

Freiheit für Mumia Abu-Jamal!

German book reveals explosive new evidence in death-row case

http://insubordination.blogspot.com/2006/11/freiheit-fr-mumia-abu-jamal_24.html

by Hans Bennett

“The history of the criminal case of Mumia Abu-Jamal, which is by now almost 25 years old, has been characterized by bias right from the start -- against a black man whom the court denied a jury of his peers, against a member of the economic underclass who did not have a real claim to a qualified defense, and against a radical, whose allegedly dangerous militancy obliged the state to eliminate him from the ranks of society.” So writes German author Michael Schiffmann in his new book *Race Against Death: Mumia Abu-Jamal, a Black Revolutionary in White America* (an expansion of Schiffmann’s PhD dissertation), just released in Germany.

In 1982, Abu-Jamal was convicted of killing white Philadelphia police officer Daniel Faulkner and sentenced to death in a trial that Amnesty International has declared a “violation of minimum international standards that govern fair trial procedures and the use of the death penalty.”

Schiffmann writes that a third person (not Abu-Jamal or his brother Billy Cook) most likely shot and killed police officer Daniel Faulkner on the morning of December 9, 1981. This third person was Kenneth Freeman (Billy Cook’s friend and business partner), who according to the available evidence was a passenger in Cook’s car. Freeman likely shot him in response to Faulkner shooting Abu-Jamal in the chest, and was therefore the black male that six eyewitnesses reported seeing flee the scene moments before other police arrived.

Race Against Death asserts that ballistics almost certainly rule out Abu-Jamal as firing the first shot (into Faulkner’s back), and that much evidence shows that he also didn’t fire the lethal bullet to Faulkner’s head. However, in the very unlikely scenario that Abu-Jamal did shoot Faulkner, it would have been a response to being shot himself and would therefore be justified self-defense. Noam Chomsky writes that Schiffmann’s “careful and scrupulous inquiry into the events and the available evidence brings to light much that is new or was obscured,” and “raises understanding of this painful and critically important case to a new level. Not only his comprehensive research, but also his penetrating evaluation of the background and import, should be the basis for further engagement in the case itself and the intricate array of issues in which it is embedded.”

Building upon evidence presented in the other two books written about Abu-Jamal’s case (Dan Williams’ 2001 *Executing Justice* and Dave Lindorff’s 2003 *Killing Time*), Schiffmann presents new evidence and an entirely original analysis of previously available ballistics evidence.

A New Witness: Photographer Pedro Polakoff

In May, 2006, Schiffmann discovered two photographs on the Internet that were taken by the only press photographer immediately present at the crime scene Pedro Polakoff. The photographer arrived within 12 minutes of hearing about the shooting on the police radio and 10 minutes before the Mobile Crime Unit (responsible for forensics and photographs). This unit still hadn’t taken any photos when Polakoff left after 30-45 minutes at the scene. Upon contacting Polakoff, Schiffmann learned that three of his 31 original shots were published in Philly newspapers at the time, and five others were lost. Schiffmann told me that he “published five of the 26 remaining photos to show the following three points:



“1) The cops manipulated evidence and supplied the trial court with stuff that was simply stage-managed. On Polakoff’s photos, Faulkner’s police hat at first is clearly on the roof of Billy Cook’s VW, and only later on the sidewalk in front of 1234 Locust where it was photographed by the police photographer who arrived 10 minutes after Polakoff!

“2) In court Officer James Forbes claimed that he had ‘secured’ the weapons of both Faulkner and Mumia without touching them on their metal parts in order to not destroy potential fingerprints. However, in the single photo reprinted in the book you can see that Forbes is touching the weapons on their metal parts, and quite a few of Polakoff’s other photos make it clear that Forbes touched and smudged these weapons all over, destroying any potential fingerprint evidence that may have been on them.

“3) The second-most important prosecution witness, cab driver Robert Chobert, simply was not parked in the spot, allegedly right behind Officer Faulkner’s police squad car, where he claimed to have been and from where he claimed to have observed Mumia fire the shot that killed the officer.”

Polakoff’s observations don’t stop there. Schiffmann writes: “According to Polakoff, at that time all the officers present expressed the firm conviction that Abu-Jamal had been the passenger in Billy Cook’s VW and had fired and killed Faulkner by a single shot fired from the passenger seat of the car.”

“Polakoff further reports that this opinion on the part of the police about what had happened was apparently based on the testimony of three witnesses who were still present at the crime scene, namely, by the parking lot attendant in charge of the parking lot on the Northern side of Locust Street, by a drug addicted woman apparently acquainted with the parking lot attendant, and another woman. As Polakoff later heard from colleagues in the media, the parking lot attendant had disappeared the day after, while the drug-addicted witness died a couple of days later from an overdose. Whatever it was that these witnesses saw or did not see, we will probably never know the interesting fact in any case is that neither of them ever appeared in any report presented by the police or the prosecution.”

Polakoff told Schiffmann that he was simply ignored when he repeatedly contacted the DA’s office to give them his account--and his photos--of the crime scene. Schiffmann has informed Mumia’s lawyers about Polakoff’s evidence--who are looking into it further.

No Bullet Traces in Sidewalk

The prosecution claims that Mumia stood over and shot at Faulkner 3-4 times (with only one shot hitting him) while Faulkner was lying on his back. Schiffmann asserts that if this was true, there would have had to have been 2-3 large divots in the pavement (next to Faulkner’s body) resulting from the bullets’ impact. Since photos and police reports do not reveal any damage or bullet fragments in that location, Schiffmann concludes that the prosecution scenario must be false.

While this “missing divots” observation was publicly revealed in 2001 by Mumia’s former lawyers, Schiffmann is the first writer to investigate this further. To support the assertion Schiffmann interviewed a German ballistics expert and was told that “such divots couldn’t possibly have been overlooked.” He concludes: “They were simply not there.” Furthermore, photographer Pedro Polakoff, “emphatically denied that there could be any such divots beneath the blood or anywhere else in the area of the sidewalk to be seen on his photos.”

After asserting the fraudulence of the prosecution’s scenario, Schiffmann goes further and declares that the three prosecution witnesses supporting this scenario must have been lying. Even ignoring previous evidence that witnesses Robert Chobert and Cynthia White falsely testified, “the absence of any bullet traces or bullets in the sidewalk in front of 1234 Locust is irrefutable physical evidence that these two, plus witness Michael Scanlan, did not tell the truth at Mumia’s trial. By that simple observation a central part of the prosecution’s theory is simply blown out of the water and new evidence is on the table thereby for the coaching, coercion and manipulation of witnesses.”

Bullet and Fragments at Crime Scene

Schiffmann’s entirely original ballistics analysis is the most explosive section of *Race Against Death*. Researched for more than three years, this chapter analyzes both the unexplained bullet & fragments found in the doorway of 1234 Locust Street and the copper bullet jacket found on the sidewalk (all a full car-length from Officer Faulkner’s body).

Most likely the bullet shot into Faulkner’s back (traveling upward and exiting slightly beneath his throat) came from the sidewalk behind Faulkner as he was facing northwest towards Mumia and towards the parking lot situated at the northeastern corner of the intersection 13th and Locust where Mumia came from. The logical way for Mumia to have approached the scene was diagonally from northwest to southeast. But the only bullet fragment found in or around 1234 Locust that could have had anything to do with the shot in Faulkner’s back traveled from Northeast to Southwest, at a sharp angle from where Mumia was approaching the scene! Schiffmann shows that even if Mumia had approached the scene in an indirect and awkward way by almost circumventing it first, the bullet fragment in question cannot have come from a shot fired by him at that time.

Schiffmann writes that “this evidence shows that the first shot that hit Faulkner did not come from the direction from which Abu-Jamal approached the scene, could therefore not have been fired by Abu-Jamal, and was thus necessarily fired by some third person, a possibility that the prosecution has always adamantly denied.” Schiffmann told me: “The first key point is that Mumia is no murderer. If he shot at all, he shot to defend his own life, after he intervened at the scene in the first place to protect his brother who had already been beaten bloody.”

“Second, it is very unlikely that Mumia even took his gun out of its holster during that fateful night. What if the destruction of fingerprint evidence -1- on Mumia’s gun (shown

in Polakoff’s photos) was not just negligent, but deliberate? It would mean that the police themselves were the ones who drew Mumia’s weapon (which had been empty apart from five spent cartridges to begin with) out of his shoulder holster.”

The Third Person: Ken Freeman

Schiffmann cites six witnesses (including several who were intimidated by police) that saw someone run away before police arrived, and then argues that this third person was most likely Billy Cook’s business partner and friend, Kenneth Freeman. In the 1995 PCRA hearings it was revealed that Faulkner had a license application in his front pocket (concealed from the defense for 13 years) for Arnold Howard who testified that he had loaned his temporary (non-photo) license to Kenneth Freeman.

Schiffmann explained to me that “Billy Cook’s attorney Daniel Alva told Dave Lindorff (quoted in *Killing Time*) that Cook had told him within days after the shooting that Freeman had been with him that night. There wasn’t the slightest reason for Alva to have done so if it was not indeed true. Lying to journalists doesn’t belong to the duties of a defense attorney, and the assumption that a well-respected member of the Philadelphia legal community such as Alva would do so for no apparent reason makes little sense to me.”

Returning to his ballistics analysis, Schiffmann argues: “A person coming out of the passenger seat of Billy Cook’s VW would have been ideally placed to fire the shot that hit Faulkner in the back and exited through the region below his throat. Faulkner had on a clip-on police tie that was apparently hit right at that clip (since there was blood and lead on it). The tie was found nowhere near 1234 Locust where it should have been found had Mumia fired that shot in Faulkner’s back. Instead, it was on the Northern side of Locust shortly before the intersection 13th and Locust. And this, in turn, means that the shooter must have been on the sidewalk in front of 1234 Locust not in the street coming from the parking lot, as Mumia was.”

Further supporting Schiffmann’s argument are the mysterious circumstance of Freeman’s death. On May 13, 1985 (the same day police firebombed the MOVE organization’s headquarters) Freeman was found dead in a parking lot. Likely murdered by police that day, he was found naked, handcuffed and had a drug needle in his arm. Given the impossibility of injecting himself with the needle while handcuffed, the official explanation for the 31-year-old’s death (heart attack) seems incredible.

“If Freeman was indeed killed by cops, the killing probably was part of a general vendetta of the Philadelphia cops against their ‘enemies’ and the cops killed him because they knew or suspected he had something to do with the killing of Faulkner,” said Schiffmann.

Freiheit für Mumia Abu-Jamal!

Noam Chomsky argues that “Mumia’s case is symbolic of something much broader... The US prison system is simply class and race war... Mumia and other prisoners are the kind of people that get assassinated by what’s called ‘social cleansing’ in US client states like Colombia.”

Schiffmann also feels that Mumia’s case is part of a much larger picture and devotes most of his book to providing a proper historical context. “Determined not to write the typical boring academic tract,” Schiffmann told me: “My book’s not just about Mumia. His case is important because of the larger legal, political, and social issues that his case exposes. I investigate the US constitutional tradition, the history of the Civil Rights and Black Power movements, the horrendous history of urban development in the US tragically exemplified in Philadelphia, Mumia’s extraordinary yet typical history of a Black youth alienated by the false promises the US ‘offered’ for him as a young man of the wrong color, and finally the development of the US into a virtual police state for many segments of the population.”

Schiffmann emphasizes the extreme importance of Mumia’s current battle in the courtroom, but feels that solid legal strategy will only go so far in gaining a new trial. The key will be to exert maximum political pressure from the grassroots in Philadelphia and around the world. A “broad, multi-faceted and democratic mass-movement,” emphasizing that “Mumia is all of us,” must be used to ensure real justice. He told me, “We have kept Mumia alive. Against the odds, we have won the first stage of an uphill battle. Now we must go on all the way and that is to free Mumia Abu-Jamal!”

This review is based on both an exclusive reading of the (unpublished) English language version of *Race Against Death* and the author’s recent full-length interview with Schiffmann about his book and the German movement supporting Mumia Abu-Jamal.

Michael Schiffmann’s book *Race Against Death: Mumia Abu-Jamal, a Black Revolutionary in White America* has just been released in Germany. Schiffmann is still looking for a US publisher. He can be contacted via email: mikschiff@t-online.de. His website is www.againstthecrimeofsilence.de.

Hans Bennett is a Philadelphia-based photo-journalist who has been documenting the movement to free Mumia Abu-Jamal and all political prisoners for over 5 years. You can read his work at www.insubordination.blogspot.com

LACMA: The Oil Museum

By Mark Vallen, www.art-for-a-change.com/blog

The Los Angeles County Museum of Art (LACMA), after receiving \$25 million from the multinational oil company BP (British Petroleum), plans to dedicate a new entry gate and pavilion to the energy Goliath. To be christened the "BP Grand Entrance," the construction is an edifice to big oil and the clearest example yet of the increasing corporatization of the arts in America.

Historically, the largesse of wealthy benefactors has always played a role in the arts, with the names of well-heeled patrons gracing museum wings and collections. But there is something unseemly about naming part of an art museum after a transnational oil conglomerate - especially when considering the increasingly toxic role of oil companies in today's world. President of BP America, Bob Malone, said the donation represents the energy giant's "commitment to the arts" - but scrutiny of the endowment reveals a public relations campaign designed to erase public memory of BP's dirty doings.

BP's contribution will go towards a costly three-part expansion and renovation of LACMA's facilities. The oil leviathan's cash has swollen the money available for the first phase construction to \$191 million. Italian architect Renzo Piano has won the commission to redesign and unify LACMA's expansive site. Billionaire Eli Broad and his wife Edythe gave \$60 million to the overhaul project. The Broad Contemporary Art Museum, to be built just west of the "BP Grand Entrance", will connect to LACMA's existing main wing and will house Eli Broad's collection of modern art. The new LACMA and its edifice to the petroleum industry is scheduled to open Feb. 2008.

In a March 6 article on the oil company's "gift" to LACMA, the LA Times noted that, "Putting an oil company's name on LACMA's doorway brings an unusually high potential for controversy." Indeed! Despite the endless and well-financed public relations spin concerning BP's alleged "commitment to sustainable energy", the fact of the matter is that BP is part of the "OILigarchy" - the rapacious fossil fuel industry responsible for global warming and environmental destruction. BP reported profits of \$22 billion in 2006, and the company currently has an ongoing commitment to increase its oil production by 5% - a policy that must be linked to the crisis of fossil fuel-induced climate change.

BP invests less than 1% of its annual budget in solar and other renewable energy sources - a smaller amount than it spends yearly on public relations and advertising. That fact must be kept in mind, as the "BP Grand Entrance" pavilion will be topped by solar panels allegedly there to help fill LACMA's energy needs. However, the real task of the solar panels is a propagandistic one. BP wishes to pawn itself off as a "green" energy company, and LACMA - for a price - is only too happy to collude.

As the Times noted, BP has paid more than \$125 million in legal settlements in California since 2002. "BP paid the state \$45.8 million to settle a suit over pollution from leaking gasoline storage tanks. Later, air quality regulators sued over leakage of smog-forming chemicals at BP's Carson refinery. BP settled for \$81 million." In 2005, BP's Texas City Refinery exploded, killing 15 workers and injuring 170. U.S. government agencies investigating the blast found that BP's excessive safety and budget cuts had led to the tragedy. More than 1,700 lawsuits have been filed by injured workers, with some 1,200 claims being settled out of court by BP in order to avoid bad publicity. The company has set aside \$1.6 billion to settle cases out

of court. In the wake of the explosion in Texas, the U.S. Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) opened investigations into two of BP's Midwestern refineries, finding the oil giant guilty of violating 39 safety regulations. OSHA issued penalty citations totaling \$2.4 million dollars - BP hopes to settle out of court.

In 2006 BP was forced to shut down half of its oil operations in Prudhoe Bay, Alaska, when the company's worn-out, corroded pipelines began to leak - dumping an estimated 200,000 gallons of crude oil onto Alaskan tundra. On March 6th, 2007, Reuters reported that "Oil major BP's failure to maintain pipelines properly at its giant Prudhoe Bay field was a major factor behind Alaska's worst-ever onshore crude spill last year." Reuters interviewed Thomas Barret, the head of the U.S. Department of Transport (one of the U.S. government agencies investigating the spill), who said: "What was most unusual was to have an operator like BP not maintaining these pipelines to the standards we typically see in the industry."

BP is behind the controversial Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan (BTC) pipeline - the second longest pipeline in the world - transporting crude oil from fields in the Caspian Sea to the Mediterranean Sea. The pipeline runs across the countries of Azerbaijan, Georgia, and Turkey, all of which are conflict zones with notorious human rights records. BP has signed "production-sharing agreements" with the three host governments, neo-colonial contracts that bypass respective national environmental and social laws and place the overwhelming majority of profits in the hands of BP and its partners.

Speaking of oil pipelines in conflict zones, in 2006 BP secretly paid out a multi-million dollar settlement to Colombian farmers who were terrorized by right-wing death squads "protecting" BP's 500-mile long Ocesa oil pipeline. A thousand poor Colombian farmers filed a human rights challenge in the High Court of London, charging BP with benefiting from the bullying and persecution meted out by the rightist militias. A Colombian lawyer attempting to assist the farmers discovered she was on a paramilitary death list, and fled to Britain where she was granted political asylum. While the total compensation paid to the farmers is unknown, it is believed to have totaled in the tens of millions of dollars. Part of the settlement stipulated BP would bear "no admission of liability" for the beatings, death threats, and property damage suffered by the farmers.

Of course BP has a long history in the Middle East, where 70% of the world's oil reserves are found. Western powers

thirsty for petroleum and a need to control the region's black gold have historically resorted to colonialism, the backing of dictatorships, the proliferation of weapons, and as we see today in Iraq - outright war and occupation. During the first week of March, the Anglo-American backed government of Iraq, approved a draft law that will essentially turn over Iraq's oil wealth to American and British companies. The Iraqi oil legislation bill promotes a "production-sharing agreement" that would guarantee foreign companies up to 70 percent of the revenues obtained from exploiting Iraqi oil, giving U.S. and British oil companies the unrestricted right to take oil profits out of the country, rather than reinvesting them in Iraq. The lion's share of Iraq oil profits will therefore go to Shell, ChevronTexaco, ExxonMobil, and yes - BP. The draft law still needs final Iraqi government approval before it can be enacted, but with U.S. and British military might keeping the Iraqi government in power - passage is sure to be a "done deal."

The roots of BP's meddling in the Middle East go back to 1909. Through an agreement with the Shah of Iran, the Anglo-Persian Oil Company (APOC) began to exploit the oil resources of Persia, obtaining petroleum that fed the British war machine during World War I. In 1936 Persia was renamed Iran, and APOC became the Anglo-Iranian Oil Company (AIOC). In 1951 the Iranian parliament passed a bill that nationalized the oil industry, effectively barring British exploitation of Iranian petroleum and causing the Shah - and AIOC - to flee the country. The British then colluded with the U.S. and the C.I.A. to organize the infamous coup that overthrew Prime Minister Mossadeq and his democratically elected government. On August 19th, 1953, Mossadeq was driven from power, the pro-Western Shah was restored, and in 1954 AIOC became known as The British Petroleum Company (BP) - which of course immediately resumed pumping oil out of Iran.

It's not surprising others have taken notice of BP's destructive schemes, and have called for resistance to big oil's sponsorship of the arts. The National Portrait Gallery of London, England, was established in 1856, and it's the repository for some of that nation's greatest historic portraits. The gallery holds an annual portrait competition that has launched the careers of several portrait artists. Since 2004, the competition has been sponsored by BP, and the competition is now known as the "BP Portrait Award."

In response, English artists and environmental activists started a group called Art Not Oil, which seeks to end oil industry sponsorship of the arts. The group's mission statement encourages "artists to create work that explores the damage that companies like BP and Shell are doing to the planet, and the role art can play in counteracting that damage." The misconduct of BP and other oil companies is continually and determinedly exposed through the art exhibits, educational forums and public protests mounted by the artist activists of Art Not Oil. It is time to establish a similar organization in Los Angeles - or get used to calling LACMA - The Oil Museum.

"Vision without action is daydream. Action without vision is nightmare." - Japanese proverb

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Persecuting Panthers

The SF 8 and the Ongoing War against the Black Panther Party for Self Defense

by Kiilu Nyasha

Last year, the Black Panther Party for Self Defense celebrated its 40th anniversary, garnering coverage of its history and the positive impact it had on communities here and around the world. Activities across the country preceded a very successful Oakland reunion that drew Panthers from as far away as Tanzania. Little did we know that the same forces who attacked and destroyed the Party were busy planning still more attacks on its former members. (Note: The BPP no longer exists, but in keeping with our slogan, “once a Panther, always a Panther,” I’ll not be referring to our brothers as “ex-Panthers.”) On Jan. 23, police in NY, FL and CA arrested Francisco Torres, Harold Taylor, Richard Brown, Richard O’Neal, Ray Boudreaux and Henry Watson Jones on charges related to the 1971 killing of a San Francisco police officer – and also charged two political prisoners, Herman Bell and Jalil Muntaqim (Anthony Bottom). They’re both parole-eligible after over 30 years in prison.

Ten brothers would have been arrested had it not been for the fact that one, Ronald Stanley Bridgeforth, has not been seen or heard from in over 30 years and is still being sought. And John Bowman, one of five who resisted a Grand Jury witch-hunt in the case, and one of those who survived torture by the police 30 years ago, is deceased. JB died last Dec. 23 of terminal cancer that went undiagnosed by this medical system until its advanced stage. The FBI literally hounded him to his death and beyond; they sought to open his casket – there wasn’t one; he was cremated – they interrogated family members and the funeral director and they even visited the crematorium voicing suspicions that he had escaped. Unbelievable!

The grand jury resisters – Bowman, Brown, O’Neal, Taylor and Boudreaux – were subpoenaed in 2003 in what was the opening salvo of this bogus case. Refusing to testify, they were jailed for the jury’s duration. Upon release, in view of the Abu Ghraib torture scandal, their own torture, and the ongoing violation of their constitutional and human rights, they felt compelled to alert the public to the similarity of tortures perpetrated behind walls in the U.S. So they founded CDHR and began touring to educate people about COINTELPRO, the USA PATRIOT Act, and this latest witch-hunt.

Earlier persecution of Panthers included the framing of geronimo ji Jaga (Pratt), 27 years in California prisons until exonerated in 1996, winning a subsequent lawsuit; Dhoruba bin Wahad (Richard Moore), 19 years before exoneration and a million-dollar settlement in 2000; and the NY 21, who were all found “not guilty!” Nor can we forget the state’s plot to execute Mumia Abu Jamal, who has been locked on Pennsylvania’s death row for 25 years for a murder he clearly didn’t commit. Not to mention countless other Panthers imprisoned for up to 40 years.

The original investigation of the killing of Sgt. John Young began with the arrest in New Orleans, in 1973, of JB, Taylor and Ruben Scott. Two SF detectives interrogated them and supervised their torture by New Orleans police for several days. The brothers were isolated from one another, stripped naked and handcuffed to a chair, covered with boiling hot blankets and plastic bags tied over their heads threatening suffocation. Cattle prods were used to inflict electric shocks to their genitals and anus, and they were brutally beaten with blackjacks and other objects. Taylor described being kicked in the back of the neck unconscious, then kicked back awake four or five times in an hour. The prolonged torture left the brothers with permanent injuries, including damaged ear drums, chronic pain, knee problems, arthritis and Post Traumatic Stress Disorder such as trouble sleeping and nightmares.

At that time, they made torture-induced confessions, but such “evidence” is neither credible nor legal. So in 1975, a San Francisco judge dismissed the case. It’s outrageous that these same charges are again being brought against eight elders ranging in age from 55 to 71, all of whom now face conspiracy charges for the period from 1968-73. It was during this very period that 41 FBI field offices were advised by a memo from the FBI director to “be alert to have [Panthers] arrested” on virtually any charges they could trump up. This is the same period when Panthers were struggling to meet people’s basic needs through free breakfast programs, clothing drives, health clinics, sickle cell testing, alternative schools, organizing against rent hikes and substandard housing, and advocating for community control of local police to stop them from murdering and brutalizing our people. This resurrected case must be understood through the historical lens of the FBI’s COINTELPRO working in concert with local police departments. These forces, led by J. Edgar Hoover, targeted the Panthers for neutralization (incarceration, assassination or isolation) with an official reign of terror encompassing 1968-1973, or until a clandestine group raided FBI files and exposed its illegal operations.

Under the leadership of the late Sen. Frank Church, hearings were held resulting in passage of the Freedom of Information Act of 1973, allowing individuals to obtain copies of their secret files. This prompted lawsuits against the government and others. For example, I was one of numerous plaintiffs in a wiretap lawsuit settled out of court in New Haven

against the City, the FBI, the Chief of Police and the phone company. Today, that wouldn’t be possible, because wiretapping is legal under the USA PATRIOT Act. By 1973, at least 32 Panthers, including Field Marshall George Jackson, had been killed by so-called law enforcement. The most blatant was the premeditated assassination of Fred Hampton and Mark Clark in Chicago. A million-dollar civil lawsuit was won, but not one policeman who participated in the predawn assault was ever indicted. COINTELPRO

under Nixon regrouped under Bush when Attorney General John Ashcroft’s Justice Dept. began anew the persecution of Panthers. In fact, before leaving office, Ashcroft sought to reopen all cases of police killings dating back to the ‘60s.

Collectively, the San Francisco 8 are a group of Black community activists who served the people in the BPP activities mentioned above. They are fathers, grandfathers and even great grandfathers.

Richard Brown, 65, has worked for decades San Francisco’s Fillmore District. “He was at community meetings at night, on boards, in the neighborhood, working for affordable housing. His job was never 9 to 5,” said Rev. Arnold Townsend, who has known Brown for 40 years. A program coordinator at the Ella Hill Hutch Community Center, he’s also a founding member of the African American Police Community Relations Board and several other neighborhood organizations. “He has a fantastic rapport with the young people,” Jim Queen, a commissioner with the city’s Juvenile Probation Department, told the SF Chronicle. “He grew up there and had a special way with the kids, a stern tough-love way. He demanded high standards and made sure he was always available to them.”

Likewise, the Chronicle noted that Richard O’Neal, 57, “who has two grown sons ... has worked for the past few years at the Southeast Community Center. ... People who work there said they were stunned by his arrest, recalling him as a kind and gentle man who always had a smile on his face and would at times stay late to fix lights or other things.” Veronica Hunnicutt, the dean of the Southeast college campus, exclaimed, “Oh, my God, we’re just utterly stunned. It’s taken us all aback because he is such a nice man. He is a trusted employee who would do anything to help us. I hope they look at all of the information, because this man has been wonderful out here. He would take the shirt off his back to try to help you.”

Ray Boudreaux, 64, a Vietnam vet who resided in Altadena, Calif., was employed for the past 25 years as an electrician for the

and did community work until his arrest. “People come to me sometimes as a peacemaker. And all of that has to do with all of my experience.”

Herman Bell, 59, of Mississippi, and Jalil Muntaqim (Anthony Bottom), 55, of San Francisco, joined the Party in the Bay Area, where they began their long service to the people. Captured in the early 1970s, along with Albert Nuh Washington and Gabriel and Francisco Torres, they were framed for the killing of two policemen in New York City in May 1971. I saw Jalil and Nuh in the San Francisco court when they were arraigned in 1971. In 2007, it’s déjà vu! Their first trial ended in a hung jury. In a second trial, perjured and coerced testimony – including that of Ruben Scott, tortured in New Orleans – resulted in convictions of three brothers, who got 25-life. The trial judge had refused to hear any testimony about COINTELPRO. In April 2000, after 29 years in prison, Nuh Washington passed away from cancer. Herman and Jalil have maintained close ties to their families. In 2000, Jalil was featured in an Essence magazine article on father-daughter relationships. Both

continued to grow and contribute to society despite being locked up all these decades. They earned Bas and MAs, tutored and counseled prisoners, and worked with community activists outside to organize the Victory Gardens Project, the urban-rural connection to plant, harvest and distribute free food to various ‘hoods along the East Coast. This life-giving project enjoyed eight successful seasons. Jalil is

also the founder of the Jericho Amnesty Movement to free political prisoners.

Harold Taylor, 58, was living in Panama City, FL, where he remained committed to his principles and community. He had joined the BPP in LA. In a 2006 interview, Harold described how the FBI “used informants, agents and provocateurs to entrap people.” In fact, the FBI had infiltrated 67 agents into the BPP and deployed 700 informants nationwide. “In 2003 the detectives that were responsible for my torture came to my house to try and question me. I have not been the same since,” said Taylor.

Henry W. (Hank) Jones, 71, of Altadena, a responsible family and community elder, was employed as a real estate appraiser before his arrest. “I [have lived] under the constant threat of another ... incarceration. In essence I have been robbed of peace of mind, life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness,” said Jones when in 2003 he was subpoenaed to testify before the grand jury and resisted.

Francisco Torres, 58, was born in Puerto Rico and raised in New York City. A Vietnam veteran, he’s been an activist since his discharge from the military in 1969 in veterans’ and community affairs and has worked with troubled youth right up until his recent arrest and extradition to San Francisco from Queens, N.Y.

These brothers are being kept in jail needlessly on bails of \$3 million each – reduced from \$5 million! Where are all the wealthy Black entertainers and sports figures who claim to want to give back to their communities? Here’s a golden opportunity for you to give back to our community activists! They present no flight risk, are highly respected members of their communities and should be returned to their families as soon as possible. Equity in property can be used to secure release on bail without any permanent sacrifice of personal or community resources. Hearings will be held in the next weeks to request a lowering of bail for these brothers, making it more realistic to secure their release during these lengthy “conspiracy” hearings. For more information on the SF 8 and how you can help, please go to www.CDHRsupport.org.



Black History

Tulsa Public Schools ain't never taught me shhhh
About it
Yea, I know about Malcolm X
And Martin Luther
What about Sojourner the Truth
And Fredrick Douglas?
See those two names were hard for me to pull
Because your history classes were too full

And the teacher was too busy
Too busy teaching European and Western civilization
To teach my little chocolate ass
About Kenya
Nigeria
Tanzania
Or hell where my name came from
Tunisia

Public school system,
you're robbing me
Of my history
My ancestry

I don't know how I came to be
Where I came from
Because it's sure not Tulsa, Oklahoma
Or Wichita, Kansas

It's sad to know that I don't know who my
Great Great Grandmother

Or Grandfather Be
It's really horrible that I speak Ebonically
Unconsciously

See I don't know who comes before Hugh Maxwell
and Nelly
Because the census of 1920
Didn't care too much for me

Check W for white
N for Negro
No names and birth dates
Just how many are in your household
They didn't care if they misspelled our names
On the United States roll call
Because after all
Who the hell cares?
Where we came from?

See, truly it's about the powers that be
Because they truly have a lot of power over you
And me
If your skin's any shade of brown, black or blue

Taking my history away
Leaving me to believe that my only history
Is that we were once slaves
But fuck that because
My ancestry started way before that
But how can I ever trace it

You made sure I could never find out
About my true roots

I refuse to believe that my ancestry started from a slave
They are a part of my history
Yes indeedy
But baby I want to know
Who gave birth to them
And them
And them
And them
And
What did they do all day?
Because Believe me
Kunta is not the sum of my history

But media
Society
And public schooling
Want me to believe in that American dream
And forget that we were the descendants
Of kings
And queens.
It's the greatest tool of deceiving
And
It's a powerful way to demean the Black Community.

Tanisha Alexander AKA Phenomenally
3/25/07

Dear Editor,

The March-April 2007 issue of *Turning the Tide* contains an article entitled, *From a White Male's Perspective: An Opinion*. The author complains about "Black-on-White bias crimes."

In response, I would like to tell a story: in the 1970s, I worked at a nursing home in Los Angeles. One of my co-workers had a shift that began early in the morning, and he told me how he had once been mugged on his way to work. He said that he could understand that they needed the money, but asked why they had to beat up people.

I took some thirty years figuring out the answer to my former co-worker's question, with the help of W.E.B. Du Bois: they were getting even. White middle-class people take revenge through the criminal justice system, which concentrates on crimes which suburban dwellers tend to associate with people of color and the poor. The author should consider if what he sees as racism on the part of African Americans is really a form of resistance.

Some people may deplore a cycle of retaliation and counter-retaliation, without being critical of the police and the criminal justice system. People of color are angry because of racism, past and present. We have every reason to be angry.

The government of the United States can try to respond to angry people of color through violence and the threat of violence, or it can make concessions to us. Armies and police forces can only do so much. The United States, Europe and Japan need to target global economic inequality. Privileged people in general need to work on giving up privilege.

--Milton Takei, Eugene, OR

Editor's reply:

Although we agree that people of color have every reason to be angry, and that people with privilege, particularly white-skin privilege, have a responsibility to overcome and uproot privilege, oppression and the system of white supremacy, we don't believe that those imperatives justify beatings or "retaliatory" crimes or violence. Retaliation may be morally

justified and strategically sound against a specific perpetrator of injustice, exploitation and racism. It is not justified on the basis of skin color, even in a system based on skin-color racism and colonialism. Anti-colonial revolutionaries of color have always sought to transcend and transform the reactive criminal mentality or narrow nationalism of the oppressed with a strategic revolutionary consciousness, because the former ideologies are self-defeating and ultimately do nothing to eradicate the conditions they are reacting to. The system is reinforced, not threatened, by criminality and by oppressed people directing violence against themselves and each other or against randomly, racially selected individuals. Confusing such reactionary violence with self-defense, or with the strategic application of revolutionary force against the oppressors and exploiters, only serves to deter and disorient people who could undertake a revolutionary opposition to the system of empire.

A.R.A. ANTI-RACIST ACTION NETWORK FOUR POINTS OF UNITY

- 1) WE GO WHERE THEY GO:** When fascists are organizing or active in public, we're there. We don't believe in ignoring or staying away from them. Never let the nazis have the streets!
- 2) WE DON'T RELY ON THE COPS OR THE COURTS TO DO OUR WORK:** This doesn't mean we never go to court. But we rely on ourselves to protect ourselves & stop the fascists.
- 3) NON-SECTARIAN DEFENSE OF OTHER ANTI-FASCISTS:** In ARA, we have different groups and individuals. We don't agree about everything and we have a right to differ openly. But in this movement, an attack on one is an attack on us all. We stand behind each other.
- 4) WE SUPPORT ABORTION RIGHTS AND REPRODUCTIVE FREEDOM:** ARA intends to do the hard work necessary to build a broad, strong movement against racism, sexism, anti-Semitism, homophobia, class exploitation, repression, and discrimination against the disabled, the oldest, the youngest and the most oppressed people. We want a classless society.
WE INTEND TO WIN



Call for the Second Survivors Assembly: "Build a Strong, Independent Gulf Coast Self-Determination and Reconstruction Movement so the People Can Decide!"

In accord with the principle that "the People Must Decide", the People's Hurricane Relief Fund and Oversight Coalition (PHRF/OC) calls for the convening of the Second Survivors Assembly on Saturday, August 25th – Tuesday, August 28th, 2007 in New Orleans, Louisiana. The First Survivors Assembly was held in Jackson, Mississippi on December 8 – 9th, 2005, less than 4 months following the horrific disaster and during the most repressive and emotionally devastating period for Survivors since the trauma caused by Hurricane Katrina. The First Survivors Assembly provided a critical organizing vehicle for the Survivors and helped outline a program for the initiation of a Gulf Coast Self-Determination and Reconstruction Movement.

The First Survivors Assembly was attended by more than 250 Survivors and more than 300 allies from cities in over 10 states throughout the US. The First Survivors Assembly was followed by the "People Must Decide" march and rally on December 10th, 2005 in New Orleans where more than 5,000 people demanded justice, accountability and the right of return. The program developed out of the First Survivors Assembly informed the basic direction of the work of the many social, political, religious and civic organizations, students and progressive legal and technical forces who have become involved in the broad social justice activities around Katrina and Rita recovery and reconstruction over the past 17 months.

However, a major weakness following the First Survivors Assembly has been the failure to solidify a coordinating body to bring about greater cooperation and coordination of the common areas of work of the various groups and campaigns. The Second Survivors Assembly must ensure that such a coordinating body and its role are discussed and put in place as major components of the Reconstruction Movement. The Second Assembly is thus a continuation and further development of a process of self-determination and empowerment of a Black-led grassroots movement for Reconstruction beneficial to all oppressed, working and poor people in the impacted Gulf Coast Region.



The Second Survivors Assembly is being held in conjunction with the 2nd Commemoration of Hurricane Katrina and the convening of the International Tribunal on Hurricanes Katrina and Rita, where the US government will be tried for its various Katrina related human rights violations. This intersection of activities reflects the growing regional, national and international character and political scope of the Gulf Coast Self-Determination and Reconstruction Movement. The peoples of the Gulf Coast need a strong and unifying Black led Reconstruction Movement and program to build and mobilize effective mass based power to bring about massive improvements and changes to ensure a just Reconstruction for the region and people impacted by Hurricanes Katrina and Rita.

Seventeen months after Hurricanes Katrina and Rita, the conditions in New Orleans in particular make clear that the US government does not intend to act in good faith in addressing the needs of the Black majority.

- * More than 400,000 remain displaced;
- * More than 200,000 are under or unemployed;
- * Most devastated housing remains uninhabitable;
- * Government policies systematically deny restitution and rental assistance to renters in all Gulf Coast states;
- * Rents have tripled on average in all devastated areas;
- * Government officials still have not dispersed 98% of recovery funds to homeowners in either Mississippi or Louisiana;
- * While disaster profiteers have made a killing, wages remain stagnant throughout the region;

- * Corporate and government action has destroyed the Teachers, Hospital Workers and Bus Drivers unions;
- * Corporations and other employers have largely excluded Black workers from reconstruction jobs, preferring to ruthlessly exploit unprotected immigrant workers; and the tragedies go on and on.

Over the past 17 months, there have been many, many valiant efforts of resistance to this program of Black ethnic cleansing. However, the resistance has been extremely fragmented and isolated from the masses. While there have many important ongoing areas of work to resist the government and corporate strategy of Black ethnic cleansing, they have not taken on the character of a coherent mass movement for Reconstruction. There is no united front mechanism to work for cooperation and unity around common areas of work. Competition, tensions and divisions among various organizations involved in Katrina work have brought about fragmentation. There have not been

adequate funds and resources to support a solid core of fulltime organizers. The solidarity movement has only developed to the level of a small network of progressive activists and lacks sufficient national and international scope and depth of organization and influence in key social movements like the Black, Latino, women's, labor, youth, student, LGBT, etc., liberation movements. There has been no focus on building a political organization to challenge for areas of political power and control for the Reconstruction Movement.

The Black, oppressed, and working peoples of the Gulf Coast and the movement desperately need a new course of action based on a comprehensive strategy, and they need it now. The Second Survivors Assembly is being called to develop this strategy and build the operative unity needed to execute it.

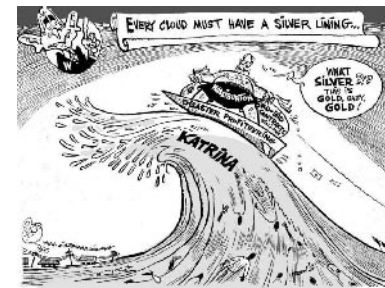
Concept

The Survivors Assembly is a constituent body of the mass of the people most affected by the disaster convened to address a crisis of the state (i.e. the government) and its operations. The crisis being addressed by the Survivors Assembly is the failure of the US government to protect and repair the lives of the people and most impacted communities and vital social institutions affected by Katrina and Rita. In addressing this crisis, the Assembly serves as the venue where the Survivors directly exercise their voice and power to decide the platform and program of the Gulf Coast Self-Determination and Reconstruction movement. In the spirit of equity and human rights, the Assembly seeks to give voice to those most affected by the Hurricanes, this includes the Black, Native, Asian and immigrant communities of the region in particular and the whole of the working class of the area in general.

As an Assembly of the people and communities in the Gulf Coast most impacted by Katrina and Rita, the Survivors must be the main participants in the Survivors Assembly. As the

Assembly is not mainly a place to give testimonies about personal suffering experienced by individual Survivors, participation is geared to involve Survivors and allies in organized discussions, planning and strategizing that develops a program of action. The main outreach will be to Survivor organizations, especially in the Gulf Coast region and the South, to solidarity committees and organizations throughout the country working directly with Survivors and to allied organizations and individuals working in legal, technical and educational areas related to Survivor issues. Survivors will have voice and vote and others will have occasional voice and not vote.

We are also calling on all of the pre-Hurricane organizations of civil society from the Mississippi Gulf Coast Region (including the Alabama, Louisiana, Mississippi, and Texas coastal regions) to come,



participate and make your voice heard. These include trade unions, social clubs, neighborhood associations, women's, youth and LGBT groups, spiritual Organizations (Churches, Mosques, etc.), and community political and cultural organizations. Finally, we are calling on all Katrina and Rita Solidarity Committees to participate. How?

We ask that all Survivors Councils, independent Survivor formations, Gulf Coast civil society organizations, and Solidarity Committee's interested in participating in the Second Survivors Assembly please contact us via email at phrfoc@gmail.com. To plan the Assembly we are seeking to convene an Assembly Organizing Committee. We ask that each above organizational categories above interested in joining this committee nominate a representative and an alternative backup, depending on your capacity, by March 1st. Send all representative information, including organizational name, individual name, phone number(s), email address(es), and mailing address to kaliakuno@gmail.com. The majority of the meetings will be conducted via conference call, however we will try and convene at least one face-to-face meeting in New Orleans during the spring or early summer. (PHRF is seeking funds to cover the expenses associated with advancing this organizing process, however, organizations may have to cover some or all of their own travel and accommodation expenses.)

Preparation Questions

For general programmatic preparation for the Assembly, we ask that each interested organization submit in writing your answers to the following questions (Please note that we will be asking a series of such questions throughout this process to clearly formulate the agenda of the Assembly. Ideally we would like this process to be mass in character to elicit as much input as possible. Our hope is that the organizing process itself will enable us to come to the Assembly with clear strategic proposals in hand that we can collectively discuss, debate, and decide upon.):

1. What are the three most important objectives of your organization?
2. What do you think the three primary strategic focuses of the overall movement should be? How does your organization's goals and objectives relate to these objectives?
3. What organizational form do you believe is best suited to accomplish these goals? A coalition? A network?
4. What are the keys in your organization's estimation to building programmatic and operative unity within the movement?
5. What do you think are the major internal and external challenges confronting the Movement?
6. How do you think the movement should address these challenges?

For more information call (504) 301-0215.

New SDS to Host Summer Action Camps

by
Josh Russell & Jenna Peters-Golden

This summer SDS will be hosting two Action Camps – one in the Northeast and one in the Midwest. Both will happen in the beginning of August. Dates and locations will be forthcoming, and new information will be constantly updated here:

http://www.newsds.org/wiki/index.php?title=Action_Camps.

The action camps will be a place to build concrete organizing skills, push our strategy and vision, deepen our commitment to and understanding of anti-oppression, and learn from ally organizations we are cultivating relationships with. It will be a place to have face to face bonding time with organizers from different states, and to deepen our understanding of what movement building is.



We are currently assembling our list of trainers and facilitators. We will be giving priority to trainers and facilitators who are SDS and MDS members, before we invite guests from ally organizations and other strategy/training organizations and collectives.

The training and curricula of the Action Camps are listed below. If you are an experienced trainer, facilitator, or discussion leader, and would like to step up and participate, please email Joshua Russell brownietime@gmail.com

SKILLS

- +Facilitation
- +Media
- +Organizing Basics
- +Campaign Strategy
- +Sustainable Organization/Chapter Building
- +Anti-Authoritarian Leadership Development
- +Non Violent Direct Action (NVDA)

ANTI-OPPRESSION

- + Anti-Racism 101
- +Confronting patriarchy, heterosexism, class, white supremacy
- +Anti-Imperialism (what does it mean for SDS)
- +Accountability Internally (privilege and interpersonal dynamics, structurally integrating anti-oppression in all levels of SDS)

+Accountability Externally (taking leadership from communities of color, coalition building, humility, how we envision our activism and how we organize on the ground)

VISION AND STRATEGY / INTERNAL SDS

- +Vision – who are we as an organization and where are we going?
- +Strategy - how are we going to achieve our vision? What strategies is SDS going to use to both win our campaigns, and how does that fit into a broader movement building strategy?
- +History - what have we learned from movements past, where are we going? What does the movement look like now? How do we want it to look next year? In 5 years? In 10 years? What kinds of institutions do we need to build to get there? (HINT – MDSers, you would be a big help here!)

Joshua Russell
Students for a Democratic Society, Rainforest Action Network
www.myspace.com/josh_russell
<http://radicalblogs.org/joshrussell/>
221 Pine St, 5th floor
San Francisco, CA 94104
Cell: (203) 246-3951,
Work: (415) 659-0544,
Fax: (415) 398-2732

Canada's Unexplained Military Presence in Afghanistan Misinformation Distorts Public Opinion Surrounding the Occupation

by Shane Martinez, Toronto ARA

Since Ottawa sent military support to the U.S.-led war in Afghanistan, Canadian public opinion has generally hovered in a state of confusion, with many people unsure of exactly why troops have been sent there in the first place.

Now, however, that befuddlement is steadily being combined, if not replaced, with a sense of distrust and agitation.

And understandably so. Canadians largely remain perplexed as to why Ottawa has sent troops to a war that many see as unjustified, and even more seem to feel is still unexplained. No solid reasoning has come from Canadian Prime Minister Stephen Harper to elaborate on the very general statements released this far, which have simply declared that Canada is now “committed” to the war. Despite the rising military and civilian death toll overseas, he claims that Canada now has a “better military” from the experience.

Contrasting with the vague statements from the federal government has been an outcry of opposition from within the armed forces. Conveniently disregarding the large number of innocent people killed in the invasion and consequent occupation, military officials have been quick to respond to anti-war sentiments by offering up the suggestion that the public often forgets about “all the good things” which Canadian soldiers contribute to the reconstruction of Afghanistan.

An intensified pro-military advertising campaign in Canada over recent years has been coupled with corporate media refusing to carry out a critical analysis of the political and economic reality of Canadian troops in Afghanistan. This has fostered the conditions for at least partial support of the war by working class Canadians.

But the attempts at winning over public opinion have not been as successful as some political leaders and military brass had hoped. According to recent polls, nearly 50 per cent of Canadians are opposed to the war in Afghanistan. Public demonstrations against the occupation are still strong, with thousands protesting in the streets throughout 37 cities last October 25, in order to spread the truth about the Conservatives' agenda.

When examined, the often ignored numbers don't lie either. Canada entered a war that aroused international popular condemnation, which is now responsible for the deaths of between 20,000 and 49,600 Afghans, according to Jonathan Steele of *The Guardian*. Canada's participation

in Afghanistan provides essential logistical support to the simultaneous US war in Iraq. Canada's death count in the Afghan “theater of operations” is now at 45 troops, with an additional 150+ injured. In analyzing the number of dead, the math paints a dreary picture that is difficult to understand. Great Britain, which currently has 4,700 soldiers serving in Afghanistan, has had fewer troops killed than Canada, which has fewer than half the number of British soldiers stationed there. Meaning that Canada's casualty rate is double that of the British. Yet these realities do not penetrate Canadian media.

Further displaying the success of wartime propaganda at work, an Ipsos Reid poll conducted on behalf of CanWest News Service this past September showed that of just over 1,000 Canadians questioned, 80 per cent actually believe that Canadian forces are conducting a “vital humanitarian mission” in Afghanistan. Unfortunately, the truth is far different from this common misconception of the Canadian military as being one of peacekeepers eager to reconstruct war-torn communities.

Canadian soldiers in Afghanistan currently have approximately 90 per cent of their work consisting of combat missions, and only 10 per cent allocated to humanitarian projects – a scandalous injustice when it is considered that 1.5 million people in Afghanistan are suffering from imminent starvation. Canada's participation in this US-instigated war helps maintain the annual deaths of 268,000 Afghani children under the age of five who pass away from easily treatable diseases such as diarrhea and

pulmonary conditions.

Since Canadian forces arrived in the region in late 2001 (and actively engaged in on-ground missions beginning in early 2002), the US government has been able to utilize more of its military resources in the invasion and occupation of Iraq. Mainstream press in Canada has been largely silent on this matter. There was an equal lack of publication on the confirmation from Ottawa in April, 2003 that over 50 Canadians were actually fighting in Iraq, placed there via exchange programs with the “allied” forces.

Canadians are faced with the challenge of choosing between blind nationalism and a critical perspective on the economic realities underlying the occupation of Afghanistan, through which Canada has enrolled itself as a military junior partner of the US global empire. As the body count of both Afghans and Canadians grows higher, the facts are becoming clearer as to the true intentions behind the war, and the necessary illusions that cloak them.

The Venice Justice Committee is Hosting a Video Advocacy Workshop

Saturday, June 9th 2007, 11am to 3 pm
2210 Lincoln Blvd, Venice CA 90291
at the Venice Peace & Justice Center

- Learn Video Advocacy & Cop Watching Techniques
- Know your Rights to Witness and Document Police Activity
- Find out What Can Be Done!

Suggested donation \$10 – Absolutely No One Turned Away

Contacts: Calvin 310 883 8865, Karin 310 745 6661, Peggy 310 365 0985

Email: justicecommittee@fastmail.fm
Web: <http://www.justice.wetnostril.net>

Venice Santa Monica Food Not Bombs
venicesantamonicafnb@fastmail.fm

Everywhere is War

by
Michael Novick, Anti-Racist Action-Los Angeles/People Against Racist Terror (ARA-LA/PART)

The words of Haile Selassie of Ethiopia, popularized by Bob Marley, ring truer today than ever:

“Until the philosophy which holds one race superior and another inferior is finally and permanently discredited and abandoned, everywhere is war. And until there are no longer first-class and second-class citizens of any nation, until the color of a man's skin is of no more significance than the color of his eyes, and until the basic human rights are equally guaranteed to all without regard to race, there is war. And until that day, the dream of lasting peace, world citizenship, rule of international morality, will remain but a fleeting illusion to be pursued, but never attained... now everywhere is war.”

Ethiopia itself is now engaged on behalf of US interests in a proxy war in Somalia, one of a number of such proxy wars in Africa. Democrats are falling all over themselves to score cheap political points about ‘ending’ the war in Iraq while agreeing to spend tens of billions of dollars, off-budget, for expanding that war. The US has begun planning for a space-based weapons race with China, has dragged Canada and other NATO countries into the war in Afghanistan, has threatened war on Iran, and has put active duty military forces into Colombia, the Philippines and elsewhere around the globe.

What is less obvious to some is that this permanent state of war exists inside the current border of the U.S. empire-state as well. Because capitalist-colonialism requires constant war, both class war and colonial war. Empire is based on conquest of land and people, and requires the constant application of force to maintain that conquest. Capitalism is based on the ongoing extraction of wealth from working people, and that too, requires the constant application of force to sustain.

The theft of native land is not an artifact of the dead past, but an ongoing reality of the present day, whether in Mohawk country, Florida, Hawaii, Alaska or occupied northern Mexico. When Minutemen whine about the Mexicano/indigenous “reconquista” of California and the US southwest, they are confusing “conquest” with the ongoing and irrepressible resistance of indigenous people to half a millennium of colonialism, whether by Spain or the U.S. It is impossible to understand the US social, political and economic order without recognizing that is, and always has been, a settler colonial empire. Only when we begin to understand that constant and ongoing state of war will we be able to end it.

There are certain key factors of the social and political structure of the US empire which can only be understood in the context of settler colonialism. For example, certain “democratic” aspects of US society are predicated in mass participation by wide sectors of the settler European population in the taking and holding of land, and the enslavement of other workers. Insofar as “white” people can be trusted with weapons to the extent that they use them to defend and extend the empire, the US is the most heavily armed society, individually and collectively, on the planet. To the extent that oppressed people can be diverted into criminality and a “war of all against all,” and away from collective struggle for liberation, guns are quite widespread among the oppressed as well. This is the material basis for the widespread and growing privatization of all aspects of the US Empire, from the mercenaries in Iraq (and New Orleans) to the vending of LAPD services to the highest bidder (such as the donations from tobacco companies to prioritize smuggling of cigarettes for investigation) and the use of private security forces in LA's gentrification zones. This reality is also reflected in the coordinated use of ICE and the Border Patrol, private enterprise detention camps, the federalization of local police forces, and the auxiliary and extra-legal efforts of racist, violence-prone vigilantes to further anti-Mexican and anti-immigrant hysteria and repression.

On May 1, 1886, police in Chicago carried out a premeditated attack and massacre of workers striking, in an anarchist-built movement, for the 8-hour day and a better world. This led to the arrest of eight anarchist labor leaders, and

the execution of four, on murder and conspiracy charges in the death of several cops killed by a bomb. On May 1, 2007, eight Black elders, former members and associates of the Black Panther Party for Self Defense, are locked up on 35-year-old charges, based on torture, of murder and conspiracy in the killing of a San Francisco police officer. And on that same day, Los Angeles police, in a premeditated attack, brutalized and dispersed a peaceful May Day rally of tens of thousands of mainly immigrant workers and families.

What took place on May Day in L.A. was police provocation and police violence. The police spent almost an hour charging at, running motorcycles at, and prodding at people with their batons trying to provoke a response and incident. They also clearly targeted the media in their violence. They were in combat mode, heavy-duty riot gear, and carrying out military type maneuvers from early on, like sharks circling, because they “smelled blood” from the moment the turnout proved to be so much smaller than last year. LAPD has been frustrated for over a year, since last March 25. The protests then were so massive, that the police were so totally outnumbered as to be utterly irrelevant and impotent to contain or even harass people on either March 25 last year or at either demo last May Day. What's more, people had a sense of their own power, and a new fearlessness. This was a very dangerous development for the Empire, which depends heavily on the coerced “consent” of oppressed and exploited people whose fear convinces them that revolution would be too costly or doomed to failure, and who seek instead to cut the best deal they can with the Empire. The empire has spent the ensuing year trying to re-install that fear through raids by ICE and through unleashing vigilante violence and a city-by-city reaction promoting police involvement in immigration enforcement. The LAPD actions on May 1 fall into that context.

Although Chief Bratton is now making noises about how some actions were “inappropriate,” it's clear from what happened that a high level command decision had been made in advance to attack and shut down the rally as soon as it was clear that turnout, though substantial, would not be overwhelming. From the start, the police refusal to permit the entire march route meant that demonstrators were divided and stretched out up and down Vermont having to walk along the sidewalks. Even along the main permitted march route, the whole street was not shut down, so that cars were turning and crossing along and across the march route and the marchers had to stop for lights, etc. This prevented the marchers from building any sense of massiveness and domination of the streets, or of creating a community of solidarity and resistance among the totality of marchers and other participants. Thus the police were able to hem people in as we gathered in and around MacArthur Park.

They immediately began to carry out their feints and run their wedges, skirmish lines and encirclement tactics, trying to intimidate and aggravate people. They sought to establish the idea that the streets belong to the police by virtue of their firepower and their military tactics. Their political intent was to terrorize the community at large and the politically active immigrant sector in particular. In the wake of last May 1, they wanted to make people think twice about going into the streets or even going to rallies. Their intent was to try to **-7-** re-establish fear and a

sense of weakness or vulnerability among people becoming conscious of their own strength. These were psychological operations, carried out by a department that has always had close ties to military intelligence and the CIA.

We need to counter the narrative that “a few trouble-makers” were the source or cause of the violence. Militarized, political police -- an occupying army trying to reassert its authority over both the terrain and the people -- were the source of the violence. This will also counter the fall-back Bratton position that it was few “bad apples” or overzealous cops “over-reacting” to being hit by “rabble throwing things” who marred an otherwise proper and justified police action.

It's time for a counter-offensive, using this blatant exposure of the police state to call into question both Villaraigosa's attempt to build up the police forces in LA to protect gentrification, and Bratton's intention to get ratified for another 5 year term to “complete his unfinished business.” Testimonies of people who were assaulted by cops, provoked or ridden up on with motorcycles and jabbed with billy-clubs, the footage of cops attacking, beating and kicking media people, needs to be assembled and presented to the public, to the City Council, etc. This can also set a context for community-based organizing for self-defense.

The contrast between last year -- when the massive turnout disciplined itself happily and asserted its strength and power and collective solidarity and will without incident or injury -- and this year, -- when the police provoked and abused people and then carried out both targeted and indiscriminate violence -- should make clear to all that the coercive powers of the police are the problem, not a solution.

For far too long, the imperial war on the people has been one-sided. But as the Bush administration has come to rely increasingly on militarization and privatization, the beginnings of a new popular offensive are taking shape. The inability of the US empire to impose its will militarily on the people of Iraq or Afghanistan has shaken the will and unanimity of the ruling elite, threatened the morale and capacity of US military forces, and inspired people all over the world to redouble their resistance to the Empire.

For the first time since COINTELPRO and the promotion of reactionary Islam by the imperialists in the 1970s, imperialism is once again on a strategic defensive globally and potentially inside the continental borders of the empire. This is why the state has resurrected the discredited case against the SF 8, trying to use it to legitimize torture within the colonial criminal justice system just as it has internationally with Guantanamo and secret renditions. By linking the defense of political prisoners like the Eight and Mumia, with defense of immigrants and detainees and of GI resisters, we can begin to lay the basis for a fight-back that will strip the empire once and for all of its air of invincibility. We can overcome the defeatism that has plagued the popular movements since the defeats of the 1970s and 1980s. As the anti-colonial struggles of indigenous, African and other people of color begin to reassert themselves by any means necessary, they will once again intensify the contradictions and class struggle inside the settler population. Resistance is fertile!

Anti-Racist Actions in May

Ashanti Alston Speaks

Thursday, May 10

National Co-Chair of Jericho Amnesty Movement,
former Black Panther political prisoner rare West Coast visit

LA Premiere, new video on Mumia Abu-Jamal: Framing an Execution

Thursday, May 17

Narrated by Danny Glover
Both Events at the Southern California Library for Social Studies
6120 S. Vermont, between Slauson & Gage

Legacy of Torture: Free the SF8 Video, show & benefit

Thursday May 24, Cal State LA

For more information on all, call 310-495-0299

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TURNING THE TIDE

The People's Spirit is Greater Than the Man's Technology!

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**Anti-Racist Action-LA/People Against Racist Terror
PO Box 1055* Culver City CA 90232* 310-495-0299
www.antiracistaction.us*antiracistaction_la@yahoo.com**