence and autonomy and his own connections to this struggle.

The following essays speak of the nonmaterial, of the spiritual and transcendent, of autonomy from the political formation and from purely political identification and identity. Chapter twenty-one, "Art of Liberation: A Vision of Freedom" by artist Elizam Escobar, offers one of the more creative and imaginative discussions of roles, conflicts, and contradictions of the revolutionary who maintains an independence from the struggle itself via his or her connection through art. In chapter twenty-two, "Violence and the State" (abridged), Standing Deer recounts an attempt on the part of prison authorities to get him to assault AIM activist and political prisoner Leonard Peltier. Standing Deer's "conversion" is both political and spiritual, both rational and suprarational. It provides an introduction to the final essay by Leonard Peltier who offers new meanings for freedom and resistance in our final chapter, twenty-three, "Inipi: Sweat Lodge." Peltier's excerpt from his autobiography, *Prison Writings: My Life Is My Sundance*,[28] reminds us of the nonmaterial aspects of struggle and the spiritual dimensions of freedom.

CONCLUSION

So much of what is controversial in this collection will center on the issue of violence: the use of violence by the state to squash dissent and destroy dissenters; the use of violence by dissidents either in immediate self-defense, in military strategies for "nation-building," or to promote a political stance and commitment. Obviously state violence is not synonymous with the violence of the subaltern or oppressed or imprisoned. Most Americans are more familiar with (inured to?) state violence, particularly when it is directed against disenfranchised or racially or politically suspect minorities. Therefore, police or military violence against the "racially suspect," against the poor and immigrants, against prisoners, is not as unsettling as counterviolence against the police or military by the subaltern and incarcerated. Thus, George Jackson's militarist stance in *Blood in My Eye*[29] is more terrifying for the conventional reader than the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) torture manual for the School of the Americas.[30] Perhaps this is because the conventional reader assumes (*knows*) that state violence is never earmarked for the obedient and the law-abiding.[31]

No essay in this volume makes a sustained theoretical argument for armed resistance to state violence—although several essays offer theoretical and religious justifications for nonviolent civil disobedience and dissent. The book that heavily influenced many of the activists whose writings appear here is Frantz Fanon's *The Wretched of the Earth*. Fanon argues that the "native" (the colonized and racialized, here, the imprisoned) does not have to theorize or articulate the truth; she or he *is* the truth—the breathing, living embodiment of the contradictions, debasement, rage, and resentment and rebellion that mark the very conditions of oppression.[32] Yet the "truth," or some approximation of it, can be spoken in critical encounters and dialogues with rebels seeking social justice.

The non-incarcerated's sense of security and our real and imagined distance from political prisoners shape the expanse between the law-abiding (reader) and the outlaw (writer). Yet, what if the issues of political prisoners are in fact the touchstones to what ails us: structural impoverishment, racial–sexual discrimination and violence, political disenfranchisement, war profiteering? In degrees of (imagined) separation, amnesic fatigue about state violence couples with outrage at extralegal challenges to domination. Despite stolid dichotomies, if liberation struggles for human rights—and against war and captivity—intersect, radical imprisoned rebels may in fact stand at Elegba's crossroads; if so, then the writings that follow illuminate bridges that span or buckle under the intimacies of death and life struggles.

NOTES

1. Antonio Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*, edited and translated by Quintin Hoare and Geoffrey Nowell Smith (New York: International Publishers, 1985), 5. Gramsci writes: "When one distinguishes between intellectuals and non-intellectuals, one is referring in reality only to the immediate social function of the professional category of the intellectuals. . . . although one can speak of intellectuals, one cannot speak of non-intellectuals, because non-intellectuals do not exist" (9).

2. Barbara Harlow, *Barred: Women, Writing, and Political Detention* (Middletown, Conn.: Wesleyan University Press, 1992).

3. For descriptions and analyses of U.S. domestic and foreign policies that (violently) destabilized democracies, independence, and liberation movements see: Ward Churchill, *From a Native Son: Selected Essays in Indigenism, 1985–1995* (Boston: South End Press, 1997); Noam Chomsky, *The Culture of Terrorism* (Boston: South End Press, 1988); Manning Marable, *How Capitalism Underdeveloped Black America* (Boston: South End Press, 1983); Howard Zinn, *A People's History of the United States* (New York: HarperCollins, 1999); Joy James, *Resisting State Violence* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996); Joy James, ed., *States of Confinement: Policing, Detention & Prisons* (New York: St. Martin's, 2002, revised paperback edition); Jerome G. Miller, *Search and Destroy: African American Males in the Criminal Justice System* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1976).

Also see: David J. Brown and Robert Merrill, eds., *Violent Persuasions: The Politics and Imagery of Terrorism* (Seattle: Bay Press, 1993); Ward Churchill and Jim Vander Wall, *Agents of Repression: The FBI's Secret Wars against the Black Panther Party and American Indian Movement* (Boston: South End Press, 2002, revised edition); Troy Johnson et al., eds., *American*

Indian Activism: Alcatraz to the Longest Walk (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1997); W. E. B. Du Bois, *Black Reconstruction in America* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, and Company, 1935); and, Matthew Mancini, *One Dies, Get Another: Convict Leasing in the American South, 1866–1928* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1996).

4. In its desires for freedoms guarded by institutions, revolutionary politics encompass and surpass insurrectionary politics. Rather than merely revolt against repressive hierarchies, laws, and customs, revolutionary politics seeks to build new structures and norms. Hence, revolutionaries are more feared than are insurrectionists by governing structures and elites. Just as insurrection is not inherently revolutionary, neither is crime or violence intrinsically proto-revolutionary: consider that capitalism in the Americas is rooted in the theft of land and labor and the mass murder of indigenous and African peoples.

5. Page 80. The nephew of President John F. Kennedy and son of Senator Robert Kennedy, Robert F. Kennedy, Jr., a senior attorney for the Natural Resources Defense Council, engaged in civil disobedience at Vieques, Puerto Rico, in 2001. Joined by actor Edward James Olmos and union leader Dennis Rivera, Kennedy protested the U.S. Navy having "saturated Vieques with thousands of pounds of ordinance—a total that eventually exceeded the explosive power of the Hiroshima bomb." Arrested after illegally trespassing on the military site, the *disobedientes* were eventually sentenced to thirty days in Guaynabo prison. After citing the Navy's civil and criminal violations of federal laws such as the Clean Water Act and the Resource Conservation and Recovery Act, Kennedy writes: "Our defense was based on the doctrine of necessity; a defendant cannot be convicted of trespassing if he shows he entered the land to prevent a greater crime from being committed. . . . we had engaged in civil disobedience for a single purpose: to prevent a criminal violation of the Endangered Species Act by the Navy that the federal court had refused to redress" (115). The presiding judge, admonishing that he was not interested in philosophy, dismissed the necessity defense.

As Kennedy's attorney (and his sister's father-in-law), former New York governor Mario Cuomo made the following argument at trial:

> We ask the court to recall that this nation was conceived in the civil disobedience that preceded the Revolutionary War, the acts of civil disobedience that were precipitated by the Fugitive Slave Act of 1793, in the famous Sit-Down Strikes of 1936 and 1937, all through the valiant struggle for civil rights in the 1960s, and the movement against the Vietnam War. Always they were treated by the courts one way: not like crimes committed for personal gain or out of pure malice, but as technical violations designed to achieve a good purpose. (115)

See Robert Kennedy's essay in *Outside*, October 2001, 80–84 and 114–16.

Of course, Cuomo and Kennedy would see violations that resulted in the loss of life (and liberty) as tragedies rather than as technicalities. Years prior to Kennedy's trial, Mutulu Shakur and Marilyn Buck also unsuccessfully argued the "necessity defense," appealing to international instead of U.S. standards.

6. There is insufficient space to address the ways in which political prisoners are at times burdened with the characteristics of prophets; hence their limitations in efficacy in the "free world" once they are released resonate so much more intensely. Activists, such as the slain leader Chris Hani, attempted to prevent the "marriage of Mandela-ism with liberalism." With the African National Congress (ANC)'s acceptance of the apartheid government's debt and its failure to nationalize and redistribute key resources and wealth, the observation

by some local South African activists that Mandela had "sold out the bush" resonated with the intense frustrations of an economically subjugated people.

7. Some accounts of the southern civil rights movement argue that pacifists were often provided protection from Klan and police violence by armed and organized African American men and women, such as those who formed the Deacons for Defense and Justice in North Carolina. See: Anne Moody, *The Coming of Age in Mississippi* (Laureleaf, 1997, reprint); Robert Franklin Williams, *Negroes with Guns* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1998, reprint); and Timothy B. Tyson, *Radio Free Dixie: Robert F. Williams and the Roots of Black Power* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1999).

8. November 7, 2002, e-mail correspondence from Michael Hames-Garcia, editor's papers. For further discussions analyzing incarceration politics, see: Michael Hames-Garcia, *Crucibles of Freedom* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2003).

9. Dylan Rodriguez maintains:

> "Free" activists (scholars, etc.) often appropriate the iconography of captive radicals/revolutionaries . . . and may even do so in critical and radical ways (for example, to introduce the discourse of "political prisoners/POW's" to a public that cannot assimilate such a possibility in their midst). Yet, it is far more difficult for free people to engage the political work of radical prisoners in a manner that seriously informs their praxis. Of course, to do so would necessitate a far more urgent, even desperate attempt to translate the political dream (vision) of prison/police abolition into an antagonistic and accessible political-cultural practice. . . . 50 activists and critically informed students could read the anthology *through* this structure of . . . disavowal, such that the mundane pro-state progressivism (inherently white supremacist) of the CBO, non-profit, and academic sectors remains sacrosanct. To refuse the urgency of principled hostility and opposition to this civic and state formation is a virtual religious fiat of the current (post–civil rights) era of the alleged Left. (Dylan Rodriguez, September 2002 e-mail correspondence, editor's papers.)

For another critical perspective on the "prison writer," see Paul St. John, "Behind the Mirror's Face," in *Doing Time: Twenty-Five Years of Prison Writing*, ed. Bell Gale Chevigny (New York: Arcade, 1999).

10. Using historian Eugene Genovese's statement "The Black experience in this country has been a phenomenon without analog" as the epigraph for his essay, Frank Wilderson, III, quotes from Steve Martinot and Jared Sexton, "The Avant-Garde of White Supremacy," April 2002, www.ocf.berkeley.edu/~marto/paradigm/. Genovese's citation is given as: *Boston Review* October/November 1993. See: Frank Wilderson, III, "The Prison Slave as Hegemony's (Silent) Scandal," in *Social Justice* (forthcoming).

11. For a discussion of the concept "social death" in a global and historical context, see: Orlando Patterson, *Slavery and Social Death: A Comparative Study* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1982). For contemporary analyses of "social death" within the context of U.S. racial and incarceration politics, see: Frank Wilderson, III, "The Prison Slave as Hegemony's (Silent) Scandal" and Dylan Rodriguez, "'Social Truth' and Imprisoned Radical Intellectuals" in the forthcoming issue of the journal *Social Justice*.

12. The Thirteenth Amendment to the U.S. Constitution legalizes slavery for those duly convicted of a crime. In the convict prison lease system following the Civil War, African Americans, criminalized for their "blackness," were worked to death in mines, fields, and forests in joint ventures between the state and private industries. For an analysis of the his-

tory of the convict lease system in the United States, see Matthew Mancini, *One Dies, Get Another: Convict Leasing in the American South, 1866–1928* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1996).

13. W. E. B. Du Bois, *Black Reconstruction in America* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, and Company, 1935).

14. See Vincent Harding, *There Is a River: The Black Struggle for Freedom in America* (New York: Harcourt Brace, 1981).

15. See Mike Ngo, under pseudonym "An Unknown Soldier," "A Day in the Life," prisoners' zine, untitled, January 13, 2000; also see Dylan Rodriguez, "Interview with Mike Ngo," in *Abolitionists: Imprisoned Writers on Incarceration, Enslavement and Emancipation*, ed. Joy James (forthcoming).

16. For details of U.S. foreign and domestic policies that instigated considerable warfare, destabilization, and death in the post–World War II era, see: Noam Chomsky, *The Culture of Terrorism* (Boston: South End Press, 1988); Ward Churchill and Jim Vander Wall, *Agents of Repression: The FBI's Secret War against the Black Panther Party and the American Indian Movement* (Boston: South End Press, revised 2002 edition); Joy James, *Resisting State Violence: Radicalism, Gender, and Race in U.S. Culture* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996).

17. See Mondo we Langa, "Letter from Inside," *Nebraska Report*, May/June 1999, 9. For information on Wopashitwe Mondo Eyen we Langa (David Rice), see *Can't Jail the Spirit* (Chicago: Committee to End the Marion Lockdown, 2002, 5th edition). Mondo we Langa was deputy minister of information for the Omaha, Nebraska, chapter of the National Committees to Combat Fascism, an organization affiliated with the Black Panther Party, and is serving a life sentence for the first-degree murder of a policeman. He was active in protesting police brutality against African American residents in Omaha. According to the Center for Constitutional Rights, we Langa was targeted by COINTELPRO and his conviction "was based on the testimony of a frightened teenager and on explosives allegedly found in [we Langa's] house." A Federal Court of Appeals declared the search illegal yet the Supreme Court "sustained the conviction holding that the Federal courts should not have reviewed the state court decision." See Center for Constitutional Rights, "Political Prisoners in the United States," September 1988.

18. This article was first published in the International Association of *Democratic Lawyers Bulletin*, January 1990, and reprinted in *Social Justice*, vol. 18, no. 3.

19. For information on Lori Berenson, see Rhoda Berenson, *Lori: My Daughter, Wrongfully Imprisoned in Peru* (New York: Context Books, 2000). For discussions of prisoners with the status of "illegal [non]combatants" following September 11, 2001, see: Amnesty International, "USA: Detainees from Afghan Conflict Should Be Released or Tried," AI Index: AMR 51/164/2002, 1 November 2002; and Joseph Lelyveld, "In Guantánamo," *The New York Review of Books*, November 7, 2002.

20. See Anne-Marie Cusac, "You're in the Hole: A Crackdown on Dissident Prisoners," *The Progressive*, December 2001. *The Progressive* reports that on October 26, 2001, John Ashcroft signed the "National Security: Prevention of Acts of Violence and Terrorism," which was subsequently published in the Federal Register. Cusac writes: "Under the new rules, the Department of Justice, 'based on information from the head of a federal law enforcement or intelligence agency,' will select certain prisoners for 'special administrative measures' . . . [including isolation, denials of correspondence, telephone communication, visitations, and media interviews]."

21. Targets of FBI repression have been fairly varied, including Albert Einstein, because of his socialism and antiracist activism (Einstein worked with W. E. B. Du Bois and Paul Robeson; with the latter he cofounded an anti-lying organization), and John Lennon, targeted because of his antiwar activism. See, respectively, Frank Jerome, *The Einstein F.B.I. File* (New York: St. Martin's, 2002) and Jon Wiener, *Come Together: John Lennon in His Time* (New York: Random House, 1984) and "John Lennon versus the F.B.I.," *The New Republic*, vol. 188.

On October 10, 2001, Laura W. Murphy, director of the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) Washington National Office, issued "Trust Us, We're the Government"; the statement details government malfeasance and illegal surveillance and harassment tied to COINTELPRO, in which "few members of any of the groups targeted by COINTELPRO were ever charged with a crime." It also makes reference to the 1976 Church Committee Senate report that concluded: "The Government has often undertaken the secret surveillance of citizens on the basis of their political beliefs, even when those beliefs posed no threat of violence or illegal acts on behalf of a hostile foreign power. . . . Groups and individuals have been harassed and disrupted because of their political views and their lifestyles." In 1986, a federal court determined that COINTELPRO was responsible for at least 204 burglaries by FBI agents, the use of 1,300 informants, the theft of 12,600 documents, 20,000 illegal wiretap days, and 12,000 bug days.

Alongside COINTELPRO, the ACLU notes the "STOP INDEX," where FBI computerized databases monitored antiwar activists; "CONUS" (Continental United States), which in the 1950s and 1960s "collected and maintained files on upwards of 100,000 political activists and used undercover operatives recruited from the Army to infiltrate these activist groups and steal confidential information and files for distribution to federal, state and local governments"; "OPERATION CHAOS" in the 1960s, where the Central Intelligence Agency engaged in domestic spying to destabilize the American peace movement; and "CISPES" harassment, in which the Committee in Solidarity with the People of El Salvador (CISPES) was targeted because of its opposition to President Ronald Reagan's support of paramilitary death squads in El Salvador. Murphy asserts that "the Bush Administration's defense of its new, and frighteningly broad, anti-terrorism bill is also being couched in exactly these terms [of trust for the government's use of police powers]. Unfortunately, history has also shown us that, more often than not, these expansions of domestic surveillance powers are used to violate the freedoms guaranteed to the American public by the Constitution and the Bill of Rights."

22. Writing for clemency for Anthony Jalil Bottom (#77A4283), Herman Bell (#79C0262), Abdul Majid (#83A0483), Bashir Hameed (#82A6313), Robert Seth Hayes (#74A2280), Sekou Odinga (#05228-054), and David Gilbert (#83A6158) in the petition were attorneys Robert Boyle, Robert Bloom, William Goodman, Kathleen Cleaver, Jill Soffiyah Elijah, Elizabeth Fink, Karl Franklin, Daniel Meyers, Charles Ogletree, Michael Tarif Warren, Nkechi Taifa, and Susan Tipograph. *New York Task Force for Political Prisoners 2002 Report/Petition*, editor's papers.

23. The USA PATRIOT (Provide Appropriate Tools Required to Intercept and Obstruct Terrorism) Act of 2001 permits the U.S. government to detain noncitizens indefinitely with little or no process at the discretion of the Attorney General; permits the government to conduct searches, seizures, and surveillance with lower levels of judicial review; and potentially criminalizes otherwise lawful contacts with groups engaging in politically motivated

(violent and nonviolent) illegal acts. See Nancy Chang, *Silencing Political Dissent: How Post–September 11 Anti-Terrorism Measures Threaten Our Civil Liberties* (New York: Seven Stories, 2002); *The USA PATRIOT Act: A Legal Analysis* (Washington, D.C.: Congressional Research Service, Library of Congress, 2002).

24. See Spike Lee's documentary *Four Little Girls* (New York: Forty Acres and a Mule/ HBO Home Video, 1998).

25. Former Black Panther and Black Liberation Army member Jalil Abdul Muntaqim's "Religion and Revolution" offers an interesting perspective on the role of liberation theology and Christianity in the injunction for freedom; see Jalil Muntaqim, "Religion and Revolution"; and Jalil Muntaqim, *We Are Our Own Liberators* (Montreal: Abraham Guillen Press, 2002).

26. Assata Shakur, *Assata: An Autobiography* (Westport, Conn.: Lawrence Hill & Co.), 242–43.

27. See William Patterson, ed., *We Charge Genocide: The Crime of Government against the Negro People, A Petition to the United Nations* (New York: Civil Rights Congress, 1951).

28. Leonard Peltier, *Prison Writings: My Life Is My Sundance*, edited by Harvey Arden (New York: St. Martin's, 1999).

29. In September 1971, responding to George Jackson's killing by San Quentin prison guards and administrators and to dehumanizing and racist prison conditions, 1,500 African American, Puerto Rican, and white prisoners seized control of Attica, a maximum-security prison in New York. In 2001, the California-based media organization Freedom Archives produced *Prisons on Fire*, a CD of two audio documentaries commemorating the thirtieth anniversaries of the death of George Jackson and the Attica Rebellion. The CD consists of archival and contemporary interviews, music, and narration. Featured in part one of the narrative are: George Jackson; his seventeen-year-old brother, Jonathan, who was killed in the Marin County "takeover," and his mother, Georgia Jackson; former Soledad Brother Defense Committee leader Angela Davis; former Black Panther Party leader David Hilliard; writer James Baldwin; actor Harry Belafonte; and current or former prisoners David Johnson, Hugo Pinell, Luis Talamantez, and Sundiata Tate—the latter three were charged with the San Quentin rebellion following the death of George Jackson. Part two of the CD features the voices of former Attica prison leader Frank "Big Black" Smith; Attica activists' attorneys William Kunstler, Elizabeth Fink, and Michael Deutsch; L. D. Barkley (killed in the retaking of the prison, Barkley read the Attica Manifesto to the media); and Ruchell Magee (prison activist and participant in the 1971 Marin County escape in which Jonathan Jackson and prisoners James McClain and William Christmas and Judge Harold Haley were killed by guards). The *Prisons on Fire* audio documentary is available through Rowman and Littlefield and from Freedom Archives: cd@freedomarchives.org, www.freedomarchives.org.

30. For a critique of the School of the Americas, which officially closed in 2000 (but which human rights advocates say has simply been renamed and reorganized), see Jack Nelson-Pallmeyer, *School of Assassins: The Case for Closing the School of the Americas and for Fundamentally Changing U.S. Foreign Policy* (New York: Orbis Books, 1997).

31. Ralph Miliband writes in *The State in Capitalist Society* that in the United States people "live in the shadow of the state," as political actors attempt to influence or represent "the state's power and purpose" in order to obtain its support. A comprehensive theory of the state requires that we address economic, racial, and sexual as well as political, repression and disenfranchisement. Here, I use "state violence" as a descriptive term that denotes political–economic and police violence based on nationality, ethnicity, gender, sexuality, class, and political ideology. The primary instruments and controlling interests in state violence are largely determined by corporate and police (para)military elites. Although Miliband distinguishes the state system from the political system of electoral parties and seemingly nonpolitical organizations such as religious and educational institutions, media, businesses and civic groups, it is not realistic to maintain a sharp division between the state and civil society, particularly in a racially driven or constructed culture. Without formally sharing in state power, social and ethnic groups can contribute to the erasure or validation of state violence and government misconduct. Frequently in the United States, where racial fears and hostilities are manipulated, state and civil society seem to speak in one voice regarding policing, punishment, and violence as the media, educational institutions, and private citizens are organized to further state hegemony in spite of their autonomy from state apparatuses. See: Ralph Miliband, *The State in Capitalist Society* (New York: Basic, 1969); and Joy James, *Resisting State Violence* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996), 6.

32. Fanon writes: "[T]he *fellah*, the unemployed man, the starving native do not lay a claim to the truth; they do not *say* that they represent the truth, for they *are* the truth." See Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth* (New York: Grove Press, 1963), 49.

Part One

BLACK LIBERATIONISTS

Chapter One

Martin Luther King, Jr.

Born in Atlanta, Georgia, on January 15, 1929, Martin Luther King, Jr. was the eldest son of Alberta Williams King, a schoolteacher, and Martin Luther King, Sr., a Baptist minister. At age fifteen, King entered Morehouse College, where he first read Henry David Thoreau's *On Civil Disobedience* and began to work with organizations dedicated to racial justice. After graduating from Morehouse in 1948 with a bachelor's degree in sociology, King entered Crozer Theological Seminary. In 1951, he enrolled in Boston University, where, studying Reinhold Niebuhr and G. W. Hegel, he earned a doctorate in systematic theology in 1955. King synthesized the divergent influences of his studies into a "realistic pacifism" and a theology that considered both "souls" and "societal change."[1] In Boston he met and married Coretta Scott, then a music student; they would have four children: Martin Luther III, Dexter Scott, Yolanda Denise, and Bernice Albertine.

King accepted his first pastorate at the Dexter Avenue Baptist Church in Montgomery, Alabama, in 1954. In Montgomery, he began simultaneous work with the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) and the interracial Alabama Council on Human Relations. When NAACP leader Rosa Parks was arrested on December 1, 1955, for refusing to give up her seat to a white passenger on a public bus, Joanne Robinson's Montgomery Women's Political Caucus, with trade unionist E. D. Nixon, organized a bus boycott. The originators of the boycott chose the politically inexperienced King as its titular leader for appearances of respectability and authority tied to middle-class male clergy, and with their assistance King was elected president of the ad hoc Montgomery Improvement Association (MIA).

The Montgomery bus boycott lasted more than a year. During that struggle for civil rights, King had his first experience of being jailed. Arrested for "speeding" by Montgomery police, he was taken to the Montgomery city jail. Violence and police harassment and brutality against black protesters, including the bombing of King's home, punctuated the long boycott. By the time the U.S. Supreme Court declared segregation of public transportation unconstitutional in November of 1956, and the

MIA triumphed through its civil disobedience, Martin Luther King, Jr., had been catapulted into the national spotlight.

In 1957, King helped found and became the president of what would eventually become the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC).[2] The SCLC, first headed by Ella Baker, protested racial injustice and racism through marches, boycotts, and demonstrations. King was arrested and jailed for his involvement in such activity.

In 1960, King accepted a position as co-pastor of the Ebenezer Baptist Church in Atlanta. The SCLC's offices in Atlanta became the organizational base for most of King's civil rights activity after 1960. In the early 1960s, the SCLC began a series of protest campaigns triggered by student sit-ins and the Freedom Ride movement. The de facto head of SCLC, Ella Baker, would prove instrumental in the founding of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC), which would work with, and at times critique and radicalize, the SCLC.

After unsuccessful organizing initiatives in Albany, Georgia, the SCLC turned its focus to Birmingham, Alabama. In 1963, King stated, "Birmingham is so segregated, we're within a cab ride of being in Johannesburg, South Africa."[3] Birmingham city officials had declared the NAACP a "foreign corporation" and criminalized its activities. The head of Birmingham's police was Commissioner of Public Safety Eugene "Bull" Connor, who prided himself "on knowing how to handle the Negro and keep him in his 'place.'"[4]

In the ensuing confrontation with racist police and city administration, King was arrested on April 12, and "charged with violation of a city ordinance in parading without a permit and also with defying a state court injunction against demonstrations."[5] While being held for over twenty-four hours in solitary confinement, he woke in the morning to find in his cell a newspaper with an advertisement taken out by eight clergymen of the major denominations who condemned the demonstrations and criticized the civil rights activists as "extremists."[6]

"Letter from Birmingham Jail," Reverend King's response, was first published in *Christian Century*, *Liberation*, and *Christianity and Crisis*, three progressive journals. In his "Letter," King set forth an incisive critique of the "white moderate," who, he claimed, was "more devoted to 'order' than justice." The recipient of the Nobel Peace Prize, Martin Luther King, Jr., was assassinated in Memphis, Tennessee, in April 1968.

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NOTES

Research and draft for this biography were provided by Christopher Muller.

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2. *Autobiography*, 102.
3. Flip Schulke and Penelope Ortner McPhee, *King Remembered* (New York: Norton, 1986), 118.
4. Adam Fairclough, *Martin Luther King, Jr.* (Athens: University of Georgia, 1995), 72; *Autobiography*, 172.
5. Foster Hailey, "Dr. King Arrested at Birmingham," *New York Times*, 13 April 1963, A1.
6. *Autobiography*, 187.

Letter from Birmingham Jail

April 16, 1963

AUTHOR'S NOTE: This response to a published statement by eight fellow clergymen from Alabama (Bishop C. C. J. Carpenter, Bishop Joseph A. Durick, Rabbi Hilton L. Grafman, Bishop Paul Hardin, Bishop Holan B. Harmon, the Reverend George M. Murray, the Reverend Edward V. Ramage and the Reverend Earl Stallings) was composed under somewhat constricting circumstance. Begun on the margins of the newspaper in which the statement appeared while I was in jail, the letter was continued on scraps of writing paper supplied by a friendly Negro trusty, and concluded on a pad my attorneys were eventually permitted to leave me. Although the text remains in substance unaltered, I have indulged in the author's prerogative of polishing it for publication.

April 16, 1963

MY DEAR FELLOW CLERGYMEN:

While confined here in the Birmingham city jail, I came across your recent statement calling my present activities "unwise and untimely." Seldom do I pause to answer criticism of my work and ideas. If I sought to answer all the criticisms that cross my desk, my secretaries would have little time for anything other than such correspondence in the course of the day, and I would have no time for constructive work. But since I feel that you are men of genuine good will and that your criticisms are sincerely set forth, I want to try to answer your statements in what I hope will be patient and reasonable terms.

I think I should indicate why I am here in Birmingham, since you have been influenced by the view which argues against "outsiders coming in." I have the honor of serving as president of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference, an organization operating in every southern state, with headquarters in Atlanta, Georgia. We have some eighty-five affiliated organizations across the South, and one of them is the Alabama Christian Movement for Human Rights. Frequently we share staff, educational and financial resources with our affiliates. Several months ago the affiliate here in Birmingham asked us to be on call to engage in a nonviolent direct-action program if such were deemed necessary. We readily consented, and when the hour came we lived up to our promise. So I, along with several members of my staff, am here because I was invited here. I am here because I have organizational ties here.

But more basically, I am in Birmingham because injustice is here. Just as the prophets of the eighth century B.C. left their villages and carried their "thus saith the Lord" far beyond the boundaries of their home towns, and just as the Apostle Paul left his village of Tarsus and carried the gospel of Jesus Christ to the far corners

of the Greco-Roman world, so am I compelled to carry the gospel of freedom beyond my own home town. Like Paul, I must constantly respond to the Macedonian call for aid.

Moreover, I am cognizant of the interrelatedness of all communities and states. I cannot sit idly by in Atlanta and not be concerned about what happens in Birmingham. Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere. We are caught in an inescapable network of mutuality, tied in a single garment of destiny. Whatever affects one directly, affects all indirectly. Never again can we afford to live with the narrow, provincial "outside agitator" idea. Anyone who lives inside the United States can never be considered an outsider anywhere within its bounds.

You deplore the demonstrations taking place in Birmingham. But your statement, I am sorry to say, fails to express a similar concern for the conditions that brought about the demonstrations. I am sure that none of you would want to rest content with the superficial kind of social analysis that deals merely with effects and does not grapple with underlying causes. It is unfortunate that demonstrations are taking place in Birmingham, but it is even more unfortunate that the city's white power structure left the Negro community with no alternative.

In any nonviolent campaign there are four basic steps: collection of the facts to determine whether injustices exist; negotiation; self-purification; and direct action. We have gone through all these steps in Birmingham. There can be no gainsaying the fact that racial injustice engulfs this community. Birmingham is probably the most thoroughly segregated city in the United States. Its ugly record of brutality is widely known. Negroes have experienced grossly unjust treatment in the courts. There have been more unsolved bombings of Negro homes and churches in Birmingham than in any other city in the nation. These are the hard, brutal facts of the case. On the basis of these conditions, Negro leaders sought to negotiate with the city fathers. But the latter consistently refused to engage in good-faith negotiation.

Then, last September, came the opportunity to talk with leaders of Birmingham's economic community. In the course of the negotiations, certain promises were made by the merchants—for example, to remove the stores' humiliating racial signs. On the basis of these promises, the Reverend Fred Shuttlesworth and the leaders of the Alabama Christian Movement for Human Rights agreed to a moratorium on all demonstrations. As the weeks and months went by, we realized that we were the victims of a broken promise. A few signs, briefly removed, returned; the others remained.

As in so many past experiences, our hopes had been blasted, and the shadow of deep disappointment settled upon us. We had no alternative except to prepare for direct action, whereby we would present our very bodies as a means of laying our case before the conscience of the local and the national community. Mindful of the difficulties involved, we decided to undertake a process of self-purification. We began a series of workshops on nonviolence, and we repeatedly asked ourselves: "Are you able to accept blows without retaliating?" "Are you able to endure the

ordeal of jail?" We decided to schedule our direct-action program for the Easter season, realizing that except for Christmas, this is the main shopping period of the year. Knowing that a strong economic withdrawal program would be the by-product of direct action, we felt that this would be the best time to bring pressure to bear on the merchants for the needed change.

Then it occurred to us that Birmingham's mayoralty election was coming up in March, and we speedily decided to postpone action until after election day. When we discovered that the Commissioner of Public Safety, Eugene "Bull" Connor, had piled up enough votes to be in the run-off we decided again to postpone action until the day after the run-off so that the demonstrations could not be used to cloud the issues. Like many others, we waited to see Mr. Connor defeated, and to this end we endured postponement after postponement. Having aided in this community need, we felt that our direct-action program could be delayed no longer.

You may well ask: "Why direct action? Why sit-ins, marches and so forth? Isn't negotiation a better path?" You are quite right in calling for negotiation. Indeed, this is the very purpose of direct action. Nonviolent direct action seeks to create such a crisis and foster such a tension that a community which has constantly refused to negotiate is forced to confront the issue. It seeks so to dramatize the issue that it can no longer be ignored. My citing the creation of tension as part of the work of the nonviolent-resister may sound rather shocking. But I must confess that I am not afraid of the word "tension." I have earnestly opposed violent tension, but there is a type of constructive, nonviolent tension which is necessary for growth. Just as Socrates felt that it was necessary to create a tension in the mind so that individuals could rise from the bondage of myths and half-truths to the unfettered realm of creative analysis and objective appraisal, we must see the need for nonviolent gadflies to create the kind of tension in society that will help men rise from the dark depths of prejudice and racism to the majestic heights of understanding and brotherhood.

The purpose of our direct-action program is to create a situation so crisis-packed that it will inevitably open the door to negotiation. I therefore concur with you in our call for negotiation. Too long has our beloved Southland been bogged down in a tragic effort to live in monologue rather than dialogue.

One of the basic points in your statement is that the action that I and my associates have taken in Birmingham is untimely. Some have asked: "Why didn't you give the new city administration time to act?" The only answer that I can give to this query is that the new Birmingham administration must be prodded about as much as the outgoing one, before it will act. We are sadly mistaken if we feel that the election of Albert Boutwell as mayor will bring the millennium to Birmingham. While Mr. Boutwell is a much more gentle person than Mr. Connor, they are both segregationists, dedicated to maintenance of the status quo. I have hope that Mr. Boutwell will be reasonable enough to see the futility of massive resistance to desegregation. But he will not see this without pressure from devotees of civil rights. My friends, I must say to you that we have not made a single gain in civil rights without

determined legal and nonviolent pressure. Lamentably, it is an historical fact that privileged groups seldom give up their privileges voluntarily. Individuals may see the moral light and voluntarily give up their unjust posture; but, as Reinhold Niebuhr has reminded us, groups tend to be more immoral than individuals.[1]

We know through painful experience that freedom is never voluntarily given by the oppressor; it must be demanded by the oppressed. Frankly, I have yet to engage in a direct-action campaign that was "well timed" in the view of those who have not suffered unduly from the disease of segregation. For years now I have heard the word "Wait!" It rings in the ear of every Negro with piercing familiarity. This "Wait" has almost always meant "Never." We must come to see, with one of our distinguished jurists, that "justice too long delayed is justice denied."

We have waited for more than 340 years for our constitutional and God-given rights. The nations of Asia and Africa are moving with jetlike speed toward gaining political independence, but we still creep at horse-and-buggy pace toward gaining a cup of coffee at a lunch counter. Perhaps it is easy for those who have never felt the stinging dark of segregation to say, "Wait." But when you have seen vicious mobs lynch your mothers and fathers at will and drown your sisters and brothers at whim; when you have seen hate-filled policemen curse, kick and even kill your black brothers and sisters; when you see the vast majority of your twenty million Negro brothers smothering in an airtight cage of poverty in the midst of an affluent society; when you suddenly find your tongue twisted and your speech stammering as you seek to explain to your six-year-old daughter why she can't go to the public amusement park that has just been advertised on television, and see tears welling up in her eyes when she is told that Funtown is closed to colored children, and see ominous clouds of inferiority beginning to form in her little mental sky, and see her beginning to distort her personality by developing an unconscious bitterness toward white people; when you have to concoct an answer for a five-year-old son who is asking: "Daddy, why do white people treat colored people so mean?"; when you take a cross-country drive and find it necessary to sleep night after night in the uncomfortable corners of your automobile because no motel will accept you; when you are humiliated day in and day out by nagging signs reading "white" and "colored"; when your first name becomes "nigger," your middle name becomes "boy" (however old you are) and your last name becomes "John," and your wife and mother are never given the respected title "Mrs."; when you are harried by day and haunted by night by the fact that you are a Negro, living constantly at tiptoe stance, never quite knowing what to expect next, and are plagued with inner fears and outer resentments; when you are forever fighting a degenerating sense of "nobodiness" then you will understand why we find it difficult to wait. There comes a time when the cup of endurance runs over, and men are no longer willing to be plunged into the abyss of despair. I hope, sirs, you can understand our legitimate and unavoidable impatience.

You express a great deal of anxiety over our willingness to break laws. This is certainly a legitimate concern. Since we so diligently urge people to obey the

Supreme Court's decision of 1954 outlawing segregation in the public schools, at first glance it may seem rather paradoxical for us consciously to break laws. One may well ask: "How can you advocate breaking some laws and obeying others?" The answer lies in the fact that there are two types of laws: just and unjust. I would be the first to advocate obeying just laws. One has not only a legal but a moral responsibility to obey just laws. Conversely, one has a moral responsibility to disobey unjust laws. I would agree with St. Augustine that "an unjust law is no law at all."

Now, what is the difference between the two? How does one determine whether a law is just or unjust? A just law is a man-made code that squares with the moral law or the law of God. An unjust law is a code that is out of harmony with the moral law. To put it in the terms of St. Thomas Aquinas: An unjust law is a human law that is not rooted in eternal law and natural law. Any law that uplifts human personality is just. Any law that degrades human personality is unjust. All segregation statutes are unjust because segregation distorts the soul and damages the personality. It gives the segregator a false sense of superiority and the segregated a false sense of inferiority. Segregation, to use the terminology of the Jewish philosopher Martin Buber, substitutes an "I-it" relationship for an "I-thou" relationship and ends up relegating persons to the status of things. Hence segregation is not only politically, economically and sociologically unsound, it is morally wrong and awful. Paul Tillich said that sin is separation. Is not segregation an existential expression "of man's tragic separation, his awful estrangement, his terrible sinfulness?" Thus it is that I can urge men to obey the 1954 decision of the Supreme Court, for it is morally right; and I can urge them to disobey segregation ordinances, for they are morally wrong.

Let us consider a more concrete example of just and unjust laws. An unjust law is a code that a numerical or power majority group compels a minority group to obey but does not make binding on itself. This is difference made legal. By the same token, a just law is a code that a majority compels a minority to follow and that it is willing to follow itself. This is sameness made legal.

Let me give another explanation. A law is unjust if it is inflicted on a minority that, as a result of being denied the right to vote, had no part in enacting or devising the law. Who can say that the legislature of Alabama which set up that state's segregation laws was democratically elected? Throughout Alabama all sorts of devious methods are used to prevent Negroes from becoming registered voters, and there are some counties in which, even though Negroes constitute a majority of the population, not a single Negro is registered. Can any law enacted under such circumstances be considered democratically structured?

Sometimes a law is just on its face and unjust in its application. For instance, I have been arrested on a charge of parading without a permit. Now, there is nothing wrong in having an ordinance which requires a permit for a parade. But such an ordinance becomes unjust when it is used to maintain segregation and to deny citizens the First Amendment privilege of peaceful assembly and protest.

I hope you are able to face the distinction I am trying to point out. In no sense

do I advocate evading or defying the law, as would the rabid segregationist. That would lead to anarchy. One who breaks an unjust law must do so openly, lovingly, and with a willingness to accept the penalty. I submit that an individual who breaks a law that conscience tells him is unjust and who willingly accepts the penalty of imprisonment in order to arouse the conscience of the community over its injustice, is in reality expressing the highest respect for law.

Of course, there is nothing new about this kind of civil disobedience. It was evidenced sublimely in the refusal of Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego to obey the laws of Nebuchadnezzar, on the ground that a higher moral law was at stake. It was practiced superbly by the early Christians, who were willing to face hungry lions and the excruciating pain of chopping blocks rather than submit to certain unjust laws of the Roman Empire. To a degree, academic freedom is a reality today because Socrates practiced civil disobedience. In our own nation, the Boston Tea Party represented a massive act of civil disobedience.

We should never forget that everything Adolf Hitler did in Germany was "legal" and everything the Hungarian freedom fighters did in Hungary was "illegal." It was "illegal" to aid and comfort a Jew in Hitler's Germany. Even so, I am sure that, had I lived in Germany at the time, I would have aided and comforted my Jewish brothers. If today I lived in a Communist country where certain principles dear to the Christian faith are suppressed, I would openly advocate disobeying that country's antireligious laws.

I must make two honest confessions to you, my Christian and Jewish brothers. First, I must confess that over the past few years I have been gravely disappointed with the white moderate. I have almost reached the regrettable conclusion that the Negro's great stumbling block in his stride toward freedom is not the White Citizen's Counciler[2] or the Ku Klux Klanner, but the white moderate, who is more devoted to "order" than to justice; who prefers a negative peace which is the absence of tension to a positive peace which is the presence of justice; who constantly says: "I agree with you in the goal you seek, but I cannot agree with your methods of direct action"; who paternalistically believes he can set the timetable for another man's freedom; who lives by a mythical concept of time and who constantly advises the Negro to wait for a "more convenient season." Shallow understanding from people of good will is more frustrating than absolute misunderstanding from people of ill will. Lukewarm acceptance is much more bewildering than outright rejection.

I had hoped that the white moderate would understand that law and order exist for the purpose of establishing justice and that when they fail in this purpose they become the dangerously structured dams that block the flow of social progress. I had hoped that the white moderate would understand that the present tension in the South is a necessary phase of the transition from an obnoxious negative peace, in which the Negro passively accepted his unjust plight, to a substantive and positive peace, in which all men will respect the dignity and worth of human personality. Actually, we who engage in nonviolent direct action are not the creators of tension.

We merely bring to the surface the hidden tension that is already alive. We bring it out in the open, where it can be seen and dealt with. Like a boil that can never be cured so long as it is covered up but must be opened with all its ugliness to the natural medicines of air and light, injustice must be exposed, with all the tension its exposure creates, to the light of human conscience and the air of national opinion before it can be cured.

In your statement you assert that our actions, even though peaceful, must be condemned because they precipitate violence. But is this a logical assertion? Isn't this like condemning a robbed man because his possession of money precipitated the evil act of robbery? Isn't this like condemning Socrates because his unswerving commitment to truth and his philosophical inquiries precipitated the act by the misguided populace in which they made him drink hemlock? Isn't this like condemning Jesus because his unique God-consciousness and never-ceasing devotion to God's will precipitated the evil act of crucifixion? We must come to see that, as the federal courts have consistently affirmed, it is wrong to urge an individual to cease his efforts to gain his basic constitutional rights because the quest may precipitate violence. Society must protect the robbed and punish the robber.

I had also hoped that the white moderate would reject the myth concerning time in relation to the struggle for freedom. I have just received a letter from a white brother in Texas. He writes: "All Christians know that the colored people will receive equal rights eventually, but it is possible that you are in too great a religious hurry. It has taken Christianity almost two thousand years to accomplish what it has. The teachings of Christ take time to come to earth." Such an attitude stems from a tragic misconception of time, from the strangely rational notion that there is something in the very flow of time that will inevitably cure all ills. Actually, time itself is neutral; it can be used either destructively or constructively. More and more I feel that the people of ill will have used time much more effectively than have the people of good will. We will have to repent in this generation not merely for the hateful words and actions of the bad people but for the appalling silence of the good people. Human progress never rolls in on wheels of inevitability; it comes through the tireless efforts of men willing to be co-workers with God, and without this hard work, time itself becomes an ally of the forces of social stagnation. We must use time creatively, in the knowledge that the time is always ripe to do right. Now is the time to make real the promise of democracy and transform our pending national elegy into a creative psalm of brotherhood. Now is the time to lift our national policy from the quicksand of racial injustice to the solid rock of human dignity.

You speak of our activity in Birmingham as extreme. At first I was rather disappointed that fellow clergymen would see my nonviolent efforts as those of an extremist. I began thinking about the fact that we stand in the middle of two opposing forces in the Negro community. One is a force of complacency, made up in part of Negroes who, as a result of long years of oppression, are so drained of self-respect and a sense of "somebodiness" that they have adjusted to segregation; and in part of a few middle class Negroes who, because of a degree of academic and economic

security and because in some ways they profit by segregation, have become insensitive to the problems of the masses. The other force is one of bitterness and hatred, and it comes perilously close to advocating violence. It is expressed in the various black nationalist groups that are springing up across the nation, the largest and best-known being Elijah Muhammad's Muslim movement.[3] Nourished by the Negro's frustration over the continued existence of racial discrimination, this movement is made up of people who have lost faith in America, who have absolutely repudiated Christianity, and who have concluded that the white man is an incorrigible "devil."

I have tried to stand between these two forces, saying that we need emulate neither the "do-nothingism" of the complacent nor the hatred and despair of the black nationalist. For there is the more excellent way of love and nonviolent protest. I am grateful to God that, through the influence of the Negro church, the way of nonviolence became an integral part of our struggle.

If this philosophy had not emerged, by now many streets of the South would, I am convinced, be flowing with blood. And I am further convinced that if our white brothers dismiss as "rabble-rousers" and "outside agitators" those of us who employ nonviolent direct action, and if they refuse to support our nonviolent efforts, millions of Negroes will, out of frustration and despair, seek solace and security in black-nationalist ideologies—a development that would inevitably lead to a frightening racial nightmare.

Oppressed people cannot remain oppressed forever. The yearning for freedom eventually manifests itself, and that is what has happened to the American Negro. Something within has reminded him of his birthright of freedom, and something without has reminded him that it can be gained. Consciously or unconsciously, he has been caught up by the Zeitgeist, and with his black brothers of Africa and his brown and yellow brothers of Asia, South America and the Caribbean, the United States Negro is moving with a sense of great urgency toward the promised land of racial justice. If one recognizes this vital urge that has engulfed the Negro community, one should readily understand why public demonstrations are taking place. The Negro has many pent-up resentments and latent frustrations, and he must release them. So let him march; let him make prayer pilgrimages to the city hall; let him go on freedom rides—and try to understand why he must do so. If his repressed emotions are not released in nonviolent ways, they will seek expression through violence; this is not a threat but a fact of history. So I have not said to my people: "Get rid of your discontent." Rather, I have tried to say that this normal and healthy discontent can be channeled into the creative outlet of nonviolent direct action. And now this approach is being termed extremist.

But though I was initially disappointed at being categorized as an extremist, as I continued to think about the matter I gradually gained a measure of satisfaction from the label. Was not Jesus an extremist for love: "Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you." Was not Amos an extremist for justice: "Let justice roll down like waters and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream." Was not Paul

an extremist for the Christian gospel: "I bear in my body the marks of the Lord Jesus." Was not Martin Luther an extremist: "Here I stand; I cannot do otherwise, so help me God." And John Bunyan: "I will stay in jail to the end of my days before I make a butchery of my conscience." And Abraham Lincoln: "This nation cannot survive half slave and half free." And Thomas Jefferson: "We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal. . . ." So the question is not whether we will be extremists, but what kind of extremists will we be. Will we be extremists for hate or for love? Will we be extremists for the preservation of injustice or for the extension of justice? In that dramatic scene on Calvary's hill three men were crucified. We must never forget that all three were crucified for the same crime—the crime of extremism. Two were extremists for immorality, and thus fell below their environment. The other, Jesus Christ, was an extremist for love, truth and goodness, and thereby rose above his environment. Perhaps the South, the nation and the world are in dire need of creative extremists.

I had hoped that the white moderate would see this need. Perhaps I was too optimistic; perhaps I expected too much. I suppose I should have realized that few members of the oppressor race can understand the deep groans and passionate yearnings of the oppressed race, and still fewer have the vision to see that injustice must be rooted out by strong, persistent and determined action. I am thankful, however, that some of our white brothers in the South have grasped the meaning of this social revolution and committed themselves to it. They are still too few in quantity, but they are big in quality. Some—such as Ralph McGill, Lillian Smith, Harry Golden, James McBride Dabbs, Ann Braden and Sarah Patton Boyle—have written about our struggle in eloquent and prophetic terms.[4] Others have marched with us down nameless streets of the South. They have languished in filthy, roach-infested jails, suffering the abuse and brutality of policemen who view them as "dirty nigger lovers." Unlike so many of their moderate brothers and sisters, they have recognized the urgency of the moment and sensed the need for powerful "action" antidotes to combat the disease of segregation.

Let me take note of my other major disappointment. I have been so greatly disappointed with the white church and its leadership. Of course, there are some notable exceptions. I am not unmindful of the fact that each of you has taken some significant stands on this issue. I commend you, Reverend Stallings, for your Christian stand on this past Sunday, in welcoming Negroes to your worship service on a nonsegregated basis. I commend the Catholic leaders of this state for integrating Spring Hill College several years ago.[5]

But despite these notable exceptions, I must honestly reiterate that I have been disappointed with the church. I do not say this as one of those negative critics who can always find something wrong with the church. I say this as a minister of the gospel, who loves the church; who was nurtured in its bosom; who has been sustained by its spiritual blessings and who will remain true to it as long as the cord of Rio shall lengthen.

When I was suddenly catapulted into the leadership of the bus protest in Montgomery, Alabama, a few years ago, I felt we would be supported by the white church; I felt that the white ministers, priests and rabbis of the South would be among our strongest allies. Instead, some have been outright opponents, refusing to understand the freedom movement and misrepresenting its leadership; and too many others have been more cautious than courageous and have remained silent behind the anesthetizing security of stained-glass windows.

In spite of my shattered dreams, I came to Birmingham with the hope that the white religious leadership of this community would see the justice of our cause and, with deep moral concern, would serve as the channel through which our just grievances could reach the power structure. I had hoped that each of you would understand. But again I have been disappointed.

I have heard numerous southern religious leaders admonish their worshipers to comply with a desegregation decision because it is the law, but I have longed to hear white ministers declare: "Follow this decree because integration is morally right and because the Negro is your brother." In the midst of blatant injustices inflicted upon the Negro, I have watched white churchmen stand on the sideline and mouth pious irrelevancies and sanctimonious trivialities. In the midst of a mighty struggle to rid our nation of racial and economic injustice, I have heard many ministers say: "Those are social issues, with which the gospel has no real concern." And I have watched many churches commit themselves to a completely otherworldly religion which makes a strange, non-Biblical distinction between body and soul, between the sacred and the secular.

I have traveled the length and breadth of Alabama, Mississippi and all the other southern states. On sweltering summer days and crisp autumn mornings I have looked at the South's beautiful churches with their lofty spires pointing heavenward. I have beheld the impressive outlines of her massive religious-education buildings. Over and over I have found myself asking: "What kind of people worship here? Who is their God? Where were their voices when the lips of Governor [Ross] Barnett dripped with words of interposition and nullification? Where were they when Governor [George] Wallace gave a clarion call for defiance and hatred? Where were their voices of support when bruised and weary Negro men and women decided to rise from the dark dungeons of complacency to the bright hills of creative protest?"

Yes, these questions are still in my mind. In deep disappointment I have wept over the laxity of the church. But be assured that my tears have been tears of love. There can be no deep disappointment where there is not deep love. Yes, I love the church. How could I do otherwise? I am in the rather unique position of being the son, the grandson and the great-grandson of preachers. Yes, I see the church as the body of Christ. But, oh! How we have blemished and scarred that body through social neglect and through fear of being nonconformists.

There was a time when the church was very powerful in the time when the early Christians rejoiced at being deemed worthy to suffer for what they believed. In those days the church was not merely a thermometer that recorded the ideas and principles of popular opinion; it was a thermostat that transformed the mores of

society. Whenever the early Christians entered a town, the people in power became disturbed and immediately sought to convict the Christians for being "disturbers of the peace" and "outside agitators." But the Christians pressed on, in the conviction that they were "a colony of heaven," called to obey God rather than man. Small in number, they were big in commitment. They were too God-intoxicated to be "astronomically intimidated." By their effort and example they brought an end to such ancient evils as infanticide and gladiatorial contests.

Things are different now. So often the contemporary church is a weak, ineffectual voice with an uncertain sound. So often it is an arch defender of the status quo. Far from being disturbed by the presence of the church, the power structure of the average community is consoled by the church's silent and often even vocal sanction of things as they are.

But the judgment of God is upon the church as never before. If today's church does not recapture the sacrificial spirit of the early church, it will lose its authenticity, forfeit the loyalty of millions, and be dismissed as an irrelevant social club with no meaning for the twentieth century. Every day I meet young people whose disappointment with the church has turned into outright disgust.

Perhaps I have once again been too optimistic. Is organized religion too inextricably bound to the status quo to save our nation and the world? Perhaps I must turn my faith to the inner spiritual church, the church within the church, as the true ecclesia and the hope of the world. But again I am thankful to God that some noble souls from the ranks of organized religion have broken loose from the paralyzing chains of conformity and joined us as active partners in the struggle for freedom. They have left their secure congregations and walked the streets of Albany, Georgia, with us. They have gone down the highways of the South on tortuous rides for freedom. Yes, they have gone to jail with us. Some have been dismissed from their churches, have lost the support of their bishops and fellow ministers. But they have acted in the faith that right defeated is stronger than evil triumphant. Their witness has been the spiritual salt that has preserved the true meaning of the gospel in these troubled times. They have carved a tunnel of hope through the dark mountain of disappointment.

I hope the church as a whole will meet the challenge of this decisive hour. But even if the church does not come to the aid of justice, I have no despair about the future. I have no fear about the outcome of our struggle in Birmingham, even if our motives are at present misunderstood. We will reach the goal of freedom in Birmingham, and all over the nation, because the goal of America is freedom. Abused and scorned though we may be, our destiny is tied up with America's destiny. Before the pilgrims landed at Plymouth, we were here. Before the pen of Jefferson etched the majestic words of the Declaration of Independence across the pages of history, we were here. For more than two centuries our forbears labored in this country without wages; they made cotton king; they built the homes of their masters while suffering gross injustice and shameful humiliation—and yet out of a bottomless vitality they continued to thrive and develop. If the inexpressible cruelties

of slavery could not stop us, the opposition we now face will surely fail. We will win our freedom because the sacred heritage of our nation and the eternal will of God are embodied in our echoing demands.

Before closing I feel impelled to mention one other point in your statement that has troubled me profoundly. You warmly commended the Birmingham police force for keeping "order" and "preventing violence." I doubt that you would have so warmly commended the police force if you had seen its dogs sinking their teeth into unarmed, nonviolent Negroes. I doubt that you would so quickly commend the policemen if you were to observe their ugly and inhumane treatment of Negroes here in the city jail; if you were to watch them push and curse old Negro women and young Negro girls; if you were to see them slap and kick old Negro men and young boys; if you were to observe them, as they did on two occasions, refuse to give us food because we wanted to sing our grace together. I cannot join you in your praise of the Birmingham police department.

It is true that the police have exercised a degree of discipline in handling the demonstrators. In this sense they have conducted themselves rather "nonviolently" in public. But for what purpose? To preserve the evil system of segregation. Over the past few years I have consistently preached that nonviolence demands that the means we use must be as pure as the ends we seek. I have tried to make clear that it is wrong to use immoral means to attain moral ends. But now I must affirm that it is just as wrong, or perhaps even more so, to use moral means to preserve immoral ends. Perhaps Mr. [Eugene] Connor and his policemen have been rather nonviolent in public, as was Chief Pritchett in Albany, Georgia but they have used the moral means of nonviolence to maintain the immoral end of racial injustice. As T. S. Eliot has said: "The last temptation is the greatest treason: To do the right deed for the wrong reason."

I wish you had commended the Negro sit-inners and demonstrators of Birmingham for their sublime courage, their willingness to suffer and their amazing discipline in the midst of great provocation. One day the South will recognize its real heroes. They will be the James Merediths, with the noble sense of purpose that enables them to face jeering and hostile mobs, and with the agonizing loneliness that characterizes the life of the pioneer.[6] They will be old, oppressed, battered Negro women, symbolized in a seventy-two-year-old woman in Montgomery, Alabama, who rose up with a sense of dignity and with her people decided not to ride segregated buses, and who responded with ungrammatical profundity to one who inquired about her weariness: "My feets is tired, but my soul is at rest." They will be the young high school and college students, the young ministers of the gospel and a host of their elders, courageously and nonviolently sitting in at lunch counters and willingly going to jail for conscience's sake. One day the South will know that when these disinherited children of God sat down at lunch counters, they were in reality standing up for what is best in the American dream and for the most sacred values in our Judaeo-Christian heritage, thereby bringing our nation back to

those great wells of democracy which were dug deep by the founding fathers in their formulation of the Constitution and the Declaration of Independence.

Never before have I written so long a letter. I'm afraid it is much too long to take your precious time. I can assure you that it would have been much shorter if I had been writing from a comfortable desk, but what else can one do when he is alone in a narrow jail cell, other than write long letters, think long thoughts and pray long prayers?

If I have said anything in this letter that overstates the truth and indicates an unreasonable impatience, I beg you to forgive me. If I have said anything that understates the truth and indicates my having a patience that allows me to settle for anything less than brotherhood, I beg God to forgive me.

I hope this letter finds you strong in the faith. I also hope that circumstances will soon make it possible for me to meet each of you, not as an integrationist or a civil rights leader but as a fellow clergyman and a Christian brother. Let us all hope that the dark clouds of racial prejudice will soon pass away and the deep fog of misunderstanding will be lifted from our fear-drenched communities, and in some not too distant tomorrow the radiant stars of love and brotherhood will shine over our great nation with all their scintillating beauty.

Yours for the cause of Peace and
Brotherhood,
Martin Luther King, Jr.

NOTES

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1. *Editor's note:* Karl Paul Reinhold Niebuhr, theologian and author of *Moral Man and Immoral Society* (New York: Scribner, 1960) and *The Irony of American History* (New York: Scribner, 1952).

2. *Editor's note:* The White Citizen's Council (renamed the "Conservative Citizen's Council") was a white supremacist group similar to the Ku Klux Klan in both its support for discriminatory legislation and its acts of physical brutality against African American people.

3. *Editor's note:* The Nation of Islam (NOI) was established in Detroit by Wallace D. Fard at the beginning of the Great Depression. In 1933, Elijah Muhammad, who expelled Malcolm X from the NOI in 1963–1964, assumed leadership of the organization, which is today headed by Louis Farrakhan.

4. *Editor's note:* Ralph McGill, "A Church, A School," in *Pulitzer Prize Editorials: America's Best Editorial Writing, 1917–1993*, ed. Wm. David Sloan and Laird B. Anderson (Ames: Iowa State University Press, 1994); *No Place to Hide: The South and Human Rights* (Macon, Ga.: Mercer University Press, 1984); *The South and the Southerner* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1964). Lillian Smith, *Killers of the Dream* (New York: Norton, 1949); *Now Is the Time* (New York: Viking, 1955); *One Hour* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Co., 1959); *Our Faces, Our Words* (New York: Norton, 1964); *Strange Fruit* (New York: New American Library, 1944); *The Winner Names the Age: A Collection of Writings* (New York: Norton, 1978). Harry Golden, *Mr. Kennedy and the Negroes* (Cleveland: World Pub. Co., 1964); "From Negro and Jew: An Encounter in America" in *Strangers & Neighbors: Relations between Blacks & Jews in the United States*, ed. Maurianne Adams and John Bracey (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1999). James McBride Dabbs, *Haunted by God* (Richmond, Va.: John Knox Press, 1972); *The Southern Heritage* (New York: Knopf, 1958); *Who Speaks for the South* (New York: Funk & Wagnalls, 1964). Anne Braden, *House Un-American Activities Committee, Bulwark of Segregation* (Los Angeles: National Committee to Abolish the House Un-American Activities Committee, 1964); *The Wall Between* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1958). Sarah Patton Boyle, *The Desegregated Heart: A Virginian's Stand in Time of Transition* (New York: Morrow, 1962).

5. *Editor's note:* Spring Hill College is a Jesuit college in Mobile, Alabama.

6. *Editor's note:* James Meredith was the first African American student to attend the University of Mississippi. His 1962 admission was met by deadly riots eventually quelled by the National Guards. Despite constant threats and intimidation, Meredith graduated from "Ole Miss," and went on to a career of social activism.

Chapter Two

Malcolm X

Born Malcolm Little on May 19, 1925, in Omaha, Nebraska, to Louisa Little, from the West Indies, and Earl Little, a Baptist preacher and a member of Marcus Garvey's Universal Negro Improvement Association (UNIA), as a child Malcolm X faced racist terror and isolation. The Ku Klux Klan burned down his family's home and were suspected in his father's murder. Upon his mother's institutionalization, welfare agencies separated him and his siblings, placing them into various white foster homes. Young Malcolm's aspirations to become a lawyer were ridiculed and discouraged by racist teachers and schooling.

As black militancy rose with World War II, Malcolm Little, the young adult, became part of hipster and gangster culture, zoot suiting, "conking" his hair, and avoiding formal wage labor whenever possible. In 1943, he worked a train between Boston and New York City, engaging in petty hustling, drug dealing, pimping, and gambling. In 1946, apprehended in Boston for burglary, he surrendered without violence. In his autobiography, he reflects, "I believe that Allah was with me even then. I didn't try to shoot him [the arresting officer] and that saved my life."[1] He was tried and convicted with his friends, "Shorty" and two upper-middle-class white women, the latter of whom received lesser bail and shorter sentences. Both men were sentenced to ten years in the Charlestown State Prison. According to Little, the prosecution seemed more concerned with two black men's association with affluent white women than with the criminal charges.[2]

Prison transformed Little. He began studying the teachings of Elijah Muhammad and the Nation of Islam (NOI) and adopted the discipline and practices of Islam. Reading whatever books were available to him, writing letters regularly, and leading the debate team, he trained as an orator and rhetorician and began developing his political ideology and praxis. In 1952, the NOI gave him the surname "X" to reflect the fact that his African name remained unknown. The political and intellectual changes that Malcolm X underwent in prison suggest that the attraction to the NOI was both religious and political: the Nation of Islam provided a vehicle for spirituality while providing a mechanism for addressing black repression and humiliation under white supremacy.

Released from prison in 1954, the year of the Supreme Court school desegregation ruling, *Brown v Board of Education*, Malcolm X worked as a furniture salesman and auto-assemblyman, and immediately began speaking as a minister in temples across the country. He founded *Muhammad Speaks*, the NOI newspaper, and led or participated in rallies confronting local police brutality and racism. He married Betty Sanders (Betty Shabazz) in 1958, and fathered four daughters. In the 1960s, his stature as a national NOI leader grew as he offered public support for the civil rights movement and militancy, with sit-ins and the 1960 formation of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC). Malcolm X frequently criticized Martin Luther King, Jr.'s pacifism, and offered support to SNCC radicals. He also supported the independence movements and revolutionary liberation struggles to decolonize Africa.

His growing leadership soon posed a threat to Elijah Muhammad. When Malcolm X learned that the NOI's spiritual and moral leader had fathered multiple children by former secretaries and young women, tensions grew between the two men and within the organization. In 1963 Elijah Muhammad silenced him for his public comment describing the assassination of John F. Kennedy as "chickens coming home to roost"—referencing Kennedy's support for assassinations of socialist leaders such as Cuba's Fidel Castro and the Congo's Patrice Lumumba. On March 8, 1964, Malcolm X announced his resignation from the Nation of Islam and formed the Muslim Mosque, Inc., a new Islamic movement, seeking to build a broader base by working with civil rights leaders. Also in 1964, he made Hajj and took the name El-Hajj Malik El-Shabazz. On the trip to Mecca, he visited Beirut and several African nations, meeting with anticolonialist leaders (including Kwame Nkrumah, Ghana's first president). Attempting to foster support for the unity of national liberation struggles of African and "Afro-American" peoples, he founded the Organization of Afro-American Unity (OAAU). These international travels and political meetings likely exposed him to the attention of the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA). Upon returning to the United States, for the following months, Malik El-Shabazz worked with SNCC and Fannie Lou Hamer; visited Martin Luther King, Jr., when King was jailed in Selma, Alabama; and spoke tirelessly against racist injustice, as well as capitalism and imperialism. Malcolm X was assassinated in February 1965, by men associated with the Nation of Islam, after months of death threats, surveillance by the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), and the firebombing of his home (allegedly by members of the Nation of Islam).

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NOTES

Research and draft for this biography were provided by Martha Oatis.

1. Malcolm X, *The Autobiography of Malcolm X* (New York: Ballantine, 1964), 152.
2. *Autobiography*, 153.

The Ballot or the Bullet *(Abridged)*

April 3, 1964

Mr. Moderator, Brother [Louis E.] Lomax, brothers and sisters, friends and enemies: I just can't believe everyone in here is a friend and I don't want to leave anybody out. The question tonight, as I understand it, is "The Negro Revolt, and Where Do We Go From Here?" or "What Next?" In my little humble way of understanding it, it points toward either the ballot or the bullet.

Before we try and explain what is meant by the ballot or the bullet, I would like to clarify something concerning myself. I'm still a Muslim, my religion is still Islam. That's my personal belief. Just as Adam Clayton Powell is a Christian minister who heads the Abyssinian Baptist Church in New York, but at the same time takes part in the political struggles to try and bring about rights to the black people in this country; and Dr. Martin Luther King is a Christian minister down in Atlanta, Georgia, who heads another organization fighting for the civil rights of black people in this country; and Rev. [Milton] Galamison, I guess you've heard of him, is another Christian minister in New York who has been deeply involved in the school boycotts to eliminate segregated education; well, I myself am a minister, not a Christian minister, but a Muslim minister; and I believe in action on all fronts by whatever means necessary.

Although I'm still a Muslim, I'm not here tonight to discuss my religion. I'm not here to try and change your religion. I'm not here to argue or discuss anything that we differ about, because it's time for us to submerge our differences and realize that it is best for us to first see that we have the same problem, a common problem, a problem that will make you catch hell whether you're a Baptist, or a Methodist, or a Muslim, or a nationalist. Whether you're educated or illiterate, whether you live on the boulevard or in the alley, you're going to catch hell just like I am. We're all in the same boat and we all are going to catch the same hell from the same man. He just happens to be a white man. All of us have suffered here, in this country, political oppression at the hands of the white man, economic exploitation at the hands of the white man, and social degradation at the hands of the white man.

Now in speaking like this, it doesn't mean that we're anti-white, but it does mean we're anti-exploitation, we're anti-degradation, we're anti-oppression. And if the white man doesn't want us to be anti-him, let him stop oppressing and exploiting and degrading us. Whether we are Christians or Muslims or nationalists or agnostics or atheists, we must first learn to forget our differences. If we have differences, let us differ in the closet; when we come out in front, let us not have anything to argue about until we get finished arguing with the man. If the late President [John F.] Kennedy could get together with [Nikita] Khrushchev and exchange some wheat, we certainly have more in common with each other than Kennedy and Khrushchev had with each other.

If we don't do something real soon, I think you'll have to agree that we're going to be forced either to use the ballot or the bullet. It's one or the other in 1964. It isn't that time is running out—time has run out! 1964 threatens to be the most explosive year America has ever witnessed. The most explosive year. Why? It's also a political year. It's the year when all of the white politicians will be back in the so-called Negro community jiving you and me for some votes. The year when all of the white political crooks will be right back in your and my community with their false promises, building up our hopes for a letdown, with their trickery and their treachery, with their false promises which they don't intend to keep. As they nourish these dissatisfactions, it can only lead to one thing, an explosion; and now we have the type of black man on the scene in America today—I'm sorry, Brother Lomax—who just doesn't intend to turn the other cheek any longer.

Don't let anybody tell you anything about "the odds are against you." If they draft you, they send you to Korea and make you face 800 million Chinese. If you can be brave over there, you can be brave right here. These odds aren't as great as those odds. And if you fight here, you will at least know what you're fighting for.

I'm not a politician, not even a student of politics; in fact, I'm not a student of much of anything. I'm not a Democrat, I'm not a Republican, and I don't even consider myself an American. If you and I were Americans, there'd be no problem. Those Hunkies that just got off the boat, they're already Americans; Polacks are already Americans; the Italian refugees are already Americans. Everything that came out of Europe, every blue-eyed thing, is already an American. And as long as you and I have been over here, we aren't Americans yet.

Well, I am one who doesn't believe in deluding myself. I'm not going to sit at your table and watch you eat, with nothing on my plate, and call myself a diner. Sitting at the table doesn't make you a diner, unless you eat some of what's on that plate. Being here in America doesn't make you an American. Being born here in America doesn't make you an American. Why, if birth made you American, you wouldn't need any legislation, you wouldn't need any amendments to the Constitution, you wouldn't be faced with civil-rights filibustering in Washington, D.C., right now. They don't have to pass civil-rights legislation to make a Polack an American.

No, I'm not an American. I'm one of the 22 million black people who are the victims of Americanism. One of the 22 million black people who are the victims of democracy, nothing but disguised hypocrisy. So, I'm not standing here speaking to you as an American, or a patriot, or a flag-saluter, or a flag-waver—no, not I. I'm speaking as a victim of this American system. And I see America through the eyes of the victim. I don't see any American dream; I see an American nightmare.

These 22 million victims are waking up. Their eyes are coming open. They're beginning to see what they used to only look at. They're becoming politically mature. They are realizing that there are new political trends from coast to coast. As they see these new political trends, it's possible for them to see that every time there's an election the races are so close that they have to have a recount. They had to recount in Massachusetts to see who was going to be governor, it was so close. It

was the same way in Rhode Island, in Minnesota, and in many other parts of the country. And the same with [John] Kennedy and [Richard] Nixon when they ran for president. It was so close they had to count all over again.[1] Well, what does this mean? It means that when white people are evenly divided, and black people have a bloc of votes of their own, it is left up to them to determine who's going to sit in the White House and who's going to be in the dog house.

It was the black man's vote that put the present administration [of Lyndon Baines Johnson] in Washington, D.C. Your vote, your dumb vote, your ignorant vote, your wasted vote put in an administration in Washington, D.C., that has seen fit to pass every kind of legislation imaginable, saving you until last, then filibustering on top of that. And your and my leaders have the audacity to run around clapping their hands and talk about how much progress we're making. And what a good president we have. If he wasn't good in Texas, he sure can't be good in Washington, D.C. Because Texas is a lynch state. It is in the same breath as Mississippi, no different; only they lynch you in Texas with a Texas accent and lynch you in Mississippi with a Mississippi accent. And these Negro leaders have the audacity to go and have some coffee in the White House with a Texan, a Southern cracker—that's all he is—and then come out and tell you and me that he's going to be better for us because, since he's from the South, he knows how to deal with the Southerners. What kind of logic is that? Let [Senator James O.] Eastland [D-Mississippi] be president, he's from the South too. He should be better able to deal with them than Johnson.

In this present administration they have in the House of Representatives 257 Democrats to only 177 Republicans. They control two-thirds of the House vote. Why can't they pass something that will help you and me? In the Senate, there are sixty-seven senators who are of the Democratic Party. Only thirty-three of them are Republicans. Why, the Democrats have got the government sewed up, and you're the one who sewed it up for them. And what have they given you for it? Four years in office, and just now getting around to some civil-rights legislation. Just now, after everything else is gone, out of the way, they're going to sit down now and play with you all summer long—the same old giant con game that they call filibuster. All those are in cahoots together. Don't you ever think they're not in cahoots together, for the man that is heading the civil-rights filibuster is a man from Georgia named Richard Russell. When Johnson became president, the first man he asked for when he got back to Washington, D.C., was "Dicky"—that's how tight they are. That's his boy, that's his pal, that's his buddy. But they're playing that old con game. One of them makes believe he's for you, and he's got it fixed where the other one is so tight against you, he never has to keep his promise.

So it's time in 1964 to wake up. And when you see them coming up with that kind of conspiracy, let them know your eyes are open. And let them know you got something else that's wide open too. It's got to be the ballot or the bullet. The ballot or the bullet. If you're afraid to use an expression like that, you should get on out of the country, you should get back in the cotton patch, you should get back in

the alley. They get all the Negro vote, and after they get it, the Negro gets nothing in return. All they did when they got to Washington was give a few big Negroes big jobs. Those big Negroes didn't need big jobs, they already had jobs. That's camouflage, that's trickery, that's treachery, window-dressing. I'm not trying to knock out the Democrats for the Republicans, we'll get to them in a minute. But it is true—you put the Democrats first and the Democrats put you last.

Look at it the way it is. What alibis do they use, since they control Congress and the Senate? What alibi do they use when you and I ask, "Well, when are you going to keep your promise?" They blame the Dixiecrats. What is a Dixiecrat? A Democrat. A Dixiecrat is nothing but a Democrat in disguise. The titular head of the Democrats is also the head of the Dixiecrats, because the Dixiecrats are a part of the Democratic Party. The Democrats have never kicked the Dixiecrats out of the party. The Dixiecrats bolted themselves once, but the Democrats didn't put them out. Imagine, these lowdown Southern segregationists put the Northern Democrats down. But the Northern Democrats have never put the Dixiecrats down. No, look at that thing the way it is. They have got a con game going on, a political con game, and you and I are in the middle. It's time for you and me to wake up and start looking at it like it is, and trying to understand it like it is; and then we can deal with it like it is.

The Dixiecrats in Washington, D.C., control the key committees that run the government. The only reason the Dixiecrats control these committees is because they have seniority. The only reason they have seniority is because they come from states where Negroes can't vote. This is not even a government that's based on democracy. It is not a government that is made up of representatives of the people. Half of the people in the South can't even vote. Eastland is not even supposed to be in Washington. Half of the senators and congressmen who occupy these key positions in Washington, D.C., are there illegally, are there unconstitutionally.

I was in Washington, D.C., a week ago Thursday, when they were debating whether or not they should let the bill come onto the floor. And in the back of the room where the Senate meets, there's a huge map of the United States, and on that map it shows the location of Negroes throughout the country. And it shows that the Southern section of the country, the states that are most heavily concentrated with Negroes, are the ones that have senators and congressmen standing up filibustering and doing all other kinds of trickery to keep the Negro from being able to vote. This is pitiful. But it's not pitiful for us any longer; it's actually pitiful for the white man, because soon now, as the Negro awakens a little more and sees the vise that he's in, sees the bag that he's in, sees the real game that he's in, then the Negro's going to develop a new tactic.

These senators and congressmen actually violate the constitutional amendments that guarantee the people of that particular state or county the right to vote. And the Constitution itself has within it the machinery to expel any representative from a state where the voting rights of the people are violated. You don't even need new legislation. Any person in Congress right now, who is there from a state or a district

where the voting rights of the people are violated, that particular person should be expelled from Congress. And when you expel him, you've removed one of the obstacles in the path of any real meaningful legislation in this country. In fact, when you expel them, you don't need new legislation, because they will be replaced by black representatives from counties and districts where the black man is in the majority, not in the minority.

If the black man in these Southern states had his full voting rights, the key Dixiecrats in Washington, D.C., which means the key Democrats in Washington, D.C., would lose their seats. The Democratic Party itself would lose its power. It would cease to be powerful as a party. When you see the amount of power that would be lost by the Democratic Party if it were to lose the Dixiecrat wing, or branch, or element, you can see where it's against the interests of the Democrats to give voting rights to Negroes in states where the Democrats have been in complete power and authority ever since the Civil War. You just can't belong to that Party without analyzing it.

I say again, I'm not anti-Democrat, I'm not anti-Republican, I'm not anti-anything. I'm just questioning their sincerity, and some of the strategy that they've been using on our people by promising them promises that they don't intend to keep. When you keep the Democrats in power, you're keeping the Dixiecrats in power. I doubt that my good Brother Lomax will deny that. A vote for a Democrat is a vote for a Dixiecrat. That's why, in 1964, it's time now for you and me to become more politically mature and realize what the ballot is for; what we're supposed to get when we cast a ballot; and that if we don't cast a ballot, it's going to end up in a situation where we're going to have to cast a bullet. It's either a ballot or a bullet.

In the North, they do it a different way. They have a system that's known as gerrymandering, whatever that means. It means when Negroes become too heavily concentrated in a certain area, and begin to gain too much political power, the white man comes along and changes the district lines. You may say, "Why do you keep saying white man?" Because it's the white man who does it. I haven't ever seen any Negro changing any lines. They don't let him get near the line. It's the white man who does this. And usually, it's the white man who grins at you the most, and pats you on the back, and is supposed to be your friend. He may be friendly, but he's not your friend.

So, what I'm trying to impress upon you, in essence, is this: You and I in America are faced not with a segregationist conspiracy, we're faced with a government conspiracy. Everyone who's filibustering is a senator—that's the government. Everyone who's finagling in Washington, D.C., is a congressman—that's the government. You don't have anybody putting blocks in your path but people who are a part of the government. The same government that you go abroad to fight for and die for is the government that is in a conspiracy to deprive you of your voting rights, deprive you of your economic opportunities, deprive you of decent housing, deprive you of decent education. You don't need to go to the employer alone, it is the government

itself, the government of America, that is responsible for the oppression and exploitation and degradation of black people in this country. And you should drop it in their lap. This government has failed the Negro. This so-called democracy has failed the Negro. And all these white liberals have definitely failed the Negro.

So, where do we go from here? First, we need some friends. We need some new allies. The entire civil-rights struggle needs a new interpretation, a broader interpretation. We need to look at this civil-rights thing from another angle—from the inside as well as from the outside. To those of us whose philosophy is black nationalism, the only way you can get involved in the civil-rights struggle is to give it a new interpretation. That old interpretation excluded us. It kept us out. So, we're giving a new interpretation to the civil-rights struggle, an interpretation that will enable us to come into it, take part in it. And these handkerchief-heads who have been dillydallying and pussyfooting and compromising—we don't intend to let them pussyfoot and dillydally and compromise any longer.

How can you thank a man for giving you what's already yours? How then can you thank him for giving you only part of what's already yours? You haven't even made progress if what's being given to you, you should have had already. That's not progress. And I love my Brother Lomax, the way he pointed out we're right back where we were in 1954. We're not even as far up as we were in 1954. We're behind where we were in 1954. There's more segregation now than there was in 1954. There's more racial animosity, more racial hatred, more racial violence today in 1964, than there was in 1954. Where is the progress?

And now you're facing a situation where the young Negro's coming up. They don't want to hear that "turn-the-other-cheek" stuff, no. In Jacksonville, those were teenagers, they were throwing Molotov cocktails.[2] Negroes have never done that before. But it shows you there's a new deal coming in. There's new thinking coming in. There's new strategy coming in. It'll be Molotov cocktails this month, hand grenades next month, and something else next month. It'll be ballots, or it'll be bullets. It'll be liberty, or it will be death. The only difference about this kind of death—it'll be reciprocal. You know what is meant by "reciprocal"? That's one of Brother Lomax's words, I stole it from him. I don't usually deal with those big words because I don't usually deal with big people. I deal with small people. I find you can get a whole lot of small people and whip hell out of a whole lot of big people. They haven't got anything to lose, and they've got every thing to gain. And they'll let you know in a minute: "It takes two to tango; when I go, you go."

The black nationalists, those whose philosophy is black nationalism, in bringing about this new interpretation of the entire meaning of civil rights, look upon it as meaning, as Brother Lomax has pointed out, equality of opportunity. Well, we're justified in seeking civil rights, if it means equality of opportunity, because all we're doing there is trying to collect for our investment. Our mothers and fathers invested sweat and blood. Three hundred and ten years we worked in this country without a dime in return—I mean without a dime in return. You let the white man walk

around here talking about how rich this country is, but you never stop to think how it got rich so quick. It got rich because you made it rich.

You take the people who are in this audience right now. They're poor, we're all poor as individuals. Our weekly salary individually amounts to hardly anything. But if you take the salary of everyone in here collectively it'll fill up a whole lot of baskets. It's a lot of wealth. If you can collect the wages of just these people right here for a year, you'll be rich—richer than rich. When you look at it like that, think how rich Uncle Sam had to become, not with this handful, but millions of black people. Your and my mother and father, who didn't work an eight-hour shift, but worked from "can't see" in the morning until "can't see" at night, and worked for nothing, making the white man rich, making Uncle Sam rich.

This is our investment. This is our contribution—our blood. Not only did we give of our free labor, we gave of our blood. Every time he had a call to arms, we were the first ones in uniform. We died on every battlefield the white man had. We have made a greater sacrifice than anybody who's standing up in America today. We have made a greater contribution and have collected less. Civil rights, for those of us whose philosophy is black nationalism, means: "Give it to us now. Don't wait for next year. Give it to us yesterday, and that's not fast enough."

I might stop right here to point out one thing. Whenever you're going after something that belongs to you, anyone who's depriving you of the right to have it is a criminal. Understand that. Whenever you are going after something that is yours, you are within your legal rights to lay claim to it. And anyone who puts forth any effort to deprive you of that which is yours, is breaking the law, is a criminal. And this was pointed out by the Supreme Court decision. It outlawed segregation. Which means segregation is against the law. Which means a segregationist is breaking the law. A segregationist is a criminal. You can't label him as anything other than that. And when you demonstrate against segregation, the law is on your side. The Supreme Court is on your side.

Now, who is it that opposes you in carrying out the law? The police department itself. With police dogs and clubs. Whenever you demonstrate against segregation, whether it is segregated education, segregated housing, or anything else, the law is on your side, and anyone who stands in the way is not the law any longer. They are breaking the law, they are not representatives of the law. Any time you demonstrate against segregation and a man has the audacity to put a police dog on you, kill that dog, kill him, I'm telling you, kill that dog. I say it, if they put me in jail tomorrow, kill that dog. Then you'll put a stop to it. Now, if these white people in here don't want to see that kind of action, get down and tell the mayor to tell the police department to pull the dogs in. That's all you have to do. If you don't do it, someone else will.

If you don't take this kind of stand, your little children will grow up and look at you and think "shame." If you don't take an uncompromising stand—I don't mean go out and get violent; but at the same time you should never be nonviolent unless you run into some nonviolence. I'm nonviolent with those who are nonviolent

with me. But when you drop that violence on me, then you've made me go insane, and I'm not responsible for what I do. And that's the way every Negro should get. Any time you know you're within the law, within your legal rights, within your moral rights, in accord with justice, then die for what you believe in. But don't die alone. Let your dying be reciprocal. This is what is meant by equality. What's good for the goose is good for the gander.

When we begin to get in this area, we need new friends, we need new allies. We need to expand the civil-rights struggle to a higher level—to the level of human rights. Whenever you are in a civil-rights struggle, whether you know it or not, you are confining yourself to the jurisdiction of Uncle Sam. No one from the outside world can speak out in your behalf as long as your struggle is a civil-rights struggle. Civil rights comes within the domestic affairs of this country. All of our African brothers and our Asian brothers and our Latin-American brothers cannot open their mouths and interfere in the domestic affairs of the United States. And as long as it's civil rights, this comes under the jurisdiction of Uncle Sam.

But the United Nations [UN] has what's known as the charter of human rights, it has a committee that deals in human rights. You may wonder why all of the atrocities that have been committed in Africa and in Hungary and in Asia and in Latin America are brought before the UN, and the Negro problem is never brought before the UN. This is part of the conspiracy. This old, tricky, blue-eyed liberal who is supposed to be your and my friend, supposed to be in our corner, supposed to be subsidizing our struggle, and supposed to be acting in the capacity of an adviser, never tells you anything about human rights. They keep you wrapped up in civil rights. And you spend so much time barking up the civil-rights tree, you don't even know there's a human-rights tree on the same floor.

When you expand the civil-rights struggle to the level of human rights, you can then take the case of the black man in this country before the nations in the UN. You can take it before the General Assembly.[3] You can take Uncle Sam before a world court. But the only level you can do it on is the level of human rights. Civil rights keeps you under his restrictions, under his jurisdiction. Civil rights keeps you in his pocket. Civil rights means you're asking Uncle Sam to treat you right. Human rights are some thing you were born with. Human rights are your God given rights. Human rights are the rights that are recognized by all nations of this earth. And any time any one violates your human rights, you can take them to the world court. Uncle Sam's hands are dripping with blood, dripping with the blood of the black man in this country. He's the earth's number-one hypocrite. He has the audacity—yes, he has—imagine him posing as the leader of the free world. The free world! And you over here singing "We Shall Overcome." Expand the civil-rights struggle to the level of human rights, take it into the United Nations, where our African brothers can throw their weight on our side, where our Asian brothers can throw their weight on our side, where our Latin-American brothers can throw their weight on our side, and where 800 million Chinamen are sitting there waiting to throw their weight on our side.

Let the world know how bloody his hands are. Let the world know the hypocrisy that's practiced over here. Let it be the ballot or the bullet. Let him know that it must be the ballot or the bullet.

When you take your case to Washington, D.C., you're taking it to the criminal who's responsible; it's like running from the wolf to the fox. They're all in cahoots together. They all work political chicanery and make you look like a chump before the eyes of the world. Here you are walking around in America, getting ready to be drafted and sent abroad, like a tin soldier, and when you get over there, people ask you what are you fighting for, and you have to stick your tongue in your cheek. No, take Uncle Sam to court, take him before the world.

By ballot I only mean freedom. Don't you know—I disagree with Lomax on this issue—that the ballot is more important than the dollar? Can I prove it? Yes. Look in the UN. There are poor nations in the UN; yet those poor nations can get together with their voting power and keep the rich nations from making a move. They have one nation—one vote, everyone has an equal vote. And when those brothers from Asia and Africa and the darker parts of this earth get together, their voting power is sufficient to hold Sam in check. Or Russia in check. Or some other section of the earth in check. So, the ballot is most important.

Right now, in this country, if you and I, 22 million African-Americans—that's what we are—Africans who are in America. You're nothing but Africans. Nothing but Africans. In fact, you'd get farther calling yourself African instead of Negro. Africans don't catch hell. You're the only one catching hell. They don't have to pass civil-rights bills for Africans. An African can go anywhere he wants right now. All you've got to do is tie your head up. That's right, go anywhere you want. Just stop being a Negro. Change your name to Hoogagagooba. That'll show you how silly the white man is. You're dealing with a silly man. A friend of mine who's very dark put a turban on his head and went into a restaurant in Atlanta before they called themselves desegregated. He went into a white restaurant, he sat down, they served him, and he said, "What would happen if a Negro came in here?" And there he's sitting, black as night, but because he had his head wrapped up the waitress looked back at him and says, "Why, there wouldn't no nigger dare come in here."

So, you're dealing with a man whose bias and prejudice are making him lose his mind, his intelligence, every day. He's frightened. He looks around and sees what's taking place on this earth, and he sees that the pendulum of time is swinging in your direction. The dark people are waking up. They're losing their fear of the white man. No place where he's fighting right now is he winning. Everywhere he's fighting, he's fighting someone your and my complexion. And they're beating him. He can't win any more. He's won his last battle. He failed to win the Korean War. He couldn't win it. He had to sign a truce. That's a loss. Any time Uncle Sam, with all his machinery for warfare, is held to a draw by some rice eaters, he's lost the battle. He had to sign a truce. America's not supposed to sign a truce. She's supposed to be bad. But she's not bad any more. She's bad as long as she can use her hydrogen bomb, but she can't use hers for fear Russia might use hers. Russia can't use hers,

for fear that Sam might use his. So, both of them are weaponless. They can't use the weapon because each's weapon nullifies the other's. So the only place where action can take place is on the ground. And the white man can't win another war fighting on the ground. Those days are over. The black man knows it, the brown man knows it, the red man knows it, and the yellow man knows it. So they engage him in guerrilla warfare. That's not his style. You've got to have heart to be a guerrilla warrior, and he hasn't got any heart. I'm telling you now.

I just want to give you a little briefing on guerrilla warfare. It takes heart to be a guerrilla warrior because you're on your own. In conventional warfare you have tanks and a whole lot of other people with you to back you up, planes over your head and all that kind of stuff. But a guerrilla is on his own. All you have is a rifle, some sneakers and a bowl of rice, and that's all you need—and a lot of heart. The Japanese on some of those islands in the Pacific [during World War II], when the American soldiers landed, one Japanese sometimes could hold the whole army off. He'd just wait until the sun went down, and when the sun went down they were all equal. He would take his little blade and slip from bush to bush, and from American to American. The white soldiers couldn't cope with that. Whenever you see a white soldier that fought in the Pacific, he has the shakes, he has a nervous condition, because they scared him to death.

The same thing happened to the French up in French Indochina [Vietnam]. People who just a few years previously were rice farmers got together and ran the heavily-mechanized French army out of Indochina. You don't need it—modern warfare today won't work. This is the day of the guerrilla. They did the same thing in Algeria. Algerians, who were nothing but Bedouins, took a knife and sneaked off to the hills, and [Charles] de Gaulle and all of his highfalutin' war machinery couldn't defeat those guerrillas. Nowhere on this earth does the white man win in guerrilla warfare. It's not his speed. Just as guerrilla warfare is prevailing in Asia and in parts of Africa and in parts of Latin America, you've got to be mighty naive, or you've got to play the black man cheap, if you don't think some day he's going to wake up and find that it's got to be the ballot or the bullet.

I would like to say, in closing, a few things concerning the Muslim Mosque, Inc., which we established recently in New York City. It's true we're Muslims and our religion is Islam, but we don't mix our religion with our politics and our economics and our social and civil activities—not any more. We keep our religion in our mosque. After our religious services are over, then as Muslims we become involved in political action, economic action and social and civic action. We become involved with anybody, anywhere, any time and in any manner that's designed to eliminate the evils, the political, economic and social evils that are afflicting the people of our community.

The political philosophy of black nationalism means that the black man should control the politics and the politicians in his own community; no more. The black man in the black community has to be re-educated into the science of politics so he will know what politics is supposed to bring him in return. Don't be throwing

out any ballots. A ballot is like a bullet. You don't throw your ballots until you see a target, and if that target is not within your reach, keep your ballot in your pocket. The political philosophy of black nationalism is being taught in the Christian church. It's being taught in the NAACP. It's being taught in CORE meetings. It's being taught in SNCC—Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee—meetings. It's being taught in Muslim meetings. It's being taught where nothing but atheists and agnostics come together. It's being taught everywhere. Black people are fed up with the dillydallying, pussyfooting, compromising approach that we've been using toward getting our freedom. We want freedom now, but we're not going to get it saying "We Shall Overcome." We've got to fight until we overcome.

NOTES

Originally published in *Malcolm X Speaks: Selected Speeches and Statements*, ed. George Breitman (New York: Merit, 1965), 23–44.

1. *Editor's note:* In the 1960 presidential election between John F. Kennedy and Richard Nixon, Kennedy won the popular vote by a 49.7 to 49.5 percent margin and the electoral vote 303 to 219. Nixon did not demand a recount, but in his next campaign, as protection against fraud, he organized 100,000 poll watchers, headed by a former FBI official. Richard Nixon was elected president in 1968 and 1972 and resigned under threat of impeachment in 1974. Melvin Small, *The Presidency of Richard Nixon* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1999), 21.

2. *Editor's note:* During the Jacksonville, Florida, uprisings of 1960 and 1964, the African American community used tactics of heightened militancy in order to protest the continual discrimination and segregation of their community. On August 27, 1960, an African American youth was attacked by a Ku Klux Klan member, and the police did not intervene. When the Klansmen continued to chase teens into the African American neighborhood, the Boomerang gang, armed with guns, sticks, and Molotov cocktails, retaliated until the Klansmen retreated. In 1964, the African American community again protested against racial oppression and violence. A civil rights worker's home was bombed by Klansmen on February 16. The urban uprisings that followed that March used such tactics as the hit-and-run strategy: protesting in a location and then leaving before the police arrived. Youth armed with rocks and firebombs directed at buildings were also involved in the protests. Abel A. Bartley, *Keeping the Faith: Race, Politics, and Social Development in Jacksonville, Florida* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood, 2000), 101, 105–11.

3. *Editor's note:* In 1964, Malcolm X spoke before the Organization of African Unity charging the United States with genocide against African American people. Genocide was first charged to the United Nations on December 17, 1951, by William L. Patterson and Paul Robeson, who originated and delivered a petition entitled "We Charge Genocide!"

Chapter Three

Angela Y. Davis

Angela Y. Davis was born in Birmingham, Alabama, in 1944. She grew up in the southern United States under Jim Crow segregation and codified racial discrimination. During the late 1940s, her family integrated a neighborhood that subsequently became known as "Dynamite Hill" because of Ku Klux Klan terrorism against African American families integrating the previously all-white community. Davis left the South in 1959 for Manhattan where, under the auspices of a Quaker educational program, she lived with a white family and attended a progressive private high school. At age fifteen, she became active in a youth organization associated with the Communist Party USA. Attending Brandeis University as an undergraduate, Davis studied with Marxist philosopher Herbert Marcuse, and took her junior year in France at the Sorbonne. Terrorist acts against civil rights activists, particularly the Birmingham church bombing in 1963 where playmates of Davis's younger sister Fania were murdered, provided the radicalizing impetus to eventually end her European studies. Torn between the desire to learn from different national cultures and political systems and the need to join "the movement," Davis decided not to pursue a doctorate at Goethe University in Frankfurt, Germany, choosing instead to return to the United States to work with Marcuse at the University of California-San Diego.

The search for human rights, more far-reaching than the civil and electoral rights supposedly guaranteed under the U.S. Constitution and in its amendments, led Davis to the Black Panther Party. After a period of involvement with the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee, Davis simultaneously joined the Black Panther Party and the Communist Party USA. Her relationship with the former was always much more problematic. She describes her affiliation with the Panther organization as a permanently ambiguous status that fluctuated between member and fellow-traveler. In 1969, she came to national attention after being removed from her teaching position in the Philosophy Department at the University of California-Los Angeles because of her social activism and membership in the Communist Party.

Davis's long-standing commitment to prisoners' rights dates back to her involvement in the campaign to free the California prisoners known as the Soledad Brothers, which led to her own arrest and imprisonment. In 1970 she was placed on the FBI's Ten Most Wanted List on false charges connected to the attempt by seventeen-year-old Jonathan Jackson to secure the release of his elder brother, George Jackson, and the other Soledad Brothers by taking hostages at the Marin County courthouse, using guns registered in the name of Angela Davis. The Marin County confrontation resulted in the deaths of Jonathan Jackson, Judge Harold Haley, and prisoners James McClain and William Christmas by guards following official policy to prevent escapes regardless of casualties. Davis became the subject of an intense police and Federal Bureau of Investigation search that drove her underground and culminated in one of the most famous trials in recent U.S. history. During her sixteen months of incarceration, a massive international "Free Angela Davis" campaign was organized; she was acquitted of all charges in 1972.

An advocate of human rights and a critic of repression, racism, and sexism in the criminal justice system, in 1997, Angela Davis cofounded Critical Resistance, an organization for prison abolition. A professor in the History of Consciousness Program at the University of California-Santa Cruz, her publications include: *Women, Race & Class; Women, Culture & Politics; Blues Legacies and Black Feminisms;* and *If They Come in the Morning: Voices of Resistance* (coedited with Bettina Aptheker). Her essays, spanning thirty years of activism and writing, are collected in *The Angela Y. Davis Reader*.

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Political Prisoners, Prisons, and Black Liberation

May 1971

Despite a long history of exalted appeals to man's inherent right to resistance, there has seldom been agreement on how to relate in practice to unjust immoral laws and the oppressive social order from which they emanate. The conservative, who does not dispute the validity of revolutions deeply buried in history, invokes visions of impending anarchy in order to legitimize his demand for absolute obedience. Law and order, with the major emphasis on order, is his watchword. The liberal articulates his sensitivity to certain of society's intolerable details, but will almost never prescribe methods of resistance that exceed the limits of legality—redress through electoral channels is the liberal's panacea.

In the heat of our pursuit of fundamental human rights, black people have been continually cautioned to be patient. We are advised that as long as we remain faithful to the existing democratic order, the glorious moment will eventually arrive when we will come into our own as full-fledged human beings.

But having been taught by bitter experience, we know that there is a glaring incongruity between democracy and the capitalist economy which is the source of our ills. Regardless of all rhetoric to the contrary, the people are not the ultimate matrix of the laws and the system which govern them—certainly not black people and other nationally oppressed people, but not even the mass of whites. The people do not exercise decisive control over the determining factors of their lives.

Officials' assertions that meaningful dissent is always welcome, provided it falls within the boundaries of legality, are frequently a smokescreen obscuring the invitation to acquiesce in oppression. Slavery may have been un-righteous, the constitutional precision for the enslavement of blacks may have been unjust, but conditions were not to be considered so unbearable (especially since they were profitable to a small circle) as to justify escape and other acts proscribed by law. This was the import of the fugitive slave laws.[1]

Needless to say, the history of the Unites States has been marred from its inception by an enormous quantity of unjust laws, far too many expressly bolstering the oppression of black people. Particularized reflections of existing social inequities, these laws have repeatedly borne witness to the exploitative and racist core of the society itself. For blacks, Chicanos, for all nationally oppressed people, the problem of opposing unjust laws and the social conditions which nourish their growth has always had immediate practical implications. Our very survival has frequently been a direct function of our skill in forging effective channels of resistance. In resisting we as societies have been compelled to openly violate those laws which directly or indirectly buttress our oppression. But even containing our resistance within the

orbit of legality, we have been labeled criminals and have been methodically persecuted by a racist legal apparatus.

Under the ruthless conditions of slavery, the underground railroad provided the framework for extra-legal anti-slavery activity pursued by vast numbers of people, both black and white. Its functioning was in flagrant violation of the fugitive slave law; those who were apprehended were subjected to severe penalties. Of the innumerable recorded attempts to rescue fugitive slaves from the clutches of slave catchers, one of the most striking is the case of Anthony Burns, a slave from Virginia, captured in Boston in 1853. A team of his supporters, in attempting to rescue him by force during the course of his trial, engaged the police in a fierce courtroom battle. During the gun-fight, a prominent Abolitionist, Thomas Wentworth Higginson, was wounded. Although the rescuers were unsuccessful in their efforts, the impact of this incident ". . . did more to crystallize Northern sentiment against slavery than any other except the exploit of John Brown, 'and this was the last time a fugitive slave was taken from Boston. It took twenty-two companies of state militia, four platoons of marines, a battalion of United States artillerymen, and the city's police force . . . to ensure the performance of this shameful act, the cost of which, the Federal government alone, came to forty thousand dollars.'"[2]

Throughout the era of slavery, blacks, as well as progressive whites, repeatedly discovered that their commitment to the anti-slavery cause frequently entailed the overt violation of the laws of the land. Even as slavery faded away into a more subtle yet equally pernicious apparatus to dominate black people, "illegal" resistance was still on the agenda. After the Civil War, Black Codes, successors to the old Slave Codes, legalized convict labor, prohibited social intercourse between blacks and whites, gave white employers an excessive degree of control over the private lives of black workers, and generally codified racism and terror. Naturally, numerous individual as well as collective acts of resistance prevailed. On many occasions, blacks formed armed teams to protect themselves from white terrorists who were, in turn, protected by law enforcement agencies, if not actually identified with them.

By the second decade of the twentieth century, the mass movement, headed by Marcus Garvey, proclaimed in its Declaration of Rights that black people should not hesitate to disobey all discriminatory laws. Moreover, the Declaration announced, they should utilize all means available to them, legal or illegal, to defend themselves from legalized terror as well as Ku Klux Klan violence. During the era of intense activity around civil rights issues, systematic disobedience of oppressive laws was a primary tactic. The sit-ins were organized transgressions of racist legislation.

All these historical instances involving the overt violation of the laws of the land converge around an unmistakable common denominator. At stake has been the collective welfare and survival of a people. There is a distinct and qualitative difference between one breaking a law for one's own individual self-interest and violating it in the interests of a class of people whose oppression is expressed either directly or indirectly through that particular law. The former might be called criminal (though

in many instances he is a victim), but the latter, as a reformist or revolutionary, is interested in universal social change. Captured, he or she is a political prisoner.

The political prisoner's words or deed have in one form or another embodied political protests against the established order and have consequently brought him into acute conflict with the state. In light of the political content of his act, the "crime" (which may or may not have been committed) assumes a minor importance. In this country, however, where the special category of political prisoners is not officially acknowledged, the political prisoner inevitably stands trial for a specific criminal offense, not for a political act. Often the so-called crime does not even have a nominal existence. As in the 1914 murder frame-up of the IWW [Industrial Workers of the World] organizer, Joe Hill, it is a blatant fabrication, a mere excuse for silencing a militant crusader against oppression. In all instances, however, the political prisoner has violated the unwritten law which prohibits disturbances and upheavals in the status quo of exploitation and racism. This unwritten law has been contested by actually and explicitly breaking a law or by utilizing constitutionally protected channels to educate, agitate, and organize masses to resist.

A deep-seated ambivalence has always characterized the official response to the political prisoner. Charged and tried for the criminal act, his guilt is always political in nature. This ambivalence is perhaps best captured by Judge Webster Thayer's comment upon sentencing Bartolomeo Vanzetti to fifteen years for an attempted payroll robbery: "This man, although he may not have actually committed the crime attributed to him, is nevertheless morally culpable, because he is an enemy of our existing institutions." (The very same judge incidentally, sentences Sacco and Vanzetti[3] to death for a robbery and murder of which they were manifestly innocent.)[4] It is not surprising that Nazi Germany's foremost constitutional lawyer, Carl Schmitt, advanced the theory which generalized this a priori culpability. A thief, for example, was not necessarily one who had committed an overt act of theft, but rather one whose character renders him a thief *(wer nach seinem wesen ein Dieb ist)*. [President Richard] Nixon's and [FBI Director] J. Edgar Hoover's pronouncements lead one to believe that they would readily accept Schmitt's fascist legal theory. Anyone who seeks to overthrow oppressive institutions, whether or not he has engaged in an overt act, is a priori a criminal who must be buried away in one of America's dungeons.

Even in all of Martin Luther King's numerous arrests, he was not so much charged with the nominal crimes of trespassing, and disturbance of the peace, as with being an enemy of the southern society, an inveterate foe of racism. When Robert Williams[5] was accused of kidnapping, this charge never managed to conceal his real offense—the advocacy of black people's incontestable right to bear arms in their own defense.

The offense of the political prisoner is political boldness, the persistent challenging—legally or extra-legally—of fundamental social wrongs fostered and reinforced by the state. The political prisoner has opposed unjust laws and exploitative, racist

social conditions in general, with the ultimate aim of transforming these laws and this society into an order harmonious with the material and spiritual needs and interests of the vast majority of its members.

Nat Turner and John Brown were political prisoners in their time. The acts for which they were charged and subsequently hanged, were the practical extensions of their profound commitment to the abolition of slavery. They fearlessly bore the responsibility for their actions. The significance of their executions and the accompanying widespread repression did not lie so much in the fact that they were being punished for specific crimes, nor even in the effort to use their punishment as an implicit threat to deter others from similar *armed* acts of resistance. These executions, and the surrounding repression of slaves, were intended to terrorize the anti-slavery movement in general; to discourage and diminish both legal and illegal forms of abolitionist activity. As usual, the effect of repression was miscalculated and in both instances, anti-slavery activity was accelerated and intensified as a result.

Nat Turner and John Brown can be viewed as examples of the political prisoner who has actually committed an act which is defined by the state as "criminal." They killed and were consequently tried for murder. But did they commit murder? This raises the question of whether American revolutionaries had *murdered* the British in their struggle for liberation. Nat Turner and his followers killed some sixty-five white people, yet shortly before the revolt had begun, Nat is reputed to have said to the other rebelling slaves: "Remember that ours is not war for robbery nor to satisfy our passions, it is a *struggle for freedom*. Ours must be deeds and not words."[6]

The very institutions which condemned Nat Turner and reduced his struggle for freedom to a simpler criminal case of murder, owed their existence to the decision, made a half-century earlier, to take up arms against the British oppressor.

The battle for the liquidation of slavery had no legitimate existence in the eyes of the government and therefore the special quality of deeds carried out in the interests of freedom was deliberately ignored. There were no political prisoners, there were only criminals; just as the movement out of which these deeds flowed was largely considered criminal.

Likewise, the significance of activities which are pursued in the interests of liberation today is minimized not so much because officials are unable to *see* the collective surge against oppression, but because they have consciously set out to subvert such movements. In the Spring of 1970, Los Angeles Panthers took up arms to defend themselves from an assault initiated by the local police force on their office and on their persons. They were charged with criminal assault. If one believed the official propaganda, they were bandits and rogues who pathologically found pleasure in attacking policemen. It was not mentioned that their community activities—educational work, services such as free breakfast and free medical programs—which had legitimized them in the black community, were the immediate reason for which the wrath of the police had fallen upon them. In defending themselves from the attack waged by some 600 policemen (there were only eleven Panthers in the office)

they were defending not only their lives, but even more importantly their accomplishments in the black community surrounding them, and in the broader thrust for black liberation. Whenever blacks in struggle have recourse to self-defense, particularly armed self-defense, it is twisted and distorted on official levels and ultimately rendered synonymous with criminal aggression. On the other hand, when policemen are clearly indulging in acts of criminal aggression, officially they are defending themselves through "justifiable assault" or "justifiable homicide."

The ideological acrobatics characteristic of official attempts to explain away the existence of the political prisoner do not end with the equation of the individual political act with the individual criminal act. The political act is defined as criminal in order to discredit radical and revolutionary movements. A political event is reduced to a criminal event in order to affirm the absolute invulnerability of the existing order. In a revealing contradiction, the court resisted the description of the New York Panther 21[7] trial as "political," yet the prosecutor entered as evidence of criminal intent, literature which represented, so he purported, the political ideology of the Black Panther Party.

The legal apparatus designates the black liberation fighter a criminal, prompting Nixon, [Vice President Spiro] Agnew, [California Governor Ronald] Reagan et al. to proceed to mystify with their demagogy millions of Americans whose senses have been dulled and whose critical powers have been eroded by the continual onslaught of racist ideology.

As the black liberation movement and other progressive struggles increase in magnitude and intensity, the judicial system and its extension, the penal system, consequently become key weapons in the state's fight to preserve the existing conditions of class domination, and therefore racism, poverty and war.

In 1951, W. E. B. Du Bois, as Chairman of the Peace Information Center, was indicted by the federal government for "failure to register as an agent of a foreign principal." In assessing this ordeal, which occurred in the ninth decade of his life, he turned his attention to the inhabitants of the nation's jails and prisons:

> What turns me cold in all this experience is the certainty that thousands of innocent victims are in jail today because they had neither money nor friends to help them. The eyes of the world were on our trial despite the desperate efforts of press and radio to suppress the facts and cloud the real issues; the courage and money of friends and of strangers who dared stand for a principle freed me; but God only knows how many who were as innocent as I and my colleagues are today in hell. They daily stagger out of prison doors embittered, vengeful, hopeless, ruined. And of this army of the wronged, the proportion of Negroes is frightful. We protect and defend sensational cases where Negroes are involved. But the great mass of arrested or accused black folk have no defense. There is desperate need of nationwide organizations to oppose this national racket of railroading to jails and chain gangs the poor, friendless and black.[8]

Almost two decades passed before the realization attained by Du Bois on the occasion of his own encounter with the judicial system achieved extensive acceptance. A number of factors have combined to transform the penal system into a prominent terrain of struggle, both for the captives inside and the masses outside. The impact of large numbers of political prisoners both on prison populations and on the mass movement has been decisive. The vast majority of political prisoners have not allowed the fact of imprisonment to curtail their educational, agitational, and organizing activities, which they continue behind prison walls. And in the course of developing mass movements around political prisoners, a great deal of attention has inevitably been focused on the institutions in which they are imprisoned. Furthermore the political receptivity of prisoners—especially black and brown captives—has been increased and sharpened by the surge of aggressive political activity rising out of black, Chicano, and other oppressed communities. Finally, a major catalyst for intensified political action in and around prisons has emerged out of the transformation of convicts, originally found guilty of criminal offenses, into exemplary political militants. Their patient educational efforts in the realm of exposing the specific oppressive structures of the penal system in their relation to the larger oppression of the social system have had a profound effect on their fellow captives.

The prison is a key component of the state's coercive apparatus, the overriding function of which is to ensure social control. The etymology of the term "penitentiary" furnishes a clue to the controlling idea behind the "prison system" at its inception. The penitentiary was projected as the locale for doing penitence for an offense against society, the physical and spiritual purging of proclivities to challenge rules and regulations which command total obedience. While cloaking itself with the bourgeois aura of universality—imprisonment was supposed to cut across all class lines, as crimes were to be defined by the act, not the perpetrator—the prison has actually operated as an instrument of class domination, a means of prohibiting the have-nots from encroaching upon the haves.

The occurrence of crime is inevitable in a society in which wealth is unequally distributed, as one of the constant reminders that society's productive forces are being channeled in the wrong direction. The majority of criminal offenses bear a direct relationship to property. Contained in the very concept of property, crimes are profound but suppressed social needs which express themselves in anti-social modes of action. Spontaneously produced by a capitalist organization of society, this type of crime is at once a protest against society and a desire to partake of its exploitative content. It challenges the symptoms of capitalism, but not its essence.

Some Marxists in recent years have tended to banish "criminals" and the lumpenproletariat as a whole from the arena of revolutionary struggle. Apart from the absence of any link binding the criminal to the means of production, underlying this exclusion has been the assumption that individuals who have recourse to anti-social acts are incapable of developing the discipline and collective orientation required by revolutionary struggle.

With the declassed character of lumpenproletarians in mind, Marx had stated that they are as capable of "the most heroic deeds and the most exalted sacrifices,

as of the basest banditry and the dirtiest corruption."[9] He emphasized the fact that the provisional government's mobile guards under the Paris Commune—some 24,000 troops—were largely formed out of young lumpenproletarians from fifteen to twenty years of age. Too many Marxists have been inclined to overvalue the second part of Marx's observation—that the lumpenproletariat is capable of the basest banditry and the dirtiest corruption—while minimizing or indeed totally disregarding his first remark, applauding the lumpen for their heroic deeds and exalted sacrifices.

Especially today when so many black, Chicano, and Puerto Rican men and women are jobless as a consequence of the internal dynamic of the capitalist system, the role of the unemployed, which includes the lumpenproletariat, in revolutionary struggle must be given serious thought. Increased unemployment, particularly for the nationally oppressed, will continue to be an inevitable by-product of technological development. At least thirty percent of black youth are presently without jobs.[10] In the context of class exploitation and national oppression it should be clear that numerous individuals are compelled to resort to criminal acts, not as a result of conscious choice—implying other alternatives—but because society has objectively reduced their possibilities of subsistence and survival to this level. This recognition should signal the urgent need to organize the unemployed and lumpenproletariat, as indeed the Black Panther Party as well as activists in prison have already begun to do.

In evaluating the susceptibility of the black and brown unemployed to organizing efforts, the peculiar historical features of the US, specifically racism and national oppression, must be taken into account. There already exists in the black and brown communities, the lumpenproletariat included, a long tradition of collective resistance to national oppression.

Moreover, in assessing the revolutionary potential of prisoners in America as a group, it should be borne in mind that not all prisoners have actually committed crimes. The built-in racism of the judicial system expresses itself, as Du Bois has suggested, in the railroading of countless innocent blacks and other national minorities into the country's coercive institutions.

One must also appreciate the effects of disproportionately long prison terms on black and brown inmates. The typical criminal mentality sees imprisonment as a calculated risk for a particular criminal act. One's prison term is more or less rationally predictable. The function of racism in the judicial-penal complex is to shatter that predictability. The black burglar, anticipating a two-to-four-year term, may end up doing ten to fifteen years, while the white burglar leaves after two years.

Within the contained, coercive universe of the prison, the captive is confronted with the realities of racism, not simply as individual acts dictated by attitudinal bias; rather he is compelled to come to grips with racism as an institutional phenomenon collectively experienced by the victims. The disproportionate representation of the black and brown communities, the manifest racism of parole boards, the intense brutality inherent in the relationship between prison guards and black and brown

inmates—all this and more causes the prisoner to be confronted daily, hourly, with the concentrated systematic existence of racism.

For the innocent prisoner, the process of radicalization should come easy; for the "guilty" victim, the insight into the nature of racism as it manifests itself in the judicial-penal complex can lead to a questioning of his own past criminal activity and a re-evaluation of the methods he has used to survive in a racist and exploitative society. Needless to say, this process is not automatic, it does not occur spontaneously. The persistent educational work carried out by the prison's political activists plays a key role in developing the political potential of captive men and women.

Prisoners—especially blacks, Chicanos and Puerto Ricans—are increasingly advancing the proposition that they are *political* prisoners. They contend that they are political prisoners in the sense that they are largely the victims of an oppressive politico-economic order, swiftly becoming conscious of the causes underlying their victimization. The *Folsom Prisoners' Manifesto of Demands and Anti-Oppression Platform*[11] attests to a lucid understanding of the structures of oppression within the prison—structures which contradict even the avowed function of the penal institution: "The program we are submitted to, under the ridiculous title of rehabilitation, is relative to the ancient stupidity of pouring water on the drowning man, in as much as we are treated for our hostilities by our program administrators with their hostility for medication." The *Manifesto* also reflects an awareness that the severe social crisis taking place in this country, predicated in part on the ever-increasing mass consciousness of deepening social contradictions, is forcing the political function of the prisons to surface in all its brutality. Their contention that prisons are being transformed into the "fascist concentration camps of modern America," should not be taken lightly, although it would be erroneous as well as defeatist in a practical sense, to maintain that fascism has irremediably established itself.

The point is this, and this is the truth which is apparent in the *Manifesto:* the ruling circles of America are expanding and intensifying repressive measures designed to nip revolutionary movements in the bud as well as to curtail radical-democratic tendencies, such as the movement to end the war in Indochina. The government is not hesitating to utilize an entire network of fascist tactics, including the monitoring of congressmen's telephone calls, a system of "preventive fascism," as [Herbert] Marcuse has termed it, in which the role of the judicial-penal systems looms large. The sharp edge of political repression, cutting through the heightened militancy of the masses, and bringing growing numbers of activists behind prison walls, must necessarily pour over into the contained world of the prison where it understandably acquires far more ruthless forms.

It is a relatively easy matter to persecute the captive whose life is already dominated by a network of authoritarian mechanisms. This is especially facilitated by the indeterminate sentence policies of many states, for politically conscious prisoners will incur inordinately long sentences on the original conviction. According to Louis S. Nelson, warden of the San Quentin Prison, "if the prisons of California

become known as schools for violent revolution, the Adult Authority would be remiss in their duty not to keep the inmates longer" (*San Francisco Chronicle*, May 2, 1971). Where this is deemed inadequate, authorities have recourse to the whole spectrum of brutal corporal punishment, including out and out murder. At San Quentin, Fred Billingslea was teargassed to death in February 1970. W. L. Nolen, Alvin Miller, and Cleveland Edwards were assassinated by a prison guard in January 1970, at Soledad Prison. Unusual and inexplicable "suicides" have occurred with incredible regularity in jails and prisons throughout the country.

It should be self-evident that the frame-up becomes a powerful weapon within the spectrum of prison repression, particularly because of the availability of informers, the broken prisoners who will do anything for a price. The Soledad Brothers and the Soledad Three are leading examples of frame-up victims. Both cases involve militant activists who have been charged with killing Soledad prison guards. In both cases, widespread support has been kindled within the California prison system. They have served as occasions to link the immediate needs of the black community with a forceful fight to break the fascist stronghold in the prisons and therefore to abolish the prison system in its present form.

Racist oppression invades the lives of black people on an infinite variety of levels. Blacks are imprisoned in a world where our labor and toil hardly allow us to eke out a decent existence, if we are able to find jobs at all. When the economy begins to falter, we are forever the first victims, always the most deeply wounded. When the economy is on its feet, we continue to live in a depressed state. Unemployment is generally twice as high in the ghettos as it is in the country as a whole and even higher among black women and youth. The unemployment rate among black youth has presently skyrocketed to thirty percent. If one-third of America's white youths were without a means of livelihood, we would either be in the thick of revolution or else under the iron rule of fascism. Substandard schools, medical care hardly fit for animals, over-priced, dilapidated housing, a welfare system based on a policy of skimpy concessions, designed to degrade and divide (and even this may soon be canceled)—this is only the beginning of the list of props in the overall scenery of oppression which, for the mass of blacks, is the universe.

In black communities, wherever they are located, there exists an ever-present reminder that our universe must remain stable in its drabness, its poverty, its brutality. From Birmingham to Harlem to Watts, black ghettos are occupied, patrolled and often attacked by massive deployments of police. The police, domestic caretakers of violence, are the oppressor's emissaries, charged with the task of containing us within the boundaries of our oppression.

The announced function of the police, "to protect and serve the people," becomes the grotesque caricature of protecting and preserving the interests of our oppressors and serving us nothing but injustice. They are there to intimidate blacks, to persuade us with their violence that we are powerless to alter the conditions of our lives. Arrests are frequently based on whims. Bullets from their guns murder human beings with little or no pretext, aside from the universal intimidation they

are charged with carrying out. Protection for drug-pushers, and Mafia-style exploiters, support for the most reactionary ideological elements of the black community (especially those who cry out for more police), are among the many functions of forces of law and order. They encircle the community with a shield of violence, too often forcing the natural aggression of the black community inwards. [Frantz] Fanon's analysis of the role of colonial police is an appropriate description of the function of the police in America's ghettos.[12]

It goes without saying that the police would be unable to set into motion their racist machinery were they not sanctioned and supported by the judicial system. The courts not only consistently abstain from prosecuting criminal behavior on the part of the police, but they convict, on the basis of biased police testimony, countless black men and women. Court-appointed attorneys, acting in the twisted interests of overcrowded courts, convince eighty-five percent of the defendants to plead guilty. Even the manifestly innocent are advised to cop a plea so that the lengthy and expensive process of jury trials is avoided. This is the structure of the apparatus which summarily railroads black people into jails and prisons. (During my imprisonment in the New York Women's House of Detention, I encountered numerous cases involving innocent black women who had been advised to plead guilty. One sister had entered her white landlord's apartment for the purpose of paying rent. He attempted to rape her and in the course of the ensuing struggle, a lit candle toppled over, burning a tablecloth. The landlord ordered her arrested for arson. Following the advice of her court-appointed attorney, she entered a guilty plea, having been deceived by the attorney's insistence that the court would be more lenient. The sister was sentenced to three years.)

The vicious circle linking poverty, police courts, and prison is an integral element of ghetto existence. Unlike the mass of whites, the path which leads to jails and prisons is deeply rooted in the imposed patterns of black existence. For this very reason, an almost instinctive affinity binds the mass of black people to the political prisoners. The vast majority of blacks harbor a deep hatred of the police and are not deluded by official proclamations of justice through the courts.

For the black individual, contact with the law-enforcement-judicial-penal network, directly or through relatives and friends, is inevitable because he or she is black. For the activist become political prisoner, the contact has occurred because he has lodged a protest, in one form or another, against the conditions which nail blacks to this orbit of oppression.

Historically, black people as a group have exhibited a greater potential for resistance than any other part of the population. The iron-clad rule over our communities, the institutional practice of genocide, the ideology of racism have performed a strictly political as well as an economic function. The capitalists have not only extracted super profits from the underpaid labor of over 15 percent of the American population with the aid of a superstructure of terror. This terror and more subtle forms of racism have further served to thwart the flowering of a resistance—even a revolution that would spread to the working class as a whole.

In the interests of the capitalist class, the consent to racism and terror has been demagogically elicited from the white population, workers included, in order to more efficiently stave off resistance. Today, Nixon, [Attorney General John] Mitchell and J. Edgar Hoover are desperately attempting to persuade the population that dissidents, particularly blacks, Chicanos, Puerto Ricans, must be punished for being members of revolutionary organizations; for advocating the overthrow of the government; for agitating and educating in the streets and behind prison walls. The political function of racist domination is surfacing with accelerated intensity. Whites who have professed their solidarity with the black liberation movement and have moved in a distinctly revolutionary direction find themselves targets of the same repression. Even the anti-war movement, rapidly exhibiting an anti-imperialist consciousness, is falling victim to government repression.

Black people are rushing full speed ahead towards an understanding of the circumstances that give rise to exaggerated forms of political repression and thus an overabundance of political prisoners. This understanding is being forged out of the raw material of their own immediate experiences with racism. Hence, the black masses are growing conscious of their responsibility to defend those who are being persecuted for attempting to bring about the alleviation of the most injurious immediate problems facing black communities and ultimately to bring about total liberation through armed revolution, if it must come to this.

The black liberation movement is presently at a critical juncture. Fascist methods of repression threaten to physically decapitate and obliterate the movement. More subtle, yet no less dangerous ideological tendencies from within threaten to isolate the black movement and diminish its revolutionary impact. Both menaces must be counteracted in order to ensure our survival. Revolutionary blacks must spearhead and provide leadership for a broad anti-fascist movement.

Fascism is a process, its growth and development are cancerous in nature. While today, the threat of fascism may be primarily restricted to the use of the law-enforcement-judicial-penal apparatus to arrest the overt and latent revolutionary trends among nationally oppressed people, tomorrow it may attack the working class *en masse* and eventually even moderate democrats. Even in this period, however, the cancer has already commenced to spread. In addition to the prison army of thousands and thousands of nameless Third World victims of political revenge, there are increasing numbers of white political prisoners—draft resisters, anti-war activists such as the Harrisburg Eight,[13] men and women who have involved themselves on all levels of revolutionary activity.

Among the further symptoms of the fascist threat are official efforts to curtail the power of organized labor, such as the attack on the manifestly conservative construction workers and the trends towards reduced welfare aid. Moreover, court decisions and repressive legislation augmenting police powers—such as the Washington no-knock law, permitting police to enter private dwellings without warning, and Nixon's "Crime Bill" in general—can eventually be used against any citizen. Indeed congressmen are already protesting the use of police-state wire-tapping to survey

their activities. The fascist content of the ruthless aggression in Indo-China should be self-evident.

One of the fundamental historical lessons to be learned from past failures to prevent the rise of fascism is the decisive and indispensable character of the fight against fascism in its incipient phases. Once allowed to conquer ground, its growth is facilitated in geometric proportion. Although the most unbridled expressions of the fascist menace are still tied to the racist domination of blacks, Chicanos, Puerto Ricans, Indians, it lurks under the surface wherever there is potential resistance to the power of monopoly capital, the parasitic interests which control this society. Potentially it can profoundly worsen the conditions of existence for the average American citizen. Consequently, the masses of people in this country have a real, direct, and material stake in the struggle to free political prisoners, the struggle to abolish the prison system in its present form, the struggle against all dimensions of racism.

No one should fail to take heed of Georgi Dimitrov's warning: "Whoever does not fight the growth of fascism at these preparatory stages is not in a position to prevent the victory of fascism, but, on the contrary, facilitates that victory" (Report to the VIIth Congress of the Communist International, 1935). The only effective guarantee against the victory of fascism is an indivisible mass movement which refuses to conduct business as usual as long as repression rages on. It is only natural that blacks and other Third World peoples must lead this movement, for we are the first and most deeply injured victims of fascism. But it must embrace all potential victims and most important, all working-class people, for the key to the triumph of fascism is its ideological victory over the entire working class. Given the eruption of a severe economic crisis, the door to such an ideological victory can be opened by the active approval or passive toleration of racism. It is essential that white workers become conscious that historically through their acquiescence in the capitalist-inspired oppression of blacks they have only rendered themselves more vulnerable to attack.

The pivotal struggle which must be waged in the ranks of the working class is consequently the open, unreserved battle against entrenched racism. The white worker must become conscious of the threads which bind him to a James Johnson, a black auto worker, member of UAW [United Auto Workers], and a political prisoner presently facing charges for the killings of two foremen and a job setter.[14] The merciless proliferation of the power of monopoly capital may ultimately push him inexorably down the very same path of desperation. No potential victim [of the fascist terror] should be without the knowledge that the greatest menace to racism and fascism is unity!

—Marin County Jail

NOTES

Originally published in Angela Y. Davis and Bettina Aptheker, eds., *If They Come in the Morning: Voices of Resistance* (New York: The Third Press, 1971), 19–36.

1. *Editor's note:* The Fugitive Slave Act of 1850, signed into law by President Millard Fillmore, greatly facilitated the recapture of escaped slaves and the capture of free African Americans who could be claimed as "runaways" by slave owners. The act served largely as a concession to southern slaveholding states in return for admission to the Union of territories won during the Mexican-American War as nonslave states. See Howard Zinn, *A People's History of the United States 1492–Present* (New York: HarperPerennial, 1995), 176.

2. William Z. Foster, *The Negro People in American History* (New York: International Publishers, 1954), 169–70 (quoting Herbert Aptheker).

3. *Editor's note:* Nicola Sacco and Bartolomeo Vanzetti were convicted, on July 14, 1921, of first-degree murder for their alleged involvement in the holdup of a shoe factory in South Braintree, Massachusetts, on April 15 of the previous year. As Italian anarchists and activists, their case drew international attention and support for the defendants. Despite numerous protests and appeals, Sacco and Vanzetti were sentenced to death in August of 1927, a sentence that was most likely due to their political involvement and ideals. *A People's History*, 366–67; Felix Frankfurter, "The Case of Sacco and Vanzetti," *The Atlantic Monthly*, March 1927.

4. Louis Adamic, *Dynamite: The Story of Class Violence in America* (Gloucester, Mass.: Peter Smith, 1963), 312.

5. *Editor's note:* Robert Williams, former National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) official, cofounder of the Revolutionary Action Movement (RAM), former head of the Republic of New Afrika (RNA), and author of *Negroes with Guns*, was charged with the kidnapping of Mr. and Mrs. Stegall, a white couple, in Monroe, N.C., on August 21, 1971. Williams fled to Cuba and China to avoid charges, successfully fighting extradition until the charges were dropped in 1975. Hollie West, "Notes of a Traveler: From China to Cuba and Home Again," *Washington Post*, 28 January 1978, D1; "Kidnapping Charges against Black Activist," *New York Times*, 17 January 1976, 26. For a biography of Williams, see Timothy B. Tyson, *Radio Free Dixie: Robert F. Williams and the Roots of Black Power* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1999).

6. Herbert Aptheker, *Nat Turner's Slave Rebellion* (New York: Grove Press, 1968), 45. According to Aptheker these are not Nat Turner's exact words.

7. *Editor's note:* See trial statement: "To Judge Murtagh: From the Panther 21," in *The Black Panthers Speak*, ed. Philip S. Foner (New York: Lippincott, 1970), 196.

8. W. E. B. Du Bois, *Autobiography of W. E. B. Du Bois* (New York: International Publishers, 1968), 390.

9. Karl Marx, "The Class Struggle in France," in *Handbook of Marxism* (New York: International Publishers, 1935), 109.

10. *Editor's note:* According to the Sentencing Project's midyear 2001 statistics, one in every eight African American males in the twenty-five to thirty-four age range is incarcerated in prison or jail on any given day. See *New Inmate Population Figures Show Continued Growth, Prospects for Change in Policy Unclear*, www.sentencingproject.org/news/inmatepopapr02.pdf.

11. *Editor's note: The Folsom Prisoners' Manifesto of Demands and Anti-Oppression Platform* can be found in Angela Davis and Bettina Aptheker, eds., *If They Come in the Morning: Voices of Resistance* (New York: Third Press, 1971), 57.

12. *Editor's note:* See Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth* (New York: Grove Press, 1968).

13. *Editor's note:* The Harrisburg Eight, including Philip Berrigan, were charged in 1971 with plotting to bomb utilities beneath federal buildings; kidnap Henry Kissinger, Richard Nixon's national security advisor; and destroy the East Coast section of the Selective Service System. It is widely believed that the "conspirators" were targeted by J. Edgar Hoover for their antiwar activities. The defendants were acquitted in 1972. See Philip Berrigan and Fred A. Wilcox, *Fighting the Lamb's War: Skirmishes with the American Empire: The Autobiography of Philip Berrigan* (Monroe, Maine: Common Courage Press, 1996), 125.

14. See Angela Davis and Bettina Aptheker, eds., *If They Come in the Morning: Voices of Resistance* (New York: Third Press, 1971); see chapter five on political prisoners for the details of James Johnson's case.

Chapter Four

Huey P. Newton

Named for populist Louisiana governor Huey P. Long, Huey Percy Newton was born the youngest of seven children in Monroe, Louisiana, in 1942. Three years later, his family moved to Oakland, California. His was a difficult childhood, one filled with conflict. Expelled from a number of public high schools, Newton later claimed that he did not know how to read until the age of sixteen. As a high school sophomore, he brought a hammer to school for self-defense and in a confrontation assaulted another student. This led to his first arrest. Graduating from Berkeley High School, Newton attended Merritt College, where in 1962 he met Bobby Seale, an older student, at an Afro-American Association meeting.

In 1966, Newton and Seale wrote a ten-point political platform, "What We Believe" and "What We Want," that would become the foundation for the Black Panther Party for Self-Defense, later renamed the Black Panther Party (BPP). The BPP grew after its public rallies against police brutality; armed Panther patrols of police in black neighborhoods; highly visible protection offered Betty Shabazz, the widow of Malcolm X, when she visited the Bay Area; and a May 1967 rally in which Bobby Seale and other Panthers walked into a session of the California legislature while carrying guns to protest the Mumford Bill, gun-control legislation. With such activities, the Black Panthers gained national and international attention and notoriety.[1]

The BPP was still a relatively small organization on October 28, 1967, when Huey P. Newton was pulled over by Oakland police and subsequently involved in a shootout. Newton and police officer Herbert Heanes were seriously wounded, and Officer John Frey was killed. Charged with murder, kidnapping, assault, and attempted murder, Newton was found guilty of manslaughter on September 28, 1968, by an Alameda County jury. His imprisonment led to the "Free Huey" campaigns, which mobilized hundreds of thousands of supporters worldwide. Bobby Seale, Eldridge and Kathleen Cleaver, and other Panthers focused on raising money for his legal defense through speeches and rallies, as Newton evolved into a national icon of antiracist and antistate resistance, and a black "folk hero,"[2] one with a

transracial appeal. The "Free Huey" mobilization sparked a dramatic growth in party membership. By the time his conviction was overturned on August 5, 1970, the BPP had chapters in most urban areas in the United States, as well as international support committees.

The Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) COINTELPRO, along with actions by local police departments, fueled internal tensions in the organization. Subsequently, in early 1971, Newton expelled several members (including Eldridge Cleaver, who was in Algeria in flight from a U.S. warrant, and East Coast Panther leaders). This would be the first of many expulsions and violent internal conflicts that would cripple the party. Newton became increasingly isolated in his changing philosophy, focusing on electoral politics and "survival programs" and his extravagant lifestyle and addictions. The "movement" that had grown around his release from prison had continued to do so without him; and in order to control it, he would help to eviscerate the Panther party.

After his release from prison, as he struggled to convince the masses of his theory of "Revolutionary Intercommunalism"—the belief that communities, not nations, constitute a borderless world shaped by international capital—and attempted to cope with an organization moving out of his control, Newton descended again into substance abuse. A series of violent incidents by Newton culminated in the beating of his tailor and the street-corner shooting of Kathleen Smith during the summer of 1974.[3] Newton fled to Cuba after his indictment on murder charges, and three years after his return to the United States in 1977, the Black Panther Party was formally disbanded.

Despite struggles with substance addiction, Newton received his doctorate from the University of California-Santa Cruz in 1980. However, on August 22, 1989, he was shot and killed by Tyrone Robinson, an alleged member of the Black Guerilla Family (an organization originally cofounded by George Jackson), in a drug deal gone awry.

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Research and draft for this biography were provided by Will Tucker.

1. Chris Booker, "Lumpenization: A Critical Error of the Black Panther Party," in *The Black Panther Party [Reconsidered]*, ed. Charles E. Jones (Baltimore: Black Classic Press, 1998), 343.

2. See: Akinyele Omowale Umoja, "Set Our Warriors Free: The Legacy of the Black Panther Party and Political Prisoners," in *The Black Panther Party [Reconsidered]*, 419.

3. Michael Newton, *Bitter Grain: Huey P. Newton and the Black Panther Party* (Los Angeles: Holloway House Publishing Company, 1980), 211.

Prison, Where Is Thy Victory?

July 12, 1969

When a person studies mathematics he learns that there are many mathematical laws which determine the approach he must take to solving the problems presented to him. In the study of geometry one of the first laws a person learns is that "the whole is not greater than the sum of its parts." This means simply that one cannot have a geometrical figure such as a circle or a square which contains more than it does when broken down into smaller parts. Therefore, if all the smaller parts add up to a certain amount the entire figure cannot add up to a larger amount. The prison cannot have a victory over the prisoner because those in charge take the same kind of approach and assume if they have the whole body in a cell that they have contained all that makes up the person. But a prisoner is not a geometrical figure, and an approach which is successful in mathematics is wholly unsuccessful when dealing with human beings.

In the case of the human we are not dealing only with the single individual, we are also dealing with the ideas and beliefs which have motivated him and which sustain him, even when his body is confined. In the case of humanity the whole is much greater than its parts because the whole includes the body, which is measurable and confinable, and the ideas, which cannot be measured or confined.

The ideas which can and will sustain our movement for total freedom and dignity of the people cannot be imprisoned, for they are to be found in the people, all the people, wherever they are. As long as the people live by the ideas of freedom and dignity, there will be no prison which can hold our movement down. Ideas move from one person to another by the association of brothers and sisters who recognize that a most evil system of capitalism has set us against each other, although our real enemy is the exploiter who profits from our poverty. When we realize such an idea, then we come to love and appreciate our brothers and sisters who we may have seen as enemies, and those exploiters who we may have seen as friends are revealed for what they truly are to all oppressed people. The people are the idea. The respect and dignity of the people, as they move toward their freedom, are the sustaining force which reaches into and out of the prison. The walls, the bars, the guns and the guards can never encircle or hold down the idea of the people. And the people must always carry forward the idea which is their dignity and beauty.

The prison operates with the concept that since it has a person's body it has his entire being, because the whole cannot be greater than the sum of the parts. They put the body in a cell and seem to get some sense of relief and security from that fact. The idea of prison victory, then is that when the person in jail begins to act, think, and believe the way they want him to, they have won the battle and the person is then "rehabilitated." But this cannot be the case because those who operate the prisons have failed to examine their own beliefs thoroughly, and they fail to

understand the types of people they attempt to control. Therefore, even when the prison thinks it has won, there is no victory.

There are two types of prisoners. The largest number are those who accept the legitimacy of the assumptions upon which the society is based. They wish to acquire the same goals as everybody else: money, power, and conspicuous consumption. In order to do so, however, they adopt techniques and methods which the society has defined as illegitimate. When this is discovered such people are put in jail. They may be called "illegitimate capitalists" since their aim is to acquire everything capitalist society defines as legitimate. The second type of prisoner is the one who rejects the legitimacy of the assumptions upon which the society is based. He argues that the people at the bottom of the society are exploited for the profit and advantage of those at the top. Thus, the oppressed exist and will always be used to maintain the privileged status of the exploiters. There is no sacredness, there is no dignity in either exploiting or being exploited. Although this system may make the society function at a high level of technological efficiency, it is an illegitimate system, since it rests upon the suffering of humans who are as worthy and as dignified of those who do not suffer. Thus, the second type of prisoner says that the society is corrupt and illegitimate and must be overthrown. This second type of prisoner is the "political prisoner." They do not accept the legitimacy of the society and cannot participate in its corruption and exploitation, whether they are in the prison or on the block.

The prison cannot gain a victory over either type of prisoner no matter how hard it tries. The "illegitimate capitalist" recognizes that if he plays the game the prison wants him to play he will have his time reduced and be released to continue his activities. Therefore, he is willing to go through the prison programs and say the things the prison authorities want to hear. The prison assumes he is "rehabilitated" and ready for the society. The prisoner has really played the prison's game so that he can be released to resume pursuit of his capitalist goals. There is no victory, for the prisoner from the "git-go" accepted the idea of the society. He pretends to accept the idea of the prison as a part of the game he has always played.

The prison cannot gain a victory over the political prisoner because he has nothing to be rehabilitated from or to. He refuses to accept the legitimacy of the system and refuses to participate. To participate is to admit that the society is legitimate because of its exploitation of the oppressed. This is the idea which the political prisoner does not accept for which he has been imprisoned, and this is the reason why he cannot cooperate with the system. The political prisoner will, in fact, serve his time just as will the "illegitimate capitalist." Yet the idea which motivated and sustained the political prisoner rests in the people. All the prison has is the body.

The dignity and beauty of man rests in the human spirit which makes him more than simply a physical being. This spirit must never be suppressed for exploitation by others. As long as the people recognize the beauty of their human spirits and move against suppression and exploitation, they will be carrying out one of the most beautiful ideas of all time. Because the human whole is much greater than the sum

of its parts. The ideas will always be among the people. The prison cannot be victorious because walls, bars and guards cannot conquer or hold down an idea.

NOTE

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Chapter Five

George Jackson

George Lester Jackson was born on September 23, 1941, on the West Side of Chicago, the second of Georgia and Lester Jackson's five children. Georgia Jackson, George's namesake, was very protective, and forbade George and his sister from going outside alone except for school and errands. Her son nevertheless demonstrated a mind of his own. In his prison letters, Jackson at times harshly criticizes his parents, castigating his mother for teaching him "obedience" and his father for his "neo-slave" mentality.

The family moved among Chicago's urban neighborhoods, ultimately settling in the Troop Street Projects, where for George Jackson truancy and conflicts with the police became routine. In 1956, seeking to protect his son, Lester Jackson transferred his post office job to Los Angeles. Yet, soon after settling in Los Angeles, George began to have serious confrontations with the law. After an attempted burglary and possession of a stolen motorcycle (which he claimed to have purchased), he was sent to the Paso Robles School for Boys, an institution of the California Youth Authority. In Paso Robles, he avoided disciplinary attention for the duration of his seven-month sentence by reading the work of Rafael Sabatini and Jack London.[1]

In 1958, a few months after his parole, Jackson and several friends were arrested for robberies to which he pled guilty. He escaped from the Bakersfield jail and was recaptured to serve the rest of his sentence. After his release, on September 18, 1960, Jackson allegedly drove the getaway car after his friend robbed a gas station of seventy-one dollars. He agreed to confess in return for a light sentence; the judge gave him one-to-life, a sentence designed to allow judicial flexibility, but which ultimately put sentencing in the hands of prison administrators. Jackson's one year became life imprisonment. Initially sent to Soledad Prison, he was transferred at least four times during his incarceration. During his first years, he and his close friend, James Carr, gained power and respect within prison as the leaders of a gang called the "Wolf Pack." Each year, Jackson was denied parole because of infractions.

George Jackson entered prison during a time when prisoners like Eldridge

Cleaver, who would author *Soul on Ice* and become a national leader of the Black Panther Party, were beginning to undertake serious study of their conditions of incarceration. W. L. Nolen, a major figure in this movement, was the first to introduce Jackson to radical philosophy. As Jackson's disciplinary record grew, he was forced to spend up to twenty-three hours a day in solitary confinement. There he read Karl Marx, V. I. Lenin, Leon Trotsky, Friedrich Engels, Mao Tse-tung (Zedong), and other political theorists. In 1968, Jackson, Nolen, David Johnson, Carr, and other revolutionary convicts began leading "ethnic awareness classes"—study groups on radical philosophy. These meetings led to the formation of the Black Guerilla Family, a revolutionary organization (described by authorities as a "gang") that proclaimed black prisoners' rights to self-defense.

In January of 1969, Jackson and Nolen were transferred to Soledad Prison, a notoriously racist penal site among racist prisons. In the O Wing, which housed Soledad's most dangerous captives, racial tension led to the closing of the exercise yard. Nolen and five other black inmates were preparing civil suits against the O Wing guards for their complicity in creating a dangerously racially divisive atmosphere.

On January 13, 1970, guards reopened the O Wing exercise yard, and released a racially mixed group of prisoners, fully aware of the potential for violence.[2] The fight that began immediately was quickly ended by guard Opie Miller, a sharpshooter who fired four shots, killing African American inmates Nolen (Jackson's mentor), Cleveland Edwards, and Alvin Miller, and wounding a white prisoner.[3] Three days later, a Monterey County grand jury ruled the deaths "justifiable homicide." Following the publicizing of the ruling, guard John V. Mills was thrown to his death from the third tier of Y Wing—George Jackson's cellblock.

One month later, with no physical evidence, Jackson, Fleeta Drumgo, and John Clucherte were indicted for killing Mills. Huey P. Newton requested that his attorney, Fay Stender, meet with Jackson. After doing so, Stender subsequently formed the Soledad Brothers Defense Committee, which eventually was headed by Angela Davis.[4]

Stender also arranged for the publication of the influential *Soledad Brother: The Prison Letters of George Jackson*. Two months before its publication, Jackson's seventeen-year-old brother, Jonathan, entered the Marin County Courthouse—with weapons registered in the name of Angela Davis—during the trial of prisoner James McClain, who was charged with the attempted stabbing of a Soledad guard. Jonathan Jackson armed McClain and, with prisoner witnesses Ruchell Magee and William Christmas, herded the assistant district attorney, Judge Harold Haley, and three jurors into a van parked outside. Law enforcement officers fired upon the parked van without regard for the hostages, as was prison policy, killing Christmas, McClain, and Jackson; wounding Magee; and killing Haley and wounding other hostages.

The following version of events is pieced together from a variety of (sometimes contradictory) sources. On August 21, 1971, Stephen Bingham (who had replaced

Stender as Jackson's attorney) visited George Jackson at San Quentin. Inside Bingham's tape recorder were hidden a 9mm pistol and an Afro wig. During their meeting in a private attorney room, Bingham allegedly gave Jackson the gun, which he placed on his head and covered with the wig. A guard later noticed something protruding from Jackson's hair and asked to see it.[5] Discovered, Jackson loaded and fired the gun, subduing the guard(s) and freeing most of the prisoners in the Adjustment Center. Three guards and two white inmate trusties were executed in the takeover. When Jackson rushed out of the Adjustment Center into the yard, he was shot in the back. Stephen Bingham, who eventually emerged from underground to stand trial, was acquitted in 1986.

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NOTES

Research and draft for this biography were provided by Daniel Schleifer.

1. *Soledad Brother: The Prison Letters of George Jackson* (Chicago: Lawrence Hill Books, 1994), 14. Also see: Rafael Sabatini, *The Writings of Rafael Sabatini* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1924); Jack London, "'Pinched': A Prison Experience" and "The Pen: Long Days in a County Penitentiary" in *Prison Writing in 20th-Century America*, edited by H. Bruce Franklin (New York: Penguin, 1998); Jack London, *The Call of the Wild* (New York: The Daily Worker, 1915); Philip S. Foner, ed., *Jack London, American Rebel* (New York: Citadel Press, 1947).

2. Jo Durden-Smith, *Who Killed George Jackson?* (New York: Knopf, 1976), 177.

3. *Who Killed George Jackson?* 177.

4. Eight years after George Jackson's death, Fay Stender was shot in 1979, allegedly by a member of the Black Guerilla Family for not supporting Jackson's militarist politics. She suffered severe injuries that led to her paralysis. Stender committed suicide in May 1980. See Paul Liberatore, *The Road to Hell: The True Story of George Jackson, Stephen Bingham, and the San Quentin Massacre* (New York: Atlantic Monthly Press, 1996), 199.

5. "Pistol and Wig Experiment," *San Francisco Chronicle*, 28 August 1971. Quoted in Eric Mann, *Comrade George: An Investigation into the Life, Political Thought and Assassination of George Jackson* (New York: Harper & Row, 1974).

Towards the United Front

1971

There exists already a new unitarian and progressive current in the movement centering around political prisoners. The question at this point, I feel, is how to develop unitarian conduct further—against the natural resistance of establishment machinations—through the creation of new initiatives and a dialectic so clear in its argumentation, presentation and implementation that it will of its own weight force the isolation of reactionary elements. Both individual-attitudinized and organized reaction must be isolated.

Unitary conduct implies a "search" for that something in common, a conscious reaching for the relevant, the entente, and in our case especially the reconcilable. Throughout the centralizing-authoritarian process of American history, the ruling classes have found it expedient, actually necessary to insinuate upon the people instrumentalities designed to discourage and punish any genuine opposition to hierarchy. There have always been individuals and groups who rejected the ideal of society above society. The men who placed themselves above society through guile, fortuitous outcome of circumstance and sheer brutality have developed two principal institutions to deal with any and all serious disobedience—the prison and institutionalized racism. There are more prisons of all categories in the United States than in all other countries of the world combined. There are at all times two-thirds of a million people or more confined to these prisons. Hundreds are destined to be executed outright legally and thousands quasi-legally. Other thousands will never again have any freedom of movement barring a revolutionary change in all the institutions that combine to make up the order of things. Two thirds of a million people may not seem like a great number compared against the total population of nearly two hundred and five million.[1] However compared to the one million who are responsible for all the affairs of men within the extended state, it constitutes a striking contrast not at all coincidental, and perhaps deserving of careful analysis. What I want to explore now are a few of the subtle elements that I have observed to be standing in the path of a much needed united front (nonsectarian) to effectively reverse the legitimatized rip-off.

I will emphasize again that prisons were not institutionalized on so massive a scale by the people. Though all crime can be considered a manifestation of antithesis, some crime does work out to the well understood detriment of the people. Most crime, however, is clearly the simple effect of a grossly disproportionate distribution of wealth and privilege, a reflection of the state of present property relations. There are no wealthy men on death row, and so very few in the general prison population that we can discount them altogether—imprisonment is an aspect of class struggle from the outset. A closed society intended to isolate those who quite healthfully disregard the structures of a hypocritical establishment with their individual

actions, and those who would organize a mass basis for such action. U.S. history is replete with examples of both types, the latter extending from the early Working Men's Benevolent Association through the events surrounding the Ancient Order of Hibernians, The Working Men's Party who organized against the excesses of the 1877 depression, all the way to the present era when the Communist Party was banned (during this country's fascist takeover), and the Black Panther Party in the practical sense assaulted and banned.[2]

The hypocrisy of Amerikan fascism will not allow it to openly declare that it does hold political offenders—thus the hundreds of versions of conspiracy laws and the highly sophisticated frame-up. This is the first point of attack in the educational sense. Why do prisons exist in such numbers, what is the real underlying economic motive of crime, and the diacritical breakdown of types of offenders or victims? If offenders is the better term it must be clearly presented that the language of the law is definitely weighted and deceptive, it should be clear that when one "offends" the totalitarian state it is patently not an offense against the people of that state, offending the state translates into an assault upon the privilege of the privileged few.

Could anything be more ridiculous than the officious titles to indictments reading: "The People of the State . . . vs. Bobby Seale and Ericka Huggins" or "The People of the State . . . vs. Angela Davis and Ruchell Magee." What people are referred to?—clearly the hierarchy, the armed minority.

Then in the John Doe cases where an actual robbery or theft was committed, we must elucidate the real causes of economic crimes; or any crime, of passion against repression, the thrill crime, we must be all inclusive. All crime is motivated by simple economic oppression, or the psycho-social effects of an economic order that was decadent 100 years ago. Objective socio-economic conditions equals social productive or counter-productive activity, in all cases determined by the economic system, the method of economic organization, the maintenance of that organization against the forces of progress that would change it. Even the psychology of the sick individual, perpetrator of a "thrill crime" must ultimately be traced to a sick society.

Prisoners must be reached and made to understand that they are victims of social injustice. This is my task working from within (while I'm here—my persuasion is that the war goes on no matter where one may find himself on bourgeois dominated soil). The sheer numbers of the prisoner class and their terms of existence make them a mighty reservoir of revolutionary potential. Working alone and from within a steel enclosed society there is very little that people like myself can do to free the retrained potential revolutionary. That is part of the task of the "Prison Movement." "The People of the State . . . vs. John Doe" is as tenuous as the clearly political frame-ups. It's like stating "The People vs. The People." Man against himself.

The "Prison Movement" serves another important political end. It makes the ruling class conscious of our determination to never surrender our economic right to hold the implements of production in our own hands short of physical death. Detention will not check our movement. The August 7th[3] movement and all actual

acts of, and attempts to, put the keeper to death serve this notice best. They also hint at the ultimate goal of revolutionary consciousness at every level of struggle, the major level at the point of production, and all the substructural levels. The goal is always the same: the creation of an infrastructure capable of fielding a people's army.

There should be no one among us who still doesn't understand that revolution is aggressive, and that the making of demands on the manipulators of the system, that they cannot or will not meet must eventually move us all into a violent encounter with that system one day. These are the terminal years of capitalism and as we move into significant areas of antiestablishment activities, history clearly forewarns us that when the prestige of power fails a violent episode precedes its transformation.

We can attempt to limit the scope and range of violence in revolution by mobilizing as many partisans as possible at every level of socio-economic life, but considering the hold that the ruling class of this country has on the apolitical in general and its history of violence, nothing could be more predictable than civil disorders, perhaps even civil war. I don't dread either, for there are no good aspects of monopoly capital, no good or beneficial guarantees, so no reservations need be recognized in its destruction. No interpretation of what revolution will be is required really, not in the U.S., not in the face of monopoly capital. As it stands above us monopoly capital is an obstruction that leaves us in the shade and has made us its servant. It must be completely destroyed, not rejected, not simply transformed, but destroyed utterly, totally, ruthlessly, relentlessly—as immediately as possible terminated!

With this as a common major goal it would seem that unitarian conduct of all parties concerned in active antiestablishment struggle on various levels should find little difficulty in developing initiatives and new methods consistent with the goals of mass society.

Regretfully this has not been the case, although as I stated there can be detected in the prison movement the beginnings of a unitary current cutting across the ideological, racial and cultural barricades that have in all times past blocked the natural coalition of left wing forces. This brings us to another vital aspect of the activity surrounding political prisoners. Perhaps on our substructural level with steadily attentive efforts at building the united front we can provide an example for the partisans engaged at other levels of struggle. The issues involved and the dialectic which flows from the clear objective existence of overt oppression could be the basis of, or a spring board for our genuine entrance into the tide of increasing worldwide socialist consciousness. In clearing away the obstacles that preclude a united left for the defense of political prisoners and prisoners in general there must first be a renunciation of the idea that all participants must be of one mind and should work at the problem from a single party line or methodical singularity. The reverse of this is actually desirable. "From all according to ability." Each partisan, outside the vanguard elements, should proceed in a popularization strategy in the area of their natural environment, the places where they pursue their normal lives when not attending the rallies and demonstrations. The vanguard elements (organized party workers of all ideological persuasion) go among the people concentrated at the rallying point with elevation strategy, promoting commitment and providing concrete, clearly defined activity for them to popularize. The vanguard elements are first searching out people who can and will contribute to the building of the commune, the infrastructure—(with pen and clipboard in hand)—for those who cannot yet take that step a "packet" of pamphlets is provided for use in their individual pursuits.

Unity of the left factions in this substructural aspect of the movement, which centers around political prisoners and prisons in general, is significant then in several ways. With our example we can begin to break the old behavioral patterns that have repeatedly won bourgeois capitalism, its imperialism and fascism, life after death over the last several decades. We free a massive potential reservoir of partisans for cadre work, and finally we begin to address one of the most complex psychosocial by-products that economic man with his private enterprise has manufactured—Racism.

I've saved this most critical barrier to our needs of unity for last. Racism is a question of ingrained traditional attitudes conditioned through institutions—for some, it is as natural a reflex as breathing. The psychosocial effects of the dichotomous habitudes set up by a particularly sensitized racism compounded with the bitterest of class repression has served in the past to render us all practically inactive, and where we attempt progressive action, particularly impotent.

If a united left is possible in this country the major obstacle must be considered racism, white racism to be blunt. The categories can be best simplified by reducing them to three, the overt self-satisfied racist who doesn't deign to hide his antipathy, the self-interdicting racist who harbors and nurtures racism in spite of their best efforts, and the unconscious racist, product of preconceived notions that must be blamed on history.

I deny the existence of Black racism outright, by fiat I deny it. Too much Black blood has flowed between the chasm that separates the races, it's fundamentally unfair to expect the Black man to differentiate at a glance the self-accepting racist, the self-interdicting racist and the unconscious racist. The apologist's term "Black racism" is either a healthy defense reflex on the part of the sincere Black partisan attempting to deal with the realistic problems of survival and elevation, or the racism of the government stooge organs.

As Black partisans we must recognize and allow for the existence of all three types of racists, as we accept ourselves in relation thereto, but all must still be viewed as the effect of the system. It is a system that must be crushed first, for it continues to manufacture new and deeper contradictions of both class and race. Once it is gone we may be able to address in depth the effects of its presence but to a great extent, we must combat racism while we are in the process of destroying it. The psycho-social effects of hundreds of years of mutually exclusive attitudinal positions on race and class and symbols, hierarchy in general must be isolated.

The self-interdicting racist, no matter what his acquired conviction or ideology,

will seldom be able to contribute with his actions in any really concrete way. Their role in revolution, barring a change of basic character, will be minimal throughout. Whether the basic character of a man can be changed at all is still a question. But . . . we have in the immediacy of the "issues in question" the perfect opportunity to test the validity of materialist philosophy again.

The need for unitarian conduct goes much deeper than the liberation of Angela [Davis], Bobby [Seale], Ericka [Huggins], [Ruchell] Magee, Los Siete [de la Raza], [Reies Lopez] Tijerina, white draft resisters and now the indomitable and faithful James Carr.[4] We have fundamental strategy to be proved—tested and proved. The activity surrounding the protection and liberation of people who fight for us is an important aspect of the struggle, but it is important only if it provides new initiatives that redirect and advance the revolution under new progressive methods. There must be a collective redirection of the old guard, the factory and union agitator, with pamphlet and silenced pistol, the campus activist who can counter the ill-effects of fascism at its training site, the *lumpen-proletarian* intellectuals with revolutionary scientific socialist attitudes to deal with the masses of street people living outside the system already. Black, Brown, White are victims, fight! At the end of this massive collective struggle we will uncover our new man; he is a creation of the process, the future, he will be better equipped to wage the real struggle, the permanent struggle after the revolution—the one for new relationships between man.

NOTES

Originally published in *If They Come in the Morning: Voices of Resistance*, ed. Angela Y. Davis and Bettina Aptheker (New York: The Third Press, 1971), 141–47.

1. *Editor's note:* Currently, there are some 2.5 million people held in detention or prisons in the United States.

2. *Editor's note:* The Working Men's Benevolent Association and Ancient Order of Hibernians were Pennsylvania labor organizations related to the "Molly Maguires." According to Eileen O'Gara, the

> "Molly Maguires" were miners in the anthracite coal region of Pennsylvania who organized into a union during the 1860s and 1870s. These miners were chiefly, although not exclusively, Irish and the union was called the Working Men's Benevolent Association. In general, the members of this union were also members of the Ancient Order of Hibernians, a semi-secret fraternal society, which had its origin in Ireland as a completely secret and anonymous association (Eileen O'Gara, "The Molly Maguires," *Student Web Projects*, 1998 www.providence.edu/polisci/projects/molly_maguires/ [24 April 2002]).

See Kevin Kenny, *Making Sense of the Molly Maguires* (New York: Oxford, 1998); S. B. Liljegren, *The Irish Element in the Valley of Fear* (Copenhagen: Uppsala, 1964). When he claims that the "Communist Party was banned," Jackson likely refers to the 1954 Communist Control Act, which, in effect, made membership in the Communist Party illegal in the United States (Howard Zinn, *A People's History of the United States* [New York: Harper & Row, 1980], 422–23).

3. *Editor's note:* By "August 7th Movement," Jackson refers to his younger brother Jonathan's "revolutionary attempt to free several Black prisoners from the Marin County courthouse in August 1970." The attempt "ended in carnage. . . . Jackson, the judge he kidnapped, and all but one of the escaping prisoners died in the shooting outside the courthouse." Kathleen Neal Cleaver, "Back to Africa: The Evolution of the International Section of the Black Panther Party (1969–1972)," in *The Black Panther Party [Reconsidered]*, ed. Charles E. Jones (Baltimore: Black Classic Press, 1998), 235; Joy James, ed., *The Angela Y. Davis Reader* (Malden, Mass.: Blackwell, 1998), 10–11.

4. *Editor's note:* For further reading, see: Bettina Aptheker, *The Morning Breaks: The Trial of Angela Davis* (New York: International Publishers, 1975); *The Angela Y. Davis Reader*; Donald Freed, *Agony in New Haven: The Trial of Bobby Seale, Ericka Huggins, and the Black Panther Party* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1973); Marjorie Heins, *Strictly Ghetto Property* (Berkeley, Calif.: Ramparts, 1972); David DeLeon, ed., *Leaders from the 1960s: A Biographical Sourcebook of American Activism* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood, 1994), 156; James Carr, *BAD—The Autobiography of James Carr* (Dublin: Pelagian Press; reissued, AK Press, 2002).

Chapter Six

Dhoruba Bin Wahad

Dhoruba Bin Wahad (Richard Moore) was born in the South Bronx in 1944. Like most members of the Black Panther Party (BPP), he was young, only twenty-three, when he left a Bronx gang, the Disciple Sportsmen, and joined the newly formed New York Panther chapter in 1968. The New York chapter quickly became one of the four major chapters of the Oakland-based group, managing other chapters and branches along the Eastern Seaboard. Bin Wahad, a skilled orator and one of the party's early leaders, worked on tenants' rights, police brutality, and drug rehabilitation programs in Harlem, the South Bronx, and Brooklyn. He helped to develop the Lincoln Detox center, a hospital-based rehabilitation center that used acupuncture rather than methadone maintenance for drug addiction. It was possibly one of the earliest examples of the Rainbow Coalition, with the Young Lords Party and the Young Patriots Party joining with the BPP in a community effort to curtail drug abuse.

The New York Police Department (NYPD), in complicity with COINTELPRO operatives, indicted Bin Wahad and twenty other leaders of the New York BPP, the "New York 21," on April 2, 1969, for more than one hundred conspiracy charges that included plots to assassinate New York City police officers and dynamite city department stores, a botanical garden, a police station, and a railroad right-of-way. This case was a timely blow to one of the key arms of the national Black Panther organizing body. The charges were without foundation and would be dismissed later. However, in the aftermath of the arrests and warrants, the New York 21 were incarcerated, and the New York Panther leadership decimated by the spurious charges. Bin Wahad and Michael Cetewayo Tabor were released on bail and later fled the country during the trial because of a Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI)-initiated plot to incite the national BPP leadership, under Huey Newton, to assassinate them. After two years in prison and an eight-month-long trial, all the Black Panther Party defendants, including Bin Wahad and Tabor in absentia, were acquitted by a jury. Jury deliberations lasted less than an hour, and the verdict was returned on May 13, 1971. Bin Wahad returned to the United States, yet remained underground.

The NYPD apprehended Bin Wahad outside an "after hours" bar in the Bronx in June of 1971 and charged him with the attempted murder of two police officers, Thomas Curry and Nicholas Binetti, in Manhattan two months earlier. The case that ensued set the precedent for what became known as the Joint Terrorist Task Force, a joint investigative effort among New York City Police, New York State Police, and the FBI. After three trials in the case of *The People v Dhoruba Bin Wahad*, he was convicted in July of 1973 and sentenced to twenty-five years to life. Two years later, the Church Committee Senate hearings brought COINTELPRO under (semi-) public scrutiny and Bin Wahad's lawyers subsequently filed a civil rights action to procure all documents pertaining to him and the Black Panther Party in New York. Five years later, they received over 300,000 highly excised and unreadable documents that disclosed forged letters, phone calls, and anonymous articles aimed at defaming the reputation, alliances, and unity of the BPP. Significantly, the documents also contained over two hundred previously undisclosed pages of three FBI reports pertaining to Bin Wahad's case, including a record of an anonymous call to the police in which the prosecution's key witness, Pauline Joseph, exonerated Bin Wahad.[1] The defense received the final set of "Newkill" (an acronym referring to killings in New York that the agency wanted to connect to the BPP) documents in 1987, twelve years after the initial civil rights action to procure the evidence. Citing the inconsistency and possible perjury of Pauline Joseph in the 1973 trial and conviction, Dhoruba Bin Wahad and his lawyers filed for a retrial. A New York Supreme Court granted a retrial on March 22, 1990, and released Bin Wahad from prison. The District Attorney's office dismissed his case on January 19, 1995, formally ending the twenty-six-year struggle that began with the New York 21 case in 1969.

Following two lawsuits in 1995 and 2000, Dhoruba Bin Wahad received settlements for personal damages from the FBI and the City of New York, respectively.[2] With these funds, Bin Wahad founded the Campaign to Free Black and New Afrikan Political Prisoners (formerly the Campaign to Free Black Political Prisoners and Prisoners-of-War) and established the Institute for the Development of Pan-African policy in Accra, Ghana.

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NOTES

Research and draft for this biography were provided by Yvette Koch.

1. See Gerald C. Fraser, "F.B.I. Files Reveal Moves against Black Panthers," *New York Times*, 19 October 1980, late ed., A1; *The People of the State of New York v Dhoruba Bin Wahad, Formerly Richard Moore*, Lexis 1232, NY Supreme Ct., 8 February 1990; and Ward Churchill and Jim Vander Wall, *Agents of Repression: The FBI's Secret Wars against the Black Panther Party and the American Indian Movement* (Boston: South End Press, 1998).
2. Herb Boyd, "Ex-Panther's Lawsuit Settled," *Black World Today*, 9 December 2000, www.tbwt.com/views/specialrpt/special%20report-2_12-09-00.asp (6 March 2002).

COINTELPRO and the Destruction of Black Leaders and Organizations

December 1992

The concept of a counterintelligence program is a strategy or a series of operations carried out, supposedly against a foreign government, designed to counter their intelligence work within the United States or within a particular society. It's a war strategy. But here it has mainly been employed against people of color. It was first employed against the CP USA [Communist Party USA]. Many of us who look back historically realize that it was also employed against the [Marcus] Garvey movement. In fact, that was the first time it was employed against an organized, modern national liberation movement. We also know, however, that the techniques of the counterintelligence program began on the plantation.

The most basic strategy of any counterintelligence program is to confuse the enemy and have them believing what you want them to believe. But also it has another aspect to it, the aspect that we know as terrorism—intimidation and violence, making examples of leaders, making examples of people who resist. The United States government perfected these techniques in Southeast Asia against the people's movement in Vietnam. Many of the police professionals who would later lead the war of suppression against the FALN[1] and the Black Liberation Army went on year-long sabbaticals to Vietnam to be trained in the Phoenix program. For those of you who may not be aware of it, the Phoenix program was a program carried out by the CIA, and its objective was to root out the infrastructure and the cadres and troops of the National Liberation Front, the so-called Viet Cong.[2] They killed over 50,000 people in this effort, many of whom were tortured and most of whom were murdered in their sleep, much like Fred Hampton [the Chicago Black Panther leader].

The techniques of "low intensity warfare," of counterinsurgency, of terrorism, these techniques were perfected over a period of time and were used in very effective ways against the Black liberation movement. Especially during periods of upsurge in our consciousness and our activities. Earlier in the century, when Marcus Garvey began to build the United Negro Improvement Association [UNIA], and built it into a national organization of over a million Black men and women, and became a significant threat in the eyes of the racist status quo in this society, the then fledgling FBI took on the task of destroying Marcus Garvey. They did destroy him in the sense that they managed to imprison him on false income tax evasion charges, deport him from the country, and use infiltrators and undercover agents to sow dissension within his organization.

The fragmentation of the UNIA led directly to the establishment of a number of organizations that we now know about. The primary one, of course, was the Nation

of Islam, but other movements came out of the fragmented Garvey movement as well. It is important to understand that out of the fragmentation of that movement in the 1920s and early 1930s, the types of individuals that came forward to fill the vacuum that was left as a consequence of the most principled and militant nationalist leadership being eliminated, those who came forward were everything from charlatans to con artists, from buffoons to idiots. They came forward with various messages of liberation that, in and of themselves, may sound absurd to us today, but because of the desperation of oppressed people, because of the psychological preparation that slavery had made among Black people and people of color in this society, many fell victim to that. We know about Sweet Daddy Grace, we know about Father Divine, we know about the pie-in-the-sky, pork chop preachers who organized in the wake of the dissolution of that strong nationalist mass movement.[3]

The same thing happened in the 1970s once the militant, revolutionary wing of the Black movement was destroyed. We need to understand our movement very clearly. We need to analyze it very clearly. At the height of the Black liberation movement in 1969, the basis of its unity had already eroded. There were no longer mass mobilizations of Black people carried out by coalitions of forces that may have differed ideologically. What had happened? What had happened is that the Counterintelligence Program, in order to be effective, had to capitalize on the weaknesses of the Black community in general, and on the weaknesses of the Black movement in particular.

REPRESSION AND "LEADERSHIP SELECTION"

The Counterintelligence Program was very effective, but it would not have been as effective as it was had it not been for our weaknesses. Many of us talk about the Counterintelligence Program and the demise of the Black movement and we do not analyze our role in how things failed. Many of us do not realize, for instance, that the Counterintelligence Program did not just target organizations that were revolutionary. Many of us think that it's a badge of distinction when the government puts surveillance on us and goes after us. We feel that if the enemy is watching us, we must be doing something right. We feel that if the government is concerned about what we're saying, we must be saying something right. That's not the case.

The Counterintelligence Program went after buffoons and geniuses alike. It went after people whose ideology was clearly reactionary, whose ideology was clearly designed to co-opt a legitimate revolutionary consciousness on the part of Black folks, and it went after revolutionaries as well. It went after Dr. Martin Luther King, who everyone in this room knows was no revolutionary by any stretch of the imagination, who represented a particular class within the Black community, and represented them very effectively. That's not to say that Dr. Martin Luther King did not have the interests of Black people at heart, or that he was not a sincere individual or a sincere combatant in the struggle for civil rights, but it is to say that Dr. Martin

Luther King represented a tendency in the Black movement that was conciliatory. A tendency that was, at best, challenging the system in order to become part of it. But the Counterintelligence Program made Dr. Martin Luther King a number one target. At the same time it made Stokely Carmichael, Rap Brown, and SNCC [the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee] number one targets. At the same time it began to focus over eighty-five percent of its operations in the Black community on the Black Panther Party.

What we are saying here is that organizations from the Nation of Islam to the SCLC [the Southern Christian Leadership Conference, headed by Martin Luther King, Jr.] and organizations from cultural nationalist groups on the right to cultural nationalist groups on the left were all targets of the United States counterinsurgency and counterintelligence program. This being the case, we cannot but conclude that the basis for COINTELPRO, the reason that it existed and the reason that it went after Black activists, Black preachers, etc., was to weaken and destroy any kind of independent organizations of Black people that were not under the direct control of the racist forces in this country.[4]

It's very important to understand this, because today, we are confronted with the consequences of what happened. Today, many of the individuals who collaborated with the system, who benefited from the murders of Black Panthers, who benefited from the destruction of organizations that militantly espoused self-determination for Black people, are in positions of power and influence. These individuals have gotten to these positions because they identify on a very fundamental level with the system that oppresses us. This is important to us because the greatest task before us as a community, before we can even talk about challenging the power structure, is to "challenge, neutralize, and destroy," to use their terms, the Black middle class that identifies with the system. We have to completely strip them of their power. Their power, like the power of the preacher on the plantation, is derived from their direct relationship to the racists who control this society. This is why preachers in this city can endorse someone like [Senator Alphonse] D'Amato [R-NY], a known and vociferous enemy of people of color. Black so-called clergymen can endorse D'Amato. They can endorse him because they can pick up the phone and get a favor from him when we go to them crying about some injustice in our community and D'Amato responds to them.

Power and leadership in our community has always been a question of the relationship of the power base to the dominant power structure. This means that leadership behind closed doors is a way of life. This means that undercover deals are a way of life. This means that unprincipled opportunism is a quality that Black leaders must have in order to survive in this racist society. The fact that we have the leaders that we have, the fact that we have the Jesse Jacksons and the Wyatt T. Walkers and the David Dinkinses,[5] the fact that we have these individuals leading us today is a testimony to the effectiveness of the Counterintelligence Program. That's my major point.

Our failure to understand the limitations of cultural nationalism led to the situa-

tion in the 1960s in which cultural nationalists such as Ron Karenga could carry out the brutal assassination of Black Panthers at the behest of the Los Angeles Police Department and be invited today to the college campuses to pontificate. Would you invite Jonas Savimbi [the head of UNITA, the pro–South African government, CIA-supported Angolan counterrevolutionary organization] here to talk about his position in Angola? Would you sit here and listen to [the Zulu/South African reactionary chief and apartheid collaborator Gatsha] Buthelezi discuss why Inkatha is doing what it is doing? These are butchers of Black people. We do not understand why people who have participated in the murder of Black revolutionaries today are lauded as scholars and leaders in our community. Ron Karenga is but one of them. He is the most classic example of the Savimbis and the Buthelezis among us. I want you to understand that he was effective because he was a narrow cultural nationalist.[6]

CULTURAL NATIONALISM VS. REVOLUTIONARY NATIONALISM

Revolutionary nationalism represented the type of nationalism that understood that there was a common solidarity between all people under the same economic and social political system. This oppression has its historical roots in the development of European hegemony and power in the world. A revolutionary nationalist, therefore, understands that internationalism is based upon an ideology and understanding of who the enemy is, and what the limitations are of the enemy's program and ideology. Cultural nationalists, on the other hand, said that to be Black is sufficient, that our African-ness was so unique in and of itself that we need not aspire to struggle in any arena other than the arena of African culture; that we first of all had to become aware of how beautiful we were, and we first of all had to become aware of our ancient African traditions and ways.

Of course, I am not one to disparage our traditions and our ways and our ancestors. Our ancestors have gotten us here; our ancestors' spirits have provided for us in a society that was bent on our destruction. However, preceding every revolutionary struggle, cultural awareness arises and becomes a mass awareness. Preceding the upsurges of the 1960s Black people began to rediscover who they were. They began to take the conk out of their hair, started wearing their hair naturally. Black women started taking the makeup off their face and became proud of their big African lips. Black men stopped curling and frying and dyeing their hair; they started wearing Afros and dashikis. We started renaming ourselves in the tradition of our ancestors. We embraced religions that reflected who we were. This cultural awareness preceded revolutionary consciousness.

The enemy is a student of history. They know our history better than we do. They analyzed the history and religions and trends in society around the world and they came to certain conclusions. One of the conclusions they came to is that cultural nationalism in and of itself is reactionary. It will never lead to the empowerment of people until it is politicized. Once it is politicized, it can possibly become revolutionary. So the key was to stop the politicization of our cultural awareness. Therefore, individuals who preached narrow cultural nationalism had to be supported covertly, and they had to be promoted.

When the Black Panther Party came upon the scene in the 1960s, it was the first Black organization in contemporary times that, number one, was a cadre organization and, number two, had a revolutionary ideology that embraced the idea and notion that there were Black enemies of Black people based on their class consciousness. This was difficult for the cultural nationalists to deal with in the 1960s. I know. They were into having Black women walking three steps behind them. They were into speaking Swahili and refusing to talk to any white folks under any circumstances. They said that because the Black Panther Party had this position and this analysis, white folks were controlling it. They said that we were fraternizing with white people and there were white people in the Black Panther Party.

When you look at the counterintelligence documents, you see the FBI played on this. They sent false information and letters to the Black student unions around the country in order to keep the Panthers off the campus. And the way they would couch their letters was in the phrases and terminology of the cultural nationalists. The letters said that the Panthers were hanging out with white folks—with honkies—you know the terminology they used. They would bring in the local janitor of the FBI building and say, "Look, Brother Coon, why don't you write a letter for us? You know, use that ol' coon talk that you talk." Yeah, they did that. When they used to place their phone calls they used to get the janitors and the people who used to clean the offices in the FBI building to place the phone calls because they couldn't imitate the speech patterns of Black people, and they had no Black agents. This is all in the documents. This is all in the Church Committee investigation.

So we need to understand that cultural nationalism, historically, has been a brake on our revolutionary consciousness when the mass movement has no leadership. They understood this so well that they went after the most radical wing of the Black movement. They went after them with guns, indictments, and criminalization, and they boosted the reformist wing of the movement by giving them little carrots and tokens and antipoverty programs. They pushed forward the cultural nationalists to say that the most radical nationalists were people who subscribed to some white, leftist ideology.

REVOLUTION AND CULTURE

We have to be very clear that the Counterintelligence Program was not only a war strategy. It was a strategy designed to manipulate the political landscape of the Black community, manipulate it in a way that we would find ourselves twenty-three years later in the exact same position we were then. It's like *déjà vu*. If you ever look

at some of the old speeches of Malcolm and look at some of the videos we're watching now, it's like we're talking about the same thing! [Heavy-weight boxing champion] George Foreman was on yesterday talking about decent housing and police brutality and how we're not going to stop until the police stop. All you had to do was to change the date from 1963 to 1992 and he would have been talking about the exact same thing we're talking about now.

So how is it that we've managed for twenty-five years to talk about the same thing? I'll tell you how it happens. Those individuals who embraced revolutionary ideas and principles first of all realized that without a radical transformation of society there will be no possibility of a new type of human being, a non-exploited human being. A human being that can give the best of himself or herself to society and thereby enrich themselves and enrich society in the process. Revolution means, for us, the destruction of oppressive and exploitative systems. This, of course, implies that if there is to be a revolution there have to be revolutionaries and a revolutionary movement, and this movement has to have a culture. It has to have a way to inspire and to communicate to its people. The culture that this society loves to appropriate, but seldom gives its due to, is the culture of Africans in diaspora. We all know that we are the lifeblood of an otherwise bloodless culture. We know that it is our speech, our style, our very existence that peoples of the world emulate when they emulate so-called American culture. It's our music that has become renowned worldwide. It is our poetry, our speech, our clothes; it is our very being.

Therefore, the arena that the Counterintelligence Program focused on the most was the arena of the mass culture. The mass culture is an area that is controlled by what? The mass media. There could be no mass culture in this multitribal society were it not for the electronic media. The mass culture is promoted and promulgated by the mass media. It was in the arena of the mass media that the revolutionary nationalists had to first be discredited. It was in the arena of the mass media or in the arena of the mass culture that our movement had to first be derailed. . . .

We have to take it to the streets. When we look at the films of the 1960s, when we look at the struggle that unfolded in the 1960s, there was always that fundamental beat in the street. It was always going on in the streets. Without that happening today, we are going to be subjected to definition by media. You can't win because they manufacture not only consent, they manufacture ideas. They are the masters at putting a spin on something. Madison Avenue pays individuals six-digit figures to figure out how to subliminally seduce people.

We are not up against a simple system that can be defeated only through debate of ideas. We have to begin to exert some serious force in this issue. Now I'm not an advocate of violence. I'm not an advocate of the mindless use of force. But I do think the judicious application of physical force can bring about a negotiated settlement of issues that are otherwise unresolvable. I think that once we have established that our children will no longer listen to us, then I think we will begin to listen to our children.

NOTES

This selection is an edited version of a talk given by Dhoruba Bin Wahad in Harlem on December 4, 1992, at an African International Forum entitled "Cointelpro, CovertAction, and the Destruction of Black Leaders and Organizations." The talk was transcribed by Lee DeNoyer. Originally published in *Bulletin in Defense of Marxism* 11, no. 106 (May 1993): 22–26.

1. *Editor's note:* Fuerzas Armadas de Liberación Nacional (Armed Forces of National Liberation) was an underground organization that acted as resistance toward the U.S. colonization of Puerto Rico. Between 1974 and 1980, the FALN was accountable for numerous actions against U.S. military, government, and economic sites that they held responsible for U.S. domination in Puerto Rico. By 1980, the U.S. government cracked down on the group through a series of arrests. Jan Susler, "Unreconstructed Revolutionaries: Today's Puerto Rican Political Prisoners of War," in *The Puerto Rican Movement*, ed. Andres Torres and Jose E. Velazquez (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1998), 145.

2. *Editor's note:* "Operation Phoenix" was an assassination program undertaken by the CIA in southern Vietnam. "Special Operations Groups (SOGs)," acting to suppress dissident voices, and other military and nonmilitary formations, operated in a widespread counterinsurgency program. At this time, a Special Operations Service (SOS) was developed in the United States under the FBI and CIA to create similar programs domestically. Ward Churchill and Jim Vander Wall, *Agents of Repression: The FBI's Secret Wars against the Black Panther Party and the American Indian Movement* (Boston: South End Press, 1988), 194–95; Stanton Shelby, *U.S. Army and Allied Ground Forces in Vietnam: Order of Battle* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. News Books, 1981), 251–53.

3. *Editor's note:* Sweet Daddy Grace and Father Divine were leaders of different religious "cult" groups in Harlem during the Depression. Sweet Daddy Grace formed the House of Prayer shortly after Father Divine created the Peace Mission. Healing sessions, spiritual gatherings, and Messianic hope served as a way of organizing members of the black community. Many of their adherents were former followers of Marcus Garvey, who prophesied a black messiah and redemption. Both groups organized against racial and economic oppression and attempted to formulate alternatives with their congregants. Robert Weisbort, *Father Divine and the Struggle for Racial Equality* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1983), 60–63, 176–78.

4. *Editor's note:* COINTELPRO was not designed specifically for African Americans or black progressives. It was created and utilized against formations and individuals that challenged elite dominance and structural oppression; however, those disproportionately and violently victimized by COINTELPRO were African, Native, or Latino Americans.

5. *Editor's note:* Civil rights activist Jesse Jackson, Sr.; former Southern Christian Leadership Conference leader, New York Reverend Wyatt T. Walker; first elected black New York City mayor, David Dinkins.

6. *Editor's note:* The FBI's Counterintelligence Program employed operations in order to create dissension between the Black Panther Party (BPP) and Ron Karenga's US. Among the tactics used were planting cartoons of each organization characterizing the other in a negative way. US members killed BPP leaders John Higgins and Bunchy Carter. See *Agents of Repression*, 41; Charles E. Jones, ed., *The Black Panther Party [Reconsidered]* (Baltimore: Black Classic Press, 1998).

Chapter Seven

Jalil Abdul Muntaqim

Jalil Abdul Muntaqim (Anthony Bottom) was born on October 18, 1951, in Oakland, California, and grew up in San Francisco. Attracted to antiracist and civil rights activism in the 1960s, Bottom began organizing for the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) as an adolescent. In high school, he was often recruited to engage in "speak outs" on behalf of the Black Student Union (BSU). He also participated in street protests against police brutality.[1] After the assassination of Martin Luther King, Jr., in 1968, though, he became convinced of the need to use armed strategies to combat racist repression.[2]

At the age of eighteen, Muntaqim joined the Black Panther Party (BPP). During this time, between late 1968 and 1969, the black underground organization, later known as the Black Liberation Army (BLA), began to militarize.[3] The *New York Times* in 1971 defined the BLA as a "loosely knit amalgam of terrorists that arose out of a Black Panther faction." Muntaqim described the formation as "a politico-military organization, whose primary objective is to fight for the independence and self-determination of Afrikan people in the United States."[4]

While those in the Black Panther Party's aboveground offices focused on organizing, communicating with nationwide party affiliates and other revolutionary groups, and forming positive political and social relations with local black communities across the country, Muntaqim and fellow members of the underground became experts in military strategy and served as the essential "armed wing of the aboveground political apparatus."[5] When the party split (into Newton vs. Cleaver or West vs. East Coast factions), however, this balance of skills was disrupted and the BPP lost political support. The BLA continued the movement in their area of expertise—armed struggle. Lacking the indispensable political support of the BPP, and with the alienation of large segments of American and African American communities who disagreed with its violent tactics, the BLA faltered and was eventually destroyed.

On August 28, 1971, one week after a San Quentin prison guard shot and killed imprisoned BPP Field Marshall George Jackson, Muntaqim and Albert "Nuh"

Washington were arrested in California for the alleged attempted killing of a San Francisco police sergeant. New York police charged Muntaqim, Washington, and another BPP and BLA member, Herman Bell, with the May 21, 1971, killings of two Harlem police officers, Waverly Jones and Joseph A. Piagentini.[6] The shootout that led to the deaths of the two officers came only two days after two other NYPD officers were wounded by gunfire, an incident for which an anonymous informer declared the BLA responsible.[7] Using George Jackson's murder as substantiation for a motive of BLA retaliation, police entered the gun that Muntaqim held at the San Francisco shooting as evidence in the New York City murder trial.[8]

The FBI's COINTELPRO project to suppress radicals was effectively used to capture and convict Muntaqim, Washington, and Bell (Bell was arrested two years later) for the killings. They became known as the "New York Three." According to Ward Churchill and Jim Vander Wall, the FBI secured their convictions by coercion of witnesses and perjured testimonies.[9] While Muntaqim, Bell, and Washington received an evidentiary hearing in 1992, in which they successfully proved the government's suppression of evidence and its illegal conduct in their previous trial, their appeals were denied by the state and federal courts on the grounds that these violations, when considered separately, did not warrant a new trial.[10] Muntaqim and Bell remain incarcerated in New York. Albert "Nuh" Washington died of liver cancer in April 2000, in New York's Coxsackie Correctional Facility.[11]

Muntaqim has remained active as an educator and writer in support of prisoners' rights and social justice. In 1976, while at San Quentin prison, he launched the National Prisoners Campaign to petition the United Nations to recognize the existence of political prisoners in the United States.[12] Through the National Prisoners Afrikan Studies Project, he participates in the education of other inmates, and has filed numerous lawsuits on behalf of prisoners.[13] Muntaqim also conceived of the Jericho '98 March on Washington, which drew thousands to support of the freedom of U.S. political prisoners. With Bell, he helps to coordinate "Victory Gardens—Food for Harlem," a project that seeks to join rural and urban communities—through the farming and distribution of fresh food and the distribution of educational materials on amnesty/clemency campaigns for U.S. political prisoners—in political unity that transcends race and class divisions.

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Research and draft for this biography were provided by Elizabeth Kaufman.

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2. *Can't Jail the Spirit*, 99.
3. Jalil Muntaqim, "On the Black Liberation Army," *Arm the Spirit* (18 September 1979): 65.
4. "On the Black Liberation Army," 66.
5. "On the Black Liberation Army," 66.
6. Michael Kaufman, "Slaying of One of the Last Black Liberation Army Leaders Still at Large Ended a 7-Month Manhunt," *New York Times*, 16 November 1973, 10.
7. Joseph Fried, "2 Policemen Slain by Shots in Back; 2 Men Are Sought," *New York Times*, 21 May 1971, 1.
8. New York State Task Force on Political Prisoners, "Clemency Petition," 18.
9. Ward Churchill and Jim Vander Wall, *The COINTELPRO Papers: Documents from the FBI's Secret Wars against Dissent in the United States* (Boston: South End Press, 1990), 157.
10. Herman Bell, "New York Three Update," June 1997, prisonactivist.org/pps+pows/ny3_update.html.
11. New York State Task Force on Political Prisoners, 19.
12. *Can't Jail the Spirit*, 100.
13. New York State Task Force on Political Prisoners, 17.

On the Black Liberation Army *(Abridged)*

September 18, 1979

INTRODUCTION: 1966–1971

The history of our national liberation struggle is one of the most important sources from which the political [parties], the oppressed masses and the liberation armed forces can draw lessons elucidating the nature of their oppression and the task before them: moving towards independence and freedom. In this article, I would like to present to the masses the general history of the evolution of the Black Liberation Army (BLA). This will be a brief historical overview. In order to protect people who are or were at one time associated with the BLA, it will not provide specific historical data.

The Black Liberation Army is a politico-military organization whose primary objective is to fight for the independence and self-determination of Afrikan people in the United States. The political determination of the BLA evolved out of the now-defunct Black Panther Party (BPP).

With the advent of the Black Panther Party for Self-Defense in October 1966, the question of armed struggle and resistance to racist oppression emerged as a plausible strategy in the developing liberation movement. In late 1968 and early 1969, the forming of a Black underground began. From Los Angeles, California, to Texas, Louisiana, Mississippi, and Alabama, armed units were formed and trained in rural areas, and caches of resources were established.

In the same period, in Oakland, San Francisco, Detroit, Chicago, Philadelphia, Ohio, and New York, and other communities across the country, Black Panther Party offices were being established to formulate a political relationship with the oppressed Black masses. From 1969 to 1972, the BPP came under vicious attack by the State and Federal governments. The federal government employed COINTELPRO (the FBI program implemented with cooperation from the CIA and local police departments) as a means to destroy the aboveground political apparatus that fielded the Black underground.[1] But it wasn't until 1969 that the BPP began its purge of many of its most trusted and militant members, many of whom eventually joined the Black underground.

By 1971, contradictions perpetuated by COINTELPRO within the leadership of the BPP caused the split between [Huey] Newton and [Eldridge] Cleaver, which eventually split the entire Black Panther Party into two major factions. It was this BPP split and factionalism that propelled the Black underground to initiate a consistent practice of armed struggle for Black liberation. The State's armed offensive to liquidate the Party in order to destroy aboveground activity for liberation also played into this development.

This is not to say that armed action by the Black underground against the State

did not occur prior to the split. On the contrary, by 1971 the Black underground was becoming rich in experience in the tactics of armed expropriations, sabotage, and ambush-assaults.

THE "DEFENSIVE–OFFENSIVE": 1970–1971

Prior to the split, the Black underground had been the official armed wing of the aboveground political apparatus, and for that reason had restrained its military activity. It was not an autonomous entity. The Black underground, though experienced in many areas of tactical military guerrilla warfare, was still politically infantile. Although it was becoming organizationally sophisticated as a fighting apparatus, it did not establish an infrastructure completely separate from the aboveground BPP cadres and chapters. This would become one of the major detriments to the Black underground after the Black Panther Party split.

Based upon the split and factionalism in the BPP, and in the context of heightened repression by the State, the Black underground was ordered to begin establishing the capacity to take the "defensive–offensive" in developing urban guerrilla warfare. Hence, in 1971, the title "Black Liberation Army" (or "Afro-American Liberation Army") surfaced as the name of the nucleus of Black guerrilla fighters across the United States. This is not to say that the name Black Liberation Army was first used in 1971, for in late 1968, during a student strike and demonstration in Mexico City, many students and demonstrators were killed by Mexican police.[2] One of those students was reported to have had a piece of paper in his pocket upon which was written the name Black Liberation Army. Whether or not there was a connection between the fielding of the Black underground and the uprising in Mexico in 1968 is unknown.

Both before and after the split in the BPP and the call for the "defensive–offensive," the Black underground had committed many armed attacks against the State as part of the BPP (and, starting in May 1971, as the Black Liberation Army). Many of these are unrecorded. Here I would like to present the Justice Department–LEAA Task Force report on BLA activity. (It should be noted that these reports were recorded by the date when police agencies captured, killed, or in some way received information concerning BLA activity. They are, therefore, one sided and by no means indicative of all BLA activity in the last ten years.) . . .[3]

1976

The defensive–offensive politico-military initiatives launched in 1970–71 were based upon the degree of repression suffered in the Black community due to COINTELPRO police attacks. The politico-military policy at that time was to establish a *defensive* (self-defense) front that would *offensively* protect the aboveground forces, whose purpose and task were to develop a mass movement towards national liberation.

At this time, a historical transition was taking place. The civil rights movement had given way to the riotous 1960s, the creation of BPP chapters bravely fighting against police attacks in Black communities, and massive mobilizations in support of the Vietnamese national liberation war. Hence, the commencement of armed struggle by our forces responded to this historical transition and development.

But there was a problem: In the early seventies, the Black underground was the armed wing of the aboveground BPP. Unfortunately, the subsequent split and factionalism within the BPP obstructed logistics and communications between cadre(s) in the Black underground in various parts of the country. This created the greatest impediment to the advent of the Black Liberation Army, so that the commencement of armed struggle could be said to have been premature. Subjectively, our capacity to wage a sustained protracted national liberation war was undermined by the split in the aboveground political apparatus, for the underground still depended on the aboveground for logistics and communications. The Black underground was comprised of militants who had not grown to political maturity. As a result, the underground was left without a politico-military structure and strategy to merge into a national formation employing stable and mobile urban and rural guerrilla warfare in conjunction with the rising militancy of the oppressed masses.

STRATEGIC RETREAT: 1971–1975

By late 1971, the Black underground was ordered to begin a strategic retreat, to reorganize itself and build a national structure. The call for the strategic retreat was too late, however, for many cadres. Many of the most mature militants were already deeply underground, separated from those aboveground BPP members who continued to support armed struggle after the split. The repression of the State continued to mount, especially now that the Black underground was hampered by internal strife and isolated by the loss of the aboveground political support apparatus (and with virtually no support coming from existing Black community groups and organizations). At the same time, it must be stated, a major contradiction was developing between the Black underground and Euro-American forces employing armed tactics in support of the Vietnamese liberation struggle.[4]

By 1973–75, this contradiction became full-blown: Specific Euro-American revolutionary armed forces refused to give meaningful material and political support to the Black Liberation Movement, more specifically, to the Black Liberation Army. Thus, in 1974 the Black Liberation Army was without an aboveground political support apparatus; logistically and structurally scattered across the country without

the means to unite its combat units; abandoned by Euro-American revolutionary armed forces; and being relentlessly pursued by the State's reactionary law enforcement agencies and programs. It was only a matter of time before the Black Liberation Army would be virtually decimated as a fighting clandestine organization.

CONTINUING THE FIGHT IN THE COURTS AND PRISONS

By 1974–75, the fighting capacity of the Black Liberation Army had been destroyed. But the BLA as a politico-military organization had not been destroyed, because the imprisoned comrades continued attempting to escape and persisted in fighting their political trials. These efforts forged ideological and political theory concerning the building of the Black Liberation Movement and revolutionary armed struggle. In the courts, Black Liberation Army members sought to place the State on trial, to condemn the oppressive conditions in which Black people had to eke out an existence in racist America. These trials went on for several years, with the courts and police trying to use them to embellish their position as guardians of society. The State media projected the Black Liberation Army trials as instances of justice being served: to protect Black people from terrorism; to prevent these terrorists from starting racial strife between Black and white people; to protect the police, who are responsible for the welfare of the oppressed communities, etc. The captured and confined BLA members were labeled terrorist, criminal, racist—but never revolutionaries, never humanitarians, never political activists.

But the undaunted revolutionary fervor of captured BLA members continued to serve the revolution—even from within the courtrooms and the prisons. By placing the State on trial, the BLA was able to expose the contradiction between the falsehood—that the State protects the rights of all people—and the actuality—that the State only protects the rights of the capitalist-class bourgeoisie. The comrades on trial sought to undermine the State's attempts to play off the BLA as an insignificant group of crazies. Thus the BLA trials became forums to politicize the masses about the nature of the struggle and revolution. The trials served to organize people to support those being persecuted and prosecuted by the State. They became a means for the oppressed masses to build the capacity to protect themselves from future persecution. In this manner, the trials of the Black Liberation Army voiced the discontent, dissatisfaction, and disenfranchisement of Black people in racist America.

STRATEGIC CAMPAIGNS: 1975–1979

By late 1975, the Black Liberation Army established a Coordinating Committee, essentially comprised of imprisoned members and outside supporters who had

emerged during the years of political prosecution in the courts. The first task of the Coordinating Committee was to distribute an ideological document depicting the theoretical foundations of the Black Liberation Army's political determination. This document was entitled "A MESSAGE TO THE BLACK MOVEMENT—A Political Statement from the Black Underground." The Message to the Black Movement put forth several political premises underlying the BLA's status as a revolutionary political-military organization fighting for national liberation of Afrikan people in the United States.

In late 1975 and 1976, the Coordinating Committee distributed the first BLA newsletter, an organizational publication designed to forge ideological and political clarity and unity among BLA members captured and confined in various parts of the country. The BLA newsletter began to serve as a means for BLA members to voice their understanding of the national liberation struggle, and in this way, for the entire organized body to share in ideas and strengthen our collective political determination as a fighting force. Over the years, the newsletter has helped to develop cadres inside and outside of prison and to broaden the capacity of the BLA to continue to serve the national liberation struggle.

In 1976, members of the Black Liberation Army launched a national campaign to petition the United Nations concerning the plight of political prisoners of war and conditions of the U.S. penal system, on behalf of the prison movement. This BLA-initiated and led U.N. Prisoners Petition Campaign virtually revitalized the prison movement across the country and forged the impetus behind the present Human Rights campaign to the United Nations.[5] The U.N. Prisoners Petition Campaign was the first to call for an international investigation into the conditions of U.S. prisons. It also called for the release of political prisoners of war to a non-imperialist country that would accept them. (This year, another national campaign, entitled "National POW Amnesty Campaign" has been launched.) Lastly, in 1976–77, the Coordinating Committee distributed a Study Guide to captured members of the BLA as a means to consolidate the ideological perspectives from which the BLA would provide political leadership to the national liberation struggle.

From 1974 to the present, the BLA has continuously provided ideological and political perspectives within the Black Liberation Movement, and in this way has given leadership to the movement. However, the Black Liberation Army still lacks principled support from progressive forces throughout the country. The primary reason for this lack of support is the fact that the BLA still calls for armed struggle and the building of a revolutionary armed front. The Black Liberation Army is a politico-military organization. In the last five years it has served to develop the mass movement to merge with the political determination of the Black underground. The merger is based upon the development of a national politico-military strategy in unity with the aspirations and strategic initiatives of various political organizations throughout the country. The Black Liberation Army has consistently called for the development of a Black Liberation Front or Black United Front, a united

front of Black revolutionary nationalists to establish the political determination of the class and national liberation struggle towards independence and for the freeing of the land. At this stage, there are several areas of progress that may serve to strengthen, consolidate, and mobilize the national liberation struggle for the aspirations of the oppressed Black masses.

The building of the Afrikan National Prisoners Organization is a positive step for various progressive Black forces to develop principled working relationships, alliances, and coalitions, and further build towards the Black Liberation Front. Similarly, the National Black Human Rights Coalition will allow a greater number of Black organizations and groups representing oppressed Black masses to educate, organize, and mobilize against racist, capitalist imperialism in conjunction with the heightened struggles in Namibia and Azania [South Africa] and escalating human rights violations here in North America. But it is imperative that these new formations develop a struggle line that supports the need for armed struggle in the United States, and, therefore, the oldest revolutionary armed force in North America—the Black Liberation Army.[6]

It is practically 1980 and the Black Liberation Army (the Black underground) has been in existence for over ten years. The last ten years have been hard years of struggle. We have lost many comrades, we have made many mistakes, but we have never lied nor compromised our principles in struggle. The growth and development of the BLA depends on the growth and development of the entire class and national liberation struggle. The BLA's ability to build revolutionary armed struggle lies in the willingness of the oppressed masses to support the BLA. This means calling for the BLA to act and building areas of support in the work place, in the home, in the social places of entertainment, but most of all amongst the political organizations and groups with whom the oppressed masses are affiliated. It is essential and necessary that the general mass and popular movement understand the need for revolutionary armed struggle/forces. They must recognize that the existence of the Black Liberation Army is the foundation for the preservation of the class and national liberation struggle as the socio-economic conditions of U.S. monopoly capitalism worsen and as racist repression intensifies.

As mentioned earlier, another national political campaign has been launched. This new campaign calls for the release and/or exchange of captured members of the Black underground and other revolutionary forces across the country. But it must be understood that the principle objective of this campaign is also to build support for revolutionary armed struggle, employing international law and politics (specifically, Protocols of the Geneva Accords) concerning the existence of political prisoners of war in the United States. Supporting the release of political prisoners of war brings understanding of how these revolutionaries came to be imprisoned, of the need for them to be released, and of the need for revolutionary armed struggle. This is the challenge in uniting the mass and popular movements under the auspices of building the Black Liberation Front. It can only be realized by supporting the re-emergence of the Black underground, the Black Liberation Army.

SUPPORT THE BLACK LIBERATION ARMY
BUILD THE NATIONAL POW AMNESTY CAMPAIGN
FREE ALL POLITICAL PRISONERS OF WAR

Jalil Abdul Muntaqim
on behalf of the Black Liberation Army

NOTES

Originally written on September 18, 1979, and printed in the revolutionary prisoners' newspaper, *Arm the Spirit*, this essay has been edited for this volume.

1. *Editor's note:* FBI COINTELPRO activity against the Black Panther Party is documented in depth in Ward Churchill and Jim Vander Wall, *The COINTELPRO Papers: Documents from the FBI's Secret Wars against Dissent in the United States* (Boston: South End Press, 1992), 91–164. The counterinsurgency program embodied in COINTELPRO targeted a broad range of black groups and organizations, seeking to squash any development suspected of furthering black nationalist and liberationist politics.

2. *Editor's note:* Students initiated a strike in July of 1968 to demand educational reforms. The 118-day strike affected close to 150,000 students and was marked by tension and violence between federal officials and student protestors. Hundreds of students were wounded and many were killed and imprisoned for their actions. Associated Press, "Big Student Strike On in Mexico City," *New York Times*, 10 August 1968, 5; Associated Press, "Deaths Put at 49 in Mexican Clash," *New York Times*, 4 October 1968, 1.

3. *Editor's note:* The LEAA was the Law Enforcement Assistance Administration, an agency set up by the Department of Justice in 1968 to channel federal funds to state and local police agencies. Widely regarded by radicals as a conduit for counterintelligence programs, it was abolished in 1982. For Muntaqim's reference to the Justice Department–LEAA Task Force report on BLA activity, see original publication of this piece.

4. *Editor's note:* The National Black Human Rights Coalition was an alliance of revolutionary nationalist forces that led a mass mobilization in front of the United Nations in New York City in November of 1979.

5. *Editor's note:* The Euro-American forces referred to were radical student groups. Their antiwar efforts, support for the Black Panther Party, and subsequent decline are documented in *The COINTELPRO Papers: Documents from the FBI's Secret Wars against Dissent in the United States*, 165, 171–76, 208–30.

6. *Editor's note:* The Deacons for Defense and Justice, formed in 1960, provided a model for the Black Panther Party, originally created as the Black Panther Party for Self-Defense in 1966, and the Black Liberation Army as well. For more information on the Deacons for Defense and Justice and the organization's founder, Robert F. Williams, see Timothy B. Tyson, *Radio Free Dixie: Robert F. Williams and the Roots of Black Power* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1999); and Robert Franklin Williams, *Negroes with Guns* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1998; reprint).

Chapter Eight

Assata Shakur

Assata Shakur (JoAnne Chesimard) was born in 1947 in New York City. She spent most of her childhood in the segregated South, living in Wilmington, North Carolina, until her family relocated to Queens, New York, when she was a teenager. Shakur began her political education in radicalism when she enrolled as a student at Borough of Manhattan Community College (BMCC) in the mid-1960s. In the context of growing black consciousness and nationalist movements, she became involved with BMCC's black and African student organizations. Her activism expanded to include the black liberation, student rights, and anti–Vietnam War movements. After graduating from college, Shakur began working with the Black Panther Party (BPP), but differences and dissatisfaction with the Oakland-based national leadership led her to the Black Liberation Army (BLA), an underground, military wing of the Panthers largely based on the East Coast. A main target of the Federal Bureau of Investigation's COINTELPRO, Shakur was accused of numerous crimes and forced underground. Eventually in each of these cases, charges would be dropped or Shakur acquitted. In a May 1973 confrontation with New Jersey state troopers, she was seriously wounded, and her companion and BLA comember Zayd Malik Shakur was killed, along with state trooper Werner Foerster. Companion Sundiata Acoli (Clark Squire) escaped but was later apprehended. Following a change of venue in 1973 and a mistrial in 1974, in March 1977 Shakur was convicted as an accomplice to the murder of state trooper Foerster and of atrocious assault on trooper James Harper with intent to kill. Despite the testimony of expert witnesses that argued medical evidence showed Shakur could not have shot either trooper, the all-white jury, of whom five had personal ties to state troopers, convicted her. Although the trial was held in a county where frequent pretrial press reports proclaimed her guilt, the judge refused to allow any evidence of COINTELPRO repression to be entered into the case and refused to investigate a burglary of the office of her defense counsel and the destruction or disappearance of important defense trial documents during that break-in.[1]

Shakur escaped from New Jersey's Clinton Correctional Facility in 1979. Since

the 1980s she has been in exile in Cuba, where she received political asylum. Shakur's controversial case and police and prosecutorial malfeasance were reintroduced to mainstream black America in the mid-1980s through African American news host Gil Noble's *Like It Is* TV talk show, based in New York City. In the 1990s, she appeared in various documentaries, including Cuban filmmaker Gloria Rolando's *Eyes of the Rainbow*, which intersperses images of a serene Shakur with African Orisha, or Yoruba female warrior deities of love and community. Her case has received support from a broad national and international spectrum. In 1998 media reported that the U.S. State Department was negotiating with the Cuban government to lift crippling sanctions and a forty-year embargo in exchange for the extradition of Shakur and ninety other U.S. political exiles. Defiantly, Shakur described herself as a "fugitive slave" and the woman who authorized the hunt and increased the bounty on her head, then New Jersey governor Christine Todd Whitman (current Environmental Protection Agency [EPA] head), as a "slave mistress."

Shakur's life and experience in the black liberation struggle, and the state campaign to criminalize her, are detailed in *Assata: An Autobiography*. In the memoir she contests depictions of her as a violent black female revolutionary and offers a complex portrait of a woman committed to freedom. Refusing to make revolutionary war synonymous with violence, she writes of a "people's war" that precludes elite vanguards (quoted in the introduction, her words bear repeating here):

> Some of the groups thought they could just pick up arms and struggle and that, somehow, people would see what they were doing and begin to struggle themselves. They wanted to engage in a do-or-die battle with the power structure in amerika, even though they were weak and ill prepared for such a fight. But the most important factor is that armed struggle, by itself, can never bring about a revolution. Revolutionary war is a people's war.[2]

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NOTES

Research and draft for this biography were provided by Elizabeth Walsh.

1. Lennox S. Hinds, Foreword, *Assata: An Autobiography* (Chicago: Lawrence Hill Books, 1987), xi–xii.
2. Assata Shakur, *Assata: An Autobiography* (Chicago: Lawrence Hill Books, 1987), 242.

July 4th Address

July 4, 1973

BLACK BROTHERS, BLACK SISTERS, I want you to know that I love you and I hope somewhere in your heart you have love for me. My name is Assata Shakur (slave name JoAnne Chesimard), and I am a field nigga who is determined to be free by any means necessary. By that I mean that I can never be free unless all my people are free along with me. By that I mean that I have declared war on all forces that have raped our women, castrated our men and kept our babies empty-bellied.

I have declared war on the rich who prosper on our poverty, the politicians who lie to us with smiling faces, and all the mindless, heartless robots who protected them and their property.

I am a black revolutionary, and as such I am the victim of all the wrath, hatred and slander that amerikkka is capable of. Like all other black revolutionaries, I have been hunted like a dog, and like all other black revolutionaries, amerikkka is trying to lynch me.

I am a black revolutionary woman and because of this I have been charged with and accused of every alleged crime in which a woman was believed to have participated. The alleged crimes in which only men were supposed involved, I have been accused of planning. They plastered pictures alleged to be me in post offices, airports, hotels, police cars, subways, banks, television, and newspapers. They offered over fifty thousand dollars ($50,000) in rewards for my capture and they issued orders to shoot on sight and to shoot to kill.

I am a black revolutionary and, by definition, that makes me part of the Black Liberation Army. The pigs have used their newspapers and TV's to paint the Black Liberation Army to be vicious, brutal mad dog criminals. They have called us gangsters and gun molls and have compared us to such characters as John Dillinger and Ma Barker. It should be clear, it must be clear to anyone who can think, see or hear, that we are the victims. The victims are not the criminals.

It should also be clear to us by now who the real criminals are. Nixon and his crime partners have murdered hundreds of thousands of Third World brothers and sisters in Vietnam, Cambodia, Laos, Mozambique, Angola and South Africa. As was proven by Watergate, the top law enforcement officials in this country are a lying bunch of criminals. The president, two attorney generals, the head of the FBI, the head of the CIA, and half the White House staff have been implicated in the Watergate crimes.

THEY CALL US MURDERERS, but we did not murder over 250 unarmed black men, women and children, and wound thousands of others in the riots they provoked during the Sixties. The rulers of this country have always considered their property more important than our lives. They call us murderers, but we were not responsible for the more than 6,000 black people lynched by white racists. They

call us murderers, but we were not responsible for the twenty-eight brother inmates and the nine hostages murdered at Attica.[1] They call us murderers, but we did not murder and wound over thirty unarmed black students in the Orangeburg massacre.[2] We did not shoot down and murder unarmed black students at Jackson State or Southern State either.[3]

They call us murderers but we did not murder Martin Luther King, Emmett Till, Medger Evers, Malcolm X,[4] George Jackson, Nat Turner, James Chaney and countless other black Freedom Fighters. We did not bomb four black little girls in a Sunday school.[5] We did not murder, by shooting in the back, sixteen-year-old Rita Lloyd, eleven-year-old Rickie Bodden, or ten-year-old Clifford Glover.[6]

They call us murderers, but we did not control or enforce a system of racism and oppression that systematically murders black and Third World people. Although black people supposedly comprise about fifteen percent of the total amerikkkan population, at least sixty percent of murder victims are black. For every pig that is killed in the so-called line of duty there are at least fifty black people murdered by police.

Black life expectancy is much lower than white and they do their best to kill us before we are born. We are burned alive in fire-trap tenements. Our brothers and sisters O.D. daily from heroin and methadone. Our babies die from lead poisoning. Millions of black people have died as a result of indecent medical care. This is murder. But they have the gall to call us murders.

THEY CALL US KIDNAPPERS, yet Brother Clark Squire [Sundiata Acoli] (who is accused along with me, of murdering a New Jersey state trooper), was kidnapped on April 2, 1969, from our black community and held on $100,000 ransom in the New York Panther 21 conspiracy case. He was acquitted on May 13, 1971 along with all the others of all 156 counts of conspiracy by a jury that took less than two hours to deliberate. Brother Squire was innocent. Yet he was kidnapped from his community and family. Over two years of his life were stolen, but they call us kidnappers. They call us kidnappers, but we did not kidnap the thousands of Brothers and Sisters held captive in amerikkka's concentration camps. Most of the prison population in this country are black and Third World people who can afford neither bail nor lawyers.

They call us thieves and bandits. They say we steal. But it was not us who stole millions of black people from the continent of Africa. We were robbed of our language, of our gods, of our culture, of our human dignity, of our labor and of our lives. They call us thieves yet it is not us who rip off billions of dollars every year through tax evasions, illegal price fixing, embezzlement, consumer fraud, bribes, kickbacks and swindles. They call us bandits, yet every time most black people pick up our paychecks we are being robbed. Every time we walk into a store in our neighborhood we are being held up. And every time we pay our rent the landlord sticks a gun in our ribs.

They call us thieves, but we did not rob and murder millions of Indians by ripping off their homeland, then call ourselves pioneers. They call us bandits, but it is not

us who are robbing Africa, Asia and Latin America of their natural resources and freedom while the people are sick and starving. The rulers of this country and their flunkies have committed some of the most brutal, vicious crimes in history. They are the bandits. They are the murderers. And they should be treated as such. These maniacs are not fit to judge me, Clark Squire, or any other black person on trial in amerikkka. Black people should, and, inevitably must, determine our destinies.

EVERY REVOLUTION IN HISTORY has been accomplished by actions, although words are necessary. We must create shields that protect us and spears that penetrate our enemies. Black people must learn how to struggle by struggling. We must learn much by our mistakes.

I want to apologize to you, my black brothers and sisters, for being on the New Jersey Turnpike. I should have known better. The Turnpike is a check point where black people are stopped, searched, harassed, and assaulted. Revolutionaries must never be in too much of a hurry or make careless decisions. He who runs when the sun is sleeping will stumble many times.

Every time a black freedom fighter is murdered or captured the pigs try to create the impression that they have squashed the movement, destroyed our forces and put down the Black Revolution. The pigs also try to give the impression that 5 or 10 guerillas are responsible for every revolutionary action carried out in amerikkka. That is nonsense. That is absurd. Black revolutionaries do not drop from the moon. We are created by our conditions, shaped by our oppression. We are being manufactured in droves in ghetto streets; places like Attica, San Quentin, Bedford Hills, Leavenworth and Sing Sing. They are turning out thousands of us. Many jobless black veterans and welfare mothers are joining our ranks. Brothers and sisters from all walks of life who are tired of suffering passively make up the Black Liberation Army.

There is and always will be, until every black man, woman and child is free, a Black Liberation Army. The main function of the Black Liberation Army at this time is to create good examples to struggle for black freedom and to prepare for the future. We must defend ourselves and let no one disrespect us. We must gain our liberation by any means necessary.

It is our duty to fight for our freedom.
It is our duty to win.
We must love each other and support each other. We have nothing to lose but our chains!

IN THE SPIRIT OF:
RONALD CARTER
WILLIAM CHRISTMAS
MARK CLARK
MARK ESSEX
FRANK HEAVY FIELDS
WOODY CHANGA

OLUGBALA GREEN
FRED HAMPTON
LIL' BOBBY HUTTON
GEORGE JACKSON
JONATHAN JACKSON
JAMES MCLAIN
HAROLD RUSSELL
ZAYD MALIK SHAKUR
ANTHONY KIMU
OLUGBALA WHITE

NOTES

Originally published as JoAnne Chesimard, "To My People," in *The Black Scholar* vol. 5, no. 2 (October 1973): 16–27. An alternative version of this July Fourth statement appears in Evelyn Williams, *Inadmissible Evidence: The Story of the African-American Trial Lawyer Who Defended the Black Liberation Army* (Brooklyn, N.Y.: Lawrence Hill Books, 1993), 86–88. The memoir's dedication reads in part: "to all political prisoners, wherever they are confined within the mirrored noon of the dead."

1. Before Governor Nelson Rockefeller ordered the retaking of Attica Prison on September 13, 1971, three prisoners and one guard had been killed in the initial uprising. In the retaking of the prison, the National Guard killed ten guards and twenty-nine prisoners. See Eyes on the Prize, Pt. II, *A NATION of Law?* (Boston: Blacksides Production).

2. *Editor's note:* A February 8, 1968, demonstration in Orangeburg, South Carolina, "aimed against the exclusion of Blacks from a local bowling alley" resulted in the police murders of three black students: Henry Smith (age twenty), Delano Middleton (age seventeen), and Samuel Hammond (age nineteen). Along with these deaths, twenty-seven other students were shot by "wildly firing" police. The patrolmen were eventually pardoned for their acts. Jack Nelson and Jack Bass, *The Orangeburg Massacre* (New York: World Publishing, 1970).

3. *Editor's note:* On May 14–15, 1970, Jackson State (Mississippi) students protested racial intimidation and harassment by white motorists traveling on Lynch Street, a thoroughfare running through the campus, as well as the May 4, 1970, Kent State tragedy (in which four protestors were shot and killed by National Guard soldiers). When several white motorists reported that students had thrown rocks at them as they passed, police arrived, armed with carbines, submachine guns, shotguns, service revolvers, and some personal weapons. Although witnesses later attributed the rock throwing to nonstudents, the police opened fire just after midnight on May 15. Police shot twelve Jackson State students and killed Phillip Lafayette Gibbs (age twenty-one) and seventeen-year-old high school student James Earl Green. See Tim Spofford, *Lynch Street: The May 1970 Slayings at Jackson State College* (Kent, Ohio: Kent State, 1988).

4. *Editor's note:* Members of the Nation of Islam were arrested and convicted for their roles in the shooting of Malcolm X El Malik Shabazz in the Audubon Ballroom in Harlem, New York, in 1965. Allegations remain that the federal government (through FBI COINTELPRO) or the New York Police Department was complicit in the assassination.

5. *Editor's note:* Carole Robertson (age fourteen), Cynthia Wesley (age fourteen), Addie Mae Collins (age fourteen), and Denise McNair (age eleven) died in the racially motivated bombing of the Sixteenth Street Baptist Church in Birmingham, Alabama, on September 15, 1963. See Joy James, ed., *The Angela Y. Davis Reader* (Malden, Mass.: Blackwell, 1998), 4. Bryon Beckwith was convicted of and incarcerated for the murders in 2000.

6. *Editor's note:* On January 27, 1973, sixteen-year-old Rita Lloyd was shot and killed by New York City plainclothes patrolman Robert Milano in Brooklyn, N.Y. Police alleged that, while patrolling the area, Milano saw two girls, one of whom (Denise Bethel) was carrying a sawed-off shotgun. Claiming that when he attempted to disarm her, Bethel pointed her gun at him, Milano fired in what police called a "quick defensive reaction," missing Bethel and hitting Lloyd in the chest. Running from the scene, Lloyd collapsed in her home a block away; police claimed the patrolmen were unaware that Lloyd had been shot. Charges were never brought against Milano. See "'Defensive' Police Shots Kill a Girl, 16." *New York Times*, 28 January 1973, 13.

On August 15, 1972, unarmed eleven-year-old Ricky Bodden was killed by a bullet fired by Officer Francis Ortolando as he and another youngster were "allegedly running from a stolen car." See: "Officer Who Shot Boy Faces Charge," *New York Times*, 27 June 1973, 55. On April 28, 1973, New York Police Officer Thomas Shea shot and killed ten-year-old Clifford Glover and was later acquitted. See Murray Schumach, "Police-Call Tape Played at Trial," *New York Times*, 24 May 1974, 37; Laurie Johnston, "Jury Clears Shea in Killing of Boy," *New York Times*, 13 June 1974, 1.

Chapter Nine

Safiya Bukhari-Alston

Safiya Bukhari-Alston (Bernice Jones) became involved with the Black Panther Party (BPP) in 1969, when she began working at the Panthers' Free Breakfast Program in Harlem. From 1969 to 1971, she served as a section coordinator, selling party newspapers, organizing cell units, and conducting political education classes. In 1971, following the Eldridge Cleaver–Huey P. Newton split,[1] Bukhari-Alston became the head of Information and Communication for the East Coast Black Panther Party, a position she would hold until she went underground in 1973.[2]

On the morning of December 27, 1973, Bukhari-Alston was arrested with Michael Maurice Alston, Neil O. Thompson, and Harold Simmons as they allegedly attempted to free six Black Liberation Army members from "the Tombs," the Manhattan House of Detention for Men. (Among those held at the Tombs were Francisco and Gabriel Torres, Jalil Muntaqim [Anthony Bottom], Herman Bell, and Henry Brown.) The four were detained by police next to an open manhole two blocks from the Detention Center, which the police alleged they were using to gain access to the prison. According to the *New York Times*, "all were charged with burglary, possession of burglars' tools (a screwdriver, the iron bar and the rope ladder) and criminal tampering (lifting the manhole cover)."[3] Bukhari-Alston recalls: "The only thing they could charge us with was third degree burglary on a sewer, which was laughed out of court."[4] Although there was a paucity of evidence against the defendants, the media sensationalized the arrests; using phrases like "Great Tombs Escape Fails at the Sewer,"[5] it emphasized the connections of those arrested to the BPP and to other alleged criminal charges. Nevertheless, charges were dismissed on January 22, 1974, for lack of evidence. In spite of (or because of) the acquittal, the police department issued a $10,000 reward for Bukhari-Alston, based on her membership in the Black Liberation Army (BLA), and failure to appear for trial, warranting that she be shot on sight. Bukhari-Alston went underground as unit coordinator of the Amistad Collective of the BLA.[6]

Bukhari-Alston was captured on January 25, 1975, in Norfolk, Virginia, after a shooting that left her fellow BLA members Kombozi Amistad dead, and Masai

Ehehosi shot in the face. Charged with felony murder, attempted robbery, and illegal possession of a weapon, she was convicted in a one-day trial at which she was not present, sentenced to forty years in prison, and sent to the Virginia Correctional Center for Women in Goochland. There, Bukhari-Alston spent her first twenty-one days in maximum-security segregation. She was only released into the general prison community after she threatened to file a lawsuit. Upon release, however, her movement remained largely restricted given her designation as a "security risk."[7]

Refused desperately needed medical attention and surgery by prison doctors, Bukhari-Alston filed suit against the Virginia Correctional Center for Women. Both the initial suit and the appeal were denied, however, on the grounds that "her complaint amount[ed] to a difference of opinion with prison medical personnel" about treatment. Refused medical care, considering herself a citizen of the Republic of New Afrika (RNA) and therefore a prisoner of war, Bukhari-Alston decided to escape on December 31, 1976. Recaptured on February 27, 1977, she was returned to the Virginia Correctional Center, and was sentenced to an additional year. By using lack of medical attention as a defense, however, she was able to at least secure outside medical treatment, although by this point she was forced to have a hysterectomy. Upon returning to prison, she served the next three years and seven months in maximum-security segregation and, once again, only secured her release into the general population through a lawsuit. In 1983, she was granted parole.[8]

Currently a legal advocate, Bukhari-Alston is cochair of the Jericho Movement, which does educational support work for political prisoners, and cochair of the New York–based Free Mumia Abu-Jamal Coalition.

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NOTES

Research and draft for this biography were provided by Nicole Kief.

1. In the early 1970s, tensions within the Black Panther Party grew as Huey P. Newton and Eldridge Cleaver took increasingly divergent stances on the role of the party, both tactically and ideologically. These tensions played out as a broader conflict between New York and Oakland chapters of the BPP, and escalated when Newton expelled several prominent party members in 1971. The conflict turned deadly when two members, Robert Webb and Samuel Napier, were murdered, and several others left the party as a result. See: Ollie A. Johnson, "Explaining the Demise of the Black Panther Party: The Role of Internal Factors," in *The Black Panther Party [Reconsidered]*, ed. Charles E. Jones (Baltimore: Black Classic Press, 1998), 400–2.
2. "Interview with Safiya Bukhari-Alston."
3. "4 Seized Near Manhole in Alleged Plot to Free Black Army Friends in Tombs," *New York Times*, 28 December 1973.
4. "Interview with Safiya Bukhari-Alston."
5. "Interview with Safiya Bukhari-Alston."
6. "Interview with Safiya Bukhari-Alston"; "4 Seized Near Manhole in Alleged Plot to Free Black Army Friends in Tombs"; "Police Break Gang Plot?" *Tri-State Defender*, 5 January 1974; "3 in an Alleged Plot to Free 6 at Tombs Released by Judge," *New York Times*, 24 January 1974.
7. "Interview with Safiya Bukhari-Alston"; Akinyele Omowale Umoja, "Set Our Warriors Free: The Legacy of the Black Panther Party and Political Prisoners," in *The Black Panther Party [Reconsidered]*, 428–29; Safiya Bukhari-Alston, "Coming of Age," *Notes from a New Afrikan P.O.W. Journal, Book 7* (New York: Spear & Shield Publications, 1979); *United States of America v Bernice Jones*, December 30, 1975.
8. "Interview with Safiya Bukhari-Alston"; *Safiya Asya Bukhari v Virginia Correctional Center for Women*, October 28, 1975.

Coming of Age: A Black Revolutionary

1979

Greek mythology tells the story of Minos, ruler of the city of Knossus. Minos has a great labyrinth (maze) in which he keeps the Minotaur, a monster half man and half bull, whose victims were boys and girls who would make it to the center of the maze only to be killed when they came face to face with the Minotaur. If an intended victim chanced to survive the encounter with the Minotaur, they perished trying to find their way out of the many intricate passages. Finally, Theseus of Athens, with the help of Ariadne, Minos's daughter, enters the labyrinth, slays the beast and finds his way out by following the thread he had unwound as he entered.

The maturation process is full of obstacles and entanglements for anyone, but for a Black woman in America it has all the markings of the Minotaur's Maze. I had to say that, even though nothing as spectacular takes place in the maturation process of the average Black woman—it didn't happen to me—but the day-to-day struggle for survival and growth reaps the same reward in the end in ten thousand different ways. The trick is to learn from each defeat and become stronger and more determined . . . think and begin to develop the necessary strategies to insure the annihilation of the beast. . . .

I am one of a family of ten children. My parents were strict and religious, but proud and independent. One of the strongest influences of my childhood was my mother constantly telling us to hold our heads up and be proud because we were just as good or better than anyone else, and to stand up and fight for what you believe to be right.

There was a lot of competition in my family. Had to be with ten children (all two years apart) growing up, each trying to live up to the other or be better. We were determined not to be caught up in the rut of the ghetto. We were going to get out . . . so each of us worked on our separate goals—ten *individuals*—one family, in our separate world.

We believed that with the right education we could "make it"—so that's the route we took searching for the "American Dream." I was going to be a doctor.

In my second year of college I pledged a sorority—it was here that the rose colored glasses were cracked and rays of reality were allowed to filter in.

The sorority had decided to help "disadvantaged" children as one of our projects for the year and we were trying to decide what country to work with when one of the Sisters suggested that we work in the ghettos of New York. Personally, I'd never even thought of people in the United States being disadvantaged, but only too lazy to work and "make it." I was in for one of the biggest rude awakenings of my life.

A few of us were sent to Harlem to investigate the situation. We talked to people on the street, in the welfare centers, from door to door, and watched them work

and play, loiter on the corners and in the bars. What we came away with was a story of humiliation, degradation, deprivation and waste that started in infancy and lasted until death . . . in too many cases, at an early age.

Even at this point, I didn't see this as affecting me personally, only as a sorority project . . . sort of a tourist who takes pity on the less fortunate.

The sorority decided to do what we could to help the children. The Black Panther Party had a Free Breakfast Program to feed the children going on. I had a daughter of my own at this point and decided that I would put my energies into this.

I couldn't get into the politics of the Black Panther Party, but I could volunteer to feed some hungry children; you see, children deserve a good start and you have to feed them for them to live to learn. It's hard to think of reading and arithmetic when your stomach's growling.

I'm not trying to explain the logic of the Free Breakfast Program for children, but to show how I had to be slowly awakened to the reality of life and shown the interconnection of things.

Every morning, at 5:00 my daughter and I would get ready and go to the Center where I was working on the Breakfast Program—cook and serve breakfast, sometimes talk to the children about problems they were encountering and sometimes help them with their homework. Everything was going along smoothly until the number of children coming began to fall off. Finally, I began to question the children and found out that the police had been telling the parents in the neighborhood not to send their children to the Program because we were "feeding them poisoned food."

It's one thing to hear about underhanded things the police do—you can ignore it then—but it's totally different to experience it for yourself—you either lie to yourself or face it. I chose to face it and find out why the police felt it was so important to keep Black children from being fed that they told lies. I went back to the Black Panther Party and started attending some of their Community Political Education Classes.

FIRST ENCOUNTER WITH THE POLICE

It wasn't long after that when I was forced to make a decision about what direction I was going in politically. I was on 42nd Street with a friend when we noticed a crowd gathered on the corner. In the center of the crowd was a Panther with some newspapers under his arm. Two police officers were also there. I listened to see what was going on. The police was telling the Panther he couldn't sell newspapers on the corner and he was insisting that he could. Without a thought, I told the police that the Brother had a *constitutional right* to disseminate political literature anywhere, at which point, the police asked for my identification and arrested the Sister and myself, along with the Brother who was selling the papers.

I had never been arrested before and I was naive enough to believe that all you had to do was be honest and everything would work out all right. I was wrong again. As soon as the police got us into the back seat of their car and pulled away from the crowd the bestiality began to show. My friend went to say something and one of the police officers threatened to ram his nightstick up her if she opened her mouth again, and ran on in a monologue about Black people. I listened and got angry. . . .

At the 14th Precinct they separated us to search us. They made us strip. After the policewoman had searched me, I remember one of the male officers telling her to make sure she washed her hand so she wouldn't catch anything.

That night, I went to see my mother, explained to her about the bust and about a decision I'd made. Momma and Daddy were in the kitchen when I got there—Daddy sitting at the table and Momma cooking. I remember telling them about the bust and them saying nothing. Then I told them about how the police had acted and them still saying nothing. Then I told them that I couldn't sit still and allow the police to get away with that. I had to stand up for my rights as a human being. I remember my mother saying, ". . . if you think it's right, then do it." I went back to Harlem and joined the Black Panther Party.

I spent the next year working with welfare mothers, Liberation Schools, talking to students, learning the reality of life in the ghettos of America and re-evaluating a lot of the things I had been taught about the "land of the free and the home of the brave."

It was about this time that I quit school and went to look for a full-time job. I had education and skills but there was always something wrong. It didn't dawn on me what it was until I went to ITT and applied for a job as a receptionist-clerk and they told me I was *over qualified*. I ended up working for my friend's mother in her beauty parlor and spent all of my spare time with the Party.

By the summer of 1970 I was a full time Party member and my daughter was staying with my mother. I was teaching some of the Political Education classes at the Party office and had established a Liberation School in my Section of the community. I had listened to the elderly while they told me how they couldn't survive off their miserly social security checks—not pay rent and eat, too—so they pay their rent and eat from the dog food section of the supermarket or the garbage cans. I had listened to the middle-aged mother as she told of being evicted from her home and sleeping on a subway with her children because the welfare refused to give her help unless she signed over all the property she had, and out of desperation, fraudulently received welfare. I had watched while a mother prostituted her body to put food in the mouth of her child and another mother, mentally broken under the pressure, prostituted her eight-year-old child. I had seen enough of the ravages of dope, alcohol and despair to know that a change had to be made so the world could be a better place for my child to live in.

My mother had successfully kept me ignorant of the reality of the plight of Black

people in America—now I had learned it for myself—but I was still to learn a harsher lesson: The Plight of the Slave Who Dares to Rebel.

TURBULENT TIMES

The year 1971 saw many turbulent times in the Black Panther Party and changes in my life. I met and worked with many people who were to teach me and guide me: Michael (Cetewayo) Tabor of the Panther 21; Albert (Nuh) Washington, and "Lost One" who was responsible for my initial political education, Robert Webb. Cet taught me to deal principledly; Nuh taught me compassion, and Robert taught me to be firm in my convictions.

When the split went down in the Black Panther Party I was left in a position of Communications and Information Officer of the East Coast Black Panther Party. It wasn't until much later that I was to find out how vulnerable that position was.

Many of the members of the Party went underground to work with the Black Liberation Army (BLA). I was among those elected to remain aboveground and supply necessary support. The murders of youths such as Clifford Glover, Tyrone Guyton, etc., by police, and retaliation by the BLA with the assassinations of police officers Piagentini and Jones and Rocco and Laurie, made the powers that be frantic.[1] They pulled out the stops in their campaign to rid the streets of rebellious slaves.

By the spring of 1973, Comrades Assata Shakur and Sundiata Acoli were captured, along with Nuh and Jalil (Anthony Bottom) and Twyman Meyers[2] was on the FBI's Most Wanted List, and I was still traveling back and forth across the country trying to build necessary support mechanisms.

In 1972 I recognized the need for something other than myself to depend on. You see, in less than two years I'd aged to the point where I realized that nothing is permanent or secure in a world where it's who you know and what you have that counts. I'd seen friends and loved ones either killed or thrown in prison and associates that I'd once thought would never go back, turn states or go back into the woodwork. Nuh turned me on to Islam, which gave me a new security, sense of purpose and dignity.

By 1973 I'd begun to receive a lot of flak from the police because of what they "suspected" I might be doing. Actually it was because I didn't have a record, they couldn't catch me doing anything and I continued to actively and vocally support the BLA members . . . also my homework had been done so well in the community that the community's support was there also.

CAPTURE

On January 25, 1975 myself and some other members of the Amistad Collective of the BLA went into the country in Virginia to practice night firing. We were to leave

Virginia that night on our way to Jackson, Mississippi because I wanted to be there on Sunday to see someone. We decided to stop by a store before we went back to the crib we were staying at so we could pick up some cold cuts to make sandwiches with so we wouldn't have to stop at any roadside restaurants on the way down. We drove around looking for an open store. When we came to one I told the Brothers to wait in the car and I'd go in the store and be right back.

I entered the store, went past the registers, down an aisle to the meat counter and started checking them for all-beef products. I heard the door opening and looked up to see two of the brothers coming in—didn't give it a thought—went back to what I was doing when out of the corner of my left eye I saw a rifle pointed toward the door, in the manager's hand. I quickly got into an aisle just as the firing started. Up to this point I had heard no words spoken. With the first lull in shooting, Kombozi [Amistad] (one of my bodyguards and also a member of the Amistad Collective) came down the aisle towards me. He was wearing a full-length army coat. It was completely buttoned. As he came toward me he told me he was shot. I didn't believe him, at first, because I saw no blood and his weapon wasn't drawn. Then, he insisted again so I told him to lie down on the floor and I'd take care of it.

Masai [Ehehosi] (my co-defendant) had apparently made it back out the door when the firing started because just then he came back to the door and tried to draw the fire so we could get out. I saw him get shot in the face and stumble backwards out the door. I looked around for a way out and realized there was none. I elected to play it low-key in order to try and get help for Kombozi as soon as possible. I was to learn that the effort was wasted. The manager of the store and his son, Paul Green, Sr. and Jr. stomped Kombozi to death in front of my eyes. Later, when I attempted to press counter-charges of murder against them, the Commonwealth attorney called it "justifiable" homicide.

Five minutes after the shoot-out went down the FBI was on the scene. The next morning they held a press conference saying I was notorious, dangerous, etc., and known to law enforcement agencies nationwide—and my bail was set at one million dollars on each count. I had five counts.

TRIAL AND IMPRISONMENT

On April 16, 1975, after a trial that lasted one day, we were sentenced to forty years, and that night I arrived here at the Virginia Correctional Center for Women in Goochland.

Directly following my arrival I was placed in the Maximum Security building and there I stayed until, after being threatened with court action, they released me to general population. The day after my release to general population I was told that the first iota of trouble that I caused I would be placed back in the Maximum Security building and there I would stay.

At that point, and for the next two years, my emphasis was on getting some medi-

cal care for myself and the other women here and educational programs and activities, the priority being on medical care for myself. Inside the prison I was denied it (the general feeling was they couldn't chance hospitalization for fear I'd escape so rather than chancing my escape they preferred to take a chance on my life). In the courts they said they saw no evidence of inadequate medical care, but rather, a difference of opinion on treatment between me and the prison doctor.

The "medical treatment" for women prisoners here in Virginia has got to be an all-time low, when you got to put your life in the hands of a "doctor" who examines a woman who has her right ovary removed and tells her there's tenderness in her right ovary; or when this same "doctor" examines a woman who has been in prison for six months and tells her she's six weeks pregnant and there's nothing wrong with her and she later finds her baby has died and mortified inside of her; or when he tells you you're not pregnant and three months later you give birth to a seven pound baby boy; not to mention prescribing Maalox for a sore throat and diagnosing a sore throat that turns out to be cancer.

In December of 1976 I started hemorrhaging and went to the clinic for help. No help of any consequence was given, so I escaped. Two months later I was recaptured. While on escape a doctor told me that I could either endure the situation, take painkillers, or have surgery. I decided to use the lack of medical care as my defense for the escape and by doing so do two things: (1) expose the level of medical care at the prison, and (2) put pressure on them to give me the care I needed.

I finally got to the hospital in June of 1978. By that time it was too late, I was so messed up inside that everything but one ovary had to go. Because of the negligence of the "doctor" and the lack of feeling of the prison officials, they didn't give a damn, I was forced to have a hysterectomy.

When they brought me back to this prison in March of 1977, because of the escape, they placed me in Cell 5 on the segregation end of the Maximum Security building—the same room they placed me in on April 16, 1975. To date, I'm still in that cell, allegedly because of my escape, but in actuality because of my politics.

How do I know? Because since my being returned to this institution on March 24, 1977 other women have escaped and been brought back and have been released to general population—and yesterday (after twenty-two months) my co-defendant on the escape charge was okayed for release to general population. I was denied.

Despite all of the emotional and physical setbacks I've experienced, I've learned a lot. I've watched the oppressor play that same old game on Black people they've been playing for centuries—divide and conquer. Black women break under pressure and sell their men down the river and then the oppressor separates the women from their children. In two strokes the state does more damage than 30 years in prison could have done if the women had supported the men.

And now, more than ever before, Black women—New Afrikan women—have developed a mercenary outlook on life. They are not about family, community and us as a people anymore. They're about looking good, having fun and "making it." Women's liberation is what they're talking about, failing to grasp the realization

that true women's liberation for Black women will only come about with the liberation of Black people as a whole, so that for the first time since our forefathers were snatched from the Afrikan continent and brought to America as slave labor, we can be a family, and from that family build a community and a Nation.

The powers that be were totally disconcerted when Black mothers, wives, daughters and Black women in general stood by and, in a lot of cases, fought beside their men when they were captured, shot or victimized by the police and other agents of the government. They were frightened of the potential to wreak havoc that Black women represented when Black women began to enter into the prisons and jails in efforts to liberate their men. They were spurred into action when they were confronted with the fact that Black women were educating their children from the cradle up about who the real enemies of Black people are and what must be done to eliminate this ever present threat to the lives of Black people.

During the last four years of my incarceration I've watched and didn't speak because I didn't want to chance alienating the "left" as Black men and Black women have fooled themselves into believing that we were "making progress" because (1) Patricia Harris, a Black woman, is part of the U.S. president's cabinet, and (2) Andrew Young is the Ambassador to the U.N.—failing to realize that it's all politics—American style. And, twenty women of all races are working together for Women's Liberation. There is no real progress being made. As a matter of fact, one of [former president Jimmy] Carter's best friends, Vernon Jordan, head of the Urban League, had to concede in his annual economic review *The State of Black America, 1979*, that the "income gap between Blacks and whites is actually widening."[3]

The sacrifices Black women have made in search of Black womanhood, like the sacrifices made by the people of Knossus in its efforts to slay the Minotaur, have been many, harsh and cruel—but We too can slay the beast (in our case American racism, capitalism and sexism) and out of the ashes build a free and independent Black Nation in which We can take our rightful place as Women, Wives and Mothers, knowing our children will live to be men and women, our men will be allowed to recognize their manhood—support and defend their families with dignity.

TOGETHER BUILDING A FUTURE FOR OURSELVES!
Build to Win!

COMING OF AGE: AN UPDATE [JANUARY 18, 1980]

It's two years since I wrote the original article . . . lots of things have happened . . . Assata Shakur was liberated; Imari Obadele[4] was released . . . the Klu Klux Klan regrouped and revamped;[5] sixteen Black children are missing and presumed to be dead in Atlanta;[6] eight Black men murdered in Buffalo;[7] pregnant Black women shot in Chattanooga;[8] Ronald Reagan will take office in two days.[9]

It's two months since I was released from the Maximum Security Building (after spending a total of three years and seven months) . . . had to go to court to do it . . . it too was an eye opening experience . . . they said the reason they were keeping me housed in that building was because I was a "threat to the security of the free world."

What can I say? It seems that the political scene in America has come full circle and Black people are once again the scapegoats for everything that goes wrong in white America. They no longer feel the need to pacify us with poverty programs and token jobs.

Sitting in a Maximum Security cell for three years and seven months afforded me an opportunity to reflect upon my life and the lessons I was forced to learn . . . but now the learning process is over . . . it is time to put what I've learned into practice . . . freedom will only be won by the sweat of our brows.

AFTERWORD 12 YEARS LATER

Yesterday, October 21, 1994, we buried a close comrade, friend and brother—Breeze Barrow. Less than two weeks ago, we buried another close comrade, friend, mentor and father figure—Nathaniel Shanks. Both of these brothers were strong Panthers and had been on the streets holding the line, maintaining the stand while we had been locked down in the dungeons of this country.

Reverberating through my mind for years has been the incantation of Che Guevara, "Wherever death may surprise us, it will be welcome as long as this our battle cry reach some receptive ear and new hands reach out to intone our funeral dirge with the staccato of machinegun fire and new cries of battle and victory." Now, today, this minute, this hour (as Malcolm would say) I've come to realize that picking up the gun was/is the easy part. The hard part is the day to day organizing, educating and showing the people by example what needs to be done to create a new society. The hard painstaking work of changing ourselves into new beings, of loving ourselves and our people and working with them daily to create a new reality . . . this is the first revolution, that internal revolution.

I'm coming to understand what they meant when they sang the words, "The race is not given to the swift, nor is it given to the strong, but to him that endures to the end," and what was meant by the fable of the "hare and the tortoise." Some people declare themselves to be revolutionaries, members of one organization or another i.e., I was one of the first Panthers, or I used to be a Panther . . . and only come out when there's some major celebration where Panthers are on display . . . and live off of their former glory, not understanding that it's not about what you used to be, but what are you doing now. They ran a quick race, utilizing all for the moment and grew tired and gave up. It may take a little longer to do it the hard way, slow and methodical, building a movement step-by-step and block-by-block,

but doing it this way is designed to build a strong foundation that will withstand the test of time and the attack of the enemy.

If we truly are to create a new society, we must build a strong foundation. If we truly are to have a new society, we must develop a mechanism to struggle from one generation to the next. If we truly are to maintain our new society after we have won the battle and claimed the victory, we must instill into the hearts and minds of our children, our people, ourselves this ability to struggle on all fronts, internally and externally, laying a foundation built upon a love for ourselves and a knowledge of the sacrifices that went before and all we have endured.

There is much to be done to achieve this. There is a long road ahead of us. Let's do it.

NOTES

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1. *Editor's note:* On April 28, 1973, police officer Thomas Shea, searching for "two black males in their early 20's," shot and killed ten-year-old Clifford Glover in a South Jamaica, N.Y., lot after pursuing Glover and his fifty-year-old stepfather, Add Armstead. Shea was later acquitted. Murray Schumach, "Police-Call Tape Played at Trial," *New York Times*, 24 May 1974, 37; Laurie Johnston, "Jury Clears Shea in Killing of Boy," *New York Times*, 13 June 1974, 1.

Fourteen-year-old Tyrone Guyton was killed on November 1, 1973, by police from the Emeryville, Calif., Police Department in what many black activists and community members regarded as racist murder. In protest against his murder and the murder of several other black youths by police, including Clifford Glover, Claude Reese, Alberto Terrones, and Derrick Browne, the Jonathan Jackson/Sam Melville Unit of the New World Liberation Front (Symbionese Liberation Army) bombed the Emeryville Police Station on November 13. "Symbionese Liberation Army Communiqué #1," *Claycheck* www.claykeck.com/patty/docs/comm1.htm; "Communiqué Issued by the Symbionese Liberation Army (under the name 'New World Liberation Front') following the bombing of the Emeryville Police Station on August 13, 1975" *Claycheck*, www.claykeck.com/patty/docs/comm813.htm.

New York Police Officers Joseph A. Piagentini and Waverly M. Jones were murdered in Harlem on May 21, 1971. While the legitimacy of the evidence in the prosecution's case was questionable, Black Liberation Army members Jalil Abdul Muntaqim (Anthony Bottom), Herman Bell, and Albert "Nuh" Washington were convicted of the murders. Muntaqim was denied parole in 2002, and Bell is up for parole in 2004; Albert "Nuh" Washington died of liver cancer in April of 2000 while still incarcerated in New York. "New York State Task Force on Political Prisoners: Clemency Petition."

New York Police officers Rocco Laurie and Gregory Foster were murdered on January 27, 1972. While no witness could confidently identify the killer(s), members of the Black Liberation Army were accused of the murders. See: Gerald C. Fraser, "4 at Murder Site Testify at Trial," *New York Times*, 30 January 1974, 21; Associated Press, "Murder Witness Recants on Identity," *New York Times*, 31 January 1974, 37.

2. *Editor's note:* Twyman Ford Meyers, twenty-three-year-old Black Liberation Army member, was killed in a shootout with the FBI and New York Police Department officers on November 14, 1973. See: John T. McQuiston, "Fugitive Black Militant Is Killed in Bronx Shootout with Police," *New York Times*, 15 November 1973, 93.

3. *Editor's note:* Vernon Jordan, *The State of Black America* (New York: National Urban League, 1979).

4. *Editor's note:* Imari Obadele, former president of the Republic of New Afrika, was accused of "encouraging" the August 18, 1971, murder of a Mississippi police officer at the organization's headquarters and charged with the murder, despite the release, on grounds of self-defense, of others accused. See Associated Press, "Black Convicted in Police Slaying," *New York Times*, 7 May 1972; Associated Press, "4 Black Separatists Freed, Leader Is Held for Inquiry," *New York Times*, 12 October 1971, 18.

5. *Editor's note:* In the late 1970s and early 1980s, the Ku Klux Klan witnessed a resurgence in visibility and membership in the United States and Canada. The Anti-Defamation League of B'nai B'rith estimated that in 1980, the Klan boasted 10,000 members and 100,000 "sympathizers" in twenty-two states, representing the largest increase in membership in ten years. A Justice Department study during the same year warned that the "Invisible Empire, Knights of the Ku Klux Klan," a faction headed by Bill Wilkinson, posed a serious threat because of its use of violence. See "US Study Urges Agencies to Cooperate against Klan," *New York Times*, 24 November 1980, A19; "Ku Klux Klan Is Seeking New Members in Toronto," *New York Times*, 30 June 1980, A8.

6. *Editor's note:* Between August 1979 and January 1981, sixteen black children, two girls and fourteen boys, disappeared from their homes in and around Atlanta; several of the bodies were found suffocated, bludgeoned, shot, or strangled. Police reported that they were "baffled by the absence of an apparent motive for the slayings." See "Hundreds Search in Atlanta after the Discovery of Skeletons," *New York Times*, 11 January 1981, 20.

7. *Editor's note:* On September 22–24, 1980, four African American men were shot in the head in Buffalo. On October 8 and 9 of the same year, two black Buffalo taxi drivers were murdered and found with their hearts cut out. On December 29 and 30, two more black men were fatally stabbed in Buffalo and Rochester respectively. In addition, three African Americans and one Latino were stabbed to death in New York City, an incident police suspected to be linked to at least some of the Buffalo-area murders. Although Joseph Christopher, a white private in the U.S. Army, was convicted of three of the Buffalo shootings, the decision was overturned by the New York State Court of Appeals in 1985. See "Murder Convictions Against '22-Caliber Killer' Overturned," *Los Angeles Times*, 6 July 1985, 11; "Inquiry on Killings Shifted to Georgia," *New York Times*, 26 April 1981, 43.

8. *Editor's note:* Bukhari-Alston likely refers to the killing of thirty-year-old Dorothy Brown, a pregnant black woman, by a white police officer in Jackson, Mississippi, on August 29, 1980. Police contend that, upon receiving a call from neighbors claiming that Brown was drunk and threatening them with a gun, Officer Gary King arrived on the scene and, when himself threatened with Brown's weapon, shot her four times. Witnesses, however, claim that Brown had calmed down prior to King's arrival. On September 6, black and some white members of the community marched in front of City Hall protesting Brown's death and calling for the resignation of Police Chief Ray Pope, accused of covering up numerous incidents of police brutality against African Americans. See "Blacks in Jackson, Miss. Protest Killing of Woman," *New York Times*, 7 September 1980, Z30.

9. *Editor's note:* Ronald Reagan was inaugurated as the fortieth president of the United States on January 20, 1981.

Chapter Ten

Sundiata Acoli

Sundiata Acoli (Clark Squire) was born on January 14, 1937, in Decatur, Texas, and raised in Vernon, Texas. After graduating from Prairie View A&M College of Texas with a degree in mathematics, he worked for the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) for a period of time and then worked for thirteen years in computer technology in the New York area.

The murder of three civil rights workers, Andrew Goodman, Michael Schwerner, and James Chaney, in Mississippi by Klansmen in 1964 initiated Squire into political activism. This event was intended to intimidate many of the volunteers for the campaign against racial segregation in Mississippi. Squire, though, joined the summer project started by the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) and Council of Federated Organizations (COFO) in order to fight racial discrimination. During this "Freedom Summer of 1964" informal schools were created for the literacy and political education of the black community, and the Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party (MFDP), which propelled SNCC activist Fannie Lou Hamer to national prominence, was founded.

Acoli joined the Harlem branch of the newly formed Black Panther Party (BPP) and served as its finance minister. He was arrested on April 2, 1969, in the Panther 21 conspiracy case (see the biography of Dhoruba Bin Wahad). The Panther leaders were eventually acquitted of all charges but extended incarceration prior to and during their trials, and self-exile as fugitives, rendered many incapable of organizing in African American communities.

Due to the extensive targeting of Black Panthers by the FBI's COINTELPRO, Acoli considered the underground a necessity in order for Panthers to escape government and police assaults. The U.S. government considered the liberation movement a terrorist organization. In witness testimony for Sekou Odinga's[1] trial, Acoli argued that "'police pressure' had forced him . . . and others to go 'underground' with their activities . . . [because] a lot of Panthers were getting killed."[2]

On May 2, 1973, Sundiata Acoli, Assata Shakur, and Zayd Malik Shakur were stopped for an alleged traffic violation by state troopers on the New Jersey Turnpike

searching for black militants. In the ensuing shootout, in which Panther Zayd Shakur and police officer Werner Foerster were killed, and Assata Shakur wounded, Acoli escaped only to be captured two days later. Inconclusive and contradictory ballistics evidence obscures how Trooper Foerster was killed. The two bullets that were found in Foerster's body were revolver bullets rather than those of a pistol, the type of weapon found in the pulled-over vehicle. Considerable controversy, including allegations of prosecutorial malfeasance, surrounded the trial.[3] Nonetheless, Assata Shakur and Sundiata Acoli were convicted of the murder of Trooper Foerster in separate trials, both with all-white juries. They were each sentenced to life plus thirty years in prison. (Shakur escaped from prison in 1979.)

Acoli was confined in Trenton State Prison, a Management Control Unit (MCU) created for him and other politically associated prisoners. For five years, he lived in an isolation cell smaller than the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals' standard space requirement for a German shepherd.[4] Suffering from tuberculosis, Acoli was transferred in September of 1979, even though he had no federal charges or sentences, to one of the highest-security prisons in the United States, Marion Control Unit prison, cited by Amnesty International for its human rights abuses.[5] He, as were other political prisoners, was locked down twenty-three hours a day in a stripped cell. Acoli was in Marion for eight years before he was transferred in July 1987 to Leavenworth, Kansas. In the fall of 1992, he was eligible for but denied parole, and the New Jersey Parole Board (his trial took place in New Jersey) ruled, in its twenty-minute hearing, that he would only be eligible again after another twenty years. Acoli was not allowed to attend the parole meeting. He is currently incarcerated in the USP Allenwood in White Deer, Pennsylvania, in the general population. Following September 11, 2001, Sundiata Acoli was placed in solitary confinement and held incommunicado until January 3, 2002.

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NOTES

Research and draft for this biography were provided by Hana Tauber.

1. Sekou Mgobogi Abdullah Odinga is a New Afrikan Prisoner of War. In 1965, Odinga became a member of the Organization of African American Unity (OAAU, founded by Malcolm X in 1965). After Malcolm X's death, Odinga became involved with the New York chapter of the Black Panther Party. Due to increased police surveillance and repression, Odinga went underground in 1969. Captured in 1981, he was charged with six counts of attempted murder of police officers (during a police chase in which Mtayari Shabaka Sundiata was killed by police) and nine acts of a Racketeer Influenced and Corrupt Organization Act (RICO) indictment. Odinga was sentenced to twenty-five years to life for the attempted murders and twenty years and a $25,000 fine for two counts of the RICO indictment (which addressed the liberation/escape of Assata Shakur and the expropriation of money from an armored truck). He is incarcerated in Marion, Illinois. See *Can't Jail the Spirit: Political Prisoners in the U.S. A Collection of Biographies*, 5th ed. (Chicago: Committee to End the Marion Lockdown, 2002), 142–44.

2. Arnold H. Lubasch, "Convicted Killer Defends 'Revolutionary' Acts at U.S. Brink's Trial," *New York Times*, 16 August 1993.

3. See: Lennox Hinds, foreword to *Assata: An Autobiography* (Chicago: Lawrence Hill Books, 1987); and Evelyn Williams, *Inadmissible Evidence* (Brooklyn: Lawrence Hill Books, 1993).

4. *Can't Jail the Spirit*, 5th edition.

5. See the Amnesty International report on Marion, "Allegations of Ill-treatment in Marion Prison, Illinois, USA," AMR 51/26/87, May 1987.

An Updated History of the New Afrikan Prison Struggle *(Abridged)*

The New Afrikan liberation struggle behind the walls refers to the struggle of Black prisoners, "behind the walls" of U.S. penal institutions, to gain liberation for ourselves, our people, and all oppressed people. We of the New Afrikan Independence Movement spell "Afrikan" with a "k" as an indicator of our cultural identification with the Afrikan continent and because Afrikan linguists originally used "k" to indicate the "c" sound in the English language. We use the term "New Afrikan," instead of Black, to define ourselves as an Afrikan people who have been forcibly transplanted to a new land and formed into a "new Afrikan nation" in North America.

THE BLACK LIBERATION ERA

Black Panthers Usher in the Black Liberation Movement

Midstride the 1960s, on February 21, 1965, Malcolm [X] was assassinated, but his star continued to rise and his seeds fell on fertile soil. The following year, October 1966, in Oakland, California, Huey P. Newton and a handful of armed youths founded the Black Panther Party for Self Defense on principles that Malcolm had preached—and the Black Liberation Movement (BLM) was born.

Subsequently the name was shortened to the Black Panther Party (BPP) and a ten-point program was created which stated:

> We want freedom. We want power to determine the destiny of our Black community.
> We want full employment for our people.
> We want an end to the robbery by the CAPITALIST of our Black community.
> We want decent housing, fit for the shelter of human beings.
> We want education for our people that exposes the true nature of this decadent American society. We want education that teaches us our true history and our role in the present day society.
> We want all Black men to be exempt from military service.
> We want an immediate end to POLICE BRUTALITY and MURDER of Black people.
> We want freedom for all Black men held in federal, state, county and city prisons and jails.
> We want all Black people when brought to trial to be tried in court by a jury of their peer group or people from their black communities, as defined by the Constitution of the United States.

> We want land, bread, housing, education, clothing, justice and peace. And as our major political objective, a United Nations-supervised plebiscite to be held throughout the Black colony in which only Black colonial subjects will be allowed to participate, for the purpose of determining the will of Black people as to their national destiny.

The Panthers established numerous programs to serve the Oakland ghetto—free breakfasts for children, free health care, free day-care, and free political education classes. The program that riveted the ghetto's attention was their campaign to "stop police murder and brutality of Blacks." Huey, a community college pre-law student, discovered that it was legal for citizens to openly carry arms in California. With that assurance the Black Panther Party began armed car patrols of the police cruisers that patrolled Oakland's Black colony. When a cruiser stopped to make an arrest, the Panther car stopped. They fanned out around the scene, arms at the ready, and observed, tape recorded, and recommended a lawyer to the arrested victim. It didn't take long for the police to retaliate. They confronted Huey late one night near his home. Gunfire erupted, leaving Huey critically wounded, a policeman dead and another wounded. The Panthers and the Oakland/Bay community responded with a massive campaign to save Huey from the gas chamber. The California Senate began a hearing to rescind the law permitting citizens to openly carry arms within city limits. The Panthers staged an armed demonstration during the hearing at the Sacramento Capitol to protest the Senate's action, which gained national publicity.[1] That publicity, together with the Panthers' philosophy of revolutionary nationalism, self-defense, and the "Free Huey" campaign, catapulted the BPP to nationwide prominence.

But not without cost. On August 25, 1967, J. Edgar Hoover issued his infamous Counter Intelligence Program (COINTELPRO) memorandum which directed the FBI (and local police officials) to disrupt specified Black organizations and neutralize their leaders so as to prevent "the rise of a Black messiah."[2]

Attacks Increase on Revolutionaries

The Panthers rolled eastward, establishing offices in each major northern ghetto. As they went, they set up revolutionary programs in each community that were geared to provide community control of schools, tenant control of slum housing, free breakfast for school children, free health, day-care, and legal clinics, and free political education classes for the community. They also initiated campaigns to drive dope-pushers and drugs from the community, and campaigns to stop police murder and brutality of Blacks. As they went about the community organizing these various programs they were frequently confronted, attacked, or arrested by the police, and some were even killed during these encounters.

Other revolutionary organizers suffered similar entrapments. The Revolutionary Action Movement's (RAM) Herman Ferguson and Max Stamford were arrested in

1967 on spurious charges of conspiring to kill civil rights leaders. In the same year Amiri Baraka a.k.a. LeRoi Jones (the poet and playwright) was arrested for transporting weapons in a van during the Newark riots and did a brief stint in Trenton State Prison until a successful appeal overturned his conviction. SNCC's Rap Brown, Stokely Carmichael, and other orators were constantly threatened or charged with "inciting to riot" as they crisscrossed the country speaking to mass audiences. Congress passed so-called "Rap Brown" laws to deter speakers from crossing state lines to address mass audiences lest a disturbance break out leaving them vulnerable to federal charges and imprisonment.[3] And numerous revolutionary organizers and orators were imprisoned.

This initial flow of revolutionaries into the jails and prisons began to spread a revolutionary nationalist hue through New Afrikans behind the walls. New Afrikan prisoners were also influenced by the domestic revolutionary atmosphere and the liberation struggles in Afrika, Asia, and South America. Small groups began studying on their own, or in collectives, the works of Malcolm X, Huey P. Newton, *The Black Panther Newspaper* [Intercommunal News Service], *The Militant Newspaper*, contemporary national liberation struggle leaders Kwame Nkrumah, Jomo Kenyatta, Frantz Fanon, Che Guevara, Fidel Castro, Ho Chi Minh, and Mao Tse-tung, plus Marx, Lenin, and Bakunin too. Increasing numbers of New Afrikan and Third World prisoners became more conscious of national liberation politics. The percentages of New Afrikan and Third World prisoners increased while the number of White prisoners decreased throughout U.S. prisons. Under this onslaught of rising national liberation consciousness, increased percentages of New Afrikan and Third World prisoners, and decreased numbers of White prisoners, the last of the prisons' overt segregation policies fell by the wayside.

THE NEW AFRIKAN INDEPENDENCE MOVEMENT

The seeds of Malcolm took further root on March 29, 1968. On that date the Provisional Government of the Republic of New Afrika (RNA) was founded at a convention held at the Black-owned Twenty Grand Motel in Detroit. Over 500 grassroots activists came together to issue a Declaration of Independence on behalf of the oppressed Black Nation inside North America, and the New Afrikan Independence Movement (NAIM) was born.[4] Since then, Blacks desiring an independent Black Nation have referred to themselves and other Blacks in the U.S. as New Afrikans.

That same month, March 1968, during Martin Luther King's march in Memphis, angry youths on the fringes of the march broke away and began breaking store windows, looting, and firebombing. A sixteen-year-old boy was killed and fifty people were injured in the ensuing violence.[5] This left Martin profoundly shaken and questioning whether his philosophy was still able to hold the youth to a nonviolent commitment. On April 4th he returned to Memphis, seeking the answer through one more march, and found an assassin's bullet. Ghettos exploded in flames one

after another across the face of America. The philosophy of Black Liberation surged to the forefront among the youth.

But not the youth alone. Following a series of police provocations in Cleveland, on July 23, 1968, New Libya Movement activists there set an ambush that killed several policemen. A "fortyish" Ahmed Evans was convicted of the killings and died in prison ten years later of "cancer."[6]

More CIA dope surged into the ghettos from the Golden Triangle of Southeast Asia.[7] Revolutionaries stepped up their organizing activities on both sides of the walls. Behind the walls the New Afrikan percentage steadily increased.

THE STREET GANGS

There were numerous Black, White, Puerto Rican and Asian street organizations, i.e., "gangs," in New York City during the 1950s. Among the more notorious Black street gangs of the era were the Chaplains, Bishops, Sinners, and Corsair Lords; also there was the equally violent Puerto Rican Dragons. All warred against each other and other gangs that crossed their paths.

By the 1960s, the post–World War II heroin influx had taken its toll. Most of the New York street gangs faded away. Their youthful members had succumbed to drugs, either through death by overdose, or had ceased gang activities in order to pursue full time criminal activities to feed their drug habit or were in prison because of drug-crime activities or youth gang assaults and killings.

Lumumba Shakur, warlord of the Bishops, and Sekou Odinga, leader of the Sinners, were two such youths who had been sent to the reformatory for youth gang assaults. They graduated up through the "Gladiator Prisons"—Woodburn and Comstock—to mainline Attica, became politicized by the stark brutal racism in each prison and at age twenty-one were spit back upon the streets. When the Panthers reached the east coast in 1968, Lumumba and Sekou were among the first youths to sign up. Lumumba opened the Harlem Chapter of the Black Panther Party as its Defense Captain. Sekou opened the Queens Chapter as a Lieutenant and later transferred to Harlem to co-head it with his boyhood pal, Lumumba.

ORIGIN OF THE GANGSTER DISCIPLES STREET GANG

The Gangster Disciples were founded in the 1960s in Chicago under the name "Black Disciples" by the late David Barksdale, known historically in gang circles as King David.[8] The group's name was later changed to "Black Gangster Disciples" and later still the name was shortened to "Gangster Disciples," or simply as "GD." Its gang colors are blue and black.[9]

COINTELPRO ATTACKS

In 1969 COINTELPRO launched its main attack on the Black Liberation Movement. It began with the mass arrests of Lumumba Shakur and the New York Panther 21. It followed with a series of military raids on Black Panther Party offices in Philadelphia, Baltimore, New Haven, Jersey City, Detroit, Chicago, Denver, Omaha, Sacramento, and San Diego, and was capped off with an early morning four hour siege that poured thousands of rounds into the Los Angeles BPP office. By mid morning, hundreds of angry Black residents gathered at the scene and demanded that the police cease-fire. Fortunately Geronimo ji-Jaga, decorated Vietnam vet, had earlier fortified the office to withstand an assault, and no Panthers were seriously injured. However, repercussions from the event eventually drove him underground. The widespread attacks left Panthers dead all across the country—Fred Hampton, Mark Clark, Bunchy Carter, John Huggins, Walter Toure Pope, Bobby Hutton, Sylvester Bell, Frank "Capt. Franco" Diggs, Fred Bennett, James Carr, Larry Robeson, John Savage, Spurgeon "Jake" Winters, Alex Rackley, Arthur Morris, Steve Bartholemew, Robert Lawrence, Tommy Lewis, Nathaniel Clark, Welton Armstead, Sidney Miller, Sterling Jones, Babatunde Omawali, Samuel Napier, Harold Russle, and Robert Webb among others.[10] In the three years after J. Edgar Hoover's infamous COINTELPRO memorandum, thirty-one members of the BPP were killed,[11] nearly a thousand were arrested, and key leaders were sent to jail. Others were driven underground. Still others, like BPP field marshal Donald "D.C." Cox, were driven into exile overseas.

The RNA was similarly attacked that year. During their second annual convention in March 1969, held at Reverend C. L. Franklin's New Bethel Church in Detroit, a police provocation sparked a siege that poured 800 rounds into the church. Several convention members were wounded; one policeman was killed, another wounded, and the entire convention, 140 people, was arrested en masse. When Reverend Franklin (father of "The Queen of Soul," singer Aretha Franklin) and Black State Representative James Del Rio were informed of the incident they called Black judge George Crockett, who proceeded to the police station where he found total legal chaos. Almost 150 people were being held incommunicado. They were being questioned, finger printed, and given nitrate tests to determine if they had fired guns, in total disregard of fundamental constitutional procedures. Hours after the roundup, there wasn't so much as a list of persons being held and no one had been formally arrested. An indignant Judge Crockett set up court right in the station house and demanded that the police either press charges or release their captives. He had handled about fifty cases when the Wayne County prosecutor, called in by the police, intervened. The prosecutor promised that the use of all irregular methods would be halted. Crockett adjourned the impromptu court, and by noon the following day the police had released all but a few individuals who were held on specific charges.[12] Chaka Fuller, Rafael Vierra, and Alfred 2X Hibbits were charged with the killing. All three were subsequently tried and acquitted. Chaka Fuller was mysteriously assassinated a few months afterwards.[13]

On Friday June 13, 1969, Clarence 13X, founder of The Five Percenters, was mysteriously assassinated in the elevator of a Harlem project building by three male Negroes.[14] His killers were never discovered but his adherents suspect government complicity in his death.[15] News reports at the time hinted that BOSS instigated the assassination to try to ferment a war between the NOI and The Five Percenters.[16]

Revolutionaries nationwide were attacked and/or arrested—Tyari Uhuru, Maka, Askufo, and the Smyrna Brothers in Delaware, JoJo Muhammad Bowens and Fred Burton in Philadelphia, and Panthers Mondo we Langa, Ed Poindexter, and Veronza Daoud Bowers, Jr., in Omaha.

Police mounted an assault on the Panther office in the Desiree Projects of New Orleans which resulted in several arrests. A similar attack was made on the Peoples Party office in Houston. One of their leaders, Carl Hampton, was killed by police and another, Lee Otis Johnson, was arrested later on an unrelated charge and sentenced to forty-one years in prison for alleged possession of one marijuana cigarette.

THE RISE OF PRISON STRUGGLES

Like the Panthers, most of those arrested brought their philosophies with them into the prisons. Likewise, most had outside support committees to one degree or another so that this influx of political prisoners linked the struggle behind the walls with the struggles in the outside local communities. The combination set off a beehive of political activity behind the walls, and prisoners stepped up their struggle for political, Afrikan, Islamic, and academic studies, access to political literature, community access to prisons, an end to arbitrary punishments, access to attorneys, adequate law libraries, relevant vocational training, contact visits, better food, health care, housing, and myriad other struggles. The forms of prison struggle ranged from face-to-face negotiations to mass petitioning, letter writing and call-in campaigns, outside demonstrations, class action law suits, hunger strikes, work strikes, rebellions, and more drastic actions. Overall, all forms of struggle served to roll back draconian prison policies that had stood for centuries and to further the development of the New Afrikan liberation struggle behind the walls.

These struggles would not have been as successful, or would have been much more costly in terms of lives lost or brutality endured, had it not been for the links to the community and the community support and legal support that political prisoners brought with them into the prisons. Although that support was not always sufficient in quantity or quality, or was sometimes nonexistent or came with hidden agendas, or was marked by frequent conflicts, on the whole it was this combination of resolute prisoners, community support, and legal support which was most often successful in prison struggles.

THE CHANGING COMPLEXION OF PRISONS

As the 1960s drew to a close New Afrikan and Third World nationalities made up nearly fifty percent of the prison population. National liberation consciousness became the dominant influence behind the walls as the overall complexion neared the changeover from White to Black, Brown, and Red. The decade long general decrease in prisoners, particularly Whites, brought a drop of between 16,000[17] and 28,000[18] in total prison population. The total number of White prisoners decreased between 16,000 and 23,000 while the total number of New Afrikan prisoners increased slightly or changed insignificantly over the same period.[19] Yet the next decade would begin the period of unprecedented new prison construction, as the primary role of U.S. prisons changed from "suppression of the working classes" to "suppression of domestic Black and Third World liberation struggles inside the U.S."

ORIGIN OF CRIP[20]

There existed street organizations in South Central, Los Angeles, before the rise of the Black Panther Party. These groups, criminal in essence, were indeed the wells from which the Panthers would recruit their most stalwart members. Alprentice "Bunchy" Carter, who chartered the first L.A. Chapter of the Party was the leader of perhaps the most violent street organizations of that time—the Slausons. James Carr, former cell mate of Comrade George Jackson, and author of *BAD*, was a member of the Farmers. There were the Gladiators, the Businessmen, the Avenues, Blood Alley, and the Rebel Rousers to name but a few.

After the 1965 rebellion in Watts, there came an unsteady truce of sorts that caused the street organizations to focus on a larger, more deadly enemy—the L.A.P.D. [Los Angeles Police Department]. So, by the time the Black Panther Party came to L.A., in 1968, a shaky peace existed among the larger groups. The Party offered the street combatants a new direction in which to vent their anger, respond to injustice and represent their neighborhoods.

By and large, the Party usurped the youthful rage and brought the street organizations of that time to an end. Of course, the U.S. government also did its share by drafting young brothers into the Vietnam War.

These, however, were the storm years of COINTELPRO and the Party was the focal point. Thus, by late '69, the aboveground infrastructure of the BPP was in shambles due to its own internal contradictions and subsequently the weight of the state. Confusion set in among the people creating, if you will, a window of opportunity of which both the criminals and the counter revolutionists in the government took advantage.

Community Relations for an Independent People (CRIP) was a city funded team post (meeting place) on the east side of South Central L.A. that played host to some of the area's most rowdy youth. One such brother was Raymond Washington, who at that time belonged to a young upstart clique called the Baby Avenues. The team post became center ground to an ever widening group of youth who eventually took its title, CRIP, as a name and moved westward with it. With the vanguard in shambles and the local pigs turning a deliberate deaf ear, the CRIPs flourished rapidly. In its formative years, the Party's influence was evident. For the same uniform/dress code of the Party's influence was that of the CRIPs. Yet, a sinister twist developed whereas New Afrikan people were targets of the young hoodlums. And with no vanguard forces readily available to teach and train these youth, they spiraled out of control, taking as their nemesis the Brims who later developed into the city wide Bloods. The founding of the CRIPs is established as 1969. Their gang color is blue, and sometimes also the color white.

ENTER THE 1970s

A California guard, rated as an expert marksman, opened the decade of the 1970s with the January 13th shooting at close range of W. L. Nolen, Cleveland Edwards, and Alvin "Jug" Miller in the Soledad prison yard. They were left lying where they fell until it was too late for them to be saved by medical treatment. Nolen, in particular, had been instrumental in organizing protest against guard killings of two other Black prisoners—Clarence Causey and William Powell—at Soledad in the recent past, and was consequently both a thorn in the side of prison officials and a hero to the Black prison population.[21] When the guard was exonerated of the triple killings two weeks later by a Board of Inquiry, the prisoners retaliated by throwing a guard off the tier.

George Jackson, Fleeta Drumgo, and John Cluchette were charged with the guard's death and came to be known as the Soledad Brothers. California Black prisoners solidified around the Soledad Brothers case and the chain of events led to the formation of the Black Guerrilla Family (BGF). The Panthers spearheaded a massive campaign to save the Soledad Brothers from the gas chamber. The nationwide coalescence of prisoners and support groups around the case converted the scattered, disparate prison struggles into a national prison movement.

On the night of March 9, 1970, a bomb exploded, killing Ralph Featherstone and Che Payne in their car outside a Maryland courthouse where Rap Brown was to appear next day on "Inciting to Riot" charges. Instead of appearing, Rap went underground, was captured a year later during the robbery of a Harlem so-called "dope bar," and was sent behind the walls. He completed his sentence and was released from prison.[22]

On August 7, 1970, Jonathan Jackson, younger brother of George, attempted to liberate Ruchell "Cinque" Magee, William Christmas, and James McClain from the Marin County courthouse in California. Jonathan, McClain, Christmas, and the trial judge were killed by SWAT teams who also wounded the prosecutor and para-

lyzed him for life. Miraculously, Ruchell and three wounded jurors survived the fusillade. Jonathan frequently served as Angela Davis's bodyguard. She had purchased weapons for that purpose, but Jonathan used those same weapons in the breakout attempt. Immediately afterward she became the object of an international "woman hunt." On October 13, Angela was captured in New York City and was subsequently returned to California to undergo a very acrimonious trial with Magee. She was acquitted on all charges. Magee was tried separately and convicted on lesser charges. He remains imprisoned to date, over three decades all total, and is our longest held political prisoner.[23]

ORIGIN OF THE BLOODS[24]

Most South Central street organizations, commonly called "gangs," "sets," or "orgs.," take their names from prominent streets: Slauson, Denver Lane, Piru, Hoover, etc., that run through their neighborhood. The CRIPs had already formed, were massed up and rolling together. Their strength attracted other sets to become CRIPs. As they moved into territories occupied by other South Central organizations, they clashed with and met stiff resistance from those neighborhood sets who did not want to align with or be taken over by them.

Among those gang leaders resisting the CRIP invasion were Peabody of the Denver Lanes, Puddin of the Westside Pirus, Rooster of the thirty Pirus, and the Westside Brims, perhaps the most well known and respected of the lot, although their leader is unknown today. Using their prestige and influence, the Brims began going into other neighborhoods to start other Brim families and to recruit other sets to join their side in opposition to the CRIPs. As the various sets began hooking up with each other and the Brims, they formed a loose coalition whose main point in common was their opposition to the CRIPs. In the early 1970s, the federation solidified and formally united into the citywide Bloods. They adopted the color red as their banner; they also use the colors green or brown.

Prison is a normal next stop for many gang members. The first Bloods sent to Chino, a mainline California prison, are commonly referred to in Blood circles as the "First Bloods to walk the line at Chino." To increase their prison membership and recruitment, they created a Bloodline (BL) Constitution patterned after the constitution of the BGF, a Panther-influenced group already established in the California prison system at the time. The BL Constitution contained the Blood's code of conduct, history, and by-laws and was required reading for each new recruit. To speed up recruitment, the older "First Bloods" made reading the constitution an automatic induction into their ranks and thereafter began tricking young prisoners into reading it. Once read, the new recruit could only reject membership at the risk of serious bodily harm.

The press-ganging of young recruits at Chino set off ripples of dissatisfaction and breakaways among Bloods in other California prisons. Those disaffected centered around Peabody at Old Folsom prison who took parts from the BL and the BGF constitutions and created a new United Blood Nation (UBN) Constitution designed to unify all Bloods in prison. Since then, Bloods have chosen which constitution they would come under.

Blood members under either the BL or UBN Constitution are held to a higher standard than other members; they hold positions and are similar to the Officer's Corps of a military organization. Those Bloods not under a constitution are the foot soldiers. The BL and UBN organization spread throughout the California prison system, and are strictly prison organizations. Once a Blood leaves prison he returns to his old neighborhood set. From South Central, the Bloods spread to Pasadena, Gardenia, San Diego, Sacramento, Bakersfield, and throughout the state and its prison system.

CALIFORNIA BAY AREA GANGS[25]

San Francisco's Bay Area gangs or "clicks" can be traced back to the early 1960s and are usually identified by, or named after, their neighborhoods or communities. Most of those functioning today came from splinter groups of the BPP after it broke up.

In Oakland, the 69th Street Mob, founded by Felix Mitchell in the early 1970s, still exists despite the government's best efforts to derail it. In East Oakland the Rolling Twenties and the 700 Club, along with the Acorn Gang in West Oakland, are the powerhouse clicks on the streets.

In San Francisco, there is Sunnydale and Hunters Point, the city's largest street gang, which is divided into several clicks—Oakdale, Harbor Road, West Point, etc. East Palo Alto is the home of the Professional Low Riders (PLR) who are a major influence in the South Bay Area—and in Vallejo there is the North Bay Gangsters and Crestview.

Most Bay Area gangs don't have colors but align primarily on the basis of money and hustling endeavors. Many are associated with the Rap music industry and with various prison groups—the 415s, BGF, or ANSARs.

GROWTH OF THE GANGSTER DISCIPLES

In 1970, Gangster Disciple (GD) Larry Hoover was convicted for a gang related murder and sentenced to a 150 to 200 year state sentence. He's the current leader of the GDs and runs the syndicate from an Illinois prison cell.

As drugs flooded into the Chicago ghettoes, young Black men flooded into the Illinois prisons where they were given GD application forms to fill out. If their references proved solid, they were indoctrinated into the gang. Everyone who joined had to memorize the GD's sixteen-rule code. The GDs spread throughout the Illinois

and Midwest prison systems. The flow of GDs back into the streets enabled them to expand their street network which is an intricate command and control structure, similar to a military organization.[26]

COMRADE GEORGE ASSASSINATED

On August 21, 1971, a guard shot and killed George Jackson as he bolted from a control unit and ran for the San Quentin wall. Inside the unit lay three guards and two trustees dead. The circumstances surrounding George Jackson's legendary life and death, and the astuteness of his published writings,[27] left a legacy that inspires and instructs the New Afrikan liberation struggle on both sides of the wall even today, and will for years to come.

September 13, 1971, became the bloodiest day in U.S. prison history when New York's Governor Nelson Rockefeller ordered the retaking of Attica prison. The previous several years had seen a number of prison rebellions flare up across the country as prisoners protested widespread maltreatment and inhumane conditions. Most had been settled peaceably with little or no loss of human life after face to face negotiation between prisoners and state and prison officials. At Attica Black, Brown, White, Red, and Yellow prisoners took over one block of the prison and stood together for five days seeking to negotiate an end to their inhumane conditions. Their now famous dictum declared, "We are men, not beasts, and will not be driven as such." But Rockefeller had presidential ambitions. The rebelling prisoners' demands included a political request for asylum in a non-imperialistic country. Rockefeller's refusal to negotiate foreshadowed a macabre replay of his father John D's slaughter of striking Colorado miners and their families decades earlier. Altogether forty-three people died at Attica. New York State trooper bullets killed forty people—thirty-one prisoners and nine guards—in retaking Attica and shocked the world by the naked barbarity of the U.S. prison system. Yet the Attica rebellion too remains a milestone in the development of the New Afrikan liberation struggle behind the walls, and a symbol of the highest development of prisoner multinational solidarity to date.

NEW WORLD CLASHES WITH THE NATION OF ISLAM

In 1973 the simmering struggle for control of Newark's NOI [Nation of Islam] Temple No. 25 erupted into the open. Warren Marcello a New World [of Islam] member assassinated NOI Temple No. 25 Minister Shabazz. In retaliation several NWI members were attacked and killed within the confines of the New Jersey prison system, and before the year was out the bodies of Marcello and a companion were found beheaded in Newark's Weequahic Park. Ali Hassan, still in prison, was tried as one of the co-conspirators in the death of Shabazz and was found innocent.

THE BLACK LIBERATION ARMY

COINTELPRO's destruction of the BPP forced many members underground and gave rise to the Black Liberation Army (BLA)—a New Afrikan guerrilla organization. The BLA continued the struggle by waging urban guerrilla war across the U.S. through highly mobile strike teams.[28] The government's intensified search for the BLA during the early 1970s resulted in the capture of Geronimo ji-Jaga in Dallas, Dhoruba Bin-Wahad and Jamal Joseph in New York, Sha Sha Brown and Blood McCreary in St. Louis, Nuh Washington and Jalil Muntaqim in Los Angeles, Herman Bell in New Orleans, Francisco and Gabriel Torres in New York, Russell Maroon Shoats in Philadelphia, Chango Monges, Mark Holder, and Kamau Hilton in New York, Assata Shakur and Sundiata Acoli in New Jersey, Ashanti Alston, Tarik, and Walid in New Haven, Safiya Bukhari and Masai Gibson in Virginia, and others. Left dead during the government's search and destroy missions were Sandra Pratt (wife of Geronimo ji-Jaga, assassinated while visibly pregnant), Mark Essex, Woodie Changa Green, Twyman Kakuyan Olugbala Meyers, Frank "Heavy" Fields, Anthony Kimu White, Zayd Shakur, Melvin Rema Kerney, Alfred Kambui Butler, Ron Carter, Rory Hithe, and John Thomas, among others.[29] Red Adams, left paralyzed from the neck down by police bullets, would die from the effects a few years later.

Other New Afrikan freedom fighters attacked, hounded, and captured during the same general era were Imari Obadele and the RNA-11 in Jackson, Mississippi,[30] Don Taylor[31] and De Mau Mau of Chicago, Hanif Shabazz, Abdul Aziz, and the VI-5 in the Virgin Islands, Mark Cook of the George Jackson Brigade (GJB) in Seattle, Ahmed Obafemi of the RNA in Florida, Atiba Shanna in Chicago, Mafundi Lake and Sekou Kambui in Alabama, Robert Aswad Duren in California, Kojo Bomani Sababu and Dharuba Cinque in Trenton, John Partee and Tommie Lee Hodges of Alkebulan in Memphis, Gary Tyler in Louisiana, Kareem Saif Allah and the Five Percenter-BLA-Islamic Brothers in New York, Ben Chavis and the Wilmington 10 in North Carolina, Delbert Africa and MOVE members in Philadelphia, and others doubtless too numerous to name.[32]

POLITICAL CONVERTS IN PRISON

Not everyone was political before incarceration. John Andaliwa Clark became so, and a freedom fighter par excellence, only after being sent behind the walls. He paid the supreme sacrifice during a hail of gunfire by Trenton State Prison guards. Hugo Dahariki Pinell also became political after being sent behind the California walls in 1964. He has been in prison ever since. Joan Little[33] took an ice pick from a White North Carolina guard who had used it to force her to perform oral sex on him. She killed him, escaped to New York, was captured, and forced to return to the same North Carolina camp where she feared for her life. Massive public vigi-

lance and support enabled her to complete the sentence in relative safety and obtain her release. Dessie Woods[34] and Cheryl Todd, hitching through Georgia, were given a ride by a White man who tried to rape them. Woods took his gun, killed him, and was sent to prison where officials drugged and brutalized her. Todd was also imprisoned and subsequently released upon completion of the sentence. Woods was denied parole several times, then finally released.

Political or not, each arrest was met with highly sensationalized prejudicial publicity that continued unabated to and throughout the trial. The negative publicity blitz was designed to guarantee a conviction, smokescreen the real issues involved, and justify immediate placement in the harshest prison conditions possible. For men this usually meant the federal penitentiary at Marion, Illinois. For women it has meant the control unit in the federal penitentiary at Alderson, West Virginia, or Lexington, Kentucky. In 1988 political prisoners Silvia Baraldini, Alejandrina Torres, and Susan Rosenberg won a D.C. District Court lawsuit brought by attorneys Adjoa Aiyetoro, Jan Susler, and others. The legal victory temporarily halted the practice of sending prisoners to control units strictly because of their political status. The ruling was reversed by the D.C. Appellate Court a year later.[35] Those political prisoners not sent to Marion, Alderson, or Lexington control units are sent to other control units modeled after Marion/Lexington but located within maximum security state prisons. Normally this means twenty-three hour a day lockdown in long term units located in remote hinterlands far from family, friends, and attorneys, with heavy censorship and restrictions on communications, visits, and outside contacts, combined with constant harassment, provocation, and brutality by prison guards.

EFFECT OF CAPTURED FREEDOM FIGHTERS ON PRISONS

The influx of so many captured freedom fighters (i.e., prisoners of war—POWs) with varying degrees of guerrilla experience added a valuable dimension to the New Afrikan liberation struggle behind the walls. In the first place, it accelerated the prison struggles already in process, particularly the attack on control units. One attack was spearheaded by Michael Deutsch and Jeffrey Haas of the People's Law Office, Chicago, which challenged Marion's H-Unit boxcar cells. Another was spearheaded by Assata Shakur and the Center for Constitutional Rights which challenged her out of state placement in the Alderson, West Virginia, control unit.

Second, it stimulated a thoroughgoing investigation and exposure of COINTELPRO's hand in the low-intensity warfare waged on New Afrikan and Third World nationalities in the U.S. This was spearheaded by Geronimo ji-Jaga with Stuart Hanlon's law office in the West and by Dhoruba Bin-Wahad with attorneys Liz Fink, Robert Boyle, and Jonathan Lubell in the East.[36] These COINTELPRO investigations resulted in the overturn of Bin-Wahad's conviction

and his release from prison in March 1990 after he had been imprisoned nineteen years for a crime he did not commit.

Third, it broadened the scope of the prison movement to the international arena by producing the initial presentation of the U.S. political prisoner and prisoner of war (PP/POW) issue before the UN's Human Rights Commission. This approach originated with Jalil Muntaqim, and was spearheaded by him and attorney Kathryn Burke on the West Coast and by Sundiata Acoli and attorney Lennox Hinds of the National Conference of Black Lawyers on the East Coast.[37] This petition sought relief from human rights violations in U.S. prisons and subsequently asserted a colonized people's right to fight against alien domination and racist regimes as codified in the Geneva Convention.

Fourth, it intensified, clarified, and broke new ground on political issues and debates of particular concern to the New Afrikan community, i.e., the "National Question," spearheaded by Atiba Shanna in the Midwest.[38]

All these struggles, plus those already in process, were carried out with the combination in one form or another of resolute prisoners, and community and legal support. Community support when present came from various sources—family, comrades, friends; political, student, religious, and prisoner rights groups; workers, professionals, and progressive newspapers and radio stations. Some of those involved over the years were or are: the National Committee for Defense of Political Prisoners, the Black Community News Service, the African Peoples Party, the Republic of New Afrika, the African Peoples Socialist Party, The East, the BlissChord Communication Network, Liberation Book Store, WDAS Radio Philadelphia, WBLS Radio New York, WBAI Radio New York, Third World Newsreel, *Libertad* (political journal of the Puerto Rican Movimiento de Liberación Nacionál [MLN]), the Prairie Fire Organizing Committee, the May 19th Communist Organization, the Madame Binh Graphics Collective, The Midnight Express, the Northwest Iowa Socialist Party, the National Black United Front, the Nation of Islam, *Arm The Spirit*, Black News, International Class Labor Defense, the Real Dragon Project, the John Brown Anti-Klan Committee, the National Prison Project, the House of the Lord Church, the American Friends Service Committee, attorneys Chuck Jones and Harold Ferguson of Rutgers Legal Clinic, the *Jackson Advocate* newspaper, Rutgers law students, the Committee to End the Marion Lockdown, the American Indian Movement, and others.

THE END OF THE 1970s

As the decade wound down, the late 1970s saw the demise of the NOI following the death of Elijah Muhammad and the rise of orthodox Islam among significant segments of New Afrikans on both sides of the wall. By 1979 the prison population stood at 300,000, a whopping 100,000 increase within a single decade.[39] The previous 100,000 increase, from 100,000 to 200,000, had taken thirty-one years, from

1927 to 1958. The initial increase to 100,000 had taken hundreds of years, since America's original colonial times. The 1960s were the transition decade of White flight that saw a significant decrease in both prison population and White prisoners. And since the total Black prison population increased only slightly or changed insignificantly over the decade of the insurgent 1960s through 1973, it indicates that New Afrikans are imprisoned least when they fight hardest.

The decade ended on a master stroke by the BLA's Multinational Task Force, with the November 2, 1979, prison liberation of Assata Shakur—"Soul of the BLA" and preeminent political prisoner of the era. The Task Force then whisked her away to the safety of political asylum in Cuba where she remains to date.[40]

THE DECADE OF THE 1980s

In June 1980, Ali Hassan was released after sixteen years in the New Jersey state prisons. Two months later, five New World of Islam (NWI) members were arrested after a North Brunswick, New Jersey, bank robbery in a car with stolen plates. The car belonged to the recently released Ali Hassan, who had loaned it to a friend. Ali Hassan and fifteen other NWI members refused to participate in the resulting mass trial which charged them in a Racketeering Influenced Corrupt Organization (RICO) indictment with conspiracy to rob banks for the purpose of financing various NWI enterprises in the furtherance of creating an independent Black Nation. All defendants were convicted and sent behind the walls.

The 1980s brought another round of BLA freedom fighters behind walls—Basheer Hameed and Abdul Majid in the 1980s; Sekou Odinga, Kuwasi Balagoon, Chui Ferguson-El, Jamal Joseph again, Mutulu Shakur, and numerous BLA Multinational Task Force supporters in '81; and Terry Khalid Long, Ojore Lutalo, and others in 1982. The government's sweep left Mtayari Shabaka Sundiata dead, Kuwasi Balagoon subsequently dead in prison from AIDS, and Sekou Odinga brutally tortured upon capture, torture that included pulling out his toenails and rupturing his pancreas during long sadistic beatings that left him hospitalized for six months.

But this second round of captured BLA freedom fighters brought forth, perhaps for the first time, a battery of young, politically acute New Afrikan lawyers—Chokwe Lumumba, Jill Soffiyah Elijah, Nkechi Taifa, Adjoa Aiyetoro, Ashanti Chimurenga, Michael Tarif Warren, Evelyn Williams, Joan Gibbs, Florence Morgan, and others. They are not only skilled in representing New Afrikan POWs but the New Afrikan Independence Movement too, all of which added to the further development of the New Afrikan liberation struggle behind the walls.

The decade also brought behind the walls Mumia Abu-Jamal, the widely respected Philadelphia radio announcer, popularly known as the "Voice of the Voiceless." He maintained a steady drumbeat of radio support for MOVE prisoners.

He was driving his cab on the night of December 9, 1981, when he happened to spot a policeman beating his younger brother.

Mumia stopped, got out of his cab and was shot and seriously wounded; the policeman was killed. Mumia now sits on death row in greatest need of mass support from every sector, if he's to be saved from the state's electric chair.[41]

Kazi Toure of the United Freedom Front (UFF) was sent behind the walls in 1982. He was released in 1991. In 1983, the United States Penitentiary (USP) at Marion, Illinois, was permanently locked down, and the entire prison was converted into one huge control unit making it the nation's first control prison. The concept would spread across country in the next decade.

The New York 8—Coltrane Chimurenga, Viola Plummer and her son Robert "R.T." Taylor, Roger Wareham, Omowale Clay, Lateefah Carter, Colette Pean, and Yvette Kelly—were arrested on October 17, 1984, and charged with conspiring to commit prison breakouts and armed robberies, and to possess weapons and explosives. However, the New York 8 were actually the New York 8 + because another eight or nine people were jailed as grand jury resisters in connection with the case. The New York 8 were acquitted on August 5, 1985.

That same year, Ramona Africa joined other MOVE comrades already behind the walls. Her only crime was that she survived Philadelphia Mayor Goode's May 13, 1985, bombing which killed eleven MOVE members, including their babies, families, home, and neighborhood.

The following year, on November 19, 1986, a twenty-year old Bronx, New York, youth, Larry Davis—now Adam Abdul Hakeem—made a dramatic escape during a shootout with police who had come to assassinate him for absconding with their drug sales money. Several policemen were wounded in the shootout. Adam escaped unscathed but surrendered weeks later in the presence of the media, his family, and a mass of neighborhood supporters. After numerous charges, trials, and acquittals in which he exposed the existence of a New York police controlled drug ring that coerced Black and Puerto Rican youths to push police supplied drugs, he was sent behind the walls on weapon possession convictions. During incarceration, numerous beatings by guards confined him to a wheelchair for several years.

On July 16, 1987, Abdul Haqq Muhammad, Arthur Majeed Barnes, and Robert "R.T." Taylor, all members of the Black Men's Movement Against Crack, were pulled over by state troopers in upstate New York, arrested, and subsequently sent to prison on a variety of weapon possession convictions. Each completed his sentence and returned to the streets and the struggle.

Herman Ferguson, at sixty-eight years of age, voluntarily returned to the U.S. on April 6, 1989, after twenty years of exile in Ghana, Afrika, and Guyana, South America. He had fled the U.S. during the late 1960s after the appeal was denied on his sentence of three and a half to seven years following a conviction for conspiring to murder Civil Rights leaders. Upon return he was arrested at the airport and was moved constantly from prison to prison for several years as a form of harassment.

Only after serving his full sentence was he released back into the streets where he continues the struggle for Afrikan liberation.

The 1980s brought the Reagan era's rollback of progressive trends on a wide front and a steep rise in racist incidents, White vigilantism and police murder of New Afrikan and Third World people. The CIA flooded South Central, Los Angeles, with cheap "crack" cocaine and guns. It set off a tidal wave of internecine violence that eventually engulfed communities of color all across the country.

Like the CRIPs, the Bloods were initially influenced by the Black Panther Party, but with the deluge of CIA-Contra crack and guns into South Central, and with no revolutionary vanguard to direct them, the Bloods took the path of least resistance. Using their statewide network, rocks, firepower, and Blood rap videos and tapes, they spread their enterprise eastward through cities big and small.

The Reagan 1980s also brought about the rebirth and reestablishment of the NOI under the leadership of Minister Louis Farrakhan, the rapprochement with the Soviet Union, a number of New Afrikan POWs adopting orthodox Islam in lieu of revolutionary nationalism, the New Afrikan People's Organization (NAPO) and its chairman, Chokwe Lumumba's emergence from RNA as a banner carrier for the New Afrikan Independence Movement (NAIM), the Malcolm X Grassroots Movement (MXGM), the New Orleans assassination of Lumumba Shakur of the Panther 21, and an upsurge in mass political demonstrations known as the "Days of Outrage" in New York City spearheaded by the December 12th Movement and others.

The end of the decade brought the death of Huey P. Newton, founder of the Black Panther Party, allegedly killed by a young Black Guerrilla Family adherent on August 22, 1989, during a dispute over "crack." Huey taught the Black masses socialism and popularized it through the slogan "Power to the People!" He armed the Black struggle and popularized it through the slogan "Political Power grows out of the barrel of a gun."[42] For that, and despite his human shortcomings, he was a true giant of the Black struggle, because his particular contributions are comparable to that of other modern-day giants, Marcus Garvey, Elijah Muhammad, Malcolm X, and Martin Luther King, Jr.

AIDS, crack, street crime, gang violence, homelessness, and arrest rates all exploded throughout the Black colonies. The prison population on June 30, 1989, topped 673,000, an incredible 372,000 increase in less than a decade, causing the tripling and doubling of prison populations in thirty-four states, and sizable increases in most others.[43] New York City prisons became so overcrowded that they began using ships as jails. William Bennett, former U.S. Secretary of Education and then so-called Drug Czar, announced plans to convert closed military bases into concentration camps.

The prison-building spree and escalated imprisonment rates continued unabated. The new prisoners were younger, more volatile, with long prison sentences, and were overwhelmingly of New Afrikan and Third World nationalities, including women who were being incarcerated at increasing rates. Their percentage of the prison population rose to five percent in 1980 from a low of three percent in 1970.[44]

Whites continued to be arrested at about the same rate as in Western Europe while the New Afrikan arrest rate surpassed that of Blacks in South Africa. In fact, the U.S. Black imprisonment rate was now the highest in the world,[45] with ten times as many Blacks as Whites incarcerated per 100,000 population.[46]

THE 1990s AND BEYOND

As we began to move through the 1990s, the New Afrikan liberation struggle behind the walls found itself coalescing around campaigns to free political prisoners and prisoners of war, helping to build a national PP/POW organization, strengthening its links on the domestic front, and building solidarity in the international arena. 1991 brought the collapse of the Soviet Union and the end of the Cold War. It freed many of the CIA's Eastern Europe personnel for redeployment back to America to focus on the domestic war against people of color. In the same manner that COINTELPRO perfected techniques developed in the infamous Palmer raids at the end of WWI and used them against the Communist Party-USA, SCLC, SNCC, BPP, NOI, RNA, and other domestic movements, repatriated CIA operatives used destabilization techniques developed in Eastern Europe, South Africa, Southeast Asia, etc., to wreak havoc in New Afrikan and other domestic communities of color today.

Although the established media concentrated on the sensationalism of ghetto crack epidemics, street crime, drive-by shootings, and gang violence, there was a parallel long, quiet period of consciousness raising in the New Afrikan colonies by the committed independence forces. The heightened consciousness of the colonies began to manifest itself through apparent random sparks of rebellion and the rise of innovative cultural trends, i.e., Rap/Hip Hop "message" music, culturally designed hair styles, dissemination of political/cultural video cassettes, resprouting of insurgent periodicals, and the resurrection of forgotten heroes; all of which presaged an oppressed people getting ready to push forward again. Meanwhile the U.S. began building the ADX Control Prison at Florence, Colorado, which would both supersede and augment USP Marion, Illinois. ADX at Florence combined, in a single hi-tech control prison complex, all the repressive features and techniques that had been perfected at USP Marion.

In 1992, Fred Hampton, Jr., son of the martyred Panther hero, Fred Sr., was sent behind the walls. He was convicted of the firebombing of a Korean "deli" in Chicago in the aftermath of the Simi Valley, California, verdict that acquitted four policemen of the Rodney King beating which set off the Los Angeles riots.

In 1994, Shiriki Uganisha responded to the call of POWs Jalil Muntaqim, Sekou Odinga, Geronimo ji-Jaga, and Mutulu Shakur, by hosting a national conference in Kansas City, Missouri, where various NAIM organizations discussed forming themselves into a National Front. After a year of holding periodic negotiations in various cities, the discussion bore fruit in Atlanta, Georgia. On August 18, 1995, NAPO

[New Afrikan People's Organization], the December 12th Movement, MXGM [Malcolm X Grassroots Movement], The Malcolm X Commemoration Committee (MXCC), the Black Cat Collective (BCC), International Campaign to Free Geronimo, the Sundiata Acoli Freedom Campaign (SAFC), and various other POW and grassroots organizations formally unified under the banner of the New Afrikan Liberation Front (NALF), headed by Herman Ferguson. . . .

The mid decade also brought forth a growing right wing White militia movement that had obviously studied the tactics and language of the 1960s left wing movements—and which culminated in the bombing of the Oklahoma City Federal Building causing 168 deaths and a claim of POW status by the subsequently captured and convicted suspect, Timothy McVeigh. He had been an All-American boy, a blond haired, blue-eyed patriot who enlisted in the army to defend the American way of life that he so fervently believed in. He rose rapidly through the military ranks (private to sergeant) in two years, and was accepted into the Special Forces: the elite, top four percent of the military's forces. There he learned something that average thinking persons of color have known most of their lives.

In an October 1991, letter to his sister and confidant, Jennifer, McVeigh disclosed his revulsion at being told that he and nine other Special Forces commanders might be ordered to help the CIA "fly drugs into the U.S. to fund covert operations" and "work hand in hand with civilian police agencies" as "government paid assassins."[47]

Disillusioned and embittered with the U.S. government, McVeigh soon afterwards left military service, gravitated deeper into the right wing militia circles and surfaced four years later upon his arrest in the Oklahoma City bombing case.

The mid 1990s found White anarchists Neil Batelli and Mathias Bolton collaborating with Black POWs Ojore Lutalo, Sekou Odinga, and Sundiata Acoli which resulted in the transformation of their local New Jersey Anarchist Black Cross into an ABC Federation (ABCF) which now serves as a role model of the proper way for organizations to provide principled political and financial support to PP/POWs of all nationalities. The period also witnessed the resprouting of Black revolutionary organizations patterned after the BPP—the Black Panther Collective, the Black Panther Social Committee, the New Black Panthers, and the Black Panther Militia—along with the NOI's Minister Louis Farrakhan's emergence at the October 16, 1995 Million Man March (MMM) in Washington, D.C., as an undeniable force on the New Afrikan, Islamic and world stage. In the meantime, the U.S. moved further to the right with the passage of a series of racist, anti-worker legislation. The government passed the NAFTA bill to legitimize the private corporations' policy of sending U.S. jobs overseas. California passed Proposition 209 which killed Affirmative Action programs throughout the state. Then, it passed Proposition 187, which implemented statewide racist anti-immigration legislation. The Federal government killed Black voting districts and passed Clinton's Omnibus Crime Bill which greatly increased the number of crime statutes, death penalty statutes, policemen and armaments; arrest of people of color; youths tried as adults; 3-strike convictions, and prison expansion projects.

The so-called "War on Drugs" sent Blacks and other people of color, more commonly associated with crack cocaine, to prison in droves while allowing White offenders to go free. Five grams of crack worth a few hundred dollars is punishable by a mandatory five-year prison sentence, but it takes 500 grams, or $50,000 worth of powdered cocaine, more commonly associated with wealthier Whites, before facing the same five years.[48] In the mid '90s, 1600 people were sent to prison each week, every three out of four were either Black or Latino,[49] with the rate of Afrikan women imprisonment growing faster than that of Afrikan men.[50]

Blacks were ninety percent of the federal crack convictions in 1994.[51] The normal assumption follows that Blacks are the majority of crack users. Wrong! Whites are the majority of crack users[52] but were less than four percent of the crack convictions[53] and no White person had been convicted of a federal crack offense in the Los Angeles area since 1986[54] nor ever in Chicago, Miami, Denver, or sixteen states according to a 1992 survey.[55] As a result, there are now more Afrikan men in prison than in college[56] and one out of every three Afrikan men aged nineteen to twenty-nine are in prison, jail, or on probation or parole.[57] Most of the convictions were obtained by an informant's tainted testimony only, no hard evidence, in exchange for the informant's freedom from prosecution or prison.

After lobbying Congress for a few years, Families Against Mandatory Minimums (FAMM), a predominately White lobby group, succeeded in getting the harsh mandatory sentences lowered for marijuana and LSD convictions. Both drugs are more commonly associated with White offenders and FAMM's success resulted in the release of numerous White offenders from long prison sentences.

Blacks and other prisoners of color patiently waited for similar corrections to be made to the gross disparity between crack and powdered cocaine sentences. Several years passed before the answer came during a 1995 C-SPAN TV live broadcast of the Congressional session debating the disparity in sentencing. The Congress voted to continue the same 100 to 1 disparity between crack and powder cocaine sentences. Instantly, prisons exploded in riots, thirty-eight in all, although most were whited-out of the news media while across the country, prison officials instituted a nationwide federal prisons lock down. The disparity in crack/powder cocaine sentencing laws remains to date; the only change made was the removal of the C-SPAN TV channel from all federal prisons' TVs.

Only two prison elements grew faster than the Afrikan prison population. One was the number of jobs for prison guards[58] and the other was prison slave labor industries.[59] A California guard with a high school diploma makes $44,000 after seven years, which is more than the state pays its PhD public university associate professors and is $10,000 more than its average public school teacher's salary.[60] The national ratio for prisons is one guard for each 4.38 prisoners,[61] meaning that each time the state locks up five new prisoners, usually Black or others of color, they hire another prison guard, usually White, since most prisons are built in depressed, rural White areas to provide jobs to poor, unemployed White populations.

After decades of the U.S. loudly accusing China of using prison labor in their

export products, the U.S. quietly removed its ban against the sale of U.S. prison products to the public. It set off a stampede by Wall Street and private corporations—Smith Barney, IBM, AT&T, TWA, Texas Instruments, Dell Computers, Honda, Lexus, Spalding, Eddie Bauer, Brill Manufacturing Co.,[62] and many others—to shamelessly invest in prisons, set up slave labor factories in prisons and to exploit every facet of the prison slave labor industry for super profits while callously discarding civilian workers for prison slave laborers.[63]

From 1980 to 1994, prisoners increased 221 percent, prison industries jumped an astonishing 358 percent, and prison sales skyrocketed from $392 million to $1.31 billion. By the year 2000, it is predicted that 30 percent of prisoners (or 500,000) will be industry workers producing $8.9 billion in goods and services.[64]

Although crime has been decreasing for five straight years, as we approach the new millennium, we find that prison expansion has continued at record pace and that the prison population has mushroomed over the last decade to an astonishing 1.75 million souls[65]—the majority of whom are Black, period—not counting the half million persons in county and city jails for a grand sum of 2.25 million prisoners total. The prisons/jails have been majority Black since 1993 when Blacks ascended to fifty-five percent. Other prisoners of color made up eighteen percent and Whites shrunk to twenty-seven percent of the prison population. There are now over two Blacks for every White prisoner,[66] and the ratio increases daily.

The incarceration of women continues to accelerate. There are over 90,000 women in prison today, fifty-four percent are women of color and the vast majority of women in prison are single mothers. Upon imprisonment they lose contact with their children, sometimes forever. There are 167,000 children in the U.S. whose mothers are incarcerated.[67]

The term "crime" has become a code word for "Black and other people of color." The cry for "law and order," "lock 'em up and throw away the key," and for "harsher prisons" is heard everywhere. Nothing is too cruel to be done to prisoners. Control units and control prisons abound across the landscape and prison brutality and torture is the order of the day. The "War on Drugs" continues apace, by now transparent to all as a "war, actually a pre-emptive strike, on people of color" to knock out our youth—our warrior class—and to decrease our birth rate, destabilize our families, re-enslave us through mass imprisonment, and ultimately to eliminate us. The threat is serious and real. To ignore it would be at our own peril.

Despite government mass imprisonment of our youth and covertly fomenting deadly internecine wars among Black street gangs, the abhorrence of the Afrikan community and persistent "Peace Summits" sponsored by Afrikan spiritual, community, and prison leaders have produced somewhat positive, although checkered results. The Gangster Disciples, at Larry Hoover's direction, have struggled to transform their image from a criminal organization to a formidable organization for grassroots empowerment called "Growth and Development." Throughout Chicago's ghettoes they have organized neighborhood cleanups and food drives in which hundreds of bags of Cornish hens and soul food dinners were given away to the poor.

Their political action committee, 21st Century, financed Chicago voter registration drives, conducted gang "peace summits," and held rallies in support of health care reform that eventually won support from the ghetto schools, churches, and community leaders which gave them a measure of mainstream political power. Former GD "war counselor," Wallace "Gator" Bradley ran for Alderman and lost both times, but in January 1994, he was admitted to the White House with Jesse Jackson to speak with Clinton about "combating crime." The GD's power continues to grow although in May 1997, still imprisoned Larry Hoover and six associates were found guilty of narcotic conspiracy.[68]

A shaky peace maintains between the Bloods and CRIPs despite intermittent flare-ups and constant provocations by police to reignite the conflict. Gradually, some Blood and CRIP sets in the West are changing their focus and becoming more involved in endeavors that uplift and protect the New Afrikan community. The Bloods and CRIPs joined the armed contingent led by Dr. Khalid Muhammad and Aaron Michaels of the New Black Panthers of Dallas, Texas, which confronted the Klan demonstration in Jasper, Texas following the brutal pick-up murder there by White racists of a Black hitchhiker, James Byrd, Jr. Some Latin King[69] sets in New York City are doing similar positive work for the Puerto Rican community which is likely the main reason for the recent mass roundup and arrest of ninety-four Latin Kings in New York. Latin Kings were in the streets on Racial Justice Day and took part in the takeover of the Brooklyn's D.A. Office to demand justice for the police murders of Yong Xin Huang and Anibal Carasquillo. When Francis Livoti, cop murderer of Anthony Baez was acquitted in 1996, the Latin Kings joined other protesters in the Bronx. They were among the first on the train to Brooklyn as news of the police rape/torture of Abner Louima hit the streets. Their leader, King Tone, a.k.a. Anthony Fernandez, and a Latin King contingent marched in the October 22, 1997, National Day of Protest Against Police Brutality. The Latin Kings also took part in the protest to demand a new trial for death-row Political Prisoner Mumia Abu-Jamal.[70] Similar positive results have been obtained on occasions by The Code in their work with the Black street organizations of Brooklyn and Queens, New York.

Over the last two decades, the GDs have grown to roughly 30,000 members with GD Chapters in about thirty-five states, primarily in the midwest.[71] The Bloods have reached New York City, and have sets in almost every state. They became the first Black street gang to spread coast to coast in both streets and prisons.[72] Today there are approximately 235 sets of CRIPs in L.A. and the surrounding area. Reportedly, there are CRIP sets in seventeen states and thirty-six cities, including New York. Government sources put their collective number at 90,000. Sanyika Shakur asks rhetorically, "Had we not begun as predators of New Afrikans would we have been allowed to last this long?"[73]

The latter part of the decade witnessed the June 17, 1997, release of BPP/BLA POW Geronimo ji-Jaga after twenty-seven years of unjust imprisonment. He was met with a tumultuous welcome home from the masses wherever he traveled and

he confirmed their faith in him by immediately re-immersing himself in the struggle for New Afrikan independence and liberation of all oppressed peoples. In solidarity with the unprecedented gathering two years earlier of more than a million Black men at the Million Man March, three heroic grassroots sisters: Phile Chionesu, Asia Coney, and Nadirah Williams saw their works and faith materialize on October 25, 1997, when over a million Black women gathered at Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, for the Million Woman March. South Africa's Mother of the Struggle, Winnie Mandela, was the key note speaker, along with the Honorable Congresswoman Maxine Waters, and the just released POW Geronimo.[74]

Under POW Jalil Muntaqim's overall leadership, the NALF in conjunction with Jericho 98 Organizing Committee's Herman Ferguson and Safiya Bukhari brought the Jericho March to fruition on March 27, 1998. It was the first national demonstration of its kind on behalf of all PP/POWs in the U.S. Thousands of people of all nationalities from all over the country converged in Washington, D.C., to march from Malcolm X Park to the White House and around it several times, calling for U.S. recognition of, and amnesty for, all PP/POWs incarcerated in the U.S. Geronimo delivered the key note address at the main demonstration across the street in Lafayette Park. Other notable representatives of the people's struggle speaking at the event were Ramona Africa, Kathleen Cleaver, Angela Davis, Benjamin Muhammad (formerly Ben Chavis), Dennis Banks, Alejandro Molina, Julia Wright, Josefina Rodriguez, Alan Berkman, Ali Bey Hassan, Chief Billy Tyak, La Tanya White and many more—each calling for the release of all PP/POWs from prison and an end to the U.S.'s oppressive domination of the poor and people of color.

On September 5, 1998, thousands of Black and other youths of color throughout the country gathered at the Million Youth March/Movement in Harlem, New York, and Atlanta, Georgia. The Million Youth Movement in Atlanta was sponsored by Minister Louis Farrakhan of the NOI, Kweisi Mfume of the NAACP and Jesse Jackson of the Rainbow-Push Coalition. The major theme was that Black youth should be "God-centered" in their preparations to take the reins of leadership in the next century. The Million Youth March in Harlem was spearheaded by Dr. Khalid Muhammad of the New Black Panthers, Attorney Roger Wareham of the December 12th Movement, Attorney Malik Shabazz, and Erica Ford of The Code. The major theme centered around a Black youth "Struggle Agenda" for the coming century, namely:

Freedom,
Reparations for the Black Nation,
Freeing all PP/POWs,
Control of the Politics and Economics of our Communities,
Building Independent Institutions in our Communities,
Control of our Cultural and Intellectual Properties,
End Police Brutality, Harassment, and Murder of Black People,
End Racism,
Self Determination for the Black Nation

Speeches were made by Damien of Harlem's Boys Choir, Farrakhan Muhammed—son of Dr. Khalid, Phile Chionesu, Dr. Josef Ben-Jochannan, Dr. Leonard Jeffries, Attorneys Malik Shabazz and Roger Wareham, Ernie Longwalker and Warrior Woman, Minister Conrad Muhammed, Al Sharpton, and others. Messages were read from various PP/POWs. Valentine, a spectator and twenty-three-year-old member of the United Blood Nation, said one reason he came was "to show his organization had positives" and "to bring understanding." He wore a red and white bandanna around his head to represent his group, and a Million Youth March dog collar around his neck.[75] Dr. Khalid Muhammad's speech concluded the March at which time, a police helicopter buzzed low over the dispersing crowd, and a police contingent rushed the stage to cut off the sound system. A melee ensued leaving one spectator and fifteen police injured. The Harlem community was incensed at Mayor "Adolph" Giuliani and the police department for their racist/fascist posture leading up to and throughout the March, and for their brazen provocations at its end, all of which fell short of their intended effect.

The New Afrikan struggle behind the walls now follows the laws of its own development, paid for in its own blood, intrinsically linked to the struggle of its own people, and rooted deep in the ebb and flow of its own history. To know that history is to already know its future development and direction. The times are serious. Our youth, our women, and therefore our very survival as a people are at stake. We need only, both inside and out, to unite around a struggle agenda, organize, and fight for it, and we shall win without a doubt.

Sundiata Acoli
USP Allenwood
White Deer, PA
December 7, 1998

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Orignally published by the New Afrikan Peoples Organization; adapted from Acoli's 1992 essay, "The Rise and Development of the New Afrikan Liberation Struggle behind the Walls."

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18. See Calahan, *Correction Statistics*.

19. Author's conclusions based on results of his calculations using data from both Calahan's *Correction Statistics* and *Sourcebook of Criminal Justice Statistics—1986*.

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Chapter Eleven

Lorenzo Komboa Ervin

Lorenzo Komboa Ervin was born March 30, 1947, in Chattanooga, Tennessee. A street gang member in his preteen years, at twelve he joined a local National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) youth group and participated in the 1960 sit-in protests against racial discrimination in public accommodations. In 1965, Ervin was drafted for the Vietnam War and served two years in the U.S. Army before being court-martialed for his radicalism and antiwar organizing.[1]

In 1967, Ervin joined the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC). "I learned a lot about internal democracy by being a part of SNCC," Ervin writes in *Anarchism and the Black Revolution*, "[about] how it could make or break an organization, and how it had so much to do with the morale of the members." SNCC, he explains, "developed a working style that was very anti-authoritarian and unique to the civil rights movement."[2] Ervin joined the Black Panther Party (BPP) between 1967 and 1968. He credited his brief period with the Panthers as another valuable learning experience: "It taught me," he recalled, "about the limits of—and even the bankruptcy of—leadership in a revolutionary moment . . . a realization that many times leaders have one agenda, followers have another."[3]

After nationwide riots followed Martin Luther King, Jr.'s 1968 assassination, a grand jury in Hamilton County, Tennessee, began to investigate "SNCC and the Black Power movement's role in planning disturbances in the city of Chattanooga."[4] Fearing "gun-running" charges against him and other SNCC activists and threats of violence from the police and Klansmen, Ervin left the city and went into hiding. The Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) utilized the 1968 Civil Rights Act to pursue him on charges of allegedly "bombing Klan offices and smuggling guns to be used during a civil disturbance."[5] That act, which became known as the "Rap Brown Law," made it a federal crime to cross state lines to "incite a riot," that is, engage in political agitation.

On February 25, 1969, armed with a revolver, Lorenzo Ervin hijacked a St. Louis-to-San Juan, Puerto Rico, jetliner, rerouting it to Cuba.[6] There, Ervin surrendered

to Cuban authorities. In Atlanta on March 10, 1969, he was indicted by a federal grand jury and a warrant was issued. The following month, with a Cuban passport, he flew to Czechoslovakia, where he was given political asylum.[7] In Prague, Ervin traveled to the American embassy to renounce his American citizenship and was subsequently detained to face charges in the United States. Ervin alleges that he was coerced to sign "voluntary" repatriation papers. While being escorted by embassy personnel to the airport, he escaped.[8] Found on September 22, 1969, in a youth hostel in East Berlin, he was arrested by U.S. agents and forcibly repatriated to stand trial on charges of air piracy and kidnapping.[9] After the FBI arrested him at John F. Kennedy International Airport on September 24,[10] the *New York Times* reported that he had "voluntarily returned."[11]

On July 6, 1970, he was sentenced by an all-white jury in a Georgia court to concurrent life imprisonment on two counts of aircraft hijacking. This was the first life sentence ever imposed on a hijacker.[12] During his fifteen-year incarceration, he was moved approximately every two years between prisons in the South and Midwest, yet continued to organize against racism and for prisoners' human rights.

For his political activity, he was frequently held in solitary confinement. Yet Ervin remained politically engaged: while held in prison in Marion, Illinois, he joined the "Marion Brothers," a group of prisoners who fought in federal courts for general prisoners' rights. The Marion Brothers focused their work specifically on the abhorrent treatment received in the infamous Marion Control Unit. Their work gained the attention of Amnesty International, which castigated prison authorities for violating the United Nations Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners.[13] Ervin's work with the Marion Brothers helped build international interest in his case. During the late 1970s, he was "adopted" by European anarchist organizations that popularized his case and that of other political prisoners, protesting European visits by then president Jimmy Carter.[14] Due to protest and support campaigns, Ervin was released from a Memphis, Tennessee, prison in December of 1983.

After his release, Ervin returned to Chattanooga, where he remained active with Concerned Citizens for Justice, a local civil rights group organizing against police brutality and the Ku Klux Klan.[15] Ervin's continued activity led to his arrests on a number of political resistance cases, most notably those of the "Chattanooga 8" and "Chattanooga 3."[16]

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Anarchism and the Black Revolution (*Abridged*)

1979

ANARCHIST VS. MARXIST-LENINIST THOUGHT ON THE ORGANIZATION OF SOCIETY

Historically, there have been three major forms of socialism—Libertarian Socialism (Anarchism), Authoritarian Socialism (Marxist Communism), and Democratic Socialism (electoral social democracy). The non-Anarchist Left has echoed the bourgeoisie's portrayal of Anarchism as an ideology of chaos and lunacy. But Anarchism, and especially Anarchist-Communism, has nothing in common with this image. It is false and made up by its ideological opponents, the Marxist-Leninists.

It is very difficult for the Marxist-Leninists to make an objective criticism of Anarchism as such, because by its very nature it undermines all suppositions basic to Marxism. If Marxism and Leninism ([and] its variant which emerged during the Russian Revolution) is held out to be the working class philosophy, and the proletariat cannot owe its emancipation to anyone but the Communist Party, it is hard to go back on it and say that the working class is not yet ready to dispense with authority over it. [V. I.] Lenin came up with the idea of the transitional State, which would "wither away" over time, to go along with Marx's "dictatorship of the proletariat." The Anarchists expose this line as counter-revolutionary and sheer power-grabbing, and over seventy-five years of Marxist-Leninist practice have proven us right. These so-called Socialist States produced by Marxist-Leninist doctrine have only produced Stalinist police states, where workers have no rights, and a new ruling class of technocrats and party politicians have emerged, and the class differential between those the State favored over those it didn't created widespread deprivation among the masses and another class struggle. But instead of meeting such criticisms head on, they have concentrated their attacks not on the doctrine of Anarchism, but on particular Anarchist historical figures, especially [Mikhail] Bakunin ([Karl] Marx's main opponent in the First International).[1]

Anarchists are social revolutionaries who seek a stateless, classless, voluntary, cooperative federation of decentralized communities based upon social ownership, individual liberty, and autonomous self-management of social and economic life.

The Anarchists differ with the Marxist-Leninists in many areas but especially in organization building. They differ from the authoritarian socialists in primarily three ways: they reject the Marxist-Leninist notions of the vanguard party, democratic centralism and the dictatorship of the proletariat, and Anarchists have alternatives for each of them. The problem is that almost the entire Left (including

some Anarchists) is completely unaware of Anarchism's tangible structural alternatives of the catalyst group, Anarchist consensus, and the mass commune.

The Anarchist alternative to the vanguard party is the catalyst group. The catalyst group is merely an Anarchist-Communist federation of affinity groups in action. The catalyst group, or revolutionary anarchist federation, would meet on a regular basis or only when necessary, depending on the wishes of the membership and the urgency of social conditions. It would be made up of representatives from the affinity group (or the affinity group itself), with full voting rights, privileges, and responsibilities. It would both set policies and future actions to be performed. It would produce both Anarchist-Communist theory and social practice. It believes in the class struggle and the necessity to overthrow Capitalist rule. It organizes in the communities and workplaces. It is democratic and has no authority figures like a party boss or central committee.

In order to make a revolution, large-scale, coordinated movements are necessary, and their formation is in no way counter to Anarchism. What Anarchists are opposed to is hierarchical, power-tripping leadership which suppresses the creative urge of the bulk of those involved, and forces an agenda down their throats. Members of such groups are mere servants and worshippers of the party leadership. But although Anarchists reject this type of domineering leadership, they do recognize that some people are more experienced, articulate, or skilled than others, and these people will play leadership action roles. These persons are not authority figures, and can be removed at the will of the body. There is also a conscious attempt to routinely rotate responsibility and to pass on these skills to each other, especially to women and people of color, who would ordinarily not get the chance. The experience of these persons, who are usually veteran activists or better qualified than most at the moment, can help form and drive forward movements, and even help to crystallize the potential for revolutionary change in the popular movement. What they cannot do is take over the initiative of the movement itself. The members of these groups reject hierarchical positions (anyone having more official authority than others), and unlike the Marxist-Leninist vanguard parties, the Anarchist groups won't be allowed to perpetuate their leadership through a dictatorship after the revolution. Instead, the catalyst group itself will be dissolved and its members, when they are ready, will be absorbed into the new society's collective decision-making process. Therefore, these Anarchists are not leaders, but merely advisors and organizers for a mass movement. . . .

Anarchism is not confined to the ideas of a single theoretician, and it allows individual creativity to develop in collective groupings, instead of the characteristic dogmatism of the Marxist-Leninists. Therefore, not being cultist, it encourages a great deal of innovation and experimentation, prompting its adherents to respond realistically to contemporary conditions. It is the concept of making ideology fit the demands of life, rather than trying to make life fit the demands of ideology.

Therefore, Anarchists build organizations in order to build a new world, not perpetuate domination over the masses of people. We must build an organized, coordinated international movement aimed at transforming the globe into a mass commune. . . .

WHERE IS THE BLACK STRUGGLE AND WHERE SHOULD IT BE GOING?

Some, usually comfortable Black middle class professionals, politicians or businessmen who rode the 1960s Civil Rights movement into power or prominence, will say that there is no longer any necessity to struggle in the streets during the 1990s for Black freedom. They say that we have "arrived" and are now "almost free." They say our only struggle now is to "integrate the money," or win wealth for themselves and members of their social class, even though they give lip service to "empowering the poor." Look, they say: we can vote, our Black faces are all over TV in commercials and situation comedies, there are hundreds of Black millionaires, and we have political representatives in the halls of Congress and State houses all over the land. In fact, they say, there are currently over 7,000 Black elected officials, several of whom preside over the large cities in the nation, and there is even a governor of a Southern state who is an African-American. That's what they say. But does this tell the whole story?

The fact is that we are in as bad or even worse a shape economically and politically as when the Civil Rights movement began in the 1950s. One in every four Black males are in prison, on probation, on parole, or under arrest;[2] at least one-third or more of Black family units are now single parent families mired in poverty; unemployment hovers at 18–25 percent for Black communities; the drug economy is the number one employer of Black youth; most substandard housing units are still concentrated in Black neighborhoods; Blacks and other non-Whites suffer from the worst health care; and Black communities are still underdeveloped because of racial discrimination by municipal governments, mortgage companies and banks, who "redline" Black neighborhoods from receiving community development, housing and small business loans which keep our communities poor. We also suffer from murderous acts of police brutality by racist cops which have resulted in thousands of deaths and wounding, and internecine gang warfare resulting in numerous youth homicides (and a great deal of grief). But what we suffer from most and what encompasses all of these ills is the fact that we are an oppressed people, in fact a *colonized people*, who are subject to the rule of an oppressive government. We really have no rights under this system, except that which we have fought for and even that is now in peril. Clearly we need a new mass Black protest movement to challenge the government and corporations and expropriate the funds needed for our communities to survive.

Yet for the past twenty-five years the revolutionary Black movement has been on the defensive. Due to co-optation, repression, and betrayals of the Black Liberation movement of the 1960s, today's movement has suffered a series of setbacks and has

now become static in comparison. This may be because it is just now getting its stuff together after being pummeled by the State's police agencies, and also because of the internal political contradictions which arose in the major Black revolutionary groups like the Black Panther Party, Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC or "snick" as it was called in those days), and the League of Revolutionary Black Workers, which I believe were factors which led to the destruction of the 1960s Black Left in this country. Of course, many blame this period of relative inactivity in the Black movement on the lack of forceful leaders in the mold of Malcolm X, Martin Luther King [Jr.], Marcus Garvey, etc., while other people blame the "fact" that the Black masses have allegedly become "corrupt and apathetic," or just need the "correct revolutionary line."

Whatever the true facts of the matter, it can clearly be seen that the government, the capitalist corporations, and the racist ruling class are exploiting the current weakness and confusion of the Black movement to make an attack on the Black working class, and are attempting to totally strip the gains won during the Civil Rights era. In addition there is a resurgence of racism and conservatism among broad layers of the White population, which is a direct result of this right-wing campaign. Clearly this is a time when we must entertain new ideas and new tactics in the freedom struggle.

The ideals of Anarchism are something new to the Black movement and have never really been examined by Black and other non-White activists, but put simply, it means that the people themselves should rule, not governments, political parties, or self-appointed leaders in their name. Anarchism also stands for the self-determination of all oppressed peoples, and their right to struggle for freedom . . . by any means necessary.

So what road is in order for the Black movement? Continuing to depend on opportunistic Democratic hack politicians like Bill Clinton or Ted Kennedy, the same old group of middle class sell-out leaders of the Civil Rights lobby, one or another of the authoritarian Leninist sects, who insist that they and *they alone* have the correct path to "revolutionary enlightenment"; or finally building a grassroots revolutionary protest movement to fight the racist government and rulers? Only the Black masses can finally decide the matter, whether they will be content to bear the brunt of the current economic depression and the escalating racist brutality, or will lead a fightback. Anarchists trust the best instincts of the people, and human nature dictates that where there is repression, there will be resistance, where there is slavery, there will be a struggle against it. The Black masses have shown they will fight, and when they organize they will win!

A CALL FOR A NEW BLACK PROTEST MOVEMENT

Those Anarchists who are Black like myself recognize that there has to be a whole new social movement which is democratic on the grassroots level and is self-activated. It will be a movement which is independent of the major political parties, the State and the government. It must be a movement which, although it seeks to expropriate government money for projects which benefit the people, does not recognize any progressive role for the government in the lives of the people. The government will not free us, and is part of the problem, rather than part of the solution. In fact, only the Black masses themselves can wage the Black freedom struggle, not a government bureaucracy (like the U.S. Justice Department), reformist civil rights leaders like Jesse Jackson, or a revolutionary vanguard party on their behalf.

Of course, at a certain historical moment a protest leader can play a tremendous revolutionary role as a *spokesperson* for the people's feelings, or even produce correct strategy and theory for a *certain period* (Malcolm X, Marcus Garvey, and Martin Luther King, Jr. come to mind), and a "vanguard party" may win mass support and acceptance among the people for a time (e.g., the Black Panther Party of the 1960s); but it is the Black masses themselves who will make the revolution, and once set spontaneously in motion, know exactly what they want. Though leaders may be motivated by good or bad, eventually they will act as a brake on the struggle, especially if they lose touch with the freedom aspirations of the Black masses. Leaders can only really serve a legitimate purpose as an advisor and catalyst to the movement, and should be subject to *immediate recall* if they act contrary to the people's wishes, and of course in that kind of limited role they are not leaders at all, they are *community organizers*.

The dependence of the Black movement on leaders and leadership (especially the Black bourgeoisie) has led us into a political dead end. We are expected to wait and suffer quietly until the next messianic leader asserts himself, as if he or she were "divinely missioned" (as some have claimed to be). What is even more harmful is that many Black people have adopted a slavish psychology of "obeying and serving our leaders," without considering what they themselves are capable of doing. Thus they prefer to bemoan the brutal facts, for year after year, of how Brother Malcolm X was taken away from us rather than trying to analyze the current situation and then carrying on his work in the community. Some mistakenly refer to this as a "leadership vacuum." The fact is that there has not been much *movement* in the Black revolutionary movement since his assassination and the virtual destruction of groups like the Black Panther Party. We have been stagnated by middle class reformism and misunderstanding. We need to come up with new ideas and revolutionary formations in how to fight our enemies. We need a new mass protest movement. It is up to the Black masses to build it, not leaders or political parties. They cannot save us. We can only save ourselves.

WHAT FORM WILL THIS MOVEMENT TAKE?

If there was one thing which was learned by Anarchist revolutionary organizers in the 1960s, you don't organize a mass movement or a social revolution just by creat-

ing one central organization, such as a vanguard political party or a labor union. Even though Anarchists believe in revolutionary organization, *it is a means to an end*, instead of the ends itself. In other words, the Anarchist groups are not formed with the intention of being permanent organizations to seize power after a revolutionary struggle. But rather to be groups which act as a catalyst to revolutionary struggles, and which try to take the people's rebellions, like the 1992 Los Angeles revolt, to a higher level of resistance.

Two features of a new mass movement must be the intention of creating dual power institutions to challenge the state, [and] the ability to have a grassroots autonomist movement which can take advantage of a pre-revolutionary situation to go all the way. *Dual power* means that you organize a number of collectives and communes in cities and towns all over North America, which are in fact liberated zones, outside of the control of the government. *Autonomy* means that the movement must be truly independent and a free association of all those united around common goals, rather than membership as the result of some oath or other pressure. So how would Anarchists intervene in the revolutionary process in Black neighborhoods? Well, obviously North American or "White" Anarchists cannot go into Black communities and just proselytize, but they certainly should work with non-White Anarchists and help them work in communities of color. (I do think that the example of the New Jersey Anarchist Federation and its loose alliance with the Black Panther movement in that state is an example of how we must start.) And we are definitely not talking about a situation where Black organizers go into the neighborhood and win people to Anarchism so that they can then be controlled by Whites and some party. This is how the Communist Party and other Marxist groups operate, but it cannot be how Anarchists work. We spread Anarchist beliefs not to "take over" people, but to let them know how they can better organize themselves to fight tyranny and obtain freedom. We want to work with them as fellow human beings and allies, who have their own experiences, agendas, and needs. The idea is to get as many movements of people fighting the state as possible, since that is what brings the day of freedom for us all a little closer.

There needs to be some sort of revolutionary organization for Anarchists to work on the local level, so we will call these local groups *Black Resistance Committees*. Each one of these Committees will be Black working class social revolutionary collectives in the community to fight for Black rights and freedom as part of the Social Revolution. The Committees would have no leader or "party boss," and would be without any type of hierarchy structure; they would also be anti-authority. They exist to do revolutionary work, and thus are not debating societies or a club to elect Black politicians to office. They are revolutionary political formations, which will be linked with other such groups all over North America and other parts of the world in a larger movement called a *federation*. A federation is needed to coordinate the actions of such groups, let others know what is happening in each area, and to set down widespread strategy and tactics. (We will call this one, for want of a better name, the "African Revolutionary Federation," or it can be part of a multi-cultural

federation.) A federation of the sort I am talking about is a mass membership organization, which will be democratic and made up of all kinds of smaller groups and individuals. But this is not a government or representative system I am talking about; there would be no permanent positions of power, and even the facilitators of internal programs would be subject to immediate recall or have a regular rotation of duties. When a federation is no longer needed, it can be disbanded. Try that with a Communist party or one of the major Capitalist parties in North America!

NOTES

Originally released in its entirety as a pamphlet in 1979, this version is excerpted from a 1993 reprint by the Mid-Atlantic Anarchist Publishing Collective in Philadelphia.

1. *Editor's note:* Mikhail Aleksandrovich Bakunin (1814–1876) was one of the earliest theorists of anarchism. See: Mikhail Aleksandrovich Bakunin, *God and the State* (Freeport, N.Y.: Books for Libraries Press, 1971) and *Marxism, Freedom and the State* (London: Freedom Press, 1950).

2. *Editor's note:* According to the Sentencing Project's mid-year 2001 statistics, one in every eight African American males in the twenty-five to thirty-four age range is incarcerated in prison or jail on any given day. See *New Inmate Population Figures Show Continued Growth, Prospects for Change in Policy Unclear*, www.sentencingproject.org/news/inmatepop-apr02.pdf.