

CROSSROAD

Vol. V, No. 2

May 1994

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Spear & Shield Publications
1340 West Irving Park Road
Suite 108
Chicago, IL 60613

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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.

REVOLUTION WITHOUT WOMEN AIN'T HAPPENIN'

by

Aminata Umoja

New Afrikan People's Organization

This presentation was made at the "New Afrikan Women In the Field: Cultivating Our Legacy of Struggle," Regional Conference, July 10-11, 1993 at the 16th Street Baptist Church in Birmingham, Alabama.

Free The Land! Free The Land! Free The Land!

We in the New Afrikan People's Organization say Free the Land because We recognize that you can't have freedom, you cannot have liberation, you cannot have independence unless you have a land base. So We talk about Free The Land. Because that's what We plan to do. We're struggling for a free, independent New Afrika. Where Black people are in control; where self-determination is practiced in it's highest form.

People know about Free The Land. People in Algeria certainly know about Free The Land, because they wanted to free **their land** from the French. And they were successful in freeing the land. The women participated on every level of struggle. And now Algeria is free; but it's women are not.

In Zimbabwe, they understood that land had to be free. Again the sisters were right there - every level of struggle. Zimbabwe is free; but it's women are still oppressed.

Even in Cuba, the progressive country of Cuba - they talked about Free The Land. And again, they were able to win freedom. The Cuban revolution was successful. But the women of Cuba still have to fight against sexist oppression.

Participating in struggle is not enough. Sisters, We will not be free if We don't also fight against sexist oppression every step of the way. Now, i don't know about you, but i love the Black man; but i don't love the Black man so much - and myself so little - that i'm willing to help him get his freedom at the expense of my own. i'm in this movement because i want to be free! i want my children to be free. My male child *and* my female child. And that's not going to happen unless We fight against sexist oppression. Unless We fight for revolution.

Now, revolution is a scary word to some people, but it simply means complete change. And all of us in this room should understand clearly that amerikkka has to be completely changed! We know that every time We see our people on the streets. We know that when We hear about our young men shooting each other down. We know it when We see our young women pregnant. We know it when We see our people addicted and hung up on crack and alcoholism. We know that when you get sick in amerikkka, the sicker you get, the more money you have to pay - what a sick country!

So, if you love your people - whether you be a revolutionary or a progressive - you have to talk about complete change. And complete change is revolution! And in the New Afrikan People's Organization that's the kind of change We're talkin' about. We're not talking about just land and independence. We're talkin' about a place where all people can live in freedom. Where the men and women of our nation, and the children can live in freedom. And in order to do this, We have to talk about sexist oppression. Or what We'll experience will be a political revolution. You see, a political revolution is when power changes hands. *But, nothing really changes for the people themselves.* No, We can't just have a political revolution; We must have a political revolution and a social revolution. You see, We're not just struggling for land and independence, We're also struggling for liberation! We're not gonna follow the same mistakes as Zimbabwe and Cuba and Algeria. Oh no! Our people are too precious to us for that. No, so We understand in the New Afrikan People's Organization that We have to fight against sexist oppression.

Well, what is sexist oppression? Well, the sisters in the New Afrikan Women's Task force define sexist oppression - as it is practiced currently (and has been practiced historically) - as the subjugation of women by men. It's male supremacy. It's the belief that men are superior to women physically, culturally, mentally, economically — on every level. It's male patriarchy. It's the belief that men are inherently superior, based solely on biology. That they're the natural leaders. Well, certainly many people believe that, i mean, the bible says "women be subservient to your husbands." The Q'uran says something similar. And how you gon' argue with God? How you gon' argue with Allah? This is sexist oppression.

You see, We have an intimate, **intimate** relationship with sexist oppression; because it is the first form of oppression We learn. We learn it from our mommas and daddys. We learn it at home. We learn it before We even find out about racism. We learn it before We even find out about classism. We learn that "the father is the head of the household," then come momma, then come the children. Some of you might be sayin' "huh, she's only talking about two-parent households." Even in a single parent household, you hear women talkin' 'bout, "You wait 'til i tell your Uncle Joe! You wait 'til i tell you grandfather - he's gonna deal with you!" You even hear sisters who are heading their households say to their male children, "You are the **man** of the house." Indicating that in some way, he is more special - more unique. And he is special and unique, **but so is his sister!**

We have an intimate relationship with sexist oppression. And because of that, it is difficult for us to get rid of it. Because it requires us to reject a part of our culture. But isn't that what We do? As revolutionaries? Isn't that why you're here today? Because you're trying to find out how you can promote the liberation of our people? Isn't that why many sisters stop pressing their hair? Isn't that why many of us drop 'Joy' and 'Van' and 'Bob', and take on 'Aminata' and 'Safiya' and 'Chokwe' and 'Akinyele'? Isn't that why We practice Kwanzaa? Because We're trying to rid ourselves of the negative aspects of our culture. As We struggle toward freedom. We're trying to develop a culture that's a liberating culture. A culture that will bring hope to the hopelessness. A culture that will push us forward. To Freedom! Not one that will maintain our oppression. That's what We're supposed to do - as revolutionaries.

Well, this requires a new perception of the world, doesn't it? Not the perception that you were taught, and i was taught in the amerikkkan system, but a new perception. One that's based on afrocentrism. One that's based on a history of resistance. One that's based on the fact that We are oppressed. You see, once you get this new perception, you start gettin' excited. Because then you can figure things out! You start beginning to realize that our people are not inherently ignorant. That our people are not inherently lazy. You're able to combat some of the discussions you hear in our community.

From my understanding, there's been a lot of talk about mass work - about dealing with the masses. When We talk to our people, what kinds of things do We hear? We hear things like, "Niggers ain't gon' ever do anything." We hear things like, "You know the Koreans can come over here, the Japanese can come over here, these other folks come over here and they develop their own businesses — Black people ain't never gon' get it together! Why can't We do that?" But once you understand what your place is in the world, once you understand that you have been oppressed, and there is an oppressor; once you understand that you have been raped and We are trying to be healed of that victimization, then you start seeing things more clearly. And you understand that We have a self-hatred thing going on. The sister talked earlier about the competitiveness at the business place — that ain't nothin' but self-hatred! When We talk about, "She's too light; She's too dark," that ain't nothin' but self-hatred.

We're able to identify those things, and you know - once you can identify a problem, then you can go about solving the problem. Our perception of the world has to be different - and with that difference, you study. With that difference, you continuously analyze your life - every aspect - from the way you worship God, to what you call yourself, to the way you dress.

Well, as nationalists, We've been pretty successful with that - oh yes. We're into studying; We are into analyzing; We're into re-evaluating our positions. And We've grown. We've grown tremendously. But when it comes to the area of sexist oppression, We've failed. We haven't studied that much.

Well, why is that? Why is it that We've failed when it came to sexist oppression? Well, i believe that there are a couple of reasons, and of course i'm gonna share them with you. One is that We've been taught to think in terms of things as a *hierarchy*. This is a western way of thinking. We're taught to think in terms of things as "what comes first?, what comes second?, what comes third?" And then, We were taught (as young Black women growing up in the struggle) that the race, that "the nation must come first." Well see that's a joke, 'cause really what they talkin' about is the Black man, right? Because if you talkin' about the nation, then certainly it fits that We should fight against sexism, because We're half of the nation! We're more than half of the nation! But naw, We bought into that. We bought into supporting "the Black man"; to our own detriment, We bought into that.

i think another reason why We failed - in terms of really dealing with sexist oppression - is We were taught that "that was the white woman's thang; sistas don't deal with that. That's the white woman's thang!" And see, that was easy to buy into. Because white women *were* doing it (for white women!) they weren't doing it for us. Certainly We were turned off by white women, because they were middle class white women; struggling to be a part of our oppression. Struggling for "equal rights"; not struggling for a revolution, not struggling for a total difference in society. They were just struggling to put their foot on our necks too!

So, We couldn't deal with white women.

We also didn't trust white women because We know that they grew from our disasters. When the COINTELPRO was attacking us, when the government was attacking Black organizations, white women continued to grow. So We had a mistrust for them - a mistrust that was based in history. They have always been very clear: that Black people don't really mean anything to them. Unless it's to expedite their own cause. And We were clear about that.

The third reason why i think that We didn't deal with white women, or feminism at that particular time (and even now), is because many of them have an extreme dislike for men. And that turned us off - that they would actually resent men - at least that's what We were taught in the sixties.

And if none of that worked - if you didn't go for the hierarchy and you didn't go for the white woman's position (feminism) - well there was always name calling, wasn't there? There was always name calling, and that would get you, right? "You're a ballbreaker," "you a castrater," "you must be a lesbian." So, what did We do, sisters? What did We do? We kinda put our own needs to the side. **But the truth is (sister Efla mentioned it earlier) that white women don't have any hold on fighting against sexism!** Black women have been fighting against sexism for at least one hundred years (and that's just based on my narrow base of knowledge)! From my few studies, i know We've been practicing anti-sexism for at least one hundred years.

Sister Mary Chad, in 1880 organized the *Colored Women's Progressive Association*. It's job was not just to work for race; it's job was also to push forth women's issues. "Consistent with the Black women's concerns, the clubs were not organized for race work alone," Josephine St. Pierre Ruffin said, "But for work along the lines that make for women's progress." This was a hundred years ago! Sisters were talkin' about "We have to fight for our people, but We must also fight for our rights" - one hundred years ago.

i'm gonna tell you a little about how the clubs grew strong. Sister Ida B. Wells is partly responsible for that. You know, Ida B. Wells was a famous journalist during that time, and she did a lot of anti-lynching work. She would write down whenever people were lynched. Well, during this period in 1893, a brother named Henry Smith was accused of raping a five-year old little white girl. Well, as you can imagine, the white community was in a rage. So they decided to close the schools; and have a picnic. The men and women and children all came to see Henry Smith, first tortured with hot irons and then burned to death.

And then, after the brother was burned, they scrambled to the site of the fire to pick his bones, his buttons, and his teeth off the ground - to take them home for souvenirs. Well, Great Britain heard about this incident, and they could not believe how inhumane it was. So, they asked Sister Ida B. Wells - this is a hundred years ago - to come to Great Britain, and talk about the tragedy. And Ida B. Wells did. And Great Britain couldn't believe it! They couldn't believe that kind of thing went on in the United States. So they said, "what about your liberal white people?!? What about people like Francis Willard?" You see, Francis Willard was supposed to be progressive - she was the president of the Women's Temperance Union (temperance means that she was fighting to stop alcohol). Ida B. Wells said, "Well, Francis has been kind of quiet on the issue. As a matter of fact, Francis has kind of added fuel to the fire. She's saying that 'Black people hang out at the bars all the time. Black men are getting plenty drunk; and white women and children are in danger!'" Well, Francis Willard just happened to be in England at the time. And was very upset that Ida B. Wells was saying these things; and basically called her out and said, "You lying on me Ida B. Wells!" And Ida B. Wells said, "Well, if i'm lying, name one Black woman that's in your organization of women!" Francis couldn't say a thing. So, what happened? Well, you know Amerika was very concerned about how she looked to England. So Ida B. Wells was actually successful in stopping some of those lynchings - they didn't stop altogether - but they decreased *tremendously*.

Well, that pissed the press off. They wrote an open letter to the women of England. They said, "Look, now y'all are nice - you got a good heart - but you don't know the nigger woman. The nigger woman has no morality. She will lie. She will do whatever is necessary."

Well, that response pissed Sisters off! And they decided to have a woman's club here, and a women's club there - this wasn't enough. So they united and became one large national organization: The National Association of Colored Women (NACW). The president of that association was Mary Church Terrell. Now at this founding meeting many sisters were there, very impressive guests. You had Ida B. Wells, you had the daughter of Frederick Douglass, you had the daughter of Ellen Craft, you had Frances Ellen Harper; but the most impressive guest, a sister who is a **known freedom fighter**, a sister who risked her life over and over and over again for our people, and a sister who by her presence was obviously conscious of women's rights - Harriet Tubman attended this meeting. Oh, Sisters, white women ain't got nothin' on us! ***Fighting for our rights is a part of who We are!***

So, what happened?

We continued to work. We worked on every level. We were in SNCC; We were in SCLC; We were in the House of Umoja; We were in the A-APRP; We were in the Provisional Government-Republic of New Afrika. We're in NAPO now. We worked on every level, so what happened? If We didn't want to deal with white women, why didn't We come together and start fighting for our own issues? Because of the hierarchy. Because We deeply believed that, "We should struggle for the nation first." Because We were so afraid of homosexuality and homophobia - that someone would call us 'lesbian' and We'd run. i'll tell you one thing: i don't care what you call me, i'm fighting for my rights. i am fighting for my rights as a woman, and i am fighting for my rights as a New Afrikan. i will not struggle and dedicate my life to free only half of our nation - it does not make sense. And i want you to know that i am pissed off today! And one of the reasons why i am



pissed is because We remain invisible. And it makes me angry. We hear over and over again about how We have to focus on 'the Black male', 'the Black boy'. In the sixties, it was "the Black man" - "Sisters Support Your Black Man!" "Black Men Are In Danger!" And now in the nineties, it's the Black boys. "Black Boys Are Killing Themselves!" YES, the Black Man is in danger. YES, Black Boys are in danger. **AND SO ARE BLACK GIRLS. AND SO ARE BLACK WOMEN. OUR NATION IS IN DANGER.**
How Dare You Continue To Ignore Our Cry!

We have to leave this meeting feeling empowered. We have to leave this meeting going out and speaking against sexist oppression. To the masses of our people. No, to them it may not matter whether We call it "womanism" or "feminism". To them it may not matter what We talk about in theoretical discussions. But We cannot disregard the necessity for intellectual debate; that's how We get our theory so We can move forward. If We were to discard that, We'd be discarding W.E.B. DuBois, Amilcar Cabral, Malcolm X - We cannot do that. We cannot afford to do that.

So, when you leave here and you go to the barbershop to get your haircut; and you go to the hairdresser and get your hair done; and you sit in your living room with your family; and you're sitting in your church prayer group, or your bible study - you must fight against sexist oppression. Not only because it will benefit our nation, but because it is your human right to be free. It is your God-given right to be free! Don't let anyone take it from us. Don't let anyone take it from my daughter and her daughter. Free The Land, Brothers and Sisters.



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Make checks or money orders payable to Prison Legal News, P.O. Box 1684, Lake Worth, FL 33460.

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

February, 1994

**CONTACT: Rev. S. Michael Yasutake, 708-328-1543
Melissa Frolland, 312-862-5718**

New Report Detailing Westville, Indiana "Supermax" Prison Abuse Released to International Human Rights Groups.

Prison breeches promise to negotiate in "good faith" as human rights violations and torture continue.

Since the Maximum Control Complex (M.C.C.) within Indiana's Westville Correctional Center opened in 1991, the running of the high-tech dungeon has violated international law, international human rights treaties, the Eighth Amendment to the U.S. Constitution (forbidding cruel and unusual punishment), and the humanity of anyone with a conscience. The human rights abuses and torture continue, *despite* the pending "agreed entry" to be signed by the Indiana Department of Corrections and the group of M.C.C. prisoners who took legal action to save themselves from continued abuse. In fact, incidents of abuse have escalated in recent months, making the "bad faith" of the Indiana D.O.C. quite clear.

The Coalition Against Indiana Control Units and Prison Abuse (CAICUAPA) has been monitoring and documenting the patterns of abuse and torture at M.C.C. Westville. The enclosed report has been sent to Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch, and the appropriate governmental officials, as well as to print and broadcast media. An appendix to the report, containing further documentation, is available upon request from CAICUAPA.

The following actions are necessary to reverse the deplorable conditions at the Maximum Control Unit within Westville Correctional Center:

- An end to blasting cells with constant air conditioning during the winter months.
- Stop brutally violent "cell extractions" and other beatings.
- Stop physical and psychological abuse of mentally unstable prisoners.
- Stop targeting legally and politically active prisoners for abuse.
- Stop illegal censorship of mail, both personal letters and printed material.
- Increase prisoners' access to telephone, and the number of visits allowed. Stop no-contact visits with prisoners shackled.
- Allow recreation, exercise, and time out of cells.
- Develop access to educational programs.
- Allow meaningful access to legal advice and the court system.
- Develop proper medical care procedures and staff. Stop blatant indifference to prisoners' health.

CAICUAPA and Amnesty International have repeatedly contacted the Indiana Department of Corrections regarding these changes. Despite their promise to negotiate in good faith, conditions within the M.C.C. have continued to deteriorate. This escalation of abuses appears to further punish the prisoners who sought legal action.

CAICUAPA now demands that an independent investigatory team inspect M.C.C. and hold the institution accountable for its human rights violations. The structure of the Maximum Control Complex at Westville Correctional Center is built around abuse and torture. CAICUAPA believes the only way to restore the human rights of the prisoners held within the M.C.C. is to close this prison-within-a-prison.

A Call to Action: Stop the Torture of Prisoners at the Westville, Indiana Maximum Control Complex

Everyday, the Indiana Department of Corrections is violating the U.S. Constitution and the United Nations' Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners by:

- transferring prisoners to MCC as a form of punishment for legal activity (filing suits) and/or political activity (educating and organizing other prisoners) that challenges the abusive power of prison officials. Black prisoners in particular have been targeted: at MCC, over 80% of the prisoners are Black;
- denying all MCC prisoners access to education, work, religious services, visits by outside clergy, group recreation and dining;
- isolating MCC prisoners in stark-white, walled-off cells 23 + hours each day. These cells are air-conditioned in the middle of winter and kept at frigid temperatures;
- gassing, beating, firehosing, strapping prisoners down to bed-frames via four-way restraints, and forcing them to wear hockey masks for the smallest, if any, refusal to follow orders. Mentally imbalanced prisoners in particular are subjected to this brutality and are subsequently relocated to "strip cells";
- perpetrating racist assaults against the mind and bodies of particular prisoners;
- denying prisoners adequate access to legal aids and courts;
- failing to provide prisoners with adequate health and medical care;
- subjecting prisoners to full body probes every time they leave their cells even though they have no contact with other prisoners and no unrestrained contact with staff;
- prohibiting contact visits and forcing prisoners to remain shackled throughout the visit. The authorities retain the "right" to listen in to all visits if they so desire;
- opening, reading, and tampering with mail, including legal mail;

One Prisoner Writes:

"...De beatings, tear gassings, chainings to beds have/are continuing and people are being destroyed in this place. i have witnessed people reduced to de point where they begun to eat their own feces and yet they get no treatment other than more brutality. We need help now. Not sympathy, but concrete help. This must be stopped." - Shaka Shakur #28443 MCC P.O. Box 557 Westville, IN 46391-0557

Call or Write:

Christian De Bruyn, Commissioner, Indiana Department of Correction/ E 334
Indiana Govt. Center South/ 302 W. Washington St./ Indianapolis, IN 46204/ ph: (317) 232-5715/ fax: (317) 232-6798
Gov. Bayh/ Statehouse Room 206/ Indianapolis, IN 46204/ ph: (317) 232-4567/ fax: (317) 232-3443
For More Information, Contact the Coalition Against Control Units/ P.O. box 14075/ Chicago, IL 60614-0075/ ph: (312)-862-5718.

THE MYTH THAT THE PELICAN BAY CONTROL UNIT HAS REDUCED VIOLENCE

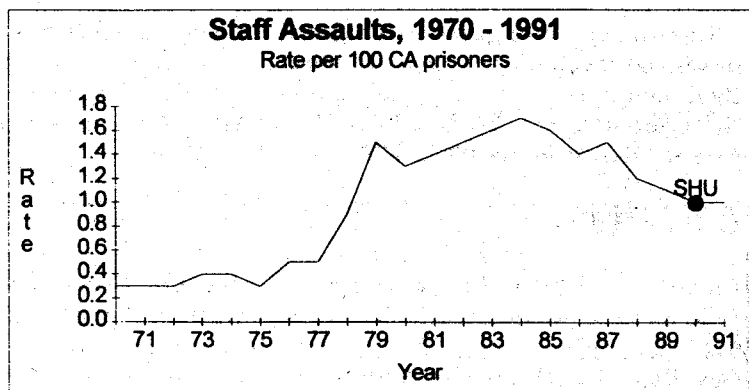
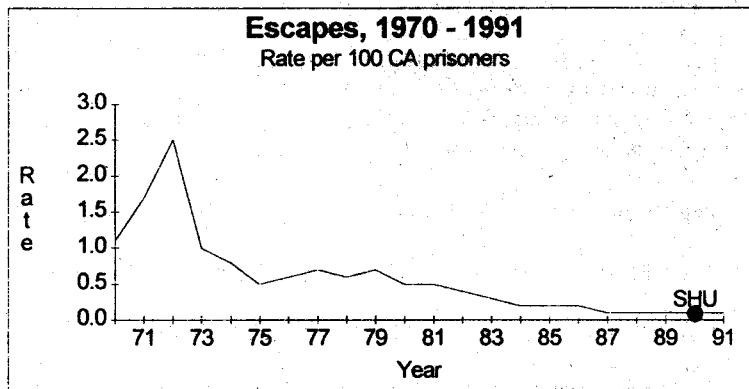
In the Fall of 1993 Pelican Bay prison, located in northern California, went on trial for violating the human rights of the prisoners caged there. Much of the testimony has come against the control unit prison, the Special Housing Unit (SHU), which is part of the Pelican Bay complex and which holds 1500 prisoners. As we write this, at the end of 1993, the trial, *Madrid v. Gomez* (one of the prisoners filing the lawsuit versus the director of the California Department of Corrections), has just come to an end but a decision is not expected for several months.

During the course of the trial members of CEML were often asked to comment on what was happening there. Whenever we would speak about the human rights violations of USP Marion and all other control unit prisons, including Pelican Bay, people would say to us "But it works in reducing prison violence, doesn't it?" We would respond by saying that even if it did reduce violence it still wouldn't be ok, and that we were certain that structurally it couldn't reduce violence, just as prisons structurally cannot reduce violence or crime in general.

(See the first-page article of the Fall, 1993 issue of CEML's newsletter, "Walkin' Steel," for a detailed explanation of why this is the case.) In response to this formulation our questioners would show us some numbers distributed by the California Department of Corrections, and published in major newspapers across the country and used on tv stations throughout Chicago. What these figures showed was a reduction in violence in the California prison system since the SHU in Pelican Bay opened in December of 1989.

Many people used such data to "prove" to us that the SHU was acceptable. One of the main proponents of this mode of argument were leaders of the Illinois chapter of AFSCME, the allegedly progressive union, which was the major force in the pursuit of a control unit prison for Illinois. This prison, they maintain, will serve as a device to protect the guards in the state prison system, one of the many groups represented by AFSCME. Others, of course, use this argument as well. California Corrections director James Gomez was quoted by the media as crediting the SHU with greatly decreasing violence in the system. Similarly, California Deputy Attorney General, Peter Siggins, has informed the media: "The simple truth about Pelican Bay is that it is working. Assaults by prisoners and lock downs have declined throughout the prison system." Let us examine this "simple truth."

CEML has just obtained the most recent annual report of the California Department of Corrections,



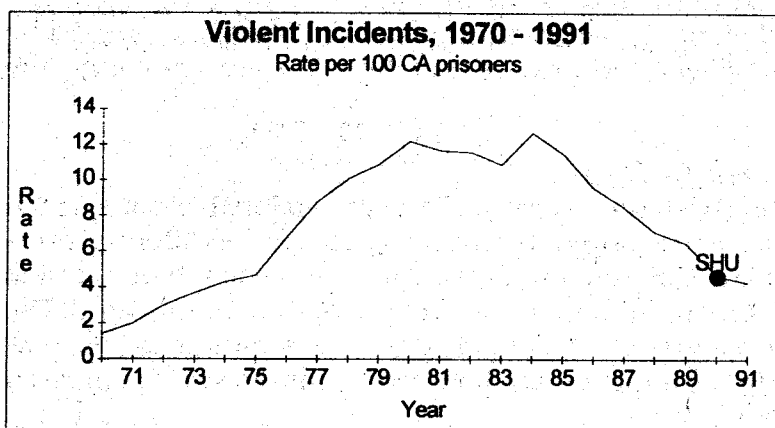
"California Prisoners and Parolees." This 95-page report contains thousands of numbers. Three of these sets of numbers are related to the stated purpose of the SHU. These are prison escapes, violent prison incidents, and assaults on staff. We have converted these numbers to rates per 100 prisoners (a common analytic tool) and plotted each set of rates over time, since 1970, the first year given in the report.

The results are astounding. Although the California Department of Corrections has informed everyone that violence decreased from 1989 to 1990 (the first full year of the SHU) and then again from 1990 to 1991, these correctional experts forgot to mention that all three measures have been declining, although in different ways, for as much as a decade.

**** Prison Escapes --** These rates were about 2.5 20 years ago and have declined steadily since then until 1991 when the rate was about 0.1. In fact this rate has been 0.1 since 1987.

**** Assaults on Staff --** These rates were 0.3 20 years ago, rose to 1.7 in 1984 and have been falling ever since. In fact, the rate did not even decline between 1990 and 1991.

**** Violent Incidents --** These rates were about 2.0 20 years ago, rose to 13.0 in 1984 and have been falling ever since.



Thus, according to California's own data, there is no evidence at all that the SHU has reduced violence. All three of these measures have been declining for some time now, and none of these declines have been speeded up by the SHU. In fact, two of the three measures did not even continue their declines in the most recent year.

The issue here is not so much that the SHU did not decrease the violence. The issues rather are twofold. First, the California Department of Corrections has lied to the public and deliberately deceived us. Second, the SHU was not "needed" even if you believe their motivation for building it, since all indicators of prison violence were steadily improving.

Thus, still another multi-million dollar fraud designed to destroy thousands upon thousands of people of color has been perpetrated upon us. Now, what will we do about it?

This material was issued by:
The Committee to End the Marion Lockdown
P.O. Box 578172
Chicago, IL 60657-8172
(312) 235-0070

Contact them for more information about control units, the colonialist nature of U.S. imprisonment, and how you can get involved in the efforts to combat these evils.

For more information about the Pelican Bay SHU, contact the
Pelican Bay Information Project,
2489 Mission Street, #28, San Francisco, CA 94110.
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Let's "Gang-Up" On Oppression: Youth Organizations and the Struggle for Power In Oppressed Communities

Owusu Yaki Yakubu

Part One

There is an urgent need for people of Afrikan and other oppressed communities to develop alternate ways of viewing and interacting with so-called "gangs" in our communities.

Most of our current thinking and behavior toward the young people in our communities has been influenced by the media and other U.S. institutions — all of which are inherently opposed to the real needs and interests of "gangs" and the communities to which they belong. These institutions have created an anti-crime hysteria, equating crime with "gangs" to the extent that the words are now commonly used interchangeably.

Why Was The Anti-Gang Hysteria Created?

The anti-crime / anti-gang hysteria was created for several related reasons: 1) The U.S. and local governments needed scapegoats for the worsening conditions of ever-larger numbers of people; 2) The U.S. and local governments needed to undermine actual and potential bases of contending power within oppressed communities; 3) The U.S. and local governments needed to test new tactical genocidal initiatives (i.e., new forms of colonialist violence) in the on-going war between themselves and oppressed peoples inside present U.S. borders.

Let me stop here to say that I am not denying the presence of crime and related ills in our communities; I am not trying to minimize their impact upon our communities. However, I am saying that all problems facing us must be viewed within a larger context — a context which has an increasingly international dimension, i.e., crimes committed by oppressive governments against the masses of people under their control.

The major task confronting Afrikan and other oppressed peoples is that of gaining total control over our communities — total sovereignty as self-determining peoples in the community of nations. The physical and intellectual energies that we direct toward the problem of "gangs" must take place within this struggle for absolute sovereignty.

What Is A "Gang"?

Rather than look upon our young people as demons among us that we should fear and attack, we must remember that members of "gangs" are our children: we must love them unconditionally; we must protect them and guide them along righteous and productive paths.

The members of so-called "gangs" are members of our families, and they are citizens of our nations — oppressed nations. We must not look upon them with the eyes of our common enemy; we must not treat them as our enemy would treat them. The first step in this direction is taken by redefining some old words and concepts, and by giving new life to modes of collective social conduct and morality inspired by revolutionary nationalism.

We need to do one of two things with regard to the word "gang": 1) Abandon the word to those who have defined it so that it now tends to have a purely negative connotation; 2) Redefine the word, and choose an alternative way to describe organized youth in oppressed communities. New concepts must accompany whichever choice We make, and new forms of activity should begin to take shape on the basis of the new words and the new concepts. What's most important is that the community begin to work together in collective activity that will transform words and concepts into a new reality, i.e., the transformation of "gangs" into progressive organizations of Afrikan people that struggle for freedom and development.

The media would have us believe that there is only one way to define "gang" and "gang activity." The media says that a "gang" is 'a band of antisocial adolescents' that engages solely in illegal activity. The media image of "gangs" is meant to inspire fear, loathing, disgust and hatred among us toward our children and other members of our communities. The media encourages us to spy and inform upon our children and other members of our communities. The media would have us believe that our young people are our enemies; that they are the obstacles in the paths of our social, political, and economic development.

However, a quick look at the essential meaning of the word "gang" can provide us with new insight regarding the underlying cause of the hysteria being created by the media and the oppressive government that it serves.

Any dictionary will tell you that a "gang" is, first and foremost, a group of people...with close social relations...that works together. Let me repeat this simple truth: A "gang" is — in essence — any group of people sharing close social relations and working together toward a common purpose, i.e., a "gang" has common Identity, Purpose, and Direction. A "gang" has actual and potential power. Power is what our common enemy fears most — the fact that We have power, that We can use that power to acquire more power, and that We can use all of our collective power against our common enemy.

The point is this: The larger, fundamental problem confronting Afrikan and other oppressed peoples is our oppression by the U.S. and local governments! Yes, there is crime in our communities, but there would be far less crime in our communities if We lived in a society that didn't breed joblessness as a condition for its existence.

Our problem is not that there are "gangs" in our communities — our problem is that our communities are colonized territories that suffer from arrested development caused by the U.S. settler-imperialist state! We have no need to attack "gangs" — that is, We have no need to attack organized groups of our people that are working to free the process of our development. Our problem is that We don't yet have the power that will enable us to control every aspect of our lives. Our problem is that too many people in our communities — young and old — lack the identity, purpose, and direction required of us if We are to acquire power.

Youth Organizations: Afrocentric and Revolutionary

We can take a step toward power — one critical step closer to a new sense of collective identity, purpose, and direction — by giving new life to the Nguzu Saba, particularly the principle of Kujichagulia, i.e., by using the power that We have to define ourselves, name ourselves, and speak for ourselves, instead of being defined and spoken for by others.

Let's not look upon "gangs" as our enemies or as the primary obstacles in our path. So-called gangs are organized groups of people in our communities who are generally misdirected and who need our help getting on track. We should stop referring to them as "gangs" and instead refer to them as "youth organizations that need adult supervision," i.e., adults who are Afrocentric and revolutionary.

Some of you like to say (usually only when it's convenient and won't cost you anything) that 'it takes an entire community to raise a child' — well, you are part of that community, and I wanna know what you will do to help raise our children. Rather, the question is what will you do to help fight the system that turns our children into criminals and victims?

All of the people in our communities must come to share the responsibility for providing a new, broader sense of Collective Identity, Purpose, and Direction. We all suffer the same oppression, at the hands of the same oppressor. We all confront and react to the obstacles to our progress that are created and sustained by the U.S. and its local governments.

We must begin to promote new ideas, new definitions. We must begin to work together as a collective, distinct community that is primarily engaged in a struggle for sovereign power.

We must promote ideas which encourage our young people to identify themselves as Afrikans; We must promote among our young the idea that their purpose is not to merely seek quasi-control over a few city blocks but to share in our control of entire cities, states and ultimately to share in the control of our own nation. We need ideas which promote the notion that the direction We must take is toward national independence. Let's "gang-up" against oppression, and struggle for power!

— end of Part One —

Owusu Yaki Yakubu
April, 1994

Malcolm X Speaking

On The Press:

...With skillful manipulating of the press they're able to make the victim look like the criminal and the criminal look like the victim.

...One of the shrewd ways that they project us in the image of a criminal is that they take statistics and with the press feed these statistics to the public, primarily the white public... And whatever the government is going to do, it always wants the public on its side — whether it is the local government, state government or federal government. At the local level they will create an image by feeding statistics to the public through the press showing the high crime rate in the Negro community. As soon as this high crime rate is emphasized through the press, then people begin to look upon the Negro community as a community of criminals.

And then any Negro in the community can be stopped in the street. "Put your hands up," and they pat you down. Might be a doctor, a lawyer, a preacher... but despite your professional standing, you'll find that you're the same victim as the man who's in the alley. Just because you're black and you live in a black community which has been projected as a community of criminals. And once the public accepts this image, it also paves the way for police-state type of activity in the Negro community — they can use any kind of brutal methods to suppress blacks because they're criminals anyway. And what has given us this image? The press... (pps. 165, 166)

...When they think that an explosive era is coming up, then they grab their press again and begin to shower the Negro public, to make it appear that all Negroes are satisfied. Because if you know you're dissatisfied all by yourself and ten others aren't, you play it cool; but if you know that all ten of you are dissatisfied, you get with it. This is what the man knows. (p. 175)



Liberation Radio in America: Arresting the Airwaves!

By: Luis J. Rodriguez

Decatur, IL — Out of his tiny dining room, Napoleon Williams has been broadcasting nightly about issues which the mass media won't touch, including the growing instances of police terror in this southern Illinois community. Williams is the proprietor of Liberation Radio, an unlicensed rap-and-talk radio program.

For his efforts, Williams, 36, has been arrested, his house raided (at one point, police pulled a gun on his then two-year-old daughter) and ostracized. His live-in girl friend, 21-year-old Mildred Jones, has also been incarcerated, and most recently, the State of Illinois has taken away their child to an unknown destination — without any investigation or evidence! Their only crime: Free Expression.

"They have yet to show us any situation where our baby came to any harm with us," Williams says. "There is no evidence, only allegations. Meanwhile Mildred is out of jail, and I don't know where they've taken our daughter."

Williams says the local press won't touch his story — although they were swift in condemning him when the local police raided his home. As a young black man with an unlicensed radio facility, it appears Williams is too "dangerous" for the powers-that-be in Decatur.

Williams says States' Attorney Lawrence Fichter has been carrying out what amounts to a personal vendetta against him, confiscating his equipment to incarcerating his girlfriend and taking away his baby — all under the cover of the law.

"They came in and held me against the wall, while the baby cried as they grabbed her," Williams says. "They say we endangered her — but it's the state which has placed her in danger."

Today in America we are witnessing a rise in censorship — such as national police associations targeting Ice-T's song "Cop Killer." We are also living in a time of an acute economic crisis. Those communities most affected by the crisis — particularly African American and working class — have been the most consistent targets of the censorship. These are precisely the communities we need to hear from.

"When those who are supposed to protect you are doing this to you, who can you turn to?" Williams asks.

Williams and Jones need your help; they particularly need legal assistance. There are people like all over this country. This is a story which needs to be told: We need to break the blackout on what's really going on in America.

You can reach Williams at (217) 422-3710 or write: Napoleon Williams, 756 S. Wise, Decatur, IL 62522.

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Luis J. Rodriguez is a poet and journalist whose works have appeared in The Nation, The Los Angeles Times, The Chicago Reporter, Playboy, LA Weekly, and others. His first book, "Poems Across the Pavement" (1989 Tia Chucha Press), won a 1989 Poetry Center Book Award from San Francisco State University. His second, "The Concrete River" (1991 Curbstone Press), won a PEN/Oakland Josephine Miles Literary Award. "Always Running: A Memoir of La Vida Loca, Gang Days in LA" is forthcoming from Curbstone Press.

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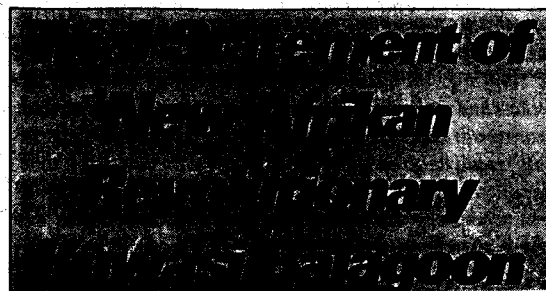
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Senate Crime Bill: Solution? Or Menace To Society

Center For Constitutional Rights

On November 19, 1993, the Senate passed an omnibus crime bill by an overwhelming vote of 95-4. The House of Representatives did not pass a similar Crime Bill because of strong objections of the Congressional Black Caucus and others. The startling fact is that many repressive and counter productive amendments were added and voted on to the Senate version of the Crime Bill without public hearings or considered debate. In fact the House never even considered the amendments that the Senate added on. A different bill had been presented by Representative Craig Washington, Edwards, Conyers, Scott, Watt, Tucker, Rangel, Payen, Schroeder and Becerra (known as the "Washington" Bill) which addresses the issues of crime in a thoughtful manner but it has yet to be publicly debated. In view of the extremely undemocratic way in which the Senate bill has been handled and the repressive content of the bill, we at the Center for Constitutional Rights are working with other concerned organizations to fight this bill and demand it be returned to the proper committees for public hearings. In addition we are initiating a Forum in Washington, D.C. on Monday, January 31, 1994 (Room 2154 Rayburn House Office Building 9:30 a.m.) in which some of the dangers of the Senate bill will be presented.

The full impact of the Senate Crime Bill on the lives of poor people, people of color, immigrants, and children is shocking. It will execute or lock-up more people for longer periods of time, disregarding Constitutional protections, without having any appreciable effect on crime in our society. We must make people aware of some of the more draconian aspects of this bill so that you can voice your opposition. Therefore, any efforts to alert Senate or House members of your opposition and specific problems should begin immediately upon receipt of this Action Alert. A list of target Congresspeople will be found at the end of this alert.

All of us can agree that we would prefer a life free from crime, violence and fear. Politicians have long used the political issue of crime and violence to win votes by appearing tough on crime. Once elected and wishing to remain in office these politicians respond to a desire within society for peace and justice by abandoning the analysis of the causes and solutions and instead look for quick fixes by playing on the fears of people. This approach to the deeply serious problems of our present society will provide not solutions to the problems and very well may lead to even worsening social conditions.

Crime and violence by young people is very real and as the options become more and more limited for a future of promise, particularly for poor people and people of color, anger is a natural response. But what does the Crime Bill offer as a solution? Prisons, longer sentencing, new death penalties, trying young people as adults, boot camps, while at the same time failing to fully fund the Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Act or the many non-jprofit proposals aimed at turning the life of young people in trouble around. In addition, the bill, establishes a new federal anti-gang statute with mandatory minimum penalties. In a recent special report to the New York Times it was reported that: Using a variety of criteria, from a youth's choice of clothing to tips from informants, the Denver police have compiled a roster of suspected gang members so vast that it could include two of every three young black men in the city...Blacks represent only 5 percent of the city's population but accounted for more than half of the names on the police list. Hispanic residents, who represent 12 percent of Denver's population, accounted for about one-third of the list. Whites, who represent 80 percent of the city's population, accounted for less than 7 percent.

Much of the funding for the Crime Bill will directly divert money away from social programs, reducing food, shelter and medical care and education to the politically unpopular category of entitlements.

Some of the Most Disturbing Aspects of the Bill Passed By The Senate Include the Following Provisions:

- * **Unprecedented expansion of the Federal Death Penalty.** In addition to reviving the death penalty for dozens of capital offenses, the bill extends to over 50 crimes.
- * **Increasing mandatory minimum sentences, creating new crimes and mandating longer sentences.** These mandatory minimums have been shown to effect disproportionately non-white prisoners.
- * **Authorizes \$500 million through the Bureau of Prisons for grants to states and localities for establishing and operating secure facilities for violent and chronic juvenile offenders.**
- * **Authorizes bonus grants to states that develop bindover systems for the prosecution of violent juveniles age 13 and older in courts with jurisdiction over adults for certain offenses.**
- * **Mandates that juveniles aged 13 or older be prosecuted as adults for certain federal offenses. This includes a file and fingerprints with the FBI and other federal law enforcement agencies.**
- * **Establishes the possession of a handgun or ammunition by anyone less than 18 years of age as a federal status offense.**
- * **Establishes the new federal anti-gang statute with mandatory minimum penalties. Under this amendment drafted by the Bush Justice Department, those who attempt or commit predicate gang crimes, conspire to or participate in criminal street gangs, or induce others to join such gangs are subject to federal sentences of between five and twenty years imprisonment, life imprisonment, or the death penalty.**
- * **Mandates that parents or legal guardians of a juvenile charged with a federal offense attend all court proceedings. Should the court find that the parents did not exercise reasonable care to control said juveniles, the parents will have to perform community service. And parents of any juvenile convicted of a federal offense will be liable for a fine of not more than \$10,000 and/or community service.**
- * **Deny federal benefits to lawfully entered aliens currently allowed to receive them, and forces state and local agencies, including schools and health providers, to provide information to the INS about a person's immigration status. It also allows the use of secret evidence to deport someone accused of being an "alien terrorist," authorizes the government to investigate individuals and groups who engage in First Amendment activities in support of the political goals of organizations deemed "terrorist," and permits the summary deportation without hearing of non-citizens convicted of a long list of crimes.**
- * **Creates an unprecedented \$22.68 billion "Violent Crime Reduction Trust Fund" to finance this crime legislation. The trust fund includes \$3 billion in funding for the construction and operation of regional prisons. This money would only be available to States which agree to impose the federal sentencing guidelines, mandatory minimum punishments and pretrial detention mandates on the States, requiring changes in many of their sentencing and detention laws.**

CONCLUSION

If the crime bill passes into law, we will, as a society experience a rapid and frightening loss of constitutional rights. Given the already disproportionate treatment of African American and Hispanic males in the criminal justice system this bill can particularly be viewed as an attack on people of color. Treating kids as young as 13 as adults in the criminal justice system is a crime. Warehousing children into training schools and boot camps will not solve the problem of juvenile crime. What input do we have into the content of these training schools and boot camps? The regimentation and militarization of young people choosing boot camp over a jail cell does not seem to be working. Based on a theory that combines a militaristic approach toward discipline and control with incarceration the boot camps are more inclined to enrage, dehumanize and disempower young people than to inspire positive motivational change.

The prison industry is one of the fastest growing industries in the U.S. today. Imagine a future that replaces our fading industries, be they military, defense, automobile or textile, with prisons.

This ill-conceived bill will not make society any safer. It is based on fundamental errors that have long been the basis of our criminal justice system. Despite the rise in death penalties, the longest prison sentences in the world and the tripling of the federal prison population in the last decade, crime and violence continue.

Center For Constitutional Rights, 666 Broadway (7th flr), New York, NY 10012 212-614-6464

TO VOICE YOUR OPPOSITION TO THE CRIME BILL PLEASE CONTACT THE FOLLOWING:

Democrats

Biden (DE), Judiciary Chair 202-224-5042

Kennedy (MA), Subcommittee Chair, Immigration and Refugee Affairs 202-224-4543

Kohl (WI), Subcommittee Chair, Juvenile Justice 202-224-5653

Metzenbaum (OH), 224-2315

Durenburger (MN) 224-3244

Republicans

Hatch (UT) ranking 224-5251

Thurmond (SC) 224-5972

Simpson (WY) 224-3424

Leadership - House

Foley (WA), Speaker 202-225-2006

Gephardt (MO), Majority Leader 202-225-2671 202-225-7452 (FAX)

Bonior (MI), Majority Whip 202-225-2106 202-226-1169 (FAX)

Hoyer (MD), Caucus Chairman 202-225-4131

Leadership - House Republicans

Michel (IL), Minority Leader 202-225-6201 202-9461 (FAX)

Gingrich (GA), Minority Whip 202-225-4501 202-225-4656 (FAX)

Army (TX), Conference Chairman 202-225-7772 202-225-7614 (FAX)

McCullum (FL), Conference Vice Chairman 202-225-2176

Leadership - Senate Democrats

Byrd (WVA), President Pro Tempore 202-224-3954 202-224-8070 (FAX)

Mitchell (ME), Majority Leader 202-224-5344

Ford (KY), Majority Whip 202-224-4343

Mitchell (ME), Conference Chairman 202-224-5344

Leadership - Senate Republicans

Dole (KS), Minority Leader 202-224-6521 202-224-6721 (FAX)

Simpson (WY), Asst. Minority Leader 202-224-3424 202-224-1315 (FAX)

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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**.

Who Are "New Afrikans"?

"We embrace the name and concept 'New Afrika' because that's what We are. Our Nation is primarily a racial, cultural, and social fusion of various Afrikan ethnic groups and Nations - the Ewe, Yoruba, Akan, Fante, Hausa, Fulani, Ibo and several others - into one, unique Nation.

"'New Afrikan' reflects our identity as a Nation and a people - a Nation and a people desiring Self-Determination. New Afrikans have been called 'Colored Americans,' 'American Negroes,' 'Black Americans,' and 'Afro-Americans.'" NAPO sees that all of these terms confuse a unique New Afrikan Nation with a 'common history, language, economic life, consciousness manifested in a community of culture.' Just as other New Afrikan nations appear today, fused together in the struggle against slavery, colonialism and imperialism in Afrika (Zimbabwe, Namibia, Mozambique, etc.) and the Caribbean (Jamaica, Haiti, Grenada, etc.), We exist as a New Afrikan Nation in North Amerika.

"'New Afrikan' reflects our purpose as We desire freedom, self-determination and independence. By stating We are New Afrikans, We clarify We want to be independent from the amerikkkan Empire. We want land and National Liberation. We no longer want the ruling class of the amerikkkan Empire to determine our political, economic, socio-cultural affairs. NAPO sees that a People who do not control their own affairs is subject to genocide. When We control our own destiny We can determine our political, economic and socio-cultural affairs in the interests of our survival and development.

"Crystallizing our identity as New Afrikans helps us understand our reality as a colonized Nation and what We need to do to be free rather than being confused looking for the system to free us. As New Afrikan Freedom Fighter Assata Shakur stated:

"They have oppressed us for 400 years. They haven't let us live in Amerikkka. They haven't let us be citizens. They haven't let us have justice, equality ...so, if they don't want to let us be free as amerikkkans - then We'll be free as New Afrikans."

"'New Afrikan' also recognizes our direction to build a NEW society based on new values. We reject the socio-economic system and values of our oppressors. We want to create a revolutionary, progressive, humane society where exploitation of humans by humans is eliminated and all can live in dignity, peace, respect. As conscious New Afrikans, We work now to transform ourselves and our Nation from the decadent death-style of oppression to the lifestyles of liberation. We can't wait for sovereignty to rebuild liberation and survival institutions. Collectivity, cooperation and community as opposed to selfishness, egocentrism and rugged individualism are Afrikan values that must be resurrected in New Afrikans.

"We are New Afrikans. We are a Nation. We will be free. NAPO will work to assert our identity, purpose and direction to continue the legacy of our ancestors; for our own progress and the future of generations yet unborn. Let us surface the New Afrikan Nation for ourselves, all Afrikans and all humanity."

reprinted from *By Any Means Necessary!*