

CROSSROAD

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NEW AFRIKAN DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE

WE, Black People in America, in consequence of arriving at a knowledge of ourselves as a people with dignity, long deprived of that knowledge; as a consequence of revolting with every decimal of our collective and individual beings against the oppression that for three hundred years has destroyed and broken and warped the bodies and minds and spirits of our people in America, in consequence of our raging desire to be free of this oppression, to destroy this oppression wherever it assaults **humankind** in the world, and in consequence of inextinguishable determination to go a different way, to build a new and better world, do hereby declare ourselves forever free and independent of the jurisdiction of the United State of America and the obligations which that country's unilateral decision to make our ancestors and ourselves paper-citizens placed on us.

We claim no rights from the United States of America other than those rights belonging to human beings anywhere in the world, and these include the right to damages, reparations, due us from the grievous injuries sustained by our ancestors and ourselves by reason of United States lawlessness.

Ours is a revolution against oppression—our own oppression and that of all people in the world. And it is a revolution for a better life, a better station for **all**, a surer harmony with the forces of life in the universe. We therefore see these aims as the aims of our revolution:

- To free black people in America from oppression;
- To support and wage the world revolution until all people everywhere are so free;
- To build a new Society that is better than what We now know and as perfect as **We** can make it;
- To assure all people in the New Society maximum opportunity and equal access to that maximum;
- To promote industriousness, responsibility, scholarship, and service;
- To create conditions in which freedom of religion abounds and the pursuit of God and/or destiny, place and purpose of **humankind** in the Universe will be without hindrance;
- To build a Black independent nation where no sect or religious creed subverts or impedes the building of the New Society, the New State Government, or achievement of the Aims of the Revolution as set forth in this Declaration;
- To end exploitation of **human beings** by **each other** or the environment;
- To assure equality of rights for the sexes;
- To end color and class discrimination, while not abolishing salubrious diversity, and to promote self-respect and mutual understanding among all people in the society;
- To protect and promote the personal dignity and integrity of the individual, and **his or her** natural rights;
- To place the major means of production and trade in the trust of the state to assure the benefits of this earth and **our** genius and labor to society and all its members, and
- To encourage and reward the individual for hard work and initiative and insight and devotion to the Revolution.

In mutual trust and great expectation, We the undersigned, for ourselves and for those who look to us but are unable personally to affix their signatures hereto, do join in this solemn Declaration of Independence, and to support this Declaration and to assure the success of the Revolution, We pledge without reservation ourselves, our talents, and all our worldly goods.

MALCOLM X & BLACK PERSPECTIVES ON THE CRISIS OF SOCIALISM

by: ABDUL ALKALIMAT

Presented at: **MALCOLM X: 1991****"RADICAL TRADITION AND A LEGACY OF STRUGGLE"***an international conference*

Borough of Manhattan Community College/CUNY, New York City

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It is a great challenge to speak on the topic "Malcolm X and Black Perspectives on the Crisis of Socialism" at this time in our history. This is so whether we think of this country in particular or the world in general. In the last decade we have seen an explosion of contradictions produce unprecedented changes and we continue to see these changes unfold before our eyes virtually on a daily basis. To put together the name of Malcolm, with the theoretical and practical experience of Socialism, is to place before us the most strategic aspects of the question being debated at the center of this storm: Can society be reorganized to produce a better quality of life than ever before, both in terms of race and nationality on the one hand, and politics and economics on the other?

Further, the results of this historical debate is no mere academic exercise, but will determine how all of us will live our lives into the 21st century. There will be a new world order, and everyone will be playing by new rules. The 50 year dominance of the USA since World War II is over, everyone who takes a serious look at the situation seems to know that. As well, every country and regional power bloc is being restructured and realigned. Thus, the debate that is raging over the future course of history is itself a historical necessity.

Some would argue that History has ended, some would argue that progress is over and some would argue that scarcity and greed will destroy morality and reduce all of society, finally, to a cash nexus, the ultimate market. These are the prophets of doom—our doom—who usually hold these beliefs as expressions of their commitment to capitalism as a system, especially their position of privilege within it, and in response to the deepening crisis, these forces are prepared to carry their defense of capitalism to extreme and ominous limits—Yes, once again we face the specter of fascism from Maastricht to Moscow, from Louisiana to Latvia.



On the other hand, those of us who would raise the name of Malcolm as one whose life and politics contains positive lessons for the future, and who believe that socialism remains a viable historical form of social transformation have "the awesome responsibility of revolutionary leadership," the task of historical criticism, strategic vision, and tactical action. The doom sayers offer barbarism, genocide and war for the masses of people—check it out, look around in New York, you can see advanced forms of social degeneration everywhere. But we gather to argue the possibility of

prosperity, peace and justice. My hope is that this session contributes to our collective grasp of socialism as a plausible scenario, and then together we can leave here and work to link this vision with the practical tasks of the day to day struggle.

In my brief time I would like to address three main issues:

1. Was Malcolm X a Socialist?
2. What is the crisis of Socialism?
3. What is the relationship between a Black agenda and a Socialist agenda?

1. WAS MALCOLM X A SOCIALIST?

On one level this is one of the most controversial and easy to solve problems. No, there is no evidence that Malcolm X publicly committed himself to the principles of Socialism. But we can't leave it at that, since defining people only by the text of their talk is limited at best, and usually would have to assume that their context and social practice was irrelevant while in fact no serious interpretation of someone's speeches and interviews can take place independent of their context and social practice.

Malcolm was a northern Black working class voice who emerged out of the **Radical Black Tradition**. Our Radical Black Tradition is rooted in the cumulative experiences of Black peoples struggle for survival - lessons paid for, learned, and encoded in a culture of resistance. The ultimate historical significance of Malcolm X is that he reaffirmed the tradition and pushed us forward to open up the debate we are having today.

The Little family nurtured Malcolm in a cradle of Panafrikanism, Nationalism, Religion, and Feminism. Earl Little, Malcolm's father, was an itinerant Baptist preacher who steeped him in the Bible as a historical paradigm of the Black experience and armed him with the Old Testament ethics of revolutionary violence. Louise Little, Malcolm's mother, was a strong personality in family and politics, while connecting Malcolm to the African diaspora through her Caribbean origin in Grenada. Both of his parents were activists in the UNIA, his father being an organizer and spokesperson, and his mother an administrative official at the local level.

Malcolm was snatched out of this context and put under direct "white" supervision where he gave that a shot and grasped the spirit of mainstream achievement and success with an open mind. He was negated in this experience by whites in a foster home and school, just as his parents had been negated by white terrorists and welfare bureaucrats. This was a reflection of the conditions facing Black families who either tried to uphold the Radical Black Tradition (Malcolm's Parents) or Black youth who try and conform to the behavior required for success by the mainstream educational institutions. Both were negated - by rejection, by institutionalization, and by murder.

In turn Malcolm then negated the conventions of society by striving for success in the underworld of street hustlers. This was a gangster hedonism that required the mainstream as much as if one were in it. And then of course in place of being killed he was locked up for burglary.

In this scenario, the main overall contradiction is that we find the radical

black tradition of the Little family liquidated by the racist terror of US capitalism.

In the depths of this prison experience Malcolm was "reborn" within the Radical Black Tradition through a religious conversion experience by joining the Nation of Islam. Elijah Muhammad, the leader of the Nation of Islam, became a father figure for Malcolm as he had been for several of Malcolm's sisters and brothers.

The Nation of Islam was a highly stylized form of nationalism. Elijah Muhammad was a man from Georgia with little formal education, but who was wise and skillful in training his organizational representatives and devising a program. He was in direct lineage, from Garvey to Noble Drew Ali to Fard to Elijah Muhammad. On the one hand the Nation of Islam was a sectarian dogmatic organization upholding a form of Black capitalism run by an authoritarian leadership, while on the other hand its newspaper was usually edited by a Black socialist who filled the pages with radical critiques of US capitalism and Western imperialist interests throughout the world.

Malcolm X was tormented by great conflicts within the Nation of Islam that pulled him from the dogmatism of Elijah Muhammad into the historical dynamic of the Black liberation movement and world revolution. His leaders' shortcoming was partly the reason, but mostly I think it was Malcolm's links with the peoples movement, the motion of history drew him into the great debate of the 1960's, and he began to change and grow within that context free of sectarianism and dogmatism.

The only critical theoretical issue within that debate that sums up Malcolm's motion for at least the last two years of his life points to socialism. Consider the following;

1. Malcolm took a class position. He consciously argued the case for the "bottom of the pile Negroes" and proudly proclaimed himself "field Negro" in opposition to the Uncle Tom "House Negroes."
2. Malcolm declared himself a revolutionary and among others gave particular reference to China and Cuba;
3. Malcolm noted that the only white people who seemed to want what he wanted usually turned out to be socialist;
4. Malcolm finally came to the position that the struggle would not be a race war, but a world wide struggle of the oppressed of the world, in opposition to "western interests" or in other words imperialism.

In sum, for me, the issue then is not really the question was Malcolm X a socialist, but rather the clear and undeniable fact that Malcolm X guided us to take up the issue of socialism (directly and indirectly) as part of the main debate driving forward the Black liberation movement. Of course, Malcolm was not alone in this but was joining the ranks of virtually all significant liberation movements in the third world. In this way Malcolm finally helped resurrect the fifth aspect of the Radical Black Tradition that had been virtually silenced since the McCarthy purges and the isolation of figures such as W E B DuBois, Paul Robeson, and Claudia Jones among others.

2. WHAT IS THE CRISIS OF SOCIALISM?

In the last 75 years we have been told by the capitalists that the socialist system was dead while the socialists have in turn charged that capitalism was moribund. But now we see the governments that proclaimed socialism in such deep crisis that they are repudiating socialism, disbanding communist parties, and even destroying multinational countries in favor of a realignment based on narrow nationalist principles and the resurrection of the capitalist system. In the Soviet Union both Yeltsin and Gorbachev uphold the capitalist direction part, but they disagree on the form and function of the political structure.

While there are internal and external bases for this crisis my summation is simple, the main basis of the crisis of socialism remains capitalism. So, if these historical forms of already existing socialism have died, rather than suicide, it was murder, or death following a premature birth.

The thesis of a premature birth is that the Marxist prescription for the development of socialism didn't take place. The idea was that socialism would be best constructed in a society with a developed economy, advanced technology and an educated culturally advanced working class, with broad democratic traditions. In fact what did happen is that virtually all 20th century socialist revolutions were in relatively undeveloped countries that took on a political form far more advanced than the economic forces and social fabric could sustain. But even as such, though with only 50 years experience with the exception of the former soviet union, they were glorious experiments whose successes affirm socialism, but whose failure forces us to be sober in our assessment of the freedom we have within the objective material conditions of our historical necessity. In the end the broad masses of working people will decide the future and fate of all history, whatever they are like, and whether we like it or not! So this thesis is that socialism went as far as it could go, and now in the midst of the world wide scientific and technological revolution its present forms are being swept aside requiring a new more advanced form of socialist revolution to develop.

The murder of socialism thesis is that within the centralized bureaucracy of the former governments and ruling communist parties a new bourgeoisie was created (and in some cases old reactionaries were simply let in) and personal privileges were generalized to the restoration of capitalism, creating an enemy headquarters within a state capitalist framework. The masses of working people became discontent with authoritarian states, an economy that fed a superstructure burdened with officials and cold war military expenditures, and a lagging supply of quality consumer goods. The new bourgeoisie has seized the moment of this mass discontent, often propelled forward by youth influenced by western cultural and material trends, and is using their new power to kill socialism. Its a case of class war.

Both of these arguments have merit in explaining the last several decades, including our case of the African Americans inside of the USA. We face two interrelated questions. First, the economic conditions: when has the economy polarized society into two warring classes? And two, when have white workers understood that their interests were fighting in unity with Blacks and not against Blacks?

The main outlines of US history seem to point to at least three times that

workers rose up, twice in alliance with the bourgeoisie to carry out the national democratic revolution in 1776 and in the 1860's, the so called American revolution and the civil war, and once in the Great Depression that resulted in the creation of the US welfare state. The crisis of socialism in the USA is that the conditions of class war have been muted by the particularities of this country, economic expansion across diverse regions in a country with vast resources, an imperialist bribe of the workers based on third world plunder and the collaboration of trade union bureaucrats. Finally the most important problem has been the racism of the white workers who have more often than not refused to unite and find common cause with the masses of Black working people.

This leads to our final question:

3. What is the relationship between a Black Agenda and a Socialist Agenda?

First let me indicate that Malcolm X lived at the end of his life in a period when the US economy was expanding. This meant that US imperialism was able to continue the bribe of white workers and extend to them privileges. Of course this was only relative to Blacks as in fact they remained firmly in the grips of the exploitative mechanisms of capitalist class relations, they were white, but they remained workers!

A Black perspective on the crisis of socialism has to come to grips with the fact that for the mass of people there is no Black agenda separate from a socialist agenda at this moment in our history. A corollary is that Black unity is no longer the key to social progress.

For the last 100 years or more the Black middle class has led the Black liberation movement for the most part because Black unity was the key to social progress and they had the ability and inclination to lead the struggle. However, the civil rights movement fought and won gains for a sector of this class that has become an openly right wing oreo trojan horse within the Black community. These are major corporate board members, high government officials, and conservative ideologues of the right. This is the final betrayal of the "house Negro."

For the majority of Black people the unity required for social progress is a bottom up political motion that turns the fundamental economic polarization into a staging ground for the army of oppressed, the wretched of the earth right here.

The agenda for this army is clear. On the one hand to unleash the scientific and technological forces to create and sustain unprecedented possibilities for improvements in the quality of life, by placing a "serve the people" principle in place of a "private profit" principle.

In sum, the crisis of socialism in the Black community is the crisis of leadership. As long as the Black middle class provides leadership and the illusion of an inclusive Black unity dominates Black political culture, socialism will be repudiated just as Bush, Pat Buchanan, and David Duke want it to be. But when the air is cleared by straight talk and open debate in the spirit of Malcolm and the "bottom of the pile Negroes" everywhere, socialism as a center piece of the Radical Black Tradition will be reborn and the possibility of a future worth living will become a practical project.

On the Question of Political Prisoners

There is no question that support for political prisoners and prisoners of war should and must be an integral part of any movement for liberation. There is no question, that is, for people who have dedicated their lives to the struggle for freedom in this country and realize that it is not possible to talk about a movement for liberation if you fail to liberate people who are incarcerated as a result of that struggle for liberation.

What is called into question, therefore, is whether or not we are serious about revolution and liberation.

I remember sitting in the back room of the Black Panther Party on Seventh Avenue and listening to a political education class. The *Red Book* was being discussed. This particular day the passage under discussion was *Tell no lies and claim no easy victories*. I interpreted that to mean, go to the people, organize the people, work among the people and tell no lies about what we want and what we've done and what we have accomplished. We have to build a strong bond of trust with the people and show them by example that we're different from the politicians and corporate businessmen and others that say anything and do anything to get the people to go along with their program.

This lesson, *Tell no lies and claim no easy victories*, has been the cornerstone of my understanding of what this struggle is supposed to be about. If we take the *Tell no lies* approach to organizing, then we take the time out to build a foundation for a movement that is destined to bring us the victory we say we're fighting for. There would be no need to organize separate programs to educate the community to the existence of political prisoners because as we work to organize rent strikes and take control of abandoned buildings to create decent housing in our community through our sweat equity. We would be talking while we're working about how Abdul Majid and others organized tenant associations in the East New York and Brownsville sections of Brooklyn such as the Oceanhill Brownsville Tenants Association. While we're organizing around the issue of quality education that teaches our true history and role in this society we could talk about Herman Bell and Albert 'Nuh' Washington and their work with the liberation schools. While we're organizing food co-ops and other survival programs we can talk about Geronimo Pratt, Sundiata Acoli, Robert 'Seth' Hayes and all the other political prisoners and prisoners of war who worked in the Free Health Clinics, the day care centers and went to prison as a result of their active participation in organizing efforts around issues that directly affected the Black and oppressed communities.

Because our 'movement', for lack of a better word, has deteriorated to the point that the majority of our organizing is done through demonstrations, rallies, conferences and press conferences; the only way we feel we can talk about the issue of political prisoners is when we drag them out for show and tell time or when we need to legitimize what we're doing. This raises the question, "Are we serious about struggle? or Are we just profiling?" If we're not serious then we need to let our political prisoners off the hook and tell them to "Do what you think is best for you!" If we are serious then we need to stop ego tripping, stop profiling, stop rabble rousing and get down to the serious work of organizing. Talk is cheap, action is supreme!

Political prisoners didn't become political prisoners out of a vacuum. They went to prison, for the most part, as members of political formations. There are



Ahmed Evans

Herman Bell



over 150 political prisoners in jail across this country. The majority of these brothers and sisters are serving upward of 25 years to life and at least one, Mumia Abu Jamal, is facing death. At the time the majority of these people went to prison there was a thriving movement on the street. They are sitting there now and the movement is totally fragmented and in a state of disarray. They are being pulled in a lot of different directions by fragmented organizations that are more interested in posturing as the 'vanguard' and jockeying for position than doing the work of organizing the people. I constantly wonder why it is necessary for them to be fighting among themselves to be the titular 'vanguard' of a 'movement'

when there are millions of people that have to be organized? If they all got down today to the task of organizing New York City, or any of the other communities across the United States, there would still be room for more help. We wouldn't even step on each other's toes and would be glad to share the work because that's how much work that has to be done. That is, if we were serious about the job of organizing for liberation.

The term 'political prisoner' means nothing to the average brother or sister on the block because the terms 'liberation' and 'revolution' mean nothing. The words have no meaning for our people, no real meaning, because we have done no real organizing, and educating for liberation. This lack of consciousness among our people, and the lack of support for political prisoners is a direct result of our lack of concrete work among our people. The days of people getting involved in struggle for great socialist ideas is long gone, if they ever existed. Our people require examples of what concrete changes will occur in their condition if we collectively fight for change. Once they are shown the example of what could be achieved, they are more likely to support struggle. When they are confronted by how the state - government - police respond to people who dare to speak out and organize and educate against a system that has consistently exploited, brutalized and oppressed them, they are more likely to support political prisoners.

Some of us mistake the people's anger at, frustration with and distrust of the system as meaning they are ready for revolution. It is true that they possess a deep seated anger at the system, that they distrust the system, but it's also true that they have not made the connection between the source of this anger and distrust and creating a revolution. Our people are more inclined to participate in a race riot than a revolution. They would support a drug dealer before they'd support a revolutionary. Why? For a number of reasons, chief being that the drug dealer is in the community constantly, is known by the community and has picked up on a lesson that the revolutionary used to know. The drug dealer understands that he has to give something back to the community. He employs the local people and therefore, even if it's pennies, makes a difference in the life of the community.

This is not an indictment of our people, but rather an indictment of the deterioration of the movement and our complete loss of direction. At some point we should have been able to stop and take an assessment of the state of the movement, especially following the major offensives against the revolution brought on by the government, i.e. COINTELPRO and the destruction of the Black Panther Party. We seem to have forgotten everything we ever learned about revolution, that it's about the people, making qualitative and quantitative changes in the conditions of our people. Revolution is not about gaining name or organizational recognition at the expense of building a foundation for a movement



Albert 'Nuh' Washington

that will lead us to victory. In order to create the conditions for revolution we must go back to basics and deal with the fact that revolution is protracted, it doesn't happen overnight therefore we have the time to make sure we lay the correct foundation and build a strong movement based on work. This is the only real way we can build the necessary support to free our political prisoners and prisoners of war.

A final word, to our political prisoners, we used to know that prison was a microcosm of society. That is, we recognized the truism that the conditions of the people that came through the doors of the prison reflected the state of the society without. If you think back to what was happening on the streets at the time you were incarcerated and the activities that were going on among the prisoners in the institutions and compare that to what the people who are coming into the institutions are talking about and doing now, you can deduce for yourself the state of the movement today. Just as we have a job to do out here, you have a job to do in there. Being in prison does not release you of your obligations to educate to liberate; some of you seem to have forgotten that. What being in prison does is change the venue from which you organize - change the playing field.

I remember another class that took place in the Harlem office of the Black Panther Party. This lesson had to do with the 10-10-10 Program. This was a lesson on organizing. We had to learn the 10-Point Program and Platform of the Party. We had to learn the 26 rules of the Party. We had to learn the 8 Points of Attention and the 3 Main Rules of Discipline. We had to learn the motto and internalize all of it. We had to learn and internalize it for the day when the offices would no longer be open and available to us. We had to learn it for the day when we would be on our own without other Panthers so that we could carry out the tasks of the revolution. Once we internalized these teachings we were ready to go out and organize. The theory was that if each one of us organized ten people, and those people organized ten people, and those people organized ten people - the third group, if each one of them organized 10 people, would number 10,000 people. It's a time consuming method of organizing, but it's tried and true. This was the approach to organizing that I used in my section when I was in the Party. During the time I was incarcerated in Goochland, Virginia the people that were in my section in the community were the ones who stood by me and sent me packages and cards and were there waiting when I was released from prison in 1986.

Organizations come and go, but we have to create within our people the spirit of struggle. We have to build a movement to liberate our people. The issue of political prisoners is part of that movement that we are building and in building that movement we must understand that this is not a separate issue. It is an integral part of that movement, it can't be put in front of the movement and can't be an afterthought. It must be woven into the very fibers.

Comrade-Sister Safiya Bukhari is presently working and organizing in the New York area. She plans to publish a collection of essays in early '95. She can be contacted through the Black Panther Newspaper Committee.



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**WE
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*International Political Prisoners Unite to Save
Mumia Abu Jamal
Art and Writings Against the Death Penalty*

Proposal

Dear Comrades & Friends:

Many of us were outraged by National Public Radio's decision not to broadcast a series of commentaries by political prisoner Mumia Abu Jamal. NPR collapsed in the face of pressure from Philadelphia police and other law enforcement groups led by Republican Bob Dole on the floor of the US senate. Several political currents were crystallized in that moment: the seriousness of the state's drive to execute Mumia and hasten the pace of executions overall; the real subservience of one of the few media services that once maintained even the pretense of independence; the relative weakness of progressive and anti-death penalty forces in the US which have been unable to reinstate the radio program. The cops and their advocates like Dole well understood the possible impact of allowing a reasoned, articulate and utterly human voice such as Mumia's on a public that has grown inure to, if not actually fond of executions. It's a lot harder to do if you're killing real human beings instead of the portrayals of demonic psychopaths that are usually crafted for us in the media. It is also a certainty that Dole and his law enforcement constituents knew that they had to head off a national discussion of the execution of a US political prisoner - the first such execution to be carried out since the Rosenberg's. The state murder of a former Black Panther, people's journalist, prison anti-death penalty activist and supporter of MOVE is something that the right wing would prefer to keep secret until it's been accomplished.

Currently, the warrant for Mumia's execution is sitting on the desk of Pennsylvania Governor Casey awaiting his signature. Casey supports the death penalty, but without enthusiasm. Last month he narrowly defeated an effort by the Pennsylvania legislature to impose an automatic time limit for signing death warrants. Casey leaves office in January; the major candidates in the campaign to succeed him are pro-death penalty and are under pressure to promise to hasten the pace of executions. Time is of the essence for Mumia.

Political prisoners in the US and other countries such as Germany have come together before to do what we could to build solidarity with Mumia and call for the abolition of the death penalty. It is time to make our best effort. We are proposing the organization of a series of events during the week of December 10, 1994 (International Human Rights Day) which we've tentatively titled, "*International Political Prisoners Unite to Save Mumia Abu Jamal: Art and Writings Against the Death Penalty.*" The concept is one of creating a multi-media, high-impact series of programs that are crafted, produced and written primarily by political prisoners and former political prisoners from the US and as many from other countries around the world as we can contact. Over the past 10 years Mumia has received strong support in Europe. We believe we can count on political prisoners from Germany, Italy, Spain and Ireland to participate in whatever ways they can. We will reach out to political prisoners in other countries characterized by anti-colonial/ anti-imperialist struggles where we already have some contacts: the Philippines, Israel, Turkey, Chile and Mexico. International human rights organizations and lawyers groups will be asked for prisoners' or outside representatives' addresses in Asia, Africa and Latin America. The more we are able to internationalize this project, the more effective it will be. If you have contacts with political prisoners or their organizations abroad, please write to them and put us in touch with them as well.

Within the project itself we envision the possibility of an art and crafts show/sale to benefit Mumia's defense fund as well as the production of prisoner-authored plays, videos and guerrilla theater, rap, poetry and even music where possible. We hope to involve actors, artists and musicians on the street (well-known and not-so-well-known) who are associated with human rights struggles or can be organized to be so. However, the point would be to organize them to read, present and/or produce works by the prisoners. Obviously the scope, variety and success of this effort is dependent on the prisoners primarily, and then upon our collective ability to activate our own networks and organizations of supporters on the street. It is for us to determine.

The goals we've discussed for this project are as follows:

1. *To motivate people inside and outside to do whatever is possible to stop the execution of Mumia and to work towards the abolition of the death penalty overall.*
2. *To raise money for Mumia's legal defense.*
3. *To involve political prisoners from other countries, thereby furthering the internationalization of the demand to stop the execution and at the same time raising consciousness in the US about the struggles of political prisoners around the world.*
4. *To assert the existence of political prisoners in the US and demand our freedom.*
5. *To gain national and international / media coverage pursuing alternative radio networks and satellite television and computer networks.*
6. *To work with Amnesty International and other international and national human rights organizations.*

We have had initial discussions with individuals in New York City who have expressed interest in organizing this project. They believe there is a lot of potential for taking it to other cities but again believe this depends on the number and extent of prisoners' contributions in the form of artwork/creative writing and contact with people on the street. We are moving forward, but we are also inviting others to commit themselves. **This is why we are writing to you now. If you wish to be involved with this project, please contact:**

Mary Taylor
164 Lexington Ave.
Jersey City, NJ 07304
(201) 435-3244

by mail, phone (collect or via third person) by January 15.

When you contact Mary, please inform her if you are willing to have your name added to the list to signatures on the Call and an idea of what contributions you can make towards the project. Please tell her also if there are any individuals who she or others might contact about doing work on the street. However, don't wait around; if you know actors, musicians, rap artists, poets or organizers who could contribute, contact them yourself and put them in touch with Mary.

We want to be clear with everyone that this project is from us, the prisoners, and for Mumia and others on the death rows across the country. We are not talking about building a coalition of organizations, but rather a working group of individuals who will facilitate our collective ability to be heard. The principles for this working group are: **1) Save Mumia; and 2) Abolish the death penalty.** Anyone who agrees with these principles and is ready to do work is welcome. All other organizational agendas should be left at the door.

We have a small amount of seed money to cover the initial mailings, but other organizing costs will have to be met. We're asking each prisoner to mobilize her/his own network to assist with fundraising through donations, house parties, charlas, raffles, house art sales, etc. In some instances these activities can lay the basis for bringing the project to other cities.

We ask you to share this with other political prisoners/pow's who are with you and other politically conscious prisoners who you think would be interested in contributing.

Many people on the street are under the illusion that Pennsylvania won't really execute Mumia — that something will happen, someone will intervene. Others, including some of us inside the walls, have succumbed to the apparent inevitability of the state doing whatever it wants to do. Those of us in these kamps know that they'll pull that switch in a hot minute unless they perceive that it is not in their long-term interest to do so. There can be no waiting for 'someone' to do 'something.' We are offering up this project proposal as one collective effort we might make. It won't succeed unless the prisoners make it happen. We each need to determine for ourselves what is possible and what is within our means.

Please let us hear from you as soon as possible with your ideas, alternatives, criticisms and suggestions. Again, be sure to inform Mary whether we have your permission to send out the enclosed "Call for Submissions" with your name on it and an idea of what you feel you can contribute.



In Solidarity,
 Alberto Rodriguez
 Kojo Bomani Sababu
 Jihad Abdul Mumit
 Hanif Shabazz Bey
 Larry Giddings
 Abdush Shakur
 Ricardo Jimenez
 Tim Blunk
 Sundiata Acoli

UPDATE: the art show opened to critical acclaim on December 10; the main east coast event will be held at the Borough of Manhattan College on February 4th. The art show will then be travelling for the next six months. Some of the stops scheduled are Philadelphia, Pittsburgh, and New Haven before taking it overseas. For more information, or to inquire about bringing it to your area, please contact Mary Taylor.

CROSSROAD Support Network News & Updates

On September 16, the CR/SN sponsored "Speaking From Behind the Wall: Mumia Abu-Jamal," along with the *Peace and Justice Radio Project*, *Prison Radio Project*, *Chicago Conference of Black Lawyers*, and the *Illinois Coalition Against the Death Penalty*. There was a full house on hand in the Center For Inner City Studies basement lounge to hear some of Mumia's insightful commentaries which were never aired on National Public Radio. If anyone is interested in doing a similar program in their community, please call 312-427-2533 for more information.

.....

On November 26, We ran down the CR/SN Principles and Program to folks gathered at Afrika West Books & Boutique (5941 W. North Avenue, Chicago) for their Grand Opening and Open House. We were happy to participate and enjoyed dancing and drumming by Sister Issatu and her son, Mungay. Mama Erline Arikpo talked about our work in The National Coalition of Blacks for Reparations in America (N'COBRA), and a brother from the Ausar Auset Society talked about how to eat to live and the spirituality of our ancestors. Sista Tabasumu, of the Westside Kwanzaa Committee, demonstrated the Kwanzaa ritual and explained the symbols.

.....

We have expanded our communications capacity with FAX and e-mail capabilities. Our FAX # is: 312-737-8679, and our e-mail address is: crsn@aol.com (for more, see page 29).

.....

Comrad-Brother Shaka Shakur is being denied medical treatment for a back problem. Please send letters to Herb Newkirk, Acting Superintendent, ISP, PO Box 41, Michigan City IN 46360 demanding that Shaka be given appropriate medical attention; send copies of your letters to CR/SN.

Our People

There are questions to be asked answers to be given
Problems to be solved about the communities we live in.

Have we really progressed in the last 400 years
Or have we wasted our people's Blood, Sweat, and Tears.

Our people's pain and suffering has been evident
And damn sure won't change with a new President.

Yes the struggle is still on and we've lost a few good men
Like Martin, Malcolm and brothers on drugs and brothers in the pen.

Are the so called black leaders just figureheads that really don't amount to much
Distant from reality and way out of touch.

Is the resurgence of Black consciousness a fad like breakdancing and X shirts
Or are we just now realizing our people's pains and hurts.

Single parenting and the raising of our children is a hard task
So where are the brothers, is the questions the sisters ask.

If there are no jobs crime may seem like the only escape
But no neighborhood besides ours let's themselves be subjected to economic rape.

The death of children due to Black on Black Violence
Should be addressed beforehand but there's only silence.

Redirect your energy and power to make positivity for others
Put an end to the killing and grieving black mothers.

The Black Nation's fate rests in Black hands
Those who deny the conspiracy fall prey to its plan.

The President, government and others shouldn't have to feel our hostility
For our neighborhood, community, children and people are our responsibility.

Lorne Runnels

Subscribe to **CROSSROAD!**

CROSSROAD is a non-sectarian newsletter produced by and for New African Prisoners of War and Political Prisoners — captured combatants who were and are engaged in protracted people's war against the colonial domination of the United States, for national self-determination and independence of the Republic of New Afrika. **CROSSROAD** also provides a perspective on the repression of the mass movement and genocidal/colonial violence waged against the masses of New African people.

\$6/8 issues (Domestic), \$9/8 issues (Institutions), \$15/8 issues (International)

Search And Destroy Missions In Chicago Housing Authority Projects Buildings

Vince Lane, the chairman of the Chicago Housing Authority (CHA) and the Chicago Police Department want to continue their illegal and unjustified policy of searching and destroying apartments in C.H.A.-controlled buildings without any type of warrant. For the past several years, the CHA along with the C.P.D. has carried out these warrantless searches and raids at their whim and tried to justify it by saying they are trying to take back buildings that have come under the control of certain youth organizations (misnomered as gangs). This policy of search and destroy has been ruled as illegal and unconstitutional by a Federal court judge yet Vince Lane and the police department are trying to find ways to circumvent the ruling. This policy reminds many in the Afrikan-American community of the Separate and Equal phase of the Amerikan nightmare that we have experienced, where there was one law for Afrikan-Americans and another for white settlers. This policy continues unabated in the eyes of many in our community when we look at the large number of Afrikan-American youth that are unemployed and the concomittant number of Afrikan-Americans who are involved with the justice system.

The so-called justification for the sweeps is allegedly to stop the sale of illegal drugs and the drug warfare raging out of control within many of the C.H.A.'s high-rise buildings. In order to stop or effect the sale of drugs and drug warfare it is necessary to deal with the root causes of drugs; poverty, high unemployment/underemployment, lack of quality education, lack of self respect and lack of self-esteem, etc. It is virtually impossible for the invading armies of police and C.H.A. bureaucrats/mercenaries to mount an effective effort against the drug trade and drug war despite their gestapo-community like paramilitary raids and pogroms. The raids are solely for publicity and part and parcel of the u.s. governments plans to destabilize, stigmatize, and commit genocide against Afrikan-American people, especially young Afrikan-Americans, many of who are in youth organizations and pose a specific threat to this nation if they become politicized with the politics of national independence, self-determination, and national liberation. The raids are tantamount to an unjustified and undeclared war against Afrikan-Americans in general and young Afrikan-Americans in particular. The main

suppliers and even users of illegal drugs are not to be found in our communities. The children of white settlers and white settler women are the main users of illegal drugs in the u.s. There are no plans being developed to raid and sweep Carl Sandburg Village or Lake Point Towers for guns or drugs and suspend the constitutional and human rights of those tenants. Why is it even necessary to search every apartment when the police usually have advanced information on which apartments are involved in drug sales? Those officials that advocate or stand



**YOU
MAY BE
NEXT!**

idly by during this period of wide-spread random warrantless searches would leave the New Afrikan community more vulnerable to the former notorious and infamous period in our history of captivity in this nation when Afrikan-Americans were subjected to the Black Codes in the North, Fugitive Slave laws below the Mason-Dixon, and the Dred Scott decision (a Black man has no rights a whiteman is bound to respect).

To add insult to injury this policy of warrantless searches is being supported by the people pimp and hustler better known as babbling Bobby Rush, the congressman from the first Congressional district. Rush has licked boots and tommed his way to the Vice-Chairmanship of the Illinois Democratic party. Rush has even out-tommed the late Congressman William Dawson, the sell-out who sold the Afrikan-American community to the highest bidder, may his soul burn eternally in hell. What makes Rush's support for the sweeps ironic is that Rush is the former Deputy Minister of Defense for the Illinois Chapter of the Black Panther Party. While head of the party, he advocated and urged our people to defend themselves arms in hand against anyone trying to enter our homes without a warrant. u.s. president clinton has also asked his staff to try and devise methods to attempt to get around the constitution similar to ronald (ray-gun) reagan and george bush devising a plan to aid the Contras in Central America through allowing them to buy cocaine from the drug lords in Colombia and selling it for money to buy weapons and equipment in the u.s.

Vince Lane and Bobby Rush, if they have any concern for the residents of the C.H.A., should and could better spend their time working to rehab and repair the thousands of vacant apartments that they claim have been taken over by small-time drug dealers. The fundamental causes of the shooting war are the dire economic contradictions in the Afrikan-American community, the lack of self-determination, and the racist white supremacist policy of benign neglect towards its internal colony, the Afrikan-American community along with the Puerto Rican community and Native Americans.

The only way to slow down and make an impact on the volume of drug sales in the community in general and the C.H.A. in particular is to turn to the tried and tested methods used in other communities. The community must organize and unite and step forward to stop the sale of drugs and the drug war. Only the community united and organized can make a dent in the problem. The C.H.A. and the C.P.D. have no more right to search the projects than they do to search Marina Towers and Sandburg Village or any other luxury high rise.

Abdul Shanna

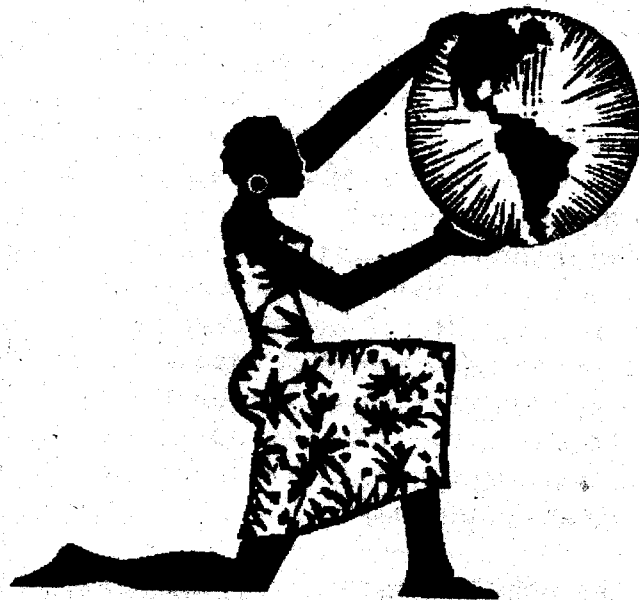


**Child in Chicago Project
shows mandatory I.D.
card**

Women in Prison: Does Anybody See?

From their breasts flowed the fluids of life that nurtured the fraternal twins — Humanity and Civilization. Now held captive for having been convicted of crimes, they are repudiated and venomously opposed by those same siblings as if they were diabolical enemies. Screams for dignity and respect are common, yet, the screams are inaudible. Their ongoing suffering is shielded from view. Their vociferation can no longer survive a societal overview. These screams for dignity and respect emanate from **Women in Prison**.

Women generally suffer inequalities (lower wages, sex discrimination/exploitation, etc.) at the hands of a sexist society controlled by white males. The situation grows more intense upon entering prison. Passivity is the order of the day and paternalism is nestled snugly in place. For the most part, America's society has become desensitized to reports of custodial rapes, sexual/psychological abuses, and racism. Low budget films portraying females in prison as children, promiscuous, or lesbians, have had an adverse impact on the way society views female prisoners. These cruel perceptions are misleading and, in most cases, these perceptions are deceptions. Sexist attitudes dominate and reinforce stereotypical views of women in prison. Male chauvinistic persuasion has produced an uncaring and uncomfortable attitude towards the disgusting conditions that women find themselves under while in prison. Thus, human cruelties such as custodial rape, sexual abuses, psychological abuses and racism have come to a point of toleration, and vile acts committed against women are intentional and receive virtually no public attention.



Female prisoners receive selective gender based punishments uniquely tailored to produce passivity. Punishments of the greatest severity are: custodial rape, threats of rape and sexual abuses-including manipulation. Strip, pat or shakedown searches are other forms of offensive body contacts. Infantile treatment is another technique specifically designed towards humiliation. Threats of placement in isolation and interference with relationship between mothers and children are pervasive forms of intimidation. Certain abuses encompass a combination of punishment, humiliation, intimidation, and racism.

Complaints of custodial abuses of women are political time-bombs, thus the complaints are cleverly concealed through shrewd and stealthy maneuvers. A major factor for concealment of reported custodial abuses is, the accused are government employees—who are sworn to uphold the laws. Government officials in many cases will not investigate allegations of abuse because they themselves are also employees of government. Having government monitor government is an unrealistic approach to solving abuses by government officials. Complaints by females are primarily dismissed because of the paternalistic doctrine which reigns over the penal system. Individual denials of the wrongdoings by male officers accused of abuse should not be grounds for a lackadaisical investigation, nor should the fact that guards have sworn to an oath serve as a bulwark of infallibility or righteousness.

The hands off approach, spearheaded by the Supreme Court of the United States in the case of Bell vs. Wolfish, 441 US 520, 60 LEd 2nd 447, 99 S Ct 1861 (1979) increased the potential

custodial abuses. The Supreme Court of the United States has literally set the stage for brutal penal officials to do as they please without substantial reasons for restraint. The Supreme Court held: (P)risoon officials are accorded wide-ranging deference on the adoption and execution of policies and practices in sustaining claims of custodial abuses and find comfort with the court allotted deference. Justice Thurgood Marshall felt, "the standard laid out by the Court was a toothless standard" and "applies irrespective of the excessiveness of the restraint or nature of the rights infringed" in his dissenting opinion, US, at 567, 60 LE2d 447, 99 S Ct 1861. The "deference negates multiple acts of abuse, and to have a court scrutinize a complaint of custodial abuse is comparable to a butterfly soaring with an elephant in tow." Thus, the court has constructed a sanctuary for male guards to abuse female prisoners.

Punishments

Historically women prisoners have faced enormous punishments inflicted upon them through male prison guards and officials. In the 1800's, women working alongside men on the dehumanizing chain gangs suffered whipping on the buttocks, in the presence of men. (1) They were also forced to defecate right where they worked, in front of men. (2) In 1826, Rachel Welch, became impregnated while isolated in solitary confinement, and died from a beating at the hands of a prison official. (3) In the period 1830-1930, the Indiana State prison operated a prostitution ring involving female prisoners and male guards. (4) Although both men and women were incarcerated there together and shared certain aspects of work, they were quartered separately.

In a 1992 Newsweek article, it was reported that women at the Women's Community Correctional Center (WCCC) on Oahu, Hawaii, had accused male guards of running a prostitution ring by renting rooms for the illicit sex in a downtown Honolulu Hotel, where they were taken from the prison to the hotel by van, and returned to the prison before the prison curfew hour. (5) Lynn Shaffer, a prisoner at WCCC, reported witnessing a uniformed guard whisper to another inmate to "Get up", and lead her to an office. Looking through a window, Shaffer said, "I saw him half-sitting against a desk. Judy was on her knees performing oral sex." (6)

Still another WCCC prisoner, Elizabeth E., reported she was forced into having sex, and a pair of guards took turns photographing the other having intercourse with her. (7) In 1993, custodial rape and sexual abuse of female prisoners at Georgia's Hardwick prison were reported on nation wide television. Women also suffer cruelty in a variety of other ways. Daisy Jane Benson reported that she was being forcibly medicated with unnecessary mind altering drugs as a pre-trial detainee and was not able to participate fully in her own defense. (8)



Humiliation

Humiliation also plays a part in female prison abuse. Male guards are allowed to do body shakedowns where they run their hands all over the women's bodies. (9) In the prison case of Lee v. Downs, Lee, a female prisoner at the Correctional Center for Women in Goochland, Virginia, suffered mental anguish after her panties were forcefully removed and her vagina was searched by a female nurse in the presence of two male guards. (10) Women in the State of Washington Corrections Center for Women

(WCCW) complained that pat searches by male officers were an unnecessary and wanton infliction of pain and constituted cruel and unusual punishment.(11) The pat searches permitted a male guard to use a flat hand and to push his hand across the inmate's crotch area. The search also included pushing his hand inward and upward when searching the crotch and upper thighs. The search further allowed searching the seam of the leg and the crotch area. Using the backs of the hand, a guard was permitted to search the breast area in a sweeping motion so that the breasts would be flattened. The search was estimated to take 45 seconds to one minute.(12) One female suffered severe emotional distress from the cross gender search. Her hands had to be pried loose from the bars she grabbed during a search and she vomited after returning to her cell.

Shaffer at WCCC said she... "was regularly frisked by guards who grabbed my breasts, crotch, everything(13)." A few years ago, women confined in the Federal Control Unit for Women in Lexington, Kentucky, complained of indecent pat and strip searches by male guards. A court investigation was instrumental in the Federal Bureau of Prison's closing the unit and transferring the women confined to the unit to a federal prison for women in Marianna, Florida. A guard from a Georgia prison for women previously mentioned, was caught on video camera as he rubbed the buttocks and inner thighs of a female who was lying on a table or bunk totally helpless. Pat or frisk searches provide opportunities for male guards to touch female prisoners in an indecent manner. The comfort level of the idea that all males can divorce themselves from the human form and act purely robotic in instances of a search of the female body is very fragile. The authority to conduct searches is often intentionally abused to humiliate.

Humiliation also comes from the way a woman is treated. **Women** prisoners become offended for not being taken seriously. There is a view that women in prison are perpetually infantilized by routines and paternalistic attitudes.(14) The treatment has been described as "pseudo-motherly... which all too often successfully reverts women to children."(15) Women also complain of being "called a girl by prison guards,"(16) and there is the concept that incarceration of women is "mass infancy treatment."(17) Sharee Mckinney, incarcerated at a Montana prison, comparing women's treatment to that of men's, summarized the condition: "<M>en are treated like intelligent adults. Women are treated like idiot children."(18) Treatments are developed to reduce self-esteem and to create a slave-master relationship. Prison officials further break down a woman's spirits by discouraging friendships, and many prisons prohibit any type of physical contact between women.(19) Consequently, treasured contact such as a hug, which in many cases is spiritual, is arbitrarily forbidden.

Intimidation

There are a number of methods used as tools to encourage compliance to rules besides rape and sexual abuse. Ironically, children become a pawn in the penological mind game, except its real life. Children are sometimes used as a means of direct persuasion. Sara Buel, a battered women's advocate in Massachusetts said, "The unwritten rule is, don't make a fuss and we'll help you get <them> back."(20) In other words, in some cases, children are held as hostages to promote acceptable penological behavior. A mainstay tactic in any prison is the threat of placement of an inmate in solitary confinement as a means to achieve forced cooperation (21) and lesbians receive incident reports simply because they are gay.(22)

Another effective form of psychological intimidation imposed on female prisoners is the possibility that male guards may be watching them as they take care of their basic intimate needs. Male guards can take down a curtain, walk into a bathroom, or observe a woman showering or changing clothes.(23) At Crane prison in Michigan, officers' desks are right next to the bathroom and the bathroom doors must be left open.(24) Women at the California Institute at Frontera (CIFW) also complained that guards spy on them while they are showering or using the toilet.(25) Male voyeurism at female prisons is no new phenomenon. Reports of voyeurism in the context of female

prisons cannot be overlooked nor should individual denials of these accusations qualify as mooting all reported incidents of the predator act.

Racism

Hatred or dislike based on skin color is, for the most part, humiliating and degrading. Historically, black women have suffered pretty much the same fate as black men. The rate of incarceration for black females has always been disproportionate to the white female. The percentage of black females in prison exceeds the incarceration level of black men, ratio wise. Today, black females suffer directly from the racist Crack Cocaine Laws. Plus, black females are 8 times more likely to be sentenced to prison than white females. It has also been estimated that 60 percent of the women in federal prisons are there on drug related charges. The black woman is on equal footing when it comes to her being sent to prison. As the prison population continues to soar, the percentage of black women in prison will undoubtedly increase, as well as incidents of racism. Racism breeds brutality. As a result of a racist attack on a black female by a white male, the first female prison uprising in the federal prison system in 20 years occurred. The uprising occurred at the Federal Medical Center (FMC) located in Lexington, Kentucky on August 12-14, 1992.(26) It was reported that a fight broke out between a black and white female. A white lieutenant ran up and grabbed a black woman who had no involvement in the scuffle and "body-slammed her to the ground." Although other women yelled out the truth of the matter to him, he continued to attack, "putting his knee in the back of her neck and smashing her face to the pavement."(27) Several black women complaining of racism were placed in the Hole (solitary confinement) for complaining about prejudice.(28) There is an obvious lack of information dealing with racist acts in female prisons. This obscurity of information prevents any real assessment of the situation.

A 1990 Bureau of Justice statistics reported that the number of women inmates has nearly tripled in the last 10 years. Those same statistics revealed a female population increase of 21.8 percent from 1988 to 1989. In 1982, black females constituted 50 percent of the total number of women confined, 9 percent Hispanic, and 3 percent native American.(29) There are estimates which indicate black female incarceration now exceeds the 50 percent level recorded in 1982, and the black female is 8 times more likely to go to prison than a white woman.(30) Here again we witness race to be a contributing factor for incarceration, and as prison conditions continue to deteriorate, instances of racism will surely increase. In 1990, CIFW reported a population of 2,500 for an institution built for 1,001.(31) In 1990, FMC's population exceeded its limits and housed 1900 inmates. In many cases, severe overcrowding at prisons appear to be a primary factor producing collective cooperation for improvement of overall conditions.

Social and political apathy has forced incarcerated females to form alliance and solidarity movements. In times of a crisis women have often shown the ability to come together for a specific purpose. On July 7, 1991, inmates at CIWF took off their clothes and stayed in bed in solidarity for the death of an inmate who died after a prison nurse injected the inmate with a drug to calm her down.(32) Other prisoners claimed that she died within one minute of the injection.(33) Also on July 7, 1991, about 50 women marched all over the prison grounds in shackles for a period of 12 hours as they sang "Bringing in the Sleep" and other songs.(34) There is an extensive history of women prison rebellions which for some reason has been removed from historical studies of the American penal system. However, information does indicate there was a riot in Sing Sing Prison in New York in 1943 which was the first women's prison.(35) Around the time of the infamous prison riot at Attica Prison in New York State in 1971, women at the federal prison in Alderson, Virginia, held a courageous work stoppage.(36)

Custodial Abuses Worldwide

This report points out instances of custodial abuses of women nationwide. However,

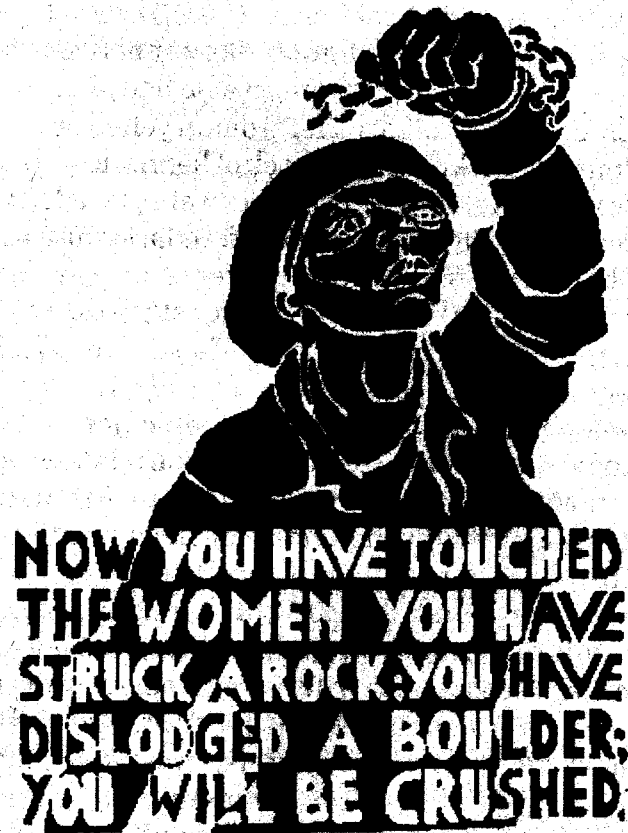
custodial abuse of women are by no means exclusively confined to the United States. Custodial abuses of women are problematic to the international community as well. For example, in 1987, an American nun, Sister Diana Ortiz, who was working in an Indian community in Guatemala, was abducted by two masked gunmen while she was in the garden of a religious retreat. She was taken by an official police car to a warehouse near Guatemala City where for the next 12 hours, she was beaten, received over 100 cigarette burn wounds on her back and breasts, raped and sexually abused in ways she says are "too horrible to be described." (37) Cherry Mendoza, a labor and social reform activist was arrested by military police in Bataan, Philippines in 1990, and taken to a military camp, where her fingers were stapled together before she was beaten, sexually abused and drugged into unconsciousness. Her hymen and vagina were also severely lacerated. (38) In another case, a 13 year old Palestinian girl, Olla al Gharali, was falsely accused of writing political slogans on walls by Israel authorities. After her arrest by an Israeli army patrol, she was taken to a room with a camera and threatened with rape. The threat of rape produced psychological terror; under the threat of rape, she signed a confession of guilt. (39) The problem of custodial abuses of women is, indeed, a world problem.

Conclusion

This essay briefly sets forth only a few of the highest forms of custodial abuses suffered by females while in the care of male prison staff. This essay was not assembled to portray all male staff assigned to women's prisons as being governmental riff-raffs from hell bent on some sort of witch hunt, nor does it intend to insinuate that the majority of male staff at female prisons threaten, actually rape, or sexually/psychologically abuse females. It is further noted that a lack of information exists concerning abuses by female prison staff.

This essay accentuates the cruelest forms of abuses: punishments, humiliation, intimidation, and racism. Reports of abuse personifies a need for collective and cohesive efforts to be taken in defense of female prisoners. Then maybe needless hostilities directed towards incarcerated women could be effectively pulverized. It is hoped that exposure of the problems will shed a ray of light on the darkness of penal abuses. Female subjugation illuminates the need for citizen oversight committees. Further in depth study of the problem should be undertaken. Political and social cataracts prevent the light of the reports of abuses from reaching society. There is no quick fix solution, but there are ways and means to assist in eliminating and reducing female abuses.

Subsequently, it is hoped that female prisoners' screams for dignity and respect will be heard and answered. Cataracts should be removed from eyes causing the sight necessary to see Women in Prison.



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Footnotes

- (1) Nancy Kurshan, "Women and Imprisonment in the U.S. - History and Current Reality."
- (2) Ibid.
- (3) Kurshan, Ibid.
- (4) Kurshan, Ibid.; citing Estelle B. Freedman, *Their Sisters' Keepers: Women's Prison Reform in America, 1830-1930* (Ann Arbor: U. of Michigan Press, 1985) p. 15.
- (5) Michael Meyer, "Coercing Sex Behind Bars," *Newsweek*, Nov. 9, 1992. v.120 n.19 p.76
- (6) Ibid.
- (7) Ibid.
- (8) Daisy Jane Benson, "California Women Prisoners Sue Over Forced Drugging," Prison News Service, Sept/Oct 1993, p. 3. Letter from Benson, 12/30/93.
- (9) Letter to the Editor, Off Our Backs, Oct. 1989.
- (10) 470 Fed. Supp. 188 (E.D. Va. 1979); 641 F2d 1117, 1120 (4th Cir. 1981).
- (11) Johnson v. Gardner, 953 F2d 1137 (9th Cir. 1992).
- (12) Ibid. p. 1145.
- (13) Meyer, Cit.
- (14) Kurshan, Id.
- (15) Nichole H. Rafter, **Partial Justice: Women in State Prisons, 1800-1935** (Boston: New England U. Press, 1985), Id at 10.
- (16) Assata Shakur, "Women in Prison: How We Are," The Black Scholar, v.9, n.1, April 1978 p. 10.
- (17) Kathryn Burkhart, **Women in Prison** (New York: Doubleday Pub. 1973).
- (18) Letter from female prisoner - Sharee Mckenney, dated 11/26/93.
- (19) Burkhart, Id.
- (20) Newsweek, "Women in Jail: Unequal Justice," June 4, 1990 p. 37-38, 51.
- (21) Meyer, Cit.
- (22) Tatiapa Shreiber/Stephanie Poggie, "Women in Prison: Does Anyone Out There Hear?," Resist Newsletter, n. 206, May 1988.
- (23) Resistance of Bedford Hills (Solidarity with Sisters Inside Committee, 1990).
- (24) Kurshan, Id, at 34.
- (25) Newsweek, "Women in Jail": Id, at 37.
- (26) Laura Whitehorn, "Resistance at F.M.C. Lexington," August 1992, CROSSROAD, v. 4 n. 4 Spring 1993 p. 17.
- (27) Whitehorn, Cit., p. 17.
- (28) Ibid.
- (29) Jacklyn M. Pollack-Byrne: **Women, Prison and Crime** (Pacific Grove, CA: Brooks/Cole Publishing, 1990) at 3, citing R.B. Flowers, **Women and Criminality: The Woman as Victim, Offender, Practitioner** (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1987) p. 150.
- (30) Freedman, Cit. p. 18.
- (31) George J. Church, "The View From Behind Bars," Time, Special Issue on Prisons, Fall 1990 p. 19.
- (32) Letter from female prisoner - Daisy Jane Benson, dated 2/4/94, at 4.
- (33) Ibid.
- (34) Ibid.
- (35) Freedman, Id., p. 18.
- (36) In U.S. Prisons and South Africa, **Women Fight a Common Enemy**, (Berkeley, CA: Coalition for International Women's Week, 1989).
- (37) *New Statesman and Society*, July 31, 1992 v.5 n. 212 p. 12
- (38) Ibid.
- (39) Ibid.



The Politicization of Parole

(editorial note: the following article refers to Puerto Rican Prisoner of War Carlos Alberto Torres' recent parole hearing in particular, but Leonard Peltier's, Sundiata Acoli's and Geronimo Ji Jaga's recent appearances before parole boards were similar in tone and had the same outcome: "you ain't got nothin' comin'", see you in 15 or 20 years, [one in Geronimo's case, but they've been telling him that for over 15 years now]. "Where imprisonment has been politicized, We must politicize parole.")

Q. Do you have any credible evidence, other than your own opinion, that you were engaged in legitimate political activity and not crime? We are looking to establish the offense. Do you deny that the organization [FALN] committed bombings?

A. That's self-evident. The activities of the FALN were brought out in court. A package seeking a presidential pardon has been submitted which includes letters from Congressional representatives, legislators in Puerto Rico, religious people, educators, elected officials. Those people are in an excellent position to determine whether our activity was legitimate political activity. International law provides that our activity was legitimate political activity.

Q. That's not a legitimate argument. It's too political. You were convicted of criminal activity. We are not here to argue the legitimacy of your cause. That has no bearing on this hearing. We will not entertain arguments that it's revolutionary, that your actions were legitimate. You cannot say you are just accountable to international law, although we understand the argument. The issue here is your criminal conviction. (1)

If you ask a U.S. government official if the U.S. has Puerto Rican political prisoners in its prisons, the answer will be a firm no. But a look at how the U.S. treats the Puerto Rican men and women in its custody for their actions in support of independence and self-determination for Puerto Rico, including how its parole commission responds when they apply for parole - the facts reflect, rather, a firm yes.

Parole is a form of conditional release from prison, where the prisoner is still accountable to the government, but can serve the remainder of her/his sentence in the community. The government has set up complicated rules governing parole, designed to make it appear that the decision to grant or deny parole is an objective non-discretionary decision. In reality, the parole commission has broad discretion, and, in political cases, exercises it in a manner completely consistent with the government's political policies. The commissioners, not coincidentally, are appointed by the president.

First, a little about parole. Prisoners with sentences of more than 30 years, sentenced before 1984, are entitled to be considered for release on parole after they have served 10 years in prison. The commission can decide to release them immediately; give them a release date for a specific date in the future (which is done over 90% of the time); or tell them to serve 15 more years before doing either; or refuse to release them, thus requiring them to complete service of their sentence in prison - the Puerto Rican political prisoners have release dates well into the 21st century.

Although the routine case is decided by the regional parole commission, the political prisoners' cases are singled out for special handling as "original jurisdiction" cases, referred to the national commissioners for decision. Around 1% of all parole cases fall into this category, selected for their anti-government, high profile nature and for their sentences in excess of 45 years.

The "objective" criteria boil down to two numbers which are plugged into a chart which then reveals how much time a prisoner should serve before being granted parole. One, the salient factor

score, is arrived at by adding together points from a list addressed to the prisoner's age, prior convictions, drug dependency and other factors. The other, the offense severity rating, is arrived at by looking to a chart which assigns a number, or category, based on the seriousness of the charge the prisoner has been convicted of, from category one being the least serious, to category eight, the most serious. Every category prescribes a range, from the minimum to the maximum amount of time a prisoner must serve. Category 8 is the only category that does not prescribe the maximum. In order to come up with the desired result—in this case, to keep the Puerto Rican political prisoners in prison for as long as possible, the commission must be very creative in manipulating the "objective" criteria.

If the commission applied its rules without political manipulation, the Puerto Rican political prisoners convicted of seditious conspiracy would be classified as category 7, which covers "national security" charges such as insurrection and rebellion. Prisoners in category 7 with the same salient factor score as the Puerto Rican political prisoners are, under normal circumstances, paroled when they have served 52 to 80 months. Since the Puerto Rican political prisoners convicted of seditious conspiracy have already served between 132 and 171 months, they would thus be entitled to release.

A look at the commission's conduct in Carlos Alberto Torres' case reveals just how unobjective the rules are when it comes to the Puerto Rican political prisoners. After serving more than 14 years on his 78 year sentence, he went to the parole commission in March of this year. Rather than look at what he was convicted of—seditious conspiracy, the facts that he and his comrades are serving excessive and politically punitive sentences, that he (and they) have already served more time than others readily paroled, that he has no prior convictions, or that he has a virtually spotless disciplinary record and his numerous achievements include reorganizing the entire prison educational program for his fellow prisoners, the commission exercised a little poetic license, classifying him as a Category 8 and denying him parole, asserting that he was "part of a group that committed bombings which killed innocent victims." A rather tortured excuse on their part, given that Carlos was never accused or convicted of such acts. Although the indictment, or accusation, against Carlos and nine of the others charged that the FALN (Fuerzas Armadas de Liberacion Nacional) was responsible for 28 bombings in the Chicago area, neither the indictment nor the evidence at trial included murder. In fact, the recognized practice of the FALN has been to phone in advance warnings to clear the targeted sites and to take precautions to avoid risk to life. A Chicago editorial contemporaneous with the events charged recognized that,

Most of the incidents have involved bombs, fortunately so placed and timed as to damage property rather than persons...
But again the terrorists were out to call attention to their cause rather than to shed blood. (2)

The commission obtained the desired results by manipulating its criteria, issuing an order denying parole and informing Carlos that he must serve another 15 years in prison before he will be considered for parole. On appeal, the commission affirmed this decision. A challenge in court is being contemplated.

In the meantime, two other Puerto Rican political prisoners, Dylcia Pagan, in prison at FCI Pleasanton, CA, and Alberto Rodriguez, at USP Lewisburg, PA, are preparing to appear before the parole commission in September and December. Both convicted of the identical seditious conspiracy, Dylcia has served over 14 years of a 63 year sentence, and Alberto, 11 years of a 35 year sentence.

While legalistic arguments, such as outlined here, certainly justify the release of the Puerto Rican political prisoners by parole or by act of the president — these are not the only or even the main reasons these men and women should be released. Other compelling reasons abound in history. Did the criminal law of apartheid stop Black South Africans from fighting for the right to shape their own destiny? Did the criminal laws of the Israeli occupation stop the Palestinian people from seeking self-determination? Indeed, did the criminal law of King George III stop those in the 13 colonies from seeking an end to British colonial domination?

In these pending cases, the parole commission needs to hear from *you*. Write to the commission to let them know that the men and women who have given their all for the freedom of their people should be released from prison immediately. Send your letter to:

U.S. Parole Commission
5550 Friendship Blvd.
Chevy Chase, MD 20815

The parole hearings are taking place in the context of a campaign for the release of all the Puerto Rican political prisoners. The campaign submitted a petition to President Clinton, who has the power under the constitution to release them. He also needs to hear from you. Let him know you support their release:

William J. Clinton, President
1600 Pennsylvania Ave.
Washington, D.C. 20500

Jan Susler
Revised
September, 1994

(1) Notes from the March 29, 1994 Parole Commission hearing of Puerto Rican political prisoner Carlos Alberto Torres. (2) "Terrorists without a cause," *Chicago Tribune* editorial, March 18, 1980, Sec. 2, p. 2.



Cuba Libre! - January 1, 1959

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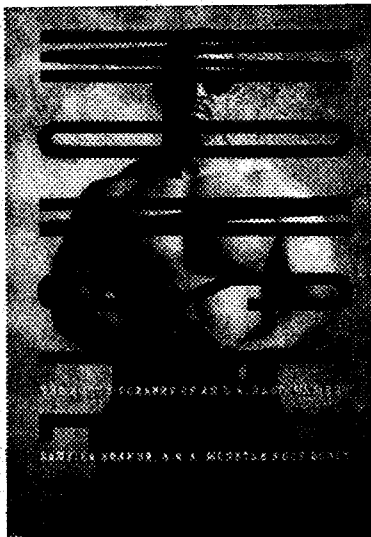
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“On Transformation”

“It’s not a question of the lumpen being “good” or “bad.” Many lumpen fighters, as everyone knows, played a militant role in the Revolutionary Movements. But to falsely glorify the class as such is to undermine the necessary understanding that the revolution requires lumpen to transform themselves, to become proletarian. No lumpen can successfully serve their people without committing class suicide.”

-False Nationalism, False Internationalism

i was captured in September of 19ADM(1)(1984) by local soldier-cops in L.A., along with *one* representative of the California Youth Authority Parole Office. The residence i was staying in, along with my companion and four year-old daughter, was overrun in a pre-dawn raid by the above-mentioned soldiers. Needless to say, We were treated very roughly by the invading unit. Luckily our daughter was away spending the night elsewhere when Our door was kicked down and the small space We called the livingroom was flooded with vile amerikans, guns drawn, shouts pronounced. Both Tamu, my companion, and i were handcuffed and made to sit at gun point on the couch, while the apartment We rented was torn to pieces. Once they found a weapon they became more fanatically obsessed with searching. Upon finding nothing else, Tamu was let out of her mechanical restraints and i was marched out of the apartment and led roughly to a personnel carrier (pig car).

i was charged with Assault With A Deadly Weapon, Mayhem and Weapons Possession. i was a criminal, not because the invading soldiers had *captured* me for running afoul of the colonial law, or even for being in possession of a weapon. i was a criminal because i thought like a criminal, i carried on in an exclusively criminal mode. As a street organization (“gang”) member, my preoccupying thoughts were totally predatory, and socially self-destructive. My predatory behavior and socially self-destructive activity were confined by the criminal, as well as, colonial mentality, to a strict horizontal circumference. Which, of course, is one of the single most costly detriments of both the criminal and colonial mentalities. But let me not get ahead of myself here, because i want to unfold this piece by piece so as to illuminate some areas that i feel We usually take for granted.

i was sent to the county holding facility to await trial on the shootings, which stemmed from a gunfight between myself and some opposing street combatants, three of whom had been wounded during the battle. Once i had been thru a few kourt proceedings, i plead guilty to the charges, and was given seven years in prison. i was housed in the county jail, in a 100% criminal population, among other street combatants, who like myself, were awaiting trial, or ready to be shipped off to one of the many kamps upstate. Although i had been chosen by the most advanced group of street combatants to join an organization that was founded in prison to collectivize and educate, to some extent, those combatants who had the greatest potential for conversion, i was not made aware of the psychology of colonialism or criminality. Therefore, that organization, the Consolidated Crip Organization (CCO), was nothing more than a collective of criminally minded colonial subjects. Conversion was preferred to **transformation**, because conversion, in this arena, meant one changing from a mere street combatant, whose primary allegiance was to his particular set, to a collective-minded representative of CCO, which mandated that one read and be bound by a constitution. Conversion was an ostensible variation that was actually non-threatening to anyone outside of the same social circumference that Our criminal / colonial mentalities bound us to before capture. Which is to say that Our energies, in spite of rhetorical clambering, were spent in horizontal exchanges with other groups in Our same social caste. **Transformation**, on the other hand, was never considered because

it was an extreme which threatened the absurdity of CCO's paradoxical platform. One was encouraged to read/study revolutionary material, but only in conformity with the organization's ideals, which were inextricably bound by the glass ceiling cage of criminal/colonial myopia. We were a doomed collective from the outset; however, i do believe that the founders of CCO had good intentions, but were simply ignorant of the pervasive psychology of both colonialism and criminality.

We carried on in Our ignorance from one kamp to the next, conducting Our liaisons over open lines, thinking that We were of no importance to the probing eyes of the state. What We failed to overstand was that We were the greatest threat to the kamp system because, unlike the other organizations which were begun there in prison, and thus had to recruit their soldiers from that well, We were Crips from the street and had waves of reserves. Of course, Our shortsightedness prevented any such overstanding, and as a result of this, our ranks remained relatively small. The things overstandable now in an advanced state of revolutionary consciousness, regarding Our activity then, are quite astounding.

In an incident where a pig "fell on something sharp" on Comrade-Brother George Jackson's birthday (September 23), myself and two other New Afrikans were given 28 months in the Security Housing Unit (SHU) and sent to San Quentin from Soledad. While my studies intensified at San Quentin' i was still unable to pull myself up another level in consciousness. Even after months of consuming Fanon, Mao, Cabral, and Nkrumah, i was not **conscious. i was socially aware**, but i was not conscious, and there is a significant difference.

To give an example of the difference between social awareness and consciousness, i'll use the entire Congressional Black Caucus (CBC). Collectively, they have probably read over one thousand books, and 5,000 newspapers in their adult lives. They **know** what is going on in neo-colonies such as Jamaica, Haiti, Brazil, the Dominican Republic, and New Afrika, but they are excluded from consciousness by their colonial mentalities. As socially aware folks they believe that New Afrika's freedom can be found in the clutches of Amerika. So in this way it is not hard to see the dangers of a colonial mentality cloaked in social awareness, passed off as consciousness.

This is precisely where We were as a collective in 21 ADM (1986). i could have told you anything about the Long March in China; the Revolution in Cuba, Zimbabwe or Angola, but when it came to articulating New Afrika's existence, evolution, and how We related to the colonial experience, i was lost. Consciousness begins with self; with one's overstanding of her/his relation to the particular oppression binding their self-determination. Overstanding that the blockage between social awareness and consciousness is a colonial mentality takes some diligence in study. We never thought about **transforming** Our colonial mentalities because We never overstood that We were **colonialized**. This is the crucial point of contention, because we got trapped in what i'll call the "Angry Blackman Stage" of social awareness. We were led to believe, from what We were reading, that We were simply "slaves" that at the height of Our subjugation, which amounted to 10 million in the late 1600's, We were nothing more than a fragmented entanglement of individual slaves. We had no concept of Nation formation, and therefore We followed suit with the popular misconceptions regarding Our National Reality. We thought that "Nations" were biologically set entities that were immovable. We failed to apply this illogical thinking to the U.S. settler state, probably because, Our colonial mentalities prevented us from even going there.

We used terms like "slave mentality" to denote those New Afrikans who worked in any capacity for the amerikans, as well as those who refused to participate in the nasty "race wars" going on here in California kamp system. But We were trying to articulate what We had been learning from an old-line perspective. Our position was Afrika for the Afrikans, Europe for Europeans, Mexico for the Mexicans, etc. We had a very unclear overstanding of capitalism, colonialism, and neo-colonialism. For a long time We were confused. Of course, We had Comrade-Brother George's material to enlighten us, but as We grew in New Afrikan consciousness, We found that the Comrade's

theories were basically inapplicable to Our situation. "Comrade George was a Communist, but he was not a New Afrikan Communist,"(2) and the difference is far and wide apart.

i did not begin to transform until 23 ADM (1987). The transformation was from a colonial mind to being revolutionary and socially aware to national consciousness; from Communist to New Afrikan Communist. There was no more ambiguity about where my allegiance lay. While i overstood clearly that i was a descendant from Afrika - West Afrika in particular - i also recognized that from many Afrikan nations captured and transported to North Amerika, came one socially evolved New Afrikan Nation. i had no problem overstanding that individuals can be slaves, but that Nations are colonized. i use to have the whole Black and white trip: the former was all good, and the latter was all bad, evil, racist, etc. But with New Afrikan Consciousness i had no problem whatsoever recognizing Nelson Mandela as an Uncle Tom and a traitor, and Marilyn Buck, Butch Lee, and Susan Rosenberg as righteous comrades and supporters of New Afrikan Independence and Self-Determination. (3)

There is a world of difference between being socially aware and politically conscious, and We, those who strive for an end to neo-colonial subjugation and capitalism, must struggle daily to raise the peoples' overstanding of this and bring them into the conscious fold. Social awareness, while being a definite stage of political development, is certainly no area to be stuck in, thinking from there one could launch an organization and then a popular revolutionary struggle. While social awareness is necessary it is not sufficient enough to sustain any protracted struggle.

In a recent communique from a comrade on this particular issue the comrade had this to say:

The main thing We are supposed to be doing is changing Ourselves. Grab hold of this: change yourself, first, because everything else will stand or fall according to how well and how you do this! We talk about revolution and organizations and movement and all kinds of issues and needs - but nothing else matters unless and until We first change Ourselves. When We say "Re-Build!" that applies, first, to each of us!! "Re-Build, comrade" means re-build yourself. We apply it, so to speak, to things/people outside Ourselves in ever-wider circles, e.g. Ourselves, Our families, Our friends, Our supporters and sympathizers, Our communities - the whole people. This is how We make the most basic and fundamental definition of "Re-Build." This is what We emphasize in Our work and by our work. When people ask us what We're about, We say "We're about Re-Building...."

The necessary transformation in consciousness requires the inescapable class suicide of the lumpen, and the re-building of a consciousness capable of overstanding that with self everything begins, and moves outward in a methodical spiral of social relations centered continually on the struggle to acquire, utilize, and retain state power. Which is to say that, We need to acquire land, utilize Our productive forces to build a National infrastructure and retain these to bring into existence the Socialist Republic of New Afrika. With the strength of Our unity and the spirit of Our Ancestors, We shall fight and win!

Re-Build!
Sanyika Shakur

(1) ADM - years After the Death of Malcolm X (2) *Study Notes On Secure Communication: So That We Don't Fool Ourselves Again.* (3) Marilyn Buck, Butch Lee, and Susan Rosenberg are North American Anti-imperialists who are long time supporters of the New Afrikan Independence Movement.

What Is a 'C' Number?

What is a 'C' number? That's a question that people are asking all over the state of Illinois. It's a question that every person in the state must have the answer to. There are N, L, A, B and C number inmates in all of the correctional facilities across the state; they all have something in common and yet the 'C' number inmates are very unique.

At this time there are 643 'C' numbers in the system; two (2) are women. These men and women have all been incarcerated for approximately twenty to twenty-five years. Most were arrested when they were teenagers. A large percentage of these inmates are college educated, many with several trades, certificates, awards of merit. They are leaders in the planning and implementing of programs, they are the editors and writers for the papers, they are the J.C.'s, the paralegals, perpetual students and teachers. These are the men and women who are now considered the elders in the institutions by the younger inmates as well as many of the staff, because they are the ones that encourage the youth to attend school, to change behavior, they are the inmates who many on the outside consider as 'unpaid staff' in the department of corrections. There are many supporters who believe these men and women are the cream of the crop, at the stage of development to put something positive back into the communities.

At this time a couple of 'C' number inmates are released per year, at the discretion of the twelve member Prison Review Board, that was appointed by the Governor. The Prison Review Board often makes a decision with only one or two of the twelve members present to hear the case, then the same form letter, with the same reason is sent to each inmate stating the same identical reason for denial.

Over the years many concerned citizens have spoken out on this issue, saying that the procedure needs to be changed. When the issue is looked at in terms of dollars and sense: 1) The members on the board, mostly retired law professionals, are paid from \$45,000 to \$65,000 per year; 2) the only cases that they review are those of 'C' number inmates; 3) it has cost the Illinois taxpayers approximately \$252,800,000.00, to keep these inmates in the institutions plus review board members' salaries of approximately \$12,000,000.00 brings us to an approximate total of \$264,800,000.00. If something is not done to bring these individuals home the taxpayer will then have to pay for them to stay in the institutions for additional years and then pay for them on into old age in the form of assistance and medical care. These men and women are now in the age range of 42 to 50 years of age, a part of the baby boomers. Instead of a continuance of tax dollars to pay for their keep, these individuals could now work to pay taxes.

Under the old law there is no out date for 'C' number inmates, they have indeterminate sentences. With what some people in the state are referring to as "Media Hype," it is up to the citizens of the state of Illinois to get really involved in the Criminal Justice System and to be informed voters on the issues. To realize that there is a way to turn around the conditions that we are faced with.

Across the state there are several groups and individuals who are speaking out on behalf of the 'C' number inmates. Those invisible numbers locked up behind prison walls, who have truly been rehabilitated, paid their debts to society and can now be an asset to the society.

Many of these people were convicted during very political times, not able to afford adequate legal counsel, there were no DNA testings, evidence has been lost, many are innocent of the charges. Most are poor, Black and Hispanic. During these many years, the children they left on the outside have grown into adulthood with children of their own, some family members have died or moved



away, some have just exhausted every avenue and have given up on justice ever being administered. We appeal to everyone to investigate the issues and support the C# cause.

The following information supplements the basic information above. It was provided by the 'C and L Numbers Ad Hoc Committee, Hill Correctional Center':

Determinate Sentence

On February 1, 1978, a new criminal law came into effect in the State of Illinois. This law was titled "Class X Law." It is a law that imposes upon a convicted felon a **Determinate Sentence** or [flat time]. In other words, convicted felons are given specific terms of imprisonment, with specific amounts of good-time that they can earn. For example, if convicted felons are sentenced to a term of 10 years, this law provides that they may earn one day of good-time for each day of good behavior. Thus, if they can demonstrate good conduct, they can reduce the term of 10 years to that of 5 years. In addition to specific terms of imprisonment, those inmates sentenced under the Class X law are required to serve a specific term of [**Mandatory Supervised Release**]. It must be understood that this M.S.R. is automatically imposed without any involvement, or approval of the parole board; consequently, most felons who are on parole in the State of Illinois were not released by the Parole Board, but are felons serving their term of Mandatory Supervised Release.

Indeterminate Sentence

The law created massive problems, not the least of which is the arbitrary and capricious denial of parole for C-Numbers. "C-Numbers" is a term used to denote those inmates who were sentenced under the law in effect prior to Class X Legislation. This law was known as the **Indeterminate Sentencing Law**. Under this law a sentencing judge would impose upon a convicted felon a "**Minimum Term**" and a "**Maximum Term**" of imprisonment. After the completion of the **minimum** term a prisoner would become eligible for parole and appear before the parole board. Even in extreme cases where a prisoner had been given a minimum term of imprisonment in excess of 20 years, the law provided for his or her parole eligibility in 20 years, less good-time credits. For example, if a convicted felon were given a sentence of 100 to 300 years, the law made that felon eligible for parole in 20 years, less good-time credits, a term that worked out to be about 11 years and 3 months. Moreover, the indeterminate sentencing law required that an inmate be "restored to useful citizenship," and when it was determined that he or she had reached this point, parole was expected. However, because of the enactment of **Class X** (legislation) and Governor Thompson's desire to be more punitive, the rehabilitation of C-Numbers is no longer a factor in being paroled, even though the indeterminate sentencing law under which all C-Numbers were sentenced still demands that the parole board consider, as an essential factor in determining parole, whether they have been "restored to useful citizenship."

The following applies only to C-number inmates. There is nothing comparable in the X-number release process:

- 1) Virtually all paroles must be considered by all twelve members of the ever larger Prisoner Review Board, instead of the three routinely impaneled before 1978. This means that seven votes in favor of parole are required. However, the prisoner is seen by only one or two members of the board, who then report back to the others not present. A tape is made of the proceedings, but the chairman of the board has admitted that the other members do not have time to listen to the tape. Testimony in support of the inmate is not heard by those not present. Even if the board member who saw the inmate is in favor of parole, it is extremely unlikely that he or she could convince six others

to vote yes. It is also absurd to expect the presiding board member to act as the inmate's advocate.

2) The subjective criteria for parole consideration allows unequal treatment and "gut feelings" to be major factors in the outcome — obviously resulting in many, many mistakes. Paroles are routinely denied to those who deserve parole, and occasionally given to those who should not be paroled. The inequity is appalling.

3) Employees who work with and supervise the prisoners are not allowed to address the board. Employees are strongly discouraged (to the point of threatening job termination) from making recommendations to case workers who report on and make recommendations regarding prisoners.

4) Although prisoners are by law allowed to review their master file and all that it contains, they are actually allowed to see little of significance. They can dispute reports they do see, but cannot get them corrected nor expunged, no matter how gross the error, and said error can be used as a reason for denial of parole.

5) The rationales provided are cursory, stating little more (in half a page) than the boilerplate "seriousness of the offense" excuse. They do not indicate what can be done to improve chances for parole at future hearings, and toss aside every positive element, as if they were meaningless.

for more information, contact the following organizations:

Prison Action Committee, 1279 N. Milwaukee, Ste 260, Chicago, IL 60622; 312-862-0376

'Ma' Houston Prison Outpost of PUSH, 930 E. 50th St., Chicago, IL 60615; 312-F.R.E.E.D.O.M.

Illinois Inmate Relief Organization, Inc. - 640 E. 79th, Ste 200, Chicago, IL 60619; 312-651-9864

CROSSROAD Support Network, 3021 W. 63rd St, Chicago, IL 60629; 312-737-8679

21st Century V.O.T.E., 1054 W. 63rd St, Chicago, IL 60621; 312-737-8281

Probation Challenge, 10001 S. Woodlawn, Bldg. #4, Chicago, IL 60628; 312-291-6670

'C #' Calendar:

February - I Love a C# Week - 12th thru the 18th

March - (Sat, 25th) Special event in 'Ma' Houston Park (50th Drexel @ Cottage Grove), releasing 643 balloons symbolic for C#s.

May - (Sat, 13th) Special event calling on all Mothers of Incarcerated persons to come together and remembering all incarcerated mothers.

June - (17th) Remembering all our men who are incarcerated.

CROSSROAD Support Network News & Updates (continued from page 11)

On December 8, the capitalist-imperialist state of Indiana killed ('executed') Ajamu Nassor (s/n Gregory Resnover, despite substantial evidence that Ajamu was innocent. CR/SN, along with the Illinois Coalition Against the Death Penalty, conducted an emergency FAX/information campaign in an effort to get Indiana Governor Bayh to issue clemency or a stay of execution, all to no avail...

.....

On December 2, Anthony "Jalil" Bottom was transferred to Attica's Security Housing Unit (S.H.U.) in the middle of the night. He is being held there pending charges he organized a prisoners voluntary lock-in at Shawangunk Correctional Facility. Jalil had been attempting to negotiate a settlement between prison officials and prisoners to avoid the protest. Supporters of Jalil are asking the public to either contact DOCS Commissioner Philip Coombe or Senator Joseph Galiber, Assemblymen Roger Green and Larry Seabrook to have Jalil released from SHU and transferred either to Sing-Sing or Eastern Correctional Facility. For more information, contact: Robert J. Boyle (718-6240-0800) or Safiya Bukhari-Alston (718-345-6200).

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New Afrikan Creed

1. i believe in the spirituality, humanity and genius of Black people, and in our new pursuit of these values.
2. i believe in the family and the community, and in the community as a family, and i will work to make this concept live.
3. i believe in the community as more important than the individual.
4. i believe in constant struggle for freedom, to end oppression and build a better world. i believe in collective struggle; in fashioning victory in concert with my brothers and sisters.
5. i believe that the fundamental reason our oppression continues is that We, as a people, lack the power to control our lives.
6. i believe that the fundamental way to gain that power, and end oppression, is to build a sovereign Black nation.
7. i believe that all the land in America, upon which We have lived for a long time, which We have worked and built upon, and which We have fought to stay on, is land that belongs to us as a people.
8. i believe in the Malcolm X Doctrine: that We must organize upon this land, and hold a plebiscite, to tell the world by a vote that We are free and our land independent, and that, after the vote, We must stand ready to defend ourselves, establishing the nation beyond contradiction.
9. Therefore, i pledge to struggle without cease, until We have won sovereignty. i pledge to struggle without fail until We have built a better condition than the world has yet known.
10. i will give my life, if that is necessary; i will give my time, my mind, my strength, and my wealth because this **IS** necessary.
11. i will follow my chosen leaders and help them.
12. i will love my brothers and sisters as myself.
13. i will steal nothing from a brother or sister, cheat no brother or sister, misuse no brother or sister, inform on no brother or sister, and spread no gossip.
14. i will keep myself clean in body, dress and speech, knowing that i am a light set on a hill, a true representative of what We are building.
15. i will be patient and uplifting with the deaf, dumb and blind, and i will seek by word and deed to heal the Black family, to bring into the Movement and into the Community mothers and fathers, brothers and sisters left by the wayside.

Now, freely and of my own will, i pledge this **Creed**, for the sake of freedom for my people and a better world, on pain of disgrace and banishment if i prove false. For, i am no longer deaf, dumb or blind. i am, by inspiration of the ancestors and grace of the Creator — a **New Afrikan**.