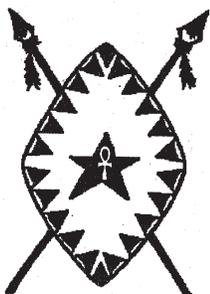


CROSSROAD

VOL. 11, #4 July - Sept 2003



This wonderful mural was completed just as the Critical Resistance Conference was ending. Less than a month later, the mural was gone - whitewashed in the middle of the night. No one saw a thing...



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NEW AFRIKAN DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE

WE, New Afrikan 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:

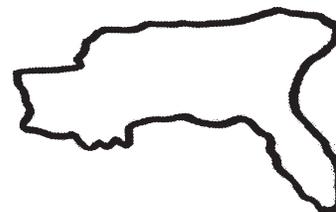
- To free black people in America from oppression;
- To support and wage the world revolution until all people everywhere are so free;
- To build a new Society that is better than what We now know and as perfect as **We** can make it;
- To assure all people in the New Society maximum opportunity and 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.

The
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 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**.





African Anti-Terrorism Statement©
 Presented by **Prisoners Of Conscience Committee**
 on Friday, 2/7/03 5th Fl., City Hall, Chicago , Il.

This African led delegation has been convened by the **Prisoners Of Conscience Committee** along with a coalition of organizations who have taken a principled stance to unite with the African - Anti Terrorism Bill. Being that this is the beginning of what has come to be internationally recognized as Black History Month, and that Black people in this city in particular and the world in general are literally on the verge of becoming history, we take the position that there can be no luxuries of celebrating in some abstract sort of way. We have specifically convened at the doorsteps of Gangster Daley Jr. in response to his February 3rd coming into the Black community and putting forward the position that he and his administration have created a "melting pot" in Chicago. Gangster Daley Jr. has negated the fact that this "melting pot" has come at the expense of boiling Black bodies. Boiling in the form that under such euphemisms as gentrification African people are being displaced in such numbers that communities in which African people previously occupied now resemble bombed territories across seas, or have become flanked with so many Starbucks and other ruling class institutions to the point that the logical question of "Where are the people at?" must be asked.

We are clear that the new housing that this government has planned for Black and oppressed people is the penitentiaries or the graveyards. Boiling Black bodies that it was during the tenure of then States Attorney Gangster Daley Jr. in which Area 2 Commander Lt. Jon Burge performed his torture chamber tactics of electro-shocking, the infamous Black Box and other atrocities of the Death Row 10, Aaron Patterson, Jackie & Andrew Wilson and countless of others of which are still held captive inside the Statesvilles aka Deathvilles, Menards, Tamms Supermax, and other concentration camps. I speak as a victim of this terrorism that has haunted the lives and minds of Black and oppressed people in this city. Being that I was legally lynched and held captive for close to 9 years in just about every concentration camp in the State of Illinois. By the same Gangster Daley machine that assassinated Deputy Chairman Fred Hampton and Defense Captain Mark Clark on December 4, 1969. As the attacks continue, so does the resistance!

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African Anti-Terrorism Bill*

• Police Terrorism.

In response to the protocol police terrorism that runs rampant throughout the African and colonized communities; the terrorism that 21 year old Michael Walker was victimized by in the Cabrini Housing project October 27, 2002 when he was executed by Chicago Police Officer Dwayne Blackman; the same occupying army that under the direction of the federal government acted out one of the most brutal acts of terrorism to occur on U.S. soil - that being the December 4, 1969 Massacre on Monroe that took the lives of Deputy Chairman Fred Hampton and Defense Captain Mark Clark....**We Demand** an immediate cease of the attacks by these death squads that claim to serve and protect. We Demand that the appropriate charges be levied against all police, state's attorneys, and any and all state officials that collaborated with committing these said crimes.

• Just - US System.

In response to the fraudulent framing, kidnapping, sentencing of Aaron Patterson, Anthony Porter, Fred Hampton Jr. and countless numbers of African and colonized youth and people in general...**We Demand** an overall peoples review and recall of served convictions in Cook (Crook) County in general, and in specific those served during the tenure of then State's Attorney Richard Daley and Assistant State's Attorney Dick Devine.

• Conditions in Concentration Camps.

In response to Prisoners in Pontiac being forced to visit their children behind 4 inches of glass while shackled down and having a black net mask over their face with a rubber grill over the mouth; and women in Cook County Jail being forced to rinse their sanitary napkins out for reuse...**We Demand** that city, state, and federal concentration camps be open for the People's Inspection and an immediate ceasing of the forced medicating, beating, and horrid conditions those held captive are forced to endure.

• Land Grab.

We Demand an immediate cease of snatching of homes and property in the African community under such guises as eminent domain, gentrification, financial incentives for foreign merchants, and the recently proposed ordinance to seize and steal homes if the owner is alleged to have a vicious dog that bit someone.

• Mis-Education.

We Demand an end to the prison style environment that our children are subjected to inside of the Chicago Public Schools and an end to the bureaucratic red tape that Africans and colonized people are subjected to when attempting to facilitate charter schools, home schools and other attempts to speak and teach in their own interest.

• Chemical Biological Warfare.

We Demand an immediate cease of the forced medicating of those held captive in local, state, and federal concentration camps: juveniles as well as adults.

***Amendments to Bill shall be forthcoming.**

The PAC Land Policy

(editorial note: the article which follows was taken from the website of *the Pan Africanist Congress of Azania* (www.paca.org.za/; e-mail: azania@icon.co.za). It deals with a subject which is at the heart of all real revolutions: changes which are necessary for those who need revolution. Since Malcolm taught us that all revolutions are fought for land, what happens with the land after revolutionary struggle defines change *concretely*. When the maps of any settler state are studied historically, shifting and expanding borders are their defining character. Be it Israel (is-it-real?), Azania ('south africa'), or the u.s.a., their chronological maps tell similar stories: people are fought, killed, and removed. In the case of New Afrikans, We were fought, killed, and removed from Afrika, then a significant portion of us were fought, killed, and removed from New Afrika. Now, this process is recurring, and it's called 'regentrification'. The struggle is still for land and socialism. We don't know all the issues in Zimbabwe, but it is correct to attempt to right the wrongs of the past by reversing the ravages of settlerism.)

* * * * *



Zimbabwe's history has not been unlike other Southern African states. It was back in 1890, that the British South African Company led by Cecil Rhodes [not] content with the discovery of gold and diamond mines in South Africa trekked northwards into Mashonaland, expecting to find new mines to consolidate their wealth. What they discovered was some of the most fertile land in Africa. There then followed ten years of theft and seizure of land and livestock and the expropriation of Africans from land that they had cultivated for thousands of years. This culminated in the indiscriminate murder of tribal chiefs and overthrow of the Mashonaland monarchy, leaving the invading settlers with vast wealth at their disposal. By 1930 a status quo existed with European hegemony controlling

all aspects of African lives and the country's resources. An era of segregation and apartheid ensued sanctioned in the Land Apportionment Act, which allowed a few Europeans who had invaded Zimbabwe to occupy vast amounts of the best land and displaced Africans who were forced into areas designated as fit for kraals.

It is against this background, that the situation of the land issue in Zimbabwe should be viewed and understood. Naturally that situation serves as a wake-up call to South Africans vis-à-vis the land question, who undoubtedly are sitting on a time-bomb, unless the redistribution of the land to those who lost it to colonialists and apartheid is speeded-up. The resolution of the land question thus represents the fundamental element in the desire and aspirations for those who were robbed and dispossessed of it by former colonialists and apartheid shareholders. The land issue is without doubt at the heart of a nation's existence. Land constitutes the very life of people. Without land there is no nation. The repossession of the land and its redistribution to those who lost it under the inhuman and

cruel apartheid and colonialism, is the central focus for the attainment of economic freedom. The unfortunate cut off date of 1913, as imposed by our constitution, leaves much to be desired. In support of the period before 1913, as far back as 1660, eight years after 1652 when Jan van Riebeeck first put his feet on the South African soil.

The leading historian and scholar, Anthony Marx, (no relation of Karl Marx) in his latest book: "Lessons of the Struggle," has this to say: "the burghers initially grew fresh produce to help the passing sailors and to prevent scurvy. They later traded with and gradually dispossessed the local pastoralists, the Khoisan and eventually, more finally exterminated the local San hunters. These white settlers engaged in further wars of dispossession. During this period, the settlers learned to make alliances with some tribes, paving the way for further white advances by encouraging divisions within the indigenous populations." The land issue is the life of the African people. When the African people were deprived of their land the settlers passed legislation in their parliament. The Land Acts of 1913 and 1936 were passed to legalise the robbery and consolidate the dispossession of the indigenous African people of their land. In other instances invasion and sheer use of force and intrigues were used to dispossess the African people of their land. The passing of the Land Restitution Act by the present democratic government has raised some hope among the African people albeit several hurdles to overcome before the complete restoration of their ancestral land which was dispossessed since 1652, can be effected. Article 28 of our democratic constitution provides for a very strong property clause which hampers the speedy redistribution of land to those who lost it due to apartheid colonialism. Parliament may however through legislation deal with restitution. Today, seven years into our political freedom [this article was written a few years ago] the new struggle is for economic emancipation which is the most difficult phase, as in more sophisticated manner, those who control the economy will inevitably use the collaboration and goodwill of the former oppressed and dispossessed to perpetuate their own exploitation. Therefore, whatever land will be redistributed (in fact this is the restoration of the title deed in the real property to specific and legally recognisable owner of/or collective owners) will be through a litigation process. Litigation is a very complex process governed by the rigorous laws of evidence and this will take a very long time.

"The process of dispossession," says Dr. M.P. Mayende, now the Director General in the Department of Land Affairs, "and colonisation of the African people was given impetus and consolidated through enactment of a battery of discriminatory laws". These laws included the Native Land Act of 1913, the Agricultural Bank Act of 1927, the Native Trust and Land Act of 1936, the Co-operative Societies Act of 1936, the Prevention of Illegal Squatting Act of 1951, the Expropriation Act of 1965, the Group Areas Act of 1966 and the sub-division of the Agricultural Land Act of 1970. These laws have acted as effective barriers to access to land, and most effectively as impediments to the social and economic development of the African people. Notwithstanding the announcement by the then Apartheid regime in June 1991 of the scrapping of land acts and the Group Areas Act, it is patently clear that the simple repeal of this racist legislation does not in itself form the basis of a genuine land reform. Genuine land reform can only come about through genuine socio-economic transformation. The repeal of these Land Acts makes no difference to the Africans who up till now are severely restricted

from owning land in 87% of the country. Finally, let us have a closer look at the presently abandoned Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP) of the ANC-led government on Land Reform. "The Land Reform has two aspects" says the RDP, "of redistribution of residential and productive land to those who cannot afford it, and redistribution to those who lost it due to apartheid laws". This expression brings comfort to the dispossessed Africans. But the Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP) in a somewhat round-about turn states further, "The government must provide substantial funding for land redistribution and beneficiaries should pay in accordance with their means". Surely, what means do those who were blatantly robbed of their ancestral lands have to be able to "pay in accordance to their means?" Where is the Government also going to get money to pay for the land that was never bought?

(BY: ELIAS L. NTLOEDIBE)



News & Notes

As We go to press, We are saddened to learn that the wife of comrad-brother Chokwe Lumumba, sister Nubia, has become gravely ill. Please keep the sister in your thoughts at this dark hour & send words of encouragement to the brother and his family... • comrad-brother *Herman Bell* is seeking letters of support as he makes his first appearance before the New York parole board... • Subscribe to **CROSSROAD!** \$5/6 issues, \$10/organizations, \$15/international

In an ongoing effort to struggle for clarity and forward motion, i want to discuss another example of sophistry and bourgeois thought amongst Afrikans worldwide. i recently attended a panel discussion on slavery and its effect on Black female/male relationships; implicitly, the flyer seemed to be making a comment on the state of our nation. i found myself agreeing with some of the panelists' assertions, but overall there was much that i disagreed with. However, i will just touch briefly on one area for now.

During the question and answer session, i asked the panelists, "Is there a Black nation in amerikkka? and if so, what should it be striving for?" There were three panelists, two passed on even answering the question. The third, a representative of the All Afrikan People's Revolutionary Party (A-A-A-APRP), basically stated that "All Afrikans make up one Afrikan nation, and all Afrikans should be fighting for the freedom of Afrika, but as far as there being one separate nation in amerikkka, no there isn't one." i chose not to get into a dialogue/debate with the sister at this point, as this wasn't the main topic and i didn't want to monopolize the student forum. Nevertheless, this brief paper will be directed to the organizers of the panel and to the A-APRP.

i accept Kwame Nkrumah's definition of Pan-Afrikanism as struggling for "the total liberation and unification of Afrika under scientific socialism." i know that there are Afrikans all over the world, and We "should all be fighting for the freedom of Afrika." The question becomes **how do We do this.** i don't agree with the first part of the representative's statement because all Afrikans do not "make up **one** Afrikan nation." In fact, it is neither scientific or socialist to say and/or struggle as if "all Afrikans make up one nation."

There are many Afrikan nations on the continent and in the diaspora—history and current social reality attest to this. The *Pan-Africanist Congress of Azania* fights first and foremost for national liberation and socialism for Afrikans in **Azania** ("South Africa"); they are struggling to take back their land from dutch settlers, british capitalists and all of western imperialism. Since 1801, Afrikans all over the world have celebrated Haitian independence. Boukmann and Dessalines led the forces that defeated slavers; they were not **given** "emancipation." These are just two illustrations of my point that there are many Afrikan nations, some of which are still struggling for national liberation and socialism—even after "independence"!

The question is, and always has been, are We—Black people in amerikkka, a nation? If so, what should We be striving for? Of course, i think that We are a nation, and that We should be fighting for land, independence and socialism. Just like any other oppressed nation—We just happen to be an Afrikan one. Trying to say that there is just one Afrikan nation is like trying to say, "Can't we all just get along?" The statement is absurd. The masses of Afrikan people are oppressed the world over; but We can't be magically molded into one nation. Different realities, experiences, and unique paths of social development ("histories") have brought us to this point, where We all have to "build where We are and dare leave a legacy which will last as long as the sun shines and the waters flow." This is the age of neo-colonialism: Buthelezi and Mobutu, Clarence Thomas and Colin Powell. Every oppressed nation is going through this, and it's no time to get confused about where our struggle is. Afrikans everywhere have to fight wherever they find themselves...

ReBuild!

Hondo T.
9/18/93

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LETTERS

6/9/03

Salaam my brother,

It has been a very long time since i last heard from you - some years! i trust that you and yours are well and doing well.

i am about as well as could be expected considering the circumstances and conditions i am presently forced to deal with.

i always ask [others] about you. What is going on politically in your area? Is the anti-war movement dead? Bush is making noise towards Cuba, Iran, North Korea, Syria and etc. It is obvious that Bush wants only white nations to have nuclear weapons. Nations of color had better develop their capacity to manufacture nuclear weapons, because Bush is a real madman. China had better develop intercontinental missiles quickly; Bush is sizing them up also. Pakistan and India better speed up their nuclear programs and develop intercontinental missiles for that is the only way to keep the usa at bay. The usa is seeking to establish a global empire of white supremacy. Bush has the same attributes and the same aspirations as Hitler, and is an even greater threat to humanity than Hitler was. Bush's popularity rating reflects the true character and nature of the american public.

i am still struggling and trying to change the values and the perspective of the young wannabe thugs/gangstas. They have gangsters' mentalities but lack true gangsters heart/courage. They carry deadly weapons that will only shoot each other. They are still getting harassed and beaten by punk cops on the streets, and punkass guards in the prisons/jails. True gangsters are about control, power, influence, money and etc. These wannabe gangsters don't control anything, have no power, influence or money. They won't even let their own fathers whip them but will take a whipping from a punkass cop, or punkass prison guard, and cry like a baby! In our communities the safest people in the community are the cops and other racist terrorists. Our women, children and elders can't walk in our communities without getting robbed, raped, or assaulted, but the klan/cops can come into the community and terrorize these same wannabe gangsters who daily terrorize the [New Afrikan] community. They misuse and abuse, and exploit the vulnerabilities of [New Afrikan] women. Turning beautiful sisters into prostitutes and degrading them in a zillion different ways. Whereas these punks who do that should be on the corner with bikini panties on!

i don't want to generalize [New Afrikan] youth, because there are a whole lot of young [New Afrikans] in our community who have their values intact and are making positive moves - taking care of business. Also, there are a lot of old punks in our community who are cowards, traitors, informers, and every other form of despicable degenerate.

It's time, past time, for the [New Afrikan] community to call a spade a spade and deal with it accordingly. Too many [New Afrikan] people have made great sacrifices for us to accept things the way they are. Rap music and explicit videos/movies are not the cause of the conditions within our community. The elders who subscribe to that notion suffers from selective amnesia. They have forgotten the bawdy vaudevilles, and explicit sex and violent songs of their/our generation. Like, "Shotgun (Shoot Him Before He Runs)", "Stagalee", "Work With Me Annie", "Annie got a Baby (She Can't Work No More)", "Annie Aunt Fannie Got the Baby and Annie Can Work Some More", "Sexy Ways", etc. The original rappers (The

Last Poets) had a song called "Black Thighs" and Millie Jackson has always been raunchy, but people were jamming on those records! The party records of Dolemite, Redd Foxx, Moms Mabley et al. What about the black exploitation films of the fifties and sixties (violence & sex!) Josephine Baker and here banana dance and the sultriness of the sex kitten, Eartha Kitt. i mean, what's new? The sex and violence didn't corrupt the morals of the elder generation, and it's hypocritical of the elder generation to blame the rap music, rap videos and Black movies for the negative behavior of today's [New Afrikan] youth. On the issue of teen pregnancy, the elder generation can check their parents age when they had their first child. Sex is not a new invention by today's youth. As of days of yore morals are taught in the home and the church, and the best way to teach good morals is by example. They youth of today needs to see examples of good conduct by more of the elder generation.

You can't tell the youth that drugs are bad when you are holding a whiskey glass in one hand and a cigarette in the other hand. You can't tell the youth that they should abstain from sex when they see their elders having sex with anybody and everybody - and having babies out of wedlock and with others outside of their marriages.

The youth of today didn't invent the words whore and bitch. A lot of them learned the words from their fathers or other men calling their mothers such names. Likewise a lot of young men today think women are supposed to be beaten because they have watched their fathers or other men beat their mothers. What the [New Afrikan] community needs is some honesty from its elders. The negative issues within the [New Afrikan] community must be confronted honestly. We don't have individual problems, We have community problems, and the community must resolve the problems We see manifest in a lot of individual behavior. The [New Afrikan] community must learn to deal realistically and practically with the problems within our community. If We stop blaming the youth and demonizing the youth, We might be able to see our youth as being part of the solution rather than part of the problem. The youth turn out to be punks when they see so much punk behavior from their elders. A lot of youth don't respect their elders because a lot of our elders don't give our youth a respectable image.

What kind of legacy are We leaving for our youth? Morals, good or bad, are learned behavior.

i don't profess to be a saint for i have my personal flaws but each day i strive to eliminate my flaws and make myself worthy of emulation by our youth. i begin with improving myself and improving my immediate family and my immediate environment. i strive to walk the talk. We all should be committed to doing that.

This began as a personal letter, but as i was writing i thought that this is something i would like to have published in CROSSROAD.



Relentlessly,
Mafundi

CUBA Now: A Marxist Analysis of the Moral and Political Contradictions

Date: 5/24/2003

Subject: Michael Lebowitz speaks out on Cuba

Dear friends and comrades,

I confess to impatience with people who talk about gross human rights abuses and repression with respect to the recent trials of so-called dissidents in Cuba— without any sign that they have done any investigation beyond reading an Amnesty International press release (if that). The most significant repression in Cuba (where I have been— except for trips to Venezuela— since early February) has been the repression of law-breaking— first and most significantly against an emerging drug network and extending to prosecution of people renting apartments without licenses, serving food obtained through the black market in the paladares and even to people selling peanuts on the street without a license. (Policing and fines for traffic violations are also up substantially.) Since so many people rely heavily on getting a little (and in some cases, a lot) on the side, this crack-down has had great impact, and my personal view (not the Cuban official position) is that it is an important part of the explanation as to why there was an upsurge in hijackings (not only the ones which made the headlines but also the 27 foiled plots)— and why people with criminal records were prominent in these.

That's not the repression, though, that people mean when they go on about the plight of independent journalists, librarians, trade unionists, human rights activists, etc — as if these people were tried for this rather than for receiving money and instructions from the US.

Please, folks, take a little time to read the text of the Helms-Burton Act— eg. sections 205 and 206 on the regime change demanded (character of the 'transition government' and who cannot be part of it) or sections 109 and 115 on the money to be provided for the overthrow of the existing government openly through the USAID and secretly. Look, too, at the official US declarations of the over \$22 million devoted to this purpose by the USAID. And, finally, read some of the evidence on-line (eg., copies of hand-written notes giving instructions and sending money for the establishment of the Varela Project, 'conceived, financed and directed' from the outside) or, for a shorter version, look at the text of Felipe Perez Roque's press conference (available on-line at many sites, including www.ratb.ork.uk). When you've read some of the statements by the Cuban undercover agents who were receiving as much as \$450 US a month— over 20 times the average Cuban salary) and their evidence about writing articles for foreign circulation on specific subjects suggested by US officials, you'll understand why the so-called dissidents are viewed in Cuba as mercenaries working on behalf of the US government to overthrow the Cuban government.

Of course, it's so much easier to recoil with horror at the concept of independent journalists, etc being persecuted! In contrast to my feelings about the defenders of those mercenaries, I respect people whose criticism of Cuba proceeds from their view of the absolute sanctity of human life— including those who signed statements of condemnation or demonstrated against Cuba for this reason— if they have done so in opposition to capital punishment in their own countries and in the United States (including that country's heinous torture of people — teenagers among them — in occupied Cuba, i.e. Guantanamo). There have been very strong statements about capital punishment made on this list— suggesting that capital punishment must be viewed as a moral (and/or political) absolute and that no circumstances could ever justify it. Accordingly, having resorted to capital punishment recently, from this perspective Cuba must be condemned. (This position is to be distinguished from one which argues that the use of capital punishment was a tactical or strategical error— one which has reduced support for Cuba at this critical time.)

I think that it is unquestionable that state murders cannot be part of the society that we want to build. From my perspective as a Marxist, though, central to a dialectical world-view is that parts do not exist separate from a whole; their properties are those that they acquire from being in a particular whole — ie., from a particular combination with other parts. (Eg., money has different qualities if it mediates exchange between independent peasants and craftsmen than it does mediating exchange within capitalism.) From this perspective, one always has to consider context and combination. If you are willing to accept in principle that under some set of extreme circumstances, ie., in a particular context, capital punishment may be acceptable, then our discussion becomes not one of absolutes but, rather, whether the context in Cuba in any way justified capital punishment. (I.e., as George Bernard Shaw said in another context, we've established the principle, and we're just haggling over the price.) But, then, you really DO have to investigate the context— and not be satisfied with making ill-informed comments about repression in Cuba.

Although I've argued in the past about the necessity to separate the capital punishment question from the spy trials, I now think that the two issues need to be understood together— i.e., that the actions of the Cuban government in both cases must be placed in a particular context. There are two questions that I think everyone needs to ask:

(1) why, after several years of a moratorium on capital punishment (which has meant that terrorists who bombed hotels, resulting in a death, in Cuba are still alive in prison despite receiving a death sentence), did the government apply the death penalty in the case of the hijackers of a small ferry?

(2) Given the clear isolation and ineffectiveness within Cuba of the 'dissidents', why did Cuba choose this time to surface 12 undercover agents who were so well-placed that they included

the head of the Pro-Human Rights Party, the 'dean of Cuba's independent reporters' (so trusted by the US Interests Section that he had a permanent pass into the US Interests Section) and the secretary of one of the best-known dissidents— so trusted that she had her e-mail password)? I.e., why throw away years of investment in intelligence now?

In part, the obvious answer is the escalation of the US campaign to overthrow the Cuban government— starting from James Cason's taking of office as Head of the US Interests Office in Havana. (His actions—including the setting up of a Cuban political party— are well-documented.) Add to this the recent welcoming of hi-jackers in the US; rather than returning them to Cuba and sending the signal that hijacking is not rewarded, they are out on bail (and walk the streets of Miami along with other Cuban terrorists). Add to this the fact that, despite an annual quota established by treaty for a minimum of 20,000 legal immigrants from Cuba, since October (the beginning of the year), the US Interests Section had by March given out only 505 visas. Add to that recent statements from US officials that they would view a mass illegal emigration from Cuba as a threat to national security, the demands in Miami that Cuba be next after Iraq and Rumsfeld's comment that there was no intention of attacking Cuba 'now'— and you can understand why Cuba might feel that the US was attempting to provoke an incident in order to justify an attack. But, there's more than just the direct provocations and assaults on Cuba.

The essential context in which to understand Cuba's actions is the US war against Iraq— both the execution of that war and the powerlessness of opposition to it. The US determination to go ahead despite the historic world-wide demonstrations against the war revealed that, whatever long-run effect the mobilisation might have, in the immediate situation the demonstrations could not stop an aggressor nation determined to have its way; i.e., as long as there was business as usual, no high costs to be felt by the aggressor, every country was on its own. Cuba was on its own. (Do you think that the leaders, eg., in Venezuela were not making the same observations when watching the US proceed to ignore the UN and world opinion?)

This is why the Cubans speak about a Nazi-Fascism stalking the world. In this situation, I think Cuba opted for its own 'shock and awe' campaign. It surfaced its undercover agents to demonstrate to the US how skillful Cuban intelligence is. (Lest anyone not get that message, Felipe Perez Roque underlined it at the press conference, noting 'that no one in Cuba is a fool, that we have revealed only a small part of what we know; ...our people have learned to defend themselves.') And, Cuba took the dramatic and painful act of executing the hijackers. As Fidel told the foreign participants to the Marx conference at an unannounced evening gathering (and subsequently told a Mexican journalist), the choice was between those deaths and many more which would result from the US plan to provoke an immigration crisis which would be used 'as a pretext for a naval blockade, which would inevitably lead to war'. "We know full well this has a price, since a great number of friends - and

many of our best friends - for various reasons, whether religious, humanitarian or philosophical, are opposed to the death penalty," Castro explained. But he insisted that "we didn't have the right to hesitate, and we will not hesitate." That part was meant to send a message both to those within Cuba, thinking about hijacking planes, etc and being let out on bail in the US, and also to those within the US planning for Cuba to follow Iraq. The message was that Cuba was prepared to do what is necessary to defend itself.

I think that some of those friends of Cuba who are criticising Cuba at this moment should explain what they would do at this time - not by reference to what they would do in their ideal socialist society but what they would do in Cuba's shoes in this real situation. And, if they differ from what Cuba has done, they should explain why they think they know better the real threat that Cuba faces than Cuba's own intelligence network. And they should explain what they are prepared to do to help Cuba defend itself.

in solidarity, michael

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Dear Justice Fighters,

This letter is in reference to the many articles you have previously posted in the past, dealing with the wrongful imprisonment of the innocent. Since the media has become more awakened to this issue, it would be of great help if something further could be pursued. The something further, which I have in mind, is the passing of legislation to prevent such occurrences of injustice from happening or slimming the likelihood down closer to none.

Before continuing, let me paint a vivid picture, to show the rationale for stronger laws to protect the innocent. For, after the innocent is convicted, serves time and then proven innocent what happens? They are set free, but they have lost serious amounts of time, which can never be given back. Yet, and still, their battle is just beginning, for now they are in a world after losing so many years, with absolutely nothing. The punishment continues, now they have the mental and physical torture of being labeled through their records of being a Felon although it has been overturned. This is because, it takes 4-9 more months to have it expunged, in the meanwhile, background checks turn up convictions which have been reversed hindering the progress of building productive lives. Imagine, having no life for an extensive period of time, then all of a sudden, life being dropped back at your feet, with no money, no place of your own, and no job, and being tagged a Felon until further notice. How would you feel? Where would you start? And what would you do? But, why should those who have been wrongfully convicted suffer further, when it was no fault of their own that they were convicted of a crime they did not commit.

In a society of quick fixes and fast foods, why is there no safety net and an expedient process for ensuring and providing secure jobs, housing, and clear records and financial compensation for the victims of wrongful convictions, whether accidental or purposely done? Where is the Government Funded Support system to facilitate such a transition back into society after having been kidnapped and robbed of life by our [sic] Justice system? Let us know, that our [sic] Government is about Helping those who have been wronged by the Law, by assisting these individuals with their outreaching far stretching abilities to make things happen and smooth their road to a New Life.

We need Laws that will protect those who have fallen victim to Injustice, which has cost them much or all of their lives.

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