

Combat the Colonial System of Criminal Injustice

by
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STOP MASS INCARCERATION!

In recent years, in response to the new phenomenon of mass incarceration, a new prison movement has begun developing in this country. Families, students and others have begun to mobilize against inhumane conditions and life-shattering sentences, and for alternatives to incarceration.

Why is there mass incarceration, particularly in communities of color? When Black Panthers like Geronimo ji Jaga or Romaine Fitzgerald were locked down, there were 200,000 prisoners in the whole country. Because the government got away with locking up those freedom fighters, the number of prisoners has increased tenfold!

Step inside any courtroom or any prison in the US, and the class and colonial nature of this society becomes immediately evident. As Mumia Abu Jamal has pointed out, the over 2 million people in U.S. prisons equal "the combined populations of Dallas and Detroit... There are 30 countries with smaller total populations than the U.S. prisons." The majority of them are Black and Mexicano/Latino, almost all of them are poor.

For example, African Americans are 13% of drug users, but 35% of those arrested for drug possession, 55% of those convicted and 74% of those sentenced to prison!

In response, families have begun to organize against mandatory minimums. But at the same time, politicians backed by the increasing clout of prison guards, have begun to routinely deny parole, further swelling the prisons even as crime rates plummet.

So this electoral campaign, despite the irrelevance of the choice between Tweedledum and Tweedledummer, is a moment of great historical impact. The forces of repression and colonialism, across the spectrum of criminal injustice issues, is seeking to beat down and beat back the people's resistance. Now it the time for us to redouble our efforts, to make our movement broader, deeper, stronger and more intense. We need to unite the people in motion around all these issues — the criminalization of youth and our communities, the death penalty, three strikes, prison slave labor and privatization, political prisoners, police brutality — and forge lasting unity in struggle. The need for common and connected action is evident. When they started locking up political prisoners in the 70's and 80's, their long sentences and harsh conditions were exceptional. Now, the lengthy terms without hope of parole and the control-unit conditions are becoming generalized to the prison population as a whole. In a society that locks people up for life over a slice of pizza or possession of a macadamia nut, it becomes impossible to argue that the death penalty should be abolished in favor of life imprisonment. What's more, the families victimized by police abuse are often the very same whose members face

STOP POLICE BRUTALITY!

In recent years, in response to police killings, beatings, and racism, a widespread movement against police abuse and for police accountability has sprung up. Police brutality has been a problem for years, but people are increasingly fed up, and fired up. Under Bush, we had the beating of Rodney King and the L.A. rebellion. Clinton added 100,000 more cops and armed them with heavier weapons and armored personnel carriers. Cops killed Margaret Mitchell, Tyisha Miller and Ricardo Clos in southern California; Diallo and Dorismond in N.Y. — and they all walked off scot free. Cities have been rocked by police scandals — murders for hire in New Orleans; planted evidence, brutality and perjury in Philadelphia and Los Angeles; torture in New York City, racial profiling in New Jersey. The Washington Post recently won a Pulitzer for after the fact coverage of the record number of shootings by DC police. The Detroit press did a similar expose of that city for having the highest per capita ratio of killings by police of any PD in the U.S. Louisville's newspaper recently did an expose of the unreported use of force, including deadly force, by police in that Kentucky city. Tens of thousands of people have been marching, picketing, even using civil disobedience, across the country. The response of police departments and the politicians who back them has been to stonewall.

In NY, for example, the mayor and police commissioner Howard Safir have rejected calls from the US Civil Rights Commission for more effective discipline.

STOP THE DEATH PENALTY!

Recent years have begun to see a major change on the question of the death penalty. Illinois was forced to declare a moratorium after more than a dozen people on Death Row in that state were exonerated and released, mostly thanks to independent investigations by journalists and students.

Public opinion surveys in CA show a majority favoring change on the state's death penalty, if not outright abolition. State legislatures in New England have recently voted to abolish the death penalty. The U.S. is one of the last countries in the world with the death penalty. South Africa and Russia both recently abolished the death penalty, after oppressive regimes were overturned.

But here in the U.S. last year, where racism still predominates in the application of the death penalty, we had a chart-busting number of total executions. Hundreds more — too poor to afford good lawyers — are locked on Death Row awaiting execution, even though studies show that most people sentenced to death eventually have their sentences overturned. Yet Congress passed and Clinton signed the Effective Death Penalty Act to speed up executions and deny people the appeals to prove their innocence. There was a massive outcry and appeals for clemency at Texas prepared to execute Shaka Sankofa, an arguably innocent man convicted of a capital offense while still a minor. Yet Bush, who has presided over more than 130 executions as governor of Texas, and will probably allow 15 more to proceed over the coming weeks until the presidential elections, sealed Sankofa's fate.

third strikes, whose children are being treated like hardened criminals for talking back to a teacher or throwing a spitball at school. It's time to rebuild and fight back! If you're sick and tired of being ground down in the dirt, of scraping yourself off the boots of the cops and the rich, it's time to unite and fight the powers that be! Get your families and friends together, and join us! Demonstrate at the Republican and Democratic Conventions, and use those mobilizations to build on-going resistance in your community. By uniting our struggles, we can create a pole of attraction to begin to involve people who have been demoralized and demobilized by the feeling that there is nothing we can do. The fact is, the rulers are being placed once again on the defensive by the people's movement. Remember that all their power comes from the people they oppress, and all their wealth comes from the people they exploit. They are vulnerable to our resistance and our struggle for liberation. As we take back our own strength, it weakens them. They know it, and so they fear Mumia Abu Jamal, Leonard Peltier, and all of us who are prepared for uncompromising struggle and resistance. *Fight for the future!*

FREE ALL POLITICAL PRISONERS!

A world-wide movement has developed over the past few years around the case of Mumia Abu Jamal, a former Black Panther Party political prisoner on Death Row in Pennsylvania. Mumia has been a graduation speaker at many colleges in the past two years, and hundreds of thousands have marched in the U.S. and other countries to demand justice and stop his execution. He's one of hundreds of people locked up for their effective resistance to this rotten system. Native Americans like Leonard Peltier and Standing Deer, Puerto Ricans like Haydee Beltran and Oscar Lopez Rivera, North American anti-imperialists like Marilyn Buck and Linda Evans, New Afrikan freedom fighters like Dr. Mutulu Shakur and Sekou Odinga, anarchist resisters like Rob Los Ricos in Oregon have been singled out by the state for long sentences and isolation from other prisoners because of their effective resistance to this system. But every time any prisoner develops a political consciousness, the Bureau of Prisons or Department of Corrections locks them up in Special Housing/Control Units AKA "the hole." Moreover, despite the broad support for Mumia Abu Jamal, both major political parties this summer have identified their conventions with his execution — the Republicans are being hosted in Philadelphia by Gov. Thomas Ridge who has signed two death warrants on Mumia and is seeking the vice-presidential nomination. The Democrats in turn will be chaired by Ed Rendell, former prosecutor and mayor in Philadelphia, who has responsibility in both the deadly bombing of the MOVE house and the death sentence imposed on Mumia Abu Jamal.

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PART'S PERSPECTIVE:

STRIKE BACK AGAINST THE EMPIRE!

The contest for who will be elected emperor to succeed Bill Clinton is on. There are life and death issues facing people in the United States and around the world. There is a fierce struggle emerging about the future of this country and the planet. But you wouldn't know it from the presidential campaigns or candidacies of Republican Gov. George W. Bush or Democratic V.P. Albert Gore.

Bush, like Gore, supports NAFTA and the WTO. Gore, like Bush, supports the death penalty and the militarization of police. Both parties support US-financed counter-insurgency war in Colombia. Both candidates back making NATO into an aggressive military alliance, projecting Euro-American armed might into southwest Asia. Neither will restore the 'social safety net' or defend the rights of immigrant workers. They disagree slightly but politely about how swiftly to eliminate the deficit or how many and

WHO PAYS THE PIPER, CALLS THE TUNE

The Democratic and Republican Parties exist to organize a mass base of consent for the policies of the rulers. The two parties alike dance to the tune of their corporate masters. That tune calls for privatization of every public resource. It demands the ever-increasing exploitation of working people, the planet, and even the biological basis of life itself. That dance requires ever-larger applications of force and coercion, whether through police, prisons, border control, the military, or the counter-insurgency operations of covert agencies. The corporate media further define and enforce careful limits to 'dissent.' Similar dynamics are at play in Canada and "Fortress Europe."

And so people's struggles are emerging where they must — in the streets. This means that for the first time in a generation, there is the possibility of a true mass movement in this country, an opening towards a revolutionary transformation of consciousness on a vast scale. But to ignite and sustain that change requires a break with the empire. We must begin to define the 'wedge issues' of liberation — the points that will begin to split people away from the rulers, their parties, and the pro-imperialist consensus.

For far too long, 'wedge issues' have been the effective tools of the rulers and the reactionaries, dividing oppressed and working people against each other along lines of nationality, race, gender or sexual orientation. We must overcome those divisions, not by ignoring or denying them, but by building conscious solidarity. We must recognize that privilege and oppression grow out of the same soil, and that for each of us and all of us, ending our oppression means recognizing and abandoning the privileges that ensnare us.

THE NEED FOR UNITY AND SOLIDARITY AGAINST THE EMPIRE

What are the bases of a program that can pull together the campaigns and issues that have begun to galvanize this new generation of opposition into a full-fledged and sustained resistance to the empire? PART has for some time been putting forward five banners for our movement, and is raising them again, this time in the context of the demonstrations that are coming up at Republican, Democratic and Reform Party conventions.

DE-COLONIZATION

Self-determination for all oppressed people

- Respect Native treaty rights
- Independence for Puerto Rico
- Recognize Hawaiian Sovereignty
- Reparations for the descendants of Africans forcibly enslaved
- End the domination of the Mexican people on both sides of the border
- Amnesty for all political prisoners and prisoners of war in the U.S.
- World-wide Jubilee forgiveness of debt

- Repeal NAFTA, block the Multilateral Agreement on Investment, and end the WTO

DEMOCRATIZATION

Community control of police and of education —

- End police impunity!
- Restore the civic rights of convicts
- Protect labor organizing and workplace rights, including the right to strike
- Freedom of speech and conscience
- End media monopoly
- Amnesty for the undocumented
- Replace corporate domination with cooperative economics

which taxes to cut. The two are so similar because they represent only an ever-narrowing divergence in tactics for maintaining and extending the U.S. empire

Why is there such a studied disregard of real issues? Why do the major parties refuse to even recognize, let alone absorb, opposition to mass incarceration, corporate globalization, or militarism? It is a strategic response to that opposition by the rulers, in a period in which the system is less capable of tolerating any dissent. Despite the 'record economic growth' they brag about, and the vast increase in wealth for the wealthy, the rulers know how fragile the current economic and political system has become. Their profits depend on super-exploitation and the denial of democratic rights in every corner of their global empire, including inside the US itself.

DE-MILITARIZATION

End all secret wars and covert operations

- Dismantle the National Security Council, the CIA, the FBI, the School Of the Americas, and all agencies of international repression
- Ban all nuclear power, nuclear weapons, and weapons of mass destruction in the US
- Demobilize U.S. troops and bases around the world.
- End all military aid to regions of conflict

DE-CRIMINALIZATION

Provide alternatives to incarceration, for restorative justice

- Abolish the death penalty
- Community controlled treatment and rehabilitation of non-violent drug offenders
- Decriminalize consensual sexual activity and use of intoxicants
- End prison privatization, control units and the exploitation of prison labor

DEFEND HUMAN RIGHTS AND ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE

Health care, child care, housing, food, education and employment are human rights

- Support a woman's right to abortion and to control her own body
- Reverse deforestation and global warming
- End reliance on fossil fuels
- Decolonize the Bio-sphere: Ban the privatization of seeds, life forms, and the human genome.

We need to unite to set the agenda for the "new millennium" on the basis of realizing the goals of a society free of colonialism and exploitation. We urge everyone to come out and protest about any and all these issues at the Conventions, and we urge you to take the opportunity such protests give us to build anti-imperialist unity and conscious solidarity. We must not fail to seize a historical window of opportunity to transcend the barriers of racism, sexism and colonialism that have divided us and allowed our oppressors to maintain their rule.

BUILD COMMUNITIES OF RESISTANCE

The convention protests provide a moment in which we can converge our efforts on an uncompromising basis, with the potential for a tremendous effect on the consciousness of poor and oppressed people and on the balance of power on a global level between the forces of oppression and those of liberation.

Mobilizations to Philadelphia and Los Angeles are important, but they are not ends in themselves. A protest may last a day or a week, but our struggle must continue from one generation to the next. Our task is to use the opportunity the convention protests provide us to build enduring alliances of principle, not opportunism. We must deepen our critique of the system of empire and our own place within it.

We need to use these demonstrations to create something longer-lasting and deeper-rooted. We need communities of resistance that can weather the repression the system will throw at us. Within our neighborhoods, workplaces, kinship and affinity groups, we must counter the divisiveness inherent in an empire based on white supremacy, patriarchy and capitalism. By creating conscious anti-imperialist solidarity and practice, we lay the basis for trust, unity, and a better world tomorrow.

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