

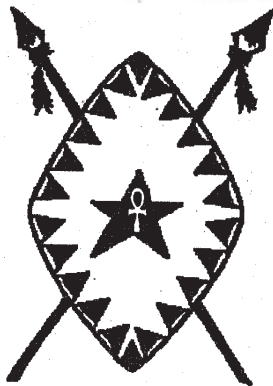
CROSSROAD

VOL. 9, #2

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Woodcut by Laura Whitehorn



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Anti-imperialist Political Prisoner, Laura Whitehorn, began her freedom on August 6, 1999, after serving 14 years in federal prison. Laura is coming out proud and defiant! She has been steadfast to her political principles, and a tireless activist and organizer throughout her imprisonment. She has broken down the prison walls of silence through her writing, her wonderful artwork, and her passionate efforts to maintain personal and political friends over all these years. She has built support for all political prisoners, with deep dedication to the freedom of the Puerto Rican Prisoners of War and to Mumia Abu Jamal. Laura has been a backbone for the efforts of prisoners inside to build HIV peer support and education programs. As a lesbian activist, she has defended gay rights inside and out, and engaged in political dialogue with the gay and lesbian community on many issues dear to her heart.

A revolutionary in spirit and action, Laura has challenged racism, colonialism, sexism and homophobia for more than 30 years. As a student anti-war and anti-racist activist, she helped build a liaison between white anti-imperialists and the Black liberation movement. She was committed to the victory of the Vietnamese nation and was part of a women's trip to Vietnam in the post-Vietnam war period. Solidarity with the oppressed has motivated her life. Laura's commitment to building a militant revolutionary movement led her to go underground as part of an armed organization that claimed responsibility for bombings of U.S. military and governmental targets. She was arrested in May, 1985, and was tried as part of the Resistance Conspiracy Case.

***Celebrate Laura's freedom!
Honor Laura's courage and sacrifice!
We welcome Laura back home!***

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Excerpt of letter from Mafundi Lake, 7-1-99

i used to wonder why liberation forces always had splits after achieving independence. It happened in Cuba, South Afrika, Angola, Zimbabwe, Haiti, etc. In most cases where you have Afrikans and people of color fighting against racial (white) oppression after the success of the struggle against white oppression they almost immediately begin fighting among themselves. This is basically a "class war." i am beginning to better understand that. i can envision the same thing happening within the Afrikan liberation struggle in this country. There are very distinct and very deep class divisions within the Afrikan liberation movement that are being ignored, but will definitely have to be addressed.

You have the "house nigger"/"field nigger" syndrome manifest within the Afrikan liberation movement. There are different and distinct class interests, and this results in different class perspectives, different class values and different class goals and objectives. These differences require different strategies and different methodologies.

i know i find myself in constant disagreement with most of the people who are most visible and vocal within the Afrikan liberation struggle. Everyone claims to be the grassroots, but who really are the grassroots? What is the grassroots? Who serves the interests of the grassroots? Is there a distinct grassroots interest? Are grassroots interests primary or secondary? Is there a distinct middle-class entity within the Afrikan liberation movement?

i was trying to analyze the fact that most of the wrongfully convicted Afrikans on and off Death Row are invariably rescued by white folks. These nameless and faceless Brothers/Sisters who are illiterate, friendless, poor and often mentally impaired, never seem to draw the interest of the Afrikan liberation leadership. Is it because of the lack of publicity and thus a lack of glory for them?

i have been very upset that the Afrikan liberation movement has been silent and invisible in regard to Lachesha Murray's case (the 11-year-old Sister in Texas who was sentenced to 25 years in prison). Where was the outrage of the Afrikan liberation movement? Gary Tyler in Louisiana has been in prison since he was 15-years-old (1974) and for some arcane reason the Afrikan liberation movement's so-called leaders decided to drop his case! They also dropped Hugo Pinell, Ruchell Magea and others—including myself.

Ruchell and Hugo have been fighting in and out of prison for over 40 years! If 40 years in prison doesn't qualify a Brother for support there is something fundamentally wrong with the Afrikan liberation movement. If being incarcerated for 25 years -- since he was 15 years old, and incarcerated as a result of a racist-terrorist attack on school children riding a school bus, doesn't qualify Gary Tyler for the support of the Afrikan liberation movement, something is fundamentally wrong with that movement.

There are over 1 million incarcerated Afrikans and thousands are on Death Row — but only a chosen few are recognized and supported by the Afrikan liberation movement. Andrew Young, when Ambassador to the U.N., said that there were tens of thousands of Political Prisoners in America, but the Afrikan liberation leadership says that there are less than a hundred! Yet, they would villify Andrew Young....

Relentlessly, Mafundi

CORRECTION

On the cover of our last issue, We gave the wrong date for the birth of **James Boggs**. Boggs was born on May 28, **1919** in Marion Junction, Alabama, which is just 14 miles below Selma. He was active in labor, black power, youth, and environmental movements throughout his adult life. He authored **Racism and the Class Struggle, The American Revolution: Pages From A Negro Worker's Notebook**, and **Revolution & Evolution in the Twentieth Century**, co-authored by *Grace Boggs*. After coming to Detroit in 1938, Boggs became active in the union movement, the Marxist movement, and the black movement. He was married to Grace Boggs, with whom he worked continually on critical causes with organizations such as Save Our Sons and Daughters (SOSAD), We the People Reclaim Our Streets (WEPROS), and Detroiters Uniting. James Boggs died on July 22, 1993.

(source: Untold Tales, Unsung Heroes: An Oral History of Detroit's African American Community, 1918-1967. Elaine Lazman Moon, Wayne State University Press, 1994.)

Thoughts On What We Are Becoming:
A Discussion Paper

“The beginning of wisdom is to know
who you are — draw near and listen:
We are the people of the day before yesterday,
and the people of the day after tomorrow.

The world is our village —
what is good for the world is good for us.”

Introduction

1. This paper calls into question the terms and concepts that We use to identify ourselves, e.g., “black,” “white,” New Afrikan, American, African-American, etc. Whatever your present identity, it ain’t static, but a thing in motion and evolving, influencing and being influenced by all social phenomena, as things change, as the old fades away and new things arise. No matter how you define your goals and interests (e.g., for national self-determination, to “smash the white race,” to overthrow capitalism, to liberate women, gays and lesbians, etc.), all of these require the self-transformation of each individual and of each group, toward greater philosophical, ideological, social homogeneity — one world, one people — not withstanding the diversity that will remain (since life would come to an end without the (non-antagonistic) struggle of “opposites”).

2. Even now, We must use, in various ways, some of the differences as means of evolving into the “New People” that We are becoming. i still have a need (no matter how uncomfortable i feel) to speak from an identity as a New Afrikan (a nationality, not a “race” or “color”) Communist (socio-political consciousness) because of the boundaries within which We exist and the need to have a present identity that distinguishes me/us from the enemy — but, at the same time, i must begin to develop a new orientation for the present identity. That is, We must continue to organize on the basis of particular identities and interests as the best means of gaining strength and character, necessary to transform the particular into the general.

3. For example: A) Our identity as a people (New Afrikan) lies at the center of the struggle for self-determination — choosing political destiny requires a specific socio-political consciousness. As We struggle as a people for resolution of our problems, We need an identity that distinguishes us from the forces of evil, which symbolizes our need to move beyond the boundaries of U.S. political-economic structures and its bourgeois/capitalist values and morality. Our evolving identity must inform our new politics and the new socio-economic structure that We need in order to realize ourselves as a New People;

B) “New Afrikans” must continue to struggle as a people — yet trans-

form the meaning and goals of the struggle so that even as a new “national identity is shaped, it comes to be characterized by consciousness, and not by “race” or “color,” and the interests of “New Afrikans” are expressed as the common interests of all peoples (i.e., an end to all forms of exploitation and oppression). Afrikans in the U.S. may or may not “Free The Land” or otherwise realize a “national independence” as presently conceived — but liberation in any form, for any of us, can only come through a challenge and overthrow of capitalism, imperialism, and patriarchy.

It’s really “anti-capitalism” and “pro-socialism” that sit at the center of the identity of the New People — straight-forward challenges and abandonment of the capitalist way, and anything short of this is insufficient, and part of what’s passing away, e.g., Afrocentricity, multiculturalism, and New Abolitionism.

4. Afrocentricity and multiculturalism are both essentially forms of an “ethnic pluralism” that doesn’t critique and abandon capitalism. They join the “New Abolitionism” as petty-bourgeois tendencies which vacillate and fail to cross the boundaries of bourgeois hegemony. (Those who want to challenge “whiteness,” “abolish the white race,” or “overthrow white supremacy” must begin to explicitly name and challenge capitalism, and not continue to omit naming it and instead use such “neo-radical” language as “to challenge, disrupt, and eventually overturn the institutions and behavior patterns that reproduce the privileges of whiteness” — underlying all these is CAPITALISM! “Whiteness” is not the cause, and to merely challenge “whiteness” without an explicit challenge to capitalism is actually a way to continue enjoying privilege while claiming to reject it. It won’t work if one tries to make “the destruction of the white race” central to the destruction of capitalism, rather than making the destruction of capitalism central to the destruction of “white privilege” — “whiteness” is to capitalism, what the shadow is to an object — you won’t destroy the object by trying to destroy the shadow.)

5. Identities based on so-called “race” or skin pigmentation are increasingly inadequate and are fading away. Identities based upon nationality are better, but these, too, will lack and fade if the nations that We claim don’t abandon and challenge patriarchy, capitalism and imperialism. At bottom, the way that We come to identify, as individuals, as groups, as a New People, is and will best rest upon what We believe about ourselves and relationships to other people, and to nature — upon what We do in and for the world.

Part One

1. Who are We? How do We define ourselves — especially, how do We define ourselves in relation to others? Does raising questions such as these draw us into a form of “identity politics” that can divide us, and diminish the struggles around “more important” issues? Only if We fail to see the interconnectedness, and interdependency of all issues, and give a **n**arrow definition to our “identity politics” which tends to isolate one aspect of who We are (e.g., one’s “race,” gender, or profession) from all other aspects, and attempt to make that one aspect the sole focus of one’s socio-political energies.

Of course, knowing who you are is at the “center” of anything and everything that you struggle for — any problem that you have and seek to resolve; any vision that you want to realize — but, who you are is a combination of many elements, is constantly reshaped and influenced by literally all social phenomena — no single aspect of who you are exists in isolation from all other aspects. As best We can, We must begin to define an identity (a “label” if you will) that incorporates all aspects of who We are... that takes into account all of the social phenomena that acts upon us, and upon which We, too, act....

In this sense, We are dealing with an “identity/politics” — but in a broader, more complex, and far more dynamic and evolving context than that in which We generally perceive the issue....

2. i’m trying to discuss a concept of “identity” that is based upon what We all have — or should have — in common; upon a set of psycho-socio-economic characteristics that define our common interests, and inform our jointly arrived at and pursued solutions to all questions arising from the struggle to end all forms of oppression and exploitation, and to build a socialist society. (e.g., questions as to why We don’t have, and how We can have, FREE public transportation; an end to environmental destruction; an end to the high cost and widespread unavailability of health care; people’s control over insurance and pharmaceutical companies; people’s regulation of the air waves (t.v. and radio) and phone communication and public utilities — literally any and every issue that We face in our daily lives is related to the way that We define — or should define — our identity and our interests.)

3. i’m trying to discuss an identity — a concept of identity — that is characterized by (one’s) politics (and a concept of politics that characterizes (one’s) identity; where “politics” comes to be understood by everyone as not just what “they” do in D.C., or at the state capital, or at city hall, but what every individual does or fails to do about all things presently left to “the politicians”).

4. “The people of the day before yesterday” are essentially characterized by the socio-economic orders that they developed, on the basis of the conditions under which they lived. We refer to these orders as “communal” or as “primitive communism” — where there were no concepts of “ownership” or of “private property” in the major means of social production, and the people shared in the work and the fruits of the social means of production — no person or group was exploited or oppressed by another person or group (i.e., for reasons of gender, “race,” or class)

5. “The people of the day after tomorrow” must create a contemporary form of communal society, where differences between people aren’t used to rationalize exploitation; where all of the people again “own” and share in the fruits of the social means of production, and participate in the major decision-making — where all people enjoy the rights to FREE education, health care, and all other major social services....

6. The struggle for a new identity (individual and collective) is a reflection of the process of becoming New People, with new values, a new moral-

ity, and new social, economic, and political consciousness. It's not just about what We call ourselves, but about the kind of people We want/need to be; about the way We want to live, to produce and distribute the goods and services that sustain our lives. It's about shaping new ways of relating to each other and to nature — urging each other to think about and discuss such new relationships, rather than continue to rank commodities above people....

We're engaged in struggle today not only because of things and ideas that We stand in opposition to, but because there are things and ideas that We are/should be struggling to realize -- what We want for ourselves and our children and all those that come after us, everywhere in the world. All of this is about "identity," knowing that what We fight too depends on who we are; that who We ought to be, informs what We (should) fight for....

(End of Part One)

Owusu Yaki Yakubu

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From Death Row, U.S.A.:

Zolo Azania Fights U.S. Violation of International Law

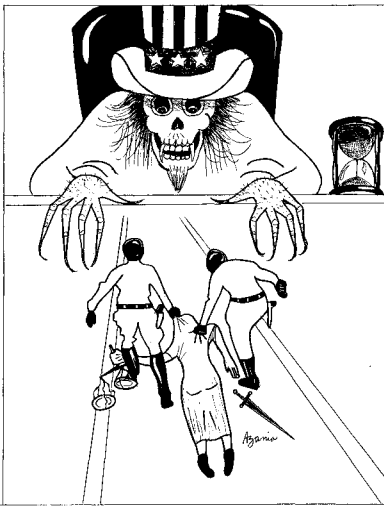
EACH imposition of the death penalty in the U.S. violates international human rights law (e.g., the Second Optional Protocol to the International Covenants on Civil and Political Rights). However, when Zolo Azania was sentenced to death, the U.S. committed a more heinous act, violating international humanitarian law (the law of war, e.g., the Geneva Convention), which prohibits the imposition of the death penalty upon combatants in liberation movements.

Who is Zolo Azania?

Anyone having read the pamphlets written by Zolo (e.g., Who Is The New Afrikan?), or having read any of the articles he's written for publications in the U.S., India, Cuba, and Africa, may be tempted to say that Zolo Azania is a writer — but that's not entirely true.

Anyone having seen Zolo's oil paintings, or any of his art used as illustrations in books written by others, may believe that Zolo is a visual artist — but that's also not entirely correct.

Zolo Azania uses the written word and visual art as weapons of war — as instruments that not merely call attention to himself, but raise the political awareness of his people, and draw the attention of the world to their fight for self-determination and independence from the imperialist hegemony of the U.S.



Zolo Azania has been on Death Row in Indiana for seventeen (17) years, and many opponents of the death penalty don't know who he is. Using the racial vocabulary of U.S. politics, Zolo is one of those "blacks" who are four (4) times more likely to receive the death penalty than a "white" convicted of the same offense.

However, Zolo is not one of the "common criminals" on Death Row, U.S.A. — criminals who should receive the support of death penalty opponents simply because: 1) the death penalty is prohibited by international law; 2) its application in the U.S. is class-based, "whites" and "blacks" from the ranks of the poor fill the cells; 3) its application in the U.S. is "race"-based, and Afrikans make up a disproportionate 42 per cent of those filling the cells. The death penalty in the U.S. is a tool of capitalist-imperialism, and used as a tool of state terrorism and repression against all classes and nationalities within U.S. borders.

Some people think that they know Zolo Azania as a "nationalist," because he is a Conscious Citizen of the Republic of New Afrika (RNA), commonly re-
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ferred to as the historic “black nation” within U.S. borders. And, in this respect, too, even other RNA Conscious Citizens, and supporters of the New Afrikan independence movement, don’t really know who he is.

Zolo Azania is not a “nationalist” as that term is commonly (and incorrectly) used in the U.S. — he is not a “narrow” bourgeois nationalist; he’s not blinded by “skin analysis,” patriarchal ideology, or homophobia. By definition, all Conscious New Afrikans are “revolutionary nationalists,” i.e., non-racists, anti-sexists, anti-capitalists, socialists, and internationalists.

Zolo Azania is someone who should never have been sentenced to death because his status as a freedom fighter (and not a “common criminal”) should have protected him not only from being sentenced to death, but from trial and conviction in the criminal courts of the U.S.

At the time of his arrest, trial, conviction and sentencing, Zolo Azania was an armed combatant in the RNA’s struggle for self-determination against the colonial and racist regime of the U.S.

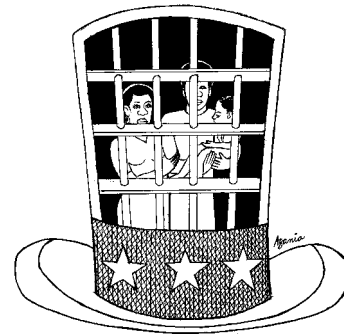
As explained by his attorney, Michael Deutsch, Zolo, like all liberation movement combatants, should not have been “treated as a criminal, but given a protected status so that when the hostilities have ended [they] can be repatriated. So the use of the death penalty to [kill] a freedom fighter violates every basic principle [of international humanitarian law] in spirit and letter, of the protections afforded anti-colonial combatants.”

The use of the death penalty upon Political Prisoners and Prisoners of War is a flagrant aggravation of its use as an “ultimate” weapon of state repression and terrorism, in this case, a weapon used against liberation movements.

Zolo was sentenced to death for his 1981 arrest for bank expropriation and the killing of a police officer. During his trial, he declared himself a Conscious Citizen of the RNA — an oppressed nation held in colonial bondage by the U.S. In the appeal of his conviction, Zolo petitioned the Indiana Supreme Court to recognize his protected status as an armed-anti-colonial combatant, under resolutions of the United Nations’ General Assembly (e.g., #3103), and the Geneva Convention — all part of the body of customary international law relative to the humane treatment of anti-colonial combatants — which, among other things, protects the combatants from imposition of the death penalty.

As was the case with other liberation movement combatants in the U.S. who have made similar presentations, the courts followed the fallacious policy of the U.S. government, which denies the political status of Political Prisoners and Prisoners of War, choosing to criminalize their acts. This policy is designed to delegitimize the struggles of oppressed peoples, and to prevent recognition of the political and protected status of the combatants in the eyes of their peoples and in the eyes of the international community.

With all its propaganda about being the “leader of the free world” and of the need to uphold law, the U.S. is the world’s foremost violator of interna-



tional law in nearly all fields — and it's time that it be called to account!

The international community (You!) has the right, the duty, and the means, to force the U.S. to observe its obligations under the Geneva Convention and Article 4, Paragraph 1, of Protocol 1, to that Convention, as well as its obligations under the Second Optional Protocol to the Covenants on Civil and Political Rights: 1) the U.S. is bound to observe customary international law, even where it's not a signatory to specific instruments, as when it demonstrates in practice that it doesn't dissent from the principles of those instruments; 2) under the concept of erga omnes, all states have an obligation to intervene when another state fails to afford the protections due under the Geneva Convention, i.e they must protest the violation, and demand immediate cessation of unlawful practices or omissions.

Those who know Zolo Azania are broadening their campaign to force U.S. compliance with international law relative to the treatment of combatants captured in the course of the war against the colonial and racist U.S. regime. We call upon you to join this campaign.



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o.y.y.

from the Principles and Programs of the CROSSROAD Support Network:

CROSSROAD (CR) is a non-sectarian newsletter produced by and for New Afrikan Prisoners of War and Political Prisoners — captured combatants who were and are engaged in protracted people's war against the colonial domination of the United States, for national self-determination and independence of the Republic of New Afrika.

CROSSROAD also provides a perspective on the repression of the mass movement and genocidal/colonial violence waged against the masses of New Afrikan people.

Although CR's primary focus will be on the independence struggle of New Afrikan people, We won't neglect the struggles of Native Nation, Caribbean, Puerto Rican, or North American and other Prisoners of War and Political Prisoners. The "crucial point" for CR is the common struggle against all forms of oppression inspired by U.S. and world capitalist-imperialism, and for self-determination and socialism.

CR has a strategic objective to: 1) increase awareness and active support inside of the geo-political borders of the U.S. and 2) to increase awareness and active support among the community of nations — for the release of captured combatants; and for the struggle of the Republic of New Afrika for national self-determination.

CR is not in opposition to, nor in competition with, other vehicles or organizations which serve the nation and its captured combatants. Because CR is produced by POW's, there are many things that We can't do by ourselves. However, We are confident that others will commit themselves to helping us go where We can't, and to helping us do and say what We can't, i.e., the eventual development of a CROSSROAD Support Network....

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“Why Hip-Hop Is Dead”: A Response

“The best art is political,
and you ought to be able to
make it unquestionably political and
irrevocably beautiful at the same time”
Toni Morrison

In the May-June, 1999, issue of CROSSROAD, Lethal Wonder’s article, “Why Hip-Hop Is Dead,” seems to have been mis-titled, because the point of the piece is not that Hip-Hop is “dead,” but that it’s misled.

Lethal Wonder tells us that: Creativity (which he says characterized the birth of the Hip-Hop art form) has been replaced (as the dominant tendency) by a “gangster mentality,” and that there’s an “other side” to this mentality — people who “stayed underground with their head in the sand,” claiming to “keep it real,” but failing to re-direct the “misguided flow” of Hip-Hop.

So, the point would seem to be: How to get Hip-Hop back on a “correct” path? Further dialogue and practice might include:

1) Study and discussion of dialectical contradiction (the unity and struggle of opposites), and class struggle (struggle between groups which have opposing interests and forms of social consciousness).

Lethal Wonder’s article points to a struggle between opposing tendencies within Hip-Hop, and the fact that he wrote the article shows that he’s part of one of these tendencies, and engaged in struggle with the others. Re-directing Hip-Hop requires an understanding of each tendency and of tendencies in general — what they are; why they exist; how to distinguish between them and come to know friends from enemies; how tendencies inter-relate and develop; how the old ones fade away and how new ones arise. (For example, study to learn how the “gangster mentality” actually arose from within the “creative” tendency, and didn’t just fall from the sky or have itself imposed upon Hip-Hop from the outside. All development begins from something that already exists, just as the re-direction of Hip-Hop has to begin within its progressive tendency, as Lethal Wonder exemplifies.)

Within Hip-Hop, there are “right” (reactionary) and “left” (progressive) tendencies at either extreme of the political spectrum of its artistic expression, and a “middle” (vacillating), composed of the majority of artists, who are influenced and guided by one extreme or the other.

Based upon Lethal Wonder’s article, We could refer to the “creative” tendency as the “left” (i.e., it was “original” and was initially characterized as progressive); the “gangster mentality” could be called the “right”, and the “underground” could be referred to as the “middle” (e.g., the “keep it real” and “We’re just showing what’s happening in our communities” line actually vacillates between “right” and “left,” but ultimately only serves the “right,” because it doesn’t move beyond reflecting what is, when what We need are projections of what ought to be!

Lethal Wonder calls attention to the present dominance of the “right,” and is part of the struggle to overturn it and help give rise to a new dominant

tendency — not a “return” to something that once existed (which ain’t possible, anyway). But, even educators need educating, and those who claim to be part of the struggle to create a new, progressive tendency within Hip-Hop must themselves engage in study as well as struggle. (It should be mentioned: This ain’t just about Hip-Hop, but is also about the overall absence of a left/radical/revolutionary political expression — about the “death”/misdirection of revolutionary politics being characteristic of the society as a whole.)

2) Study, discussion, and practice — to enhance artistic creativity with a partisan political perspective, in service to the revolutionary interests of all people, to end oppression and alienation, and to create a new, socialist, society.

This should begin with efforts to understand that ALL art is political, and partisan, whether implicitly or explicitly. (“Political” in the fundamental sense, as serving people/society -- everything that has anything to do with helping people to live better, and to have control over every aspect of the lives that they live.) All art serves either oppression and alienation, or self-determination and the full development of each person and of the society.

Artistic expression ain’t just about being “creative” (creativity doesn’t take place in a vacuum — it’s influenced by and influences all other human activities, and doesn’t occur without conscious direction. The only question is: what form of consciousness will inspire the artistic creativity, progressive, or reactionary). Nor is artistic expression simply about having “fun” or “getting paid” (especially when these take place absent an informed social practice based in the needs and interests of the community). Artistic creativity is a social responsibility.

It’s not a mere lack of creativity that accounts for the misdirection of Hip-Hop that Lethal Wonder challenges, but a lack of partisan political perspective. Even those with a gangster mentality can be “creative,” but they can’t continue to cling to that mentality — expressing the crass materialism, individualism, and decadence of the capitalist ethic — and also serve the people. The gangster mentality expresses an essentially petty-bourgeois outlook -- it’s the mentality of illegitimate would-be capitalists -and capitalism is the enemy of the people.

Therefore, when Lethal Wonder calls for the re-direction of the “misguided flow” of Hip-Hop, that’s a call for creative energy inspired by a new set of values, a new concept of artistic responsibility, and a new political perspective with principles that are informed by a revolutionary communal, spirit.

As the new direction is charted — for Hip-Hop and all other artistic production — questions such as these must be asked and answered in ways that correspond with the new spirit: What kind of social vision does the art promote? Who does the art serve? How does the art help people to understand themselves and their social responsibilities? How does the art help people to understand social problems and create solutions for them?

Charting the new direction requires those who share the desire and the vision to reach out to each other, share ideas and learn from each other, find ways to work together and promote each other, and to join as artists with those who work in other fields of socio-political practice.

Charting the new direction also requires the challenge and persuasion of those who remain misguided — most of whom aren't die-hards, but ones who simply don't know, haven't had an alternative presented to them, and who would choose the new direction if given the opportunity and the assistance.

Misguidance stems largely from not having sufficient and proper information, so charting the new direction also requires artists to study and discuss the history of revolutionary artistic expression, and the socio-political role of artistic expression in general. Since We're talking most specifically about music here, such study should begin with the development of the musical forms (e.g., spirituals, blues, jazz), but should include literature, with particular attention to the "Harlem Renaissance" and to the "Black Arts Movement" of the 1960s and '70s. It should go without saying that the present "misguided flow" is due in large part because the present generation of artists has no knowledge of and isn't linked to the vibrant tradition of radical artistic expression — which brings me to my last point.

When Lethal Wonder spoke about those "underground" with their heads in the sand, he could just as easily have been referring to those of my generation who have not exercised sufficient initiative to link themselves, their ideas, experience, and present practice, to the youth, allowing their art forms and social practice to develop without continuity with respect to the kind of partisan political perspective that was being developed by the artists and other political activists of our generation.

It should be noted, tho, that this ain't just a "generational" problem — it's a general political problem, resulting primarily from our own bad theory and practice, and secondarily from the efforts of the enemy to divide radical forces and their vision from the majority of our people, to break continuity between the old and the new, to "arrest the development" of the people's movement. All of us must share the responsibility for reaching out to each other, sharing and learning from each other, working together, as one people, to free the process of our development, to wage revolutionary struggle, and begin to create a new, socialist society.



Re-Build!

Owusu Yaki Yakubu

The Coup: An Appreciation

This is long overdue; i've been digging this group since Comrad-Brother Sanyika Shakur wired me up years ago. i was still flyin' high off of 2PAC mentioning the 'New Afrikan Panthers' on his first release, *2Pacalypse Now*.

So here We are, closing out 1999, PAC's dead and The Coup have released three of the baddest albums of the decade: **Kill My Landlord, Genocide & Juice**, and the latest (now a year old!) **Steal This Album**. They have proven Wu-Tang wrong: it's not cash that 'rules everything around me', but consciousness!

The Coup have consistently called for socialism & armed struggle to attain it. This is light years beyond all the rap, hip-hop or any other music i've heard in my years of intense music appreciation. The next best thing this listener can think of is *Sedition Ensemble's* 1981 album, Regeneration Report, an obscure, no doubt impossible-to-find, but beautiful jazz-in-flected piece. This record was overtly ideological, with references to Assata, Ho Chi Minh, and global imperialism.

Anyway, revolutionaries gotta be concerned with all the people, and ya gotta be extra concerned with the upcoming generations, 'cause it's only by imparting the need for revolution & socialism to the generations coming after us that We'll be able to build a new society. From One Generation To The Next!

The facts of life for the majority of downpressed people are often the subjects in The Coup's music. The 'hooptie' is the subject of "Cars & Shoes"; "The Repo Man" deals with exorbitant interest rates and prices the poor are forced to pay for consumer items and creature comforts, sometimes only to see them get jacked in the end by avaricious thug corporations. In "Underdogs," Boots runs down a litany of life for the poor:

*There's certain tricks of the trade to try
to halt your defeat
like takin' tupperware to an all-you-can-eat*

*returnin' used shit for new sayin' you lost
your receipt
and writin' 4-figure checks when your ac-
counts deplete
then all your problems pile up about a
mile up
thinkin' 'bout a patnah you can dial up
to help you out this vile stuff
whole family sleepin' on the futon
while you clippin' coupons
eatin' salad tryna get full off the croutons
crosstown the situation is identical
somebody gettin' strangled by the system
and it's tentacles...*

In "20,000 Gun Salute," the work-
ing class is urged to solve it's problems:

*let's get masses
wage struggle as direct classes
on just how We gon' overthrow
they bitch asses
give whiplashes
from the force as We make it tight
and ignite
the flames of takin over daily life
make it a right
to have food, threads, and homestead
and Pac Bell won't ever
cut your phone dead (We own it!)
but these businesses
that love payin'
minimum wage
ain't gon' let you take they shit
unless you showin' a gauge
and if you do it by yourself
they gon' put you in a cage
if you in a rage
please meet me
on the same page with a
20,000 gun salute!
get rowdy like you got a substitute!
this slugs for Newt! - shut yo mouth don't
pollute!
army of down muthafuckas, shit We tryna
recruit!*

The frustrations and inevitability of
struggle are summed up in "U.C.P.A.S.":
*Undas, Cops, Pigs & Shit
they be gettin' on my nerves
i'm 'bout to have a fit
i need land, a place where no money is
spent*

i'll kick back, and live life immaculate

Often, The Coup write with a macabre sense of humor, but the subject is always the predicament of the masses. One of my favorites is "Breathing Apparatus," where Boots finds himself in the hospital and tells E-Roc:

Lean over the bed and lemme whisper close

watch these muthafuckas with the stethoscopes

u know i'm uninsured up in this B-I-OTCH my medical plan was to not get shot...

E, please don't let 'em fuck with my breathing apparatus!

All the while in the background, We hear "Paging Dr. Kevorkian" over the P.A. In the end, We're given the prognosis for Boots: "It seems like he's lost his will to pay."

We gotta be about holding up groups like this as shining examples of the values We're trying to promote, so check out DJ Pam the Funkstress, Boots & E-Roc. The battle for consciousness is raging amongst us; i hope you put The Coup in your arsenal.

**Re-Build!
hondo**

**booking info: eprodellis@aol.com;
202-265-1560;
website:www.illcrew.com/thecoup/**



The Symbolism of the SSC Logo

We have received several questions concerning the symbolism of the logo of the Spear & Shield Collective.

The logo, and the name of the our Collective, derive from a statement by Assata Shakur: We need shields to protect us, and spears to penetrate our enemies.

Our logo has three components: 1) the spear and shield; 2) the black star; 3) the Ankh. Each of these components can be interpreted in more than one way, from concrete and abstract levels — but all interpretation is done on the basis of the dialectical materialist outlook. the logo represents the core of the philosophy, ideology, and theory upon which our practice is based.

The Spear and Shield: Can be seen to represent political and military, armed and unarmed forces and forms of struggle. However, both the spear and shield are weapons, and used more or less simultaneously by a single body. Usually, the spear is considered as "offensive" and/or as "primary," while the shield is most often considered as "defensive" and/or as "secondary."

From our perspective, the characterization of any phenomena as primary or secondary can only be temporary, relative, and never as absolute — what is primary at one time, in one place, under one set of conditions, can become secondary at another time, in another place, and under a different set of conditions. Thus, in a particular engagement, the spear (an "offensive" weapon) can be used in a defensive/secondary capacity, and the shield (a "defensive" weapon) can be used in an offensive/primary capacity.

The Black Star: Represents, for us, the people (i.e., those who share our ideas and goals), and socialism.

The Ankh: Represents, for us, dialectical materialist philosophy, with its application to the material life of the social order. The Ankh originated as a symbol of the union between male and female, and the generation of offspring — capturing the essential material elements and philosophical principles of the development of life and society. **(Atiba Shanna)**

For Fear of Being Called*(Marilyn Buck, Feb. '96)*

*In Peru a demonstration
against a rise in bread prices
is stopped
because of threats to denounce
those who demand bread
as terrorists*

*How greatly We fear language
now an electric cattle prod
to drive us into corners
where We cower
for fear of being called
terrorists or communists or criminals
How did We allow those who don't give
a damn about how We
the 80% live or die
to rob us of our language
to intimidate us into cutting out
our tongues
and binding our limbs into lameness?*

*How can We be more afraid
to be called terrorists
than to die in the dark
with no one there to speak
for us?*



Marilyn Buck continues to believe that if one is concerned about and desires justice, liberty and equality one must join with anti-imperialist struggles worldwide.

**Movement Forces Clinton to Announce
that He Will****Free Puerto Rican Political Prisoners**

by Ralph King

In a stunning political event with historical implications, Bill Clinton announced on August 11, 1999 that he was freeing 11 of the 15 Puerto Rican Political Prisoners and Prisoners of War held in U.S. cages. Most of the 15 prisoners, allegedly members of the FALN (*Armed Forces of Liberation*) and the Macheteros (*Machete Wielders*), have been in prison for 19 years. The event was greeted with great jubilation by the prisoners, their families, supporters of Puerto Rican Independence, and opponents of U.S. repression. However, as the details emerged it was clear that the offer was less than what We had thought: Clinton, two-faced and lying as ever, had placed so many conditions on their release that the prisoners had, as of August 20, the date this article was written, not yet accepted Clinton's offer to come out of prison.

Brief History

Puerto Rico is a colony of the United States. Invaded by U.S. troops July 25, 1898, Puerto Rico remains one of the last colonies in the world. The U.S., which always protests the violence used against it, apparently had no trouble at all colonizing the nation of Puerto Rico with extraordinary violence. For this the U.S. is condemned by the United Nations almost every year. However, the New York Times, Washington Post, and other papers forget to carry the story, leaving most inhabitants of the empire unaware of these events.

And since 1898 Puerto Ricans have, of course, been fighting back by fighting. The armed struggle against the United States has taken many forms and has always been brutally repressed by the U.S. For example, in 1950, Oscar Collazo and Griselio Torresola tried to assassinate President Truman, with Torresola being killed in the effort and Collazo being sentenced to death, commuted to life in prison. In 1954 five other Nationalists, in-

cluding Lolita Lebron and Rafael Cancel Miranda, attacked the U.S. House of Representatives, shot guns into the air, waved Puerto Rican flags, and shouted slogans of liberation and independence. These acts served, as the Nationalists had hoped, to bring the plight of Puerto Rico to the attention of the world, but also landed the Nationalists in prison on 75-year sentences.

In the mid-70s, the Committee to Free the Puerto Rican Nationalists was organized by a group of Puerto Ricans in Chicago. Among the members of this committee were several people who would later become the political prisoners that Clinton is allegedly allowing to go free. In 1979, in an extraordinary development, then president Jimmy Carter freed the Nationalists unconditionally in large part in response to the work of the Committee to Free the Puerto Rican Nationalists.

The current Puerto Rican Political Prisoners and Prisoners of War were arrested in a series of busts starting in 1980. Many refused to participate in their trials, maintaining that they would not be part of a trial held in a colonial U.S. court. Although the prisoners are supported by international law in this position, the U.S. ignored all of that and sent the prisoners away on sentences that reached over a 100 years. Most were convicted of "seditious conspiracy," the same charge that the racist apartheid regime in South Africa used to send Nelson Mandela to prison for 27 years.

To Free the Prisoners

By now, there have been these aspects of support and struggle on behalf of the prisoners: (1) 100,000 petitions have been signed throughout the world; (2) every Puerto Rican politician and virtually every religious leader have called for their release; (3) 10 Nobel Prize winners, including Bishop Desmond Tutu of South Africa and Coretta Scott King, have also called for their release; (4) hundreds of thousands of people have demonstrated for their freedom; (5) all three Puerto Rican congress people have lobbied for their freedom.

As a result of this, Clinton says he will release the prisoners. He will do this if the prisoners: renounce violence; apologize for their actions; agree to leave behind four of their comrades, the ones most hated the U.S. government; and agree not to associate with any convicted felons. This last condition is especially bogus. Because the independence movement has been so widely criminalized this condition effectively would prevent any of the 15 who come out from participating in the movement. To further point out the preposterousness of this condition, consider the fact that many of the 15 are relatives. In fact, two are sisters! What does non-association imply in all of these cases?

Resolute as Always

So, what has been the response of the prisoners and their supporters? First and as always, they continue the struggle even after 19 years in the worst hell holes in this country, including control units at Marion and Florence. Not one has yet indicated that she or he will come out under these circumstances. One of the prisoners, Elizam Escobar, has called Clinton's offer "insulting" and stated that the difficulty with the association condition specified by the White House would interfere with his ability to participate in independence politics.

Supporters have been equally forceful. Clarissa Lopez, a daughter of Oscar Lopez-Rivera, called the offer "an injustice." Lolita Lebron, one of the Nationalists, proclaimed: "These are shameful demands. The President has insulted the dignity of the Puerto Rican nation and those who fight for its liberty."

Your Help is Needed Now

It is not clear now how these events will play themselves out. What is clear is that the prisoners are remaining firm and courageous and, as always, are leading the fight to free themselves. Whatever they choose to do, we must support them as national heroes and heroines. Nothing can take away the sacrifice they have made for their country and for the world-wide struggle against U.S. hegemony. We on the outside must do all we can at this crucial juncture to support them as energetically as possible. People are urged to flood the White House with requests for unconditional release for all 15 Puerto Rican political prisoners. The phone number is (202) 456-1111; the Fax is (202) 456-2883; and the email is WhiteHouse@President.gov.