

The Truth Behind the Leimert Park Confrontation

Militant Black Riders help kick racist Minute-Klan out of the 'hood, bring the message of armed self defense before the whole world

by General T.A.C.O. (Taking All Capitalists Out), Black Riders Liberation Party

The new generation Black Panthers, the Black Riders Liberation Party, led 500 people in a frontal confrontation against the Ku Klux Klan offshoot known as the Minutemen and their racist police bodyguards. The Black Riders helped the people achieve a powerful victory in a battle in the revolutionary struggle to free Black people from the evil forces of white racism, capitalism, and domestic imperialism. We stopped those white racists and the “house-nigga” scum supporters, like Ted Hayes, from getting into Leimert Park, and kicked them out of the ‘hood. Panther Power to the Black Riders!

Black people in L.A. and throughout the country have praised and admired the Black Riders’ efforts to instill a greater sense of African pride and armed resistance in Black people who have been robbed of their dignity and identity by racist white people and the pig power structure. Many ranked the Black Riders’ martial-arts trained soldiers as the most-disciplined, best-trained formidable body of Black people in the community. The Black Riders are well-known for our ability in successfully recruiting, uniting and politically educating some of the youngest and most dangerous former Bloods and Crips in L.A. This is part of a serious national plan to change the negative Black-on-Black violent criminal mentality to a positive Black freedom fighter mentality in every Black ghetto in the Amerikkkan Empire. Frequently, when no one is tackling the tough issues, the new generation Black Panthers – the Black Riders – is dealing with them. We are in the streets and we are the fastest growing Black revolutionary organization in the U.S.

We are also known for defending the people against police terrorism with video cameras and other legal weapons, also providing the people with special trained security, armed with legal shotguns and rifles to neutralize white racist threats to the neo-colonized Black community. We still believe in our God given right and our second amendment constitutional right to carry guns and defend ourselves against right wing militia groups and racist pig attacks just like the original Black Panthers. The act itself of teaching empty hand (karate) and firearms self defense within the community should be looked at as a revolutionary means of Black empowerment. Through self-defense, people are given their own means of self-determination as well as a way to stand up and fight back.

A powerful marching force of camouflage-uniformed Black Riders armed with a Red, Black & Green flag, walkie-talkie chirps, gas masks, knives, Black karate skills and every other legal weapon we could get hold of, posted up in military formation face to face at the front of the defense line against the racist “Minute-Klan” and their fascist pig security. Those white racists stood around looking scared and amazed, with their racist confederate flags, as many other Black Riders in civilian clothes rotated in the extremely large crowd, doing security at every single corner of Leimert Park.

We were ready and willing to die defending Black people in our community by any means necessary. Our new generation Black Panthers confrontational politics triggered a nationwide wave of white racist outrage, fear and controversy in the establishment news media and the Internet, as a result of this mission.

As General George Jackson points out, “To the slave, revolution is an imperative, a love-inspired conscious act of desperation. It’s aggressive. It isn’t ‘cool’ or cautious. It’s bold, audacious, violent, an expression of icy disdainful hatred [of the oppressor]. It can hardly be any other way without raising a fundamental contradiction.”

The weakly-trained armed white supremacist group known as the Minute (klan) men and their pig escorts were out-numbered, out-smarted and out-maneuvered by the armed militant Black Riders and a giant mix of angry Black and Brown oppressed people working together in uniting against a common enemy. Twenty minutes before the counter-demonstration was to take place, in a weak and vain attempt to stop the Black Riders from marching on the Minute-klan, the racist LAPD raided our Black Power Van. Two strong comrades who were supposed to go on the mission were arrested on bogus trumped-up traffic violations and released the next day. The occupying pig army launched yet another raid on our van the next day after the mission that resulted in nobody being arrested. What can we do against “all these pigs”? Go after the system that trains them and sics them on us.

Despite the pig harassment, many, many sisters and brothers from off the block joined with the Black Riders once the pigs exposed themselves to be nothing but common criminals and coward-ass busters with badgers. So the attack backfired on all counts.

Free the SF 8 and All Political Prisoners!
Power to the People!
Save Leimert with organized force!
Bulletproof Black Power Love!
We will win!

--General T.A.C.O.
Taking
All
Capitalists
Out

Ed. Note: Just after the events below, half a dozen Black Riders were arrested in coordinated raids in San Bernardino and Los Angeles. Some charges are still pending. Cash donations for defense can be sent to :
Black Riders, PO Box 8297, L.A. CA 90008

Warrant for Evidence of a Thought Crime

In August, Los Angeles sheriff’s deputies and San Bernardino sheriff’s deputies, with federal agents, raided a home in Highland CA where members of the Black Riders Liberation Party live. The search warrant claims, based on a police affidavit, that there is probable cause to believe property “used as a means of committing a felony” and “is possessed by a person with the intent of committing a public offense.” However, neither the alleged felony committed or being investigated, nor the person allegedly intending to commit an offense is named in the warrant.

Instead, the warrant authorizes the search and seizure of “any evidence of membership or affiliation with the Black Riders Liberation Party (BRLP) also known as the New Black Panther Party.” (The New Black Panther Party is a completely different and separate organization from the Black Riders.) “Any evidence such as any paraphernalia making any reference to the Black Riders Liberation Party and/or any drawings, miscellaneous writings, objects and/or graffiti depicting members’ names, initials, logos, monikers, slogans and/or containing mention of membership affiliation, activity and/or identity, as it is your Affiant’s (the cop seeking the warrant) experience that members are known by street names or monikers to their fellow Black Riders Liberation Party members, and that they frequently write their names and/or monikers of their associates on ...miscellaneous items or papers, both within and on their vehicles and within and on their vehicles...” In other words having your own name written on a paper in your own home is apparently evidence of a felony if you are “affiliated” with the Black Riders Liberation Party! This is thought crime.

The warrant also authorizes searching for and taking “any paintings, drawings, film (developed and undeveloped), photographs and/or photograph albums depicting persons, vehicles, weapons, and/or items which are indicative of membership or association with the BRLP...” In other words, having a

photograph of a weapon – or for that matter, a photograph or drawing of yourself – is evidence of a felony if you are “associated” with the BRLP! Talk about guilt by association!

The warrant goes on to authorize taking “scanners, ... all firearms, including rifles, shotguns, pistols, derringers...” (none of which are illegal weapons) “publications, manuals, schematics, video tapes, drawings and blueprints showing the assembly of firearms, ... Firearm ... records, including but not limited to firearm shipping invoices, firearm dealer’s record of sales, firearm inventory lists, receipts for the sale and purchase of firearm [sic] and firearm components, order forms ...gun show exhibition fees...” In other words, evidence of legal purchase of legal weapons is evidence of a felony!

The warrant also authorizes police seizure of “rent receipts, utility bills, addressed mail; personal ID, keys, purchase receipts, sales receipts, photographs, vehicle pink slips and vehicle registration.” Finally, the warrant gets around to the hot spot: “Any and all explosives, explosive/destructive devices, including but not limited to, any improvised explosive devices” – IEDs, as in Iraq – “including but not limited to galvanized, brass or PVC pipe and or end caps... electrical tape, wires, books, diagrams, magazines or other literature describing the manufacture and detonation of explosives...” In pursuit of this fishing expedition, apparently designed to provoke an incident and justify shooting or killing members of the BRLP, and possibly to lay the basis for a later conspiracy indictment of some kind involving the entire BRLP, the deputies showed up with armored personnel carriers, a battering ram, and enough cops to seal off four square blocks around the house. When they failed to provoke an armed confrontation, they messed



up the house, and took various possessions, including the hard drive of a computer. They also took away a child and arrested his mother (because apparently, being the child of a Black revolutionary is hazardous to your health, and the state can kidnap you into foster care for your “protection.” As George Jackson said, quite some time ago, “Fascism is already here.”

Frustrated by their inability to make more than three arrests, police shortly thereafter raided a hotel in south Los Angeles to arrest T.A.C.O, leader of the Black Riders, on a minor traffic offense. They hog-tied him, moved him around jurisdictions to prevent bail from being set, and attempted to interrogate him at gunpoint. It appears that having failed to provoke an opportunity to shoot or kill members of the BRLP, may be trying to lay the basis for a COINTELPRO-type conspiracy indictment of the Party and its leaders, members and associates. It is vital that this Homeland Security/PATRIOT Act operation be defeated, and that solidarity be built even more strongly with the Riders, particularly around the causes that have drawn so much heat on them, such as freeing the SF8 and all political prisoners, building African consciousness among Black youth, and developing internationalism as a basis for Black/Brown unity.

Anti-Racists Face Serious Legal Battle in Philly

On July 23, four anti-fascists from the Philadelphia area were arrested at what was supposed to be a Ku Klux Klan rally in Center City Philadelphia. Jared Schultz, Tom Keenan, Jason Robbins - all of Philadelphia ARA - and Jim McGovern of the Progressive Labor Party were all arrested and charged trumped up misdemeanors in a situation that for all practical purposes was straight up entrapment.

Rumors spread through Philly starting Friday July 20 that the KKK was going to show up for an 11AM rally on Monday at Love Park. While anti-fascists were present starting at 10:30, no racists showed up for the rally until noon, when two men wearing neo-Nazi t-shirts showed up. Anti-fascists approached the men, confirmed they were neo-Nazis and told them to leave. Words were exchanged, and then the nazis said they were leaving. Anti-fascists followed to make sure they kept their promise.

Strangely, Civil Affairs cops remained on the other side of the park the entire time and made no effort to follow the group even when they were out of their sight. The boneheads got into an SUV around the corner and were driven away. As they attempted to drive off, conveniently blocked by traffic, a verbal confrontation ensued with the anti-fascists for several minutes before an SUV window was smashed. The driver then flashed his badge and ordered Schultz, Keenan, Robbins and McGovern against the wall.

While the arresting officer was a Phila. PD detective, the SUV, according to paperwork received by the arrestees, was the vehicle of FBI Special Agent Sean Brennan, also present during the arrests. What the FBI was doing escorting neo-Nazis remains a mystery.

After the arrests, all four anti-fascists were transported to the 9th Police Precinct where they remained for a full day awaiting notice of their charges and bail. Initially, they

were informed that Internal Affairs was investigating their case and that they'd be facing 10 charges - 4 felonies and 6 misdemeanors. In the end, the felonies were dropped, leaving 8 misdemeanors of varying degrees. The rapid dropping of charges proves just how trumped-up they are. But there's still a lot at stake for The Love Park 4.

Currently, everyone faces Possession of an Instrument of Crime, Criminal Conspiracy, Institutional Vandalism, Reckless Endangering, Resisting Arrest, Criminal Mischief, Harassment and Disorderly Conduct. Everyone is out of jail, doing fine and just taking some time to relax for a few days before what could be a lengthy and expensive legal ordeal. All the defendants are in the process of establishing a legal defense fund and securing legal counsel. We are confident that with the right resources, all of the anti-fascists arrested will be able to defeat these outrageous charges which could result in tens of thousands of dollars in fines and years of jail time -- ***But we sure can't go it alone!***

We need the resources to win this legal battle and you can help right now! Simply go to <http://www.paypal.com>,

click on the "send money" tab and make a donation to: **cyndipitt@gmail.com**. If you wish to send funds through the mail a check or well concealed cash, noting it's for the Love Park 4 to:

**Heartsville Community Space
PO Box 5917
Philadelphia, PA 19137**

Write to **philly_ara@yahoo.com** to receive updates on how you can lend a hand.

Nazis lie, press distorts, and cops arrest 3 antifascists Armed Nazis Assault Anti-fa in NJ after Anti-Immigrant Rally

Wherever neo-Nazis go, injustice follows. After an anti-migrant rally in Morristown, NJ July 28, two neo-Nazis attacked antifascists behind town hall. The neo-Nazis, Annette and Frederick K. Williams ("Erick_K_W" on Stormfront) of North Bergen, NJ, jumped from their pick-up armed with bats and knives and assaulted pro-migrant counter-protesters. After taunting the anti-racist activists who had outed them earlier at the rally, Williams lunged at them but was quickly disarmed and his knife fell to the pavement. A local resident saw the fight and joined in to support the neo-Nazis, shouting obscenities and dragging down an activist who'd just been standing there. Williams pulled a baseball bat from the bed of his pick up and again attacked the anti-racists.

More anti-fas rushed to the scene. Williams got back in his truck and tried to flee, but not before other activists blocked his way. Moments later, police rushed in, found Williams' weapon in the back of his pickup and confiscated it. True to their fear of authority, the Williams' story quickly changed, telling police they were the victims of an unprovoked assault, but other witnesses at the scene and a video of the attack prove otherwise. After initially handcuffing the bat-wielding Frederick and detaining wife Annette, cops decided to take his word for it and rounded up several anti-racists several blocks away. Although cops had the bat, knife and other evidence in their hands, they took no action against Frederick Williams. Instead they let Williams choose which activists he wanted to be arrested. Frederick Williams suffered no more than a few scrapes and bruised ego, and his wife Annette a bloody lip, while one of those arrested was beaten with a baseball and sustained injuries to his knee and leg.

The *NY Times* printed an erroneous article using the police report, based on Williams' story, which is contradicted by the statements of other witnesses and the evidence. Police reported 10 activists targeted in the assault, when fewer than four were involved. The article made no mention of Williams' weapons. Charges against the activists reflected this lie: one was charged with two counts of weapons possession, yet fingerprint analysis will show Williams wielded the weapons. Other charges include assault, disorderly conduct, and causing bodily injury. Bails were set ridiculously high, one with a \$5,000 bail with 10% bond, and two of \$2500 cash bail without bond - all for non-indictable offenses (NJ's equivalent of a misdemeanor).

Police obstructed the release of the activists, first saying they'd be released without charges, then that they'd have charges but be released on their own recognizance. They finally informed supporters of the bail eight hours after the initial arrests while not stating

any of the charges. All the activists were bailed out within three hours of being transferred to the Morris County Jail through the efforts of friends a broad-based, growing movement committed to standing up in the face of racist attacks, harassment and lies. Their spirits are high and they're confident they'll win in court.

Organizers of the anti-immigrant rally, including blogger Robb Pearson and Morristown Mayor Don Cresitello, publicly distanced themselves from charges of racism but seemed to have no problem with the two dozen openly nazi participants at the rally, including Williams. Cresitello even stopped his prepared speech to launch a tirade against "Communists and Marxists." Antifascists had made their presence known in sight and earshot of the racist rally, exposing the nazis present. At one point, after anti-racists identified several boneheads in the crowd near town hall, the boneheads walked over to confront the protesters only to be swarmed. A tense but non-violent face off ended with the boneheads realizing they were out of their league. One ran into the local Kings' supermarket to hide, while others hastily drove off.

Williams began posting to Stormfront begging for money from other white supremacists, claiming antifas dragged him and his wife from his truck and seriously injured them. Nothing could be further from the truth, a pathetic cover-up by a neo-Nazi. But now, the nazis have gone even further, sending anonymous threats to activists and students who were not even at the counter-rally and had only re-posted calls to action. They've even begun targeting family members of those arrested. Nazis have posted photos of other activists online and called for them to be singled out for assault and perhaps worse. This only shows exactly what follows when nazis are allowed to take the streets unopposed: brutal and cowardly assaults on unarmed protesters who stand up to their hate.

There's a treasure trove of information on active white power organizers, including the participants in the assault, and any move by them will lead us right back to the source. They will be exposed, lose their jobs, and may face years behind bars if any harm comes to the activists, their friends or loved ones. Nazis will not be allowed to take one step in their communities and towns without being exposed to the light and put in their place at every turn. Anti-fas who succeeded in shutting down the World Church of the Creator, forcing the National Alliance off the streets, and countering the NSM at every turn will not let them pass. Further nazi organizing in the mainstream will bring down the movements they enter, ruining the careers of any public figure or politician who flirts with fascism.

Contact: morristownantifa@riseup.net

Nazi Attempt to Attack Anti-Racists in Scarborough, Ontario is Repelled

On August 5, anti-racist activists from across southern Ontario gathered in Toronto for a regional meeting and to participate in outings of local nazi goons. The outings took place in Scarborough, in the east end of Toronto, to alert the communities where neo-nazi organizers live. The two lucky recipients were Mike Gaio and Eric Sheridan - white power boneheads who've claimed affiliation with the "East End Bootboys."

At 80 Secord Avenue (where Gaio lives), residents thanked the activists. With the exception of some whining from a younger sibling of Gaio, the reception of the outing was positive, especially from local youth of all ethnic backgrounds. Some folks were aware of who Gaio was. The other destination was 560 Birchmount Road (where Sheridan lives). Activists decided to flyer streets around his home, including St. Clair and Birchmount. As three anti-racists were walking down Birchmount, Sheridan and his fellow white power thug Adam Karaba attempted to attack from behind, armed with a baseball bat, screaming "White power!" and "You fucking commies!" Sheridan unsuccessfully attacked one, while the two other anti-racists confronted Karaba, who was quickly rejoined by Sheridan, who'd

been forced to drop his bat. Realizing the anti-racists weren't backing down, Sheridan and Karaba ran to a local gas station, where they were later spotted speaking with the police.

These same individuals have been repeatedly linked to racist and anti-Semitic intimidation and attacks on Toronto subways and in the streets. They've gone unopposed for too long. We must not allow these hateful crimes to go unchallenged. This is the time for us to unite and declare all our streets a nazi-free zone!

Anti-racists will return to Scarborough with even stronger ranks in the near future to continue exposing and opposing Sheridan, Gaio, Karaba, and all other racist cowards of east Toronto, and to loudly declare "¡No pasarán!" They shall not pass!

**ARA Toronto info@aratoronto.org www.aratoronto.org
member: Southern Ontario Anti-Racist Action (SOARA) network**

Why this is a Double Issue - Message from the Editor

Apologies to our readers, especially to the prisoner-subscribers whose growing ranks repeatedly assure us how important and valuable *TTT* is to them - for missing the Sept.-Oct. issue of *Turning the Tide*. In August as the issue was in preparation, my oldest stepson, Lucas O. Binford, 35, was killed in a motorcycle accident. This grievous, tragic and really incomprehensible loss left his brother and me, the two main editorial and production workers on this paper, in no position to produce another issue for some time. We are still grappling with the enormity of the loss and all the family repercussions. I am also dealing with the passing earlier in the summer of a close comrade and friend, Ferd Eggan. This issue is dedicated to the memory of Ferd, a long-time anti-imperialist and former AIDS coordinator of Los Angeles, and to Lucas, son and brother, a father, lawyer and ex-Marine whose favorite Marine was anti-war anti-fascist Smedley Butler. May their untimely passings move us all to deepen our dedication to building a better world!--*Michael Novick, Editor.*

Support Grassroots Community Candidates for KPFK 90.7 FM Local Station Board

Ballots must be cast by Nov. 27 in local station board elections for KPFK and other Pacifica stations. There have been significant problems in the past with people not receiving their ballots in a timely fashion, and if you are a subscriber and don't have yours, check with your station.

This is a crucial election. KPFK is searching for a new general manager, and the attack on the station by various right-wing, corporate, statist and other reactionary elements is increasing. The *LA Weekly*, now part of the "New Times" group of pseudo-alternative newspapers, has been keeping up a steady drumbeat of attacks, principally from former KPFK honcho Marc Cooper, aimed at undermining the station's support and pushing it to the right. Internally, forces with an agenda aimed at turning KPFK and Pacifica into a lapdog for the Democratic Party in time for the 2008 elections are sharpening their knives, having smelled blood with the resignation of station General Manager Eva Georgia. Spanish-language programming is one immediate target, perhaps primarily for its political independence and grassroots orientation. Similar forces took control of the network via the old self-perpetuating national board during the Clinton era, and would have destroyed Pacifica but for resistance from listeners.

After the Bush "victory" in 2000, they relented and allowed other more independent voices on the air and into the station governance, through a court settlement that mandated an elected local station and national board, because with Republicans controlling all three branches of government, they needed an alliance with more left

Lawrence Reyes, Puerto Rican Alliance*: "The future of community-based free-speech radio is at stake. Radio powered by the people must be a call to action and community empowerment. KPFK must address survival issues of people who've been marginalized; yet KPFK is resistant to addressing those issues and airing expressions coming directly from the affected communities."

Khallid A. Al-Alim, Coalition for Educational Justice*: "Over the last seven years I've been privileged to work with some of the most politically astute teachers, parents, and students throughout the city [in the Coalition for Educational Justice]."

Rufina Juarez, South Central Farmers*: "The system is in crisis and relies on its corporate media to prepare public opinion to meet its political ends. People's media have to provide listeners with information, but should also serve as a tool for turning knowledge into action. My background as a leader of the South Central Farmers highlighted the need to link peoples' radio with local peoples' struggles."

Schyna Pour: "KPFK needs a new generation of activists! That's where I come in. I'm currently 16, and for the past 11 years I've been involved with KPFK. KPFK needs to outreach to youth, we need youth to be involved in communities, to participate in programming, staffing, and increasing members and volunteers."

Reza Pour, Union of Progressive Iranians*: "People have the choice to come together from all different nationalities in a united struggle against a system that is the source of our suffering. All the struggles around KPFK find their roots in one question: Do we have the vision to find a new GM and forward the station progressively to the new era? I'm committed to helping KPFK continue its transformation to a station connected to all the communities."

Moe Mansour: "With your vote I will have the opportunity to accomplish our dreams by building a bridge and gathering more listeners and believers in democracy and freedom to our station, and in particular to create diversity of programs of our minorities groups of Spanish speakers and others. Together we make a difference."

Leslie Radford: "You're choosing half the LSB. Together they'll find our new GM and determine which direction, forward or back, progressive or regressive, the station will take. As you choose, look for people who bring leadership from outside KPFK, who bring new communities, ideas, and ways of organizing. Look for young people, fresh voices, for people who engage the issues of this century on the streets, in grassroots movements, in community building."

Jubilee Shine: "KPFK must be brightened and focused to illuminate the vitality of our communities and to educate the grassroots of the realities of our struggle. I live at 52nd & Vermont, and hope to bring more attention to the concerns and accomplishments of these neighborhoods. The war and police brutality are symptom[s] that only independent journalists will honestly expose. KPFK must remain fearless in its local reporting."

Chuck Anderson: "In addition [to] multi Spanish language and indigenous programs, an effort must be made to return full representation of African American peoples, more Arab American and Palestinian political and cultural broadcasts in Arabic and English. We must hear more about political prisoners, more disabled programs along with Animal rights, vegan/vegetarian, bus riders and welfare protection of the homeless and needy. The problems and concerns of all immigrants must be defended."

Joaquin Cienfuegos, Revolutionary Autonomous Communities*: "Imagine a station where people of the community have a voice, where their struggles are not ignored, and which they themselves help run and maintain. KPFK can be a station where new people are trained on how to run their own shows, how to produce, interview, record, and work the board. People should be broadcasting from the frontlines of their local battles and struggles against oppression and injustice."

* Affiliation for identification purposes only

**Vote for Lawrence Reyes, Khallid Al-Alim, Rufina Juarez, Schyna Pour, Reza Pour, Joaquin Cienfuegos, Moe Mansour, Leslie Radford, Jubilee Shine and Chuck Anderson.
Preserve and extend community-based free speech radio!**

ANTI-RACIST ACTION NETWORK 4 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!** www.antiracistaction.us www.arastore.com

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Name: _____ **Address:** _____

City: _____ **State:** _____ **Zip:** _____ **Email:** _____ **Phone:** _____ **-3-**

Of 'White Trees,' Black Boys and Jena, Louisiana

[col. writ. 7/21/07] (c) '07 by Mumia Abu-Jamal

If you asked me two weeks ago if I've ever heard the name of a little town in Louisiana called 'Jena', I would've drawn a blank. Jena? Never heard of it.

It made me think of the ill-fated Palestinian village called Janin, that Israel crushed into oblivion several years ago. I think the incumbent president's daughter has that name (with and additional 'n'). But, that's it.

When a friend sent me several Internet articles about recent events there, I was, quite frankly, flabbergasted. I was astonished to learn that today, in the first decade of the 21st century, in Jena High School, there is still a 'white tree', called that not because the leaves are white, but because it is a generous giver of shade, and only white students sit under it.

In Sept. 2006, a young student named Kenneth Purvis asked the school principal for permission to sit under the 'white tree.' The principal answered that he could sit where he liked.

So, they did.

The next day, the 'white tree' was festooned with three nooses, in school colors. In the South (or the North, for that matter), nooses have one clear meaning -- they are threats of death.

People naturally got riled up, angry, or scared.

Jena's High School principal looked into the matter, found the three white students responsible, and recommended that they be expelled. The school superintendent felt otherwise, rescinded the expulsion, and instead recommended a 3 - day suspension. Speaking to the Chicago Tribune, the superintendent said, "Adolescents play pranks. I don't think it was a threat against anybody."

(Perhaps he meant anybody important - or white)

For Jena's Black community, this was but the latest slap in the face. Black students at the high school decided to resist by holding a sit-in under the 'white tree' to protest the light suspensions given to the 3 white noose-hangers. When word got out about the pending sit-in, the local DA came to a Jena school assembly with several cops, to threaten the students who dared to think they could do what people did some 40 years ago throughout the South (before the so-called 'New South'). He told them if they didn't stop making a fuss about this 'prank' he could be "your worst enemy." To make the point plain, he told the teen gathering, "I can take away your lives with a stroke of a pen."

Several days later, a white Jena student, who reportedly made racist taunts, including calling Black students 'niggers', got knocked down, punched and kicked. The boy was taken to the hospital, treated and released. That very night, he was well enough to attend a public event. Within days six Black Jena students were arrested and charged with attempted second degree murder. All six were also immediately expelled. The 6 teens were given bails set from \$70,000 to \$139,000. Bail at these ranges could've just as easily been set at \$1 million, for they were at rates that none of the local parents could afford. That meant, of course, that all of the accused were held in jail for months, awaiting trial. And if money for bail was out of reach, what about money for attorneys?

Again -- out of the question. That meant that public defenders were appointed by the court. For one of the accused, Mychal Bell, this meant little better than no counsel at all, for his trial was soon decided by an all-white jury, who promptly convicted him of aggravated second degree assault, battery and conspiracy. Bell now awaits sentencing which may put the teenager in prison for the next 22 years. The public defender never

Jena, Resistance and Self Defense

by

Lumumba Akinwale-Bande, *Malcolm X Grassroots Movement*

One of the main implications of the case of the Jena 6 is one that has sent countless activists to prison. The implication-if you dare to remove yourself from the role of a victim and attempt to assert justice yourself, you will pay a heavy price. The notion that six young Black men responded appropriately by not allowing an environment of terror to exist in their lives and their community enrages a society that does not want to see Black people recognizing and acting on the understanding that we alone will change our conditions. This case would have made countless people considerably more comfortable if these young brothers did not engage in a physical encounter with the white student. Many would have been appeased if we as a community continue to appeal to a legal system that has made it clear that it doesn't place much, if any value on the lives of Black people.

The Jena 6 engaged in an act of self-defense and their actions reflects our reality. Lynching, a genocidal act that occurred with the consent of the government, has long been a part of Black Experience in North America. In a petition submitted to the United Nations in 1951, titled "We Charge Genocide", Paul Robeson and other prominent Blacks, documented that at least 10,000 Black people had been lynched since the abolition of slavery. The exact number of people murdered can never be known. The horrendous act of lynching did not stop with the Civil Rights movement and our communities remain intimately familiar with the legacy of the noose. Countless numbers of Black people have been killed throughout recent history with the legal system failing to prevent similar cases from reoccurring.

The call for justice in this case must include the dismissal of all charges against the Jena 6 and the immediate termination of prosecutor Reed Walters. Any call for decreased charges affirms the notion that Black people can do anything to struggle against white supremacy/racism except for physically defending ourselves.

challenged the all-white jury pool, put on no evidence, and didn't call a single defense witness.

The law of aggravated assault requires the use of a deadly weapon. What was the weapon? Tennis shoes.

Families and friends of the Jena 6 are organizing against this case, and are also being threatened by the local establishment. One woman told Louisiana ACLU member, Tory Pegram, "We have to convince more people to come rally with us.... What's the worse that could happen? They fire us from our jobs? We have the worst jobs in the town anyway. They burn a cross on our lawns or burn down my house? All of that has happened to us before. We have to keep speaking out to make sure it doesn't happen to us again, or our children will never be safe."

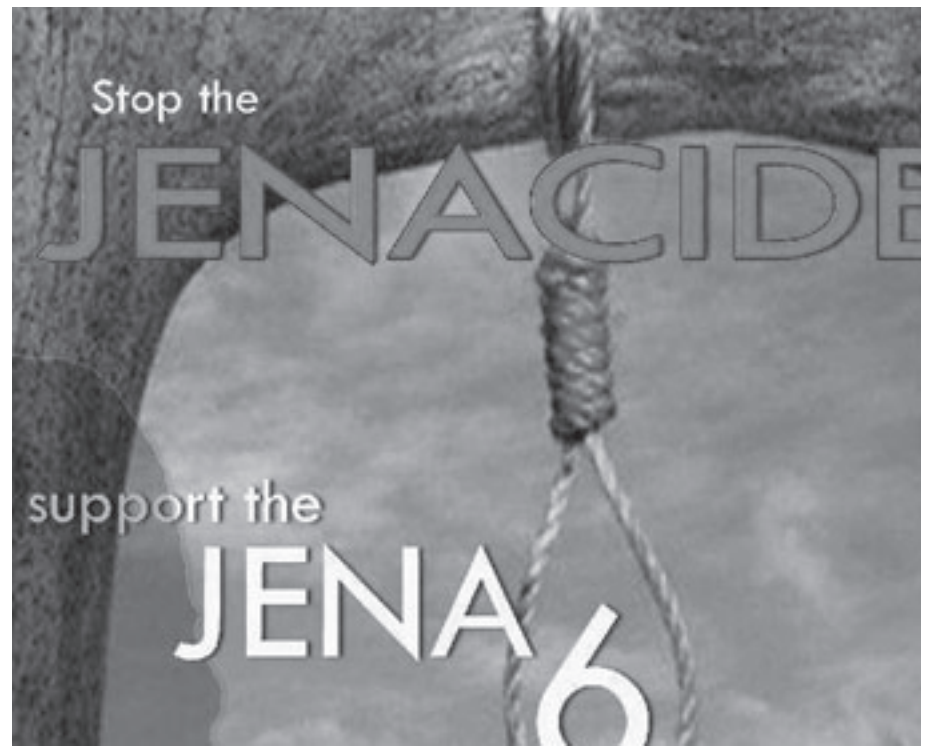
To contact the Jena 6 Defense Committee, write:

**P.O. Box 2798
Jena, Louisiana 71342**

Or by email: jena6defense@gmail.com.

[Sources: Quigley, Bill, "Injustice in Jena: Black Nooses Hanging From the 'White' Tree", July 3, '07; Quigley@loyana.edu; Mangold, Tom, "'Stealth racism' stalks deep South", BBC News, 5/24/07 online]

Mumia Abu-Jamal is a political prisoner in the United States, with what could be the final decision on his legal appeals possibly coming down at any moment. That decision could give Mumia his freedom, a new trial, life in prison, or execution. It is time to turn up the heat against this injustice. Free Mumia! For more on the case of Mumia Abu-Jamal read: Top Ten "Fry Mumia" Myths Debunked <http://indybay.org/newsitems/2007/07/19/18436405.php>



Our history of struggle in North America has always had the importance of defending our lives as a fundamental pillar. The act of defending ourselves as a community has always been criminalized. This process of criminalization is an attempt to dissuade communities at large from becoming self sufficient in their own security. Former Black Panther Party member, Jalil Muntaqim stated, "We are our own Liberators"; our path to liberation must be decided and executed by us in the manner that we determine. It is this act of self-determination that is considered to be the most dangerous by government officials. The legacy of the Black Liberation Movement was rooted in this ideology and was responded to viciously by all levels of law enforcement, which routinely attacked and murdered activists. Thus we have the many political prisoners and prisoners of war in the united states today. Nationally we have a responsibility to call for the freedom of all political prisoners in the united states who have been found guilty of simply defending the lives of Black people.

We are pleased to hear the many calls for people to pay attention to Jena Sixes in our own towns. We must recognize that we all live in Jena. The same people who boarded buses from all corners of this country must organize against the mass criminalization of our youth, militarized law enforcement and participate in the work for self-determination and the unconditional release of the political prisoners and prisoners of war in the United States.

**Self Respect, Self Defense and Self Determination
We will defend our freedom fighters**

- * To find out how you can participate in the movement to free political prisoners, please contact: Malcolm X Grassroots Movement: <http://www.mxgm.org>
- * Jericho amnesty campaign: <http://www.thejerichomovement.com>
- * Hands Off Assata campaign: <http://www.handsoffassata.com>
- * Free the San Francisco 8 campaign: <http://www.freethesf8.org>

<http://mxgm.org/web/jena-6/jena-resistance-and-self-defense.html>

PART's Perspective:

Lives in the Balance

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

In "The Art of War," Chinese strategist Sun Tzu says, "So it is said that if you know your enemies and know yourself, you will win a hundred times in a hundred battles. If you only know yourself, but not your opponent, you win one and lose the next. If you do not know yourself or your enemy, you will always lose."

The sorry situation in the U.S. is that most people, even those involved in social struggles for peace, justice or equality, are unaware that they have an enemy. Unaware of our enemy's identity, we become our own worst enemies, tilting at windmills, wasting our efforts, and discouraging those we seek to organize. Petty "victories" in "campaigns," while the real battle is lost without ever being engaged, do nothing to give heart or confidence to the exploited and oppressed about having what it takes to really change the world.

Meanwhile, our rulers, exploiters and oppressors are cold-blooded and crystal clear about the enmity between themselves and us. They understand clearly that their wealth, their power, their very survival depends on constant maintenance of their ability to control the land and to dominate and incorporate us and our creative powers into their system. Long before Malcolm X, they operated on the basis of "By Any Means Necessary!"

Like Schwarzenegger's "Terminator" cyborg, they feel no remorse, and they will not stop ever ... unless they are stopped.

Unlike the Terminator, however, they do feel pain and fear.

What they fear above all else is that the people they are sucking the life out of will realize our own power, and start inflicting some pain on them. Out of their fear and vulnerability, they hatch schemes of surveillance, repression, incarceration, infiltration, provocation and every other technique designed to keep us divided, discouraged and demoralized. But every measure they take paradoxically has the potential of waking us up to the irreconcilable nature of our enmity with them, and to the grotesque and deadly nature of their parasitism.

This dynamic is playing itself out in a thousand quarters as you read this. In every arena, the battles of the Empire's attempt to maintain its domination are waged every day in a thousand ways -- and every battle is vital to them, and to us. As the Irish Republicans used to say to the British, "You have to be lucky every time; we only have to be lucky once." But that is only true if you are awake to the reality that you are at war, living in a world at war, every minute. Colonialism and capitalism ARE war -- not occasional, but permanent war. The Empire is at war with the planet and the people who inhabit it every minute of every day. This war occurs 24/7 in the schools, housing projects and the street, on the airwaves, across picket lines, and along assembly lines, as well as in the more obvious battle lines.

But unless we understand they are engaged in war without quarter against us, and adjust our own behavior accordingly, we will go on, suicidally losing battle after battle without even knowing we have been engaged in them.

The illusion of peace, and of the possibility of peaceful reconciliation, to which people with privilege are particularly susceptible, is one of the mainstays of the Empire. A second is the illusion of war, in which we fight among ourselves and punish each other, to which people who are oppressed are particularly susceptible. The third is the conscious buy-in or sell-out, in which people who have become aware of the Empire decide to ally with it against its enemies.

Let's look at how these dynamics are playing themselves out in a number of current arenas of struggle, in which our inability to see the true consequences of defeat is hobbling us. Time may no longer be on our side.

As George Jackson said, "Patience is not always a virtue. Sometimes it is a mask for cowardice."

MASS INCARCERATION AND POLITICAL REPRESSION

Nothing the "prison movement" has done in the last three decades has deterred in the least the Empire's intention of using the prisons as profit centers, slave labor camps, and mechanisms of social engineering and control. Having long surpassed the two million mark, and growing steadily past 2,250,000, imprisonment is increasing faster than ever, especially among women of color.

Simultaneously, political intelligence gathering and targeting of activists and dissidents is intensifying. Prisons within prisons have become the new norm. Roundups and jailing of the undocumented are being added to the sources feeding the "gulag," along with the drug war, criminalization of youth and poverty, thought crimes and other pretexts.

A self-critical examination of our failures is long overdue in the prison movement. Resources must be focused on fusing the struggles against political repression, police abuse of power, anti-immigrant round-ups and detentions, mass incarceration and the prison-industrial complex. They must be directed at the grassroots, at the people inside the prisons, camps, jails and lock-ups and their families, predominantly but not entirely people of color. The 10-20% of the current prison population that is European exceeds the entire prison population of 1975; they cannot be left to become fodder for the Aryan Brotherhood and other nazis, but must be engaged and involved in conscious international and multi-racial solidarity.

ENDLESS WAR AND ITS FUTURE

Despite the adage that "the generals are always preparing to fight the last war," the Empire is in fact quite farsightedly planning to fight the next "two-and-a-half wars," as Pentagon doctrine has it. The US war machine has its sights not merely on Iran, but on China. Yet the anti-war movement in the US barely addresses Afghanistan, accommodates to Democrats who proclaim Iran a threat to the Middle East, and hardly has on its radar screen US war planning for a coming confrontation with China.

Not to mention the existing and growing US military invention and proxy wars in Africa, the Philippines, Colombia and elsewhere. US military and economic planning (two sides of the same coin) call for "destructive reduction in capacity" as the way to deal with the looming crisis of

over-production; and the capacity they intend to reduce is China's. You cannot understand what the US is up to in Iraq without recognizing that it has been an opening skirmish in a war with China.

Just so, you cannot understand US immigration policy without recognizing that the struggle of the Mexicans both in the current Mexican state and in the occupied parts of northern Mexico (known as the "Southwest") are a key destabilizing factor to the Empire. Mexico is now being primed for massive US military "assistance" as its struggle heats up right across the imposed border. The sealing and militarization of the border is a skirmish in that coming battle.

MILITARIZATION AT EVERY TURN

As the domestic and global Empire becomes ever more seamless, the militarization of every aspect of economic and social life proceeds apace, hand in glove with its privatization. The militarization (and privatization) of the border, of the police, of the schools, of the National Guard are being carried out in tandem, and will be extending soon to the workplace and other aspects of daily life. They must be opposed jointly, from the perspective that militarization has a target and an enemy. The use of educational, psychological, chemical and biological warfare has a target and it is we who are in the cross-hairs, especially the young generation coming up.

Militarization is not only guns. Police strategists refer to "community oriented policing," for example, as the domestic equivalent of psychological operations in the military. "Psy-Ops" are directed at the occupied population as well as at the enemy. Whether you are marked for manipulation as "people" or elimination as "enemy" depends on the stance you take towards the occupation.

Laws like the DREAM Act, providing an avenue to legalization of immigrants through military "service," and measures like requiring undocumented residents to register for Selective Service (the draft), are examples of how militarization in every sphere coincides with and reinforces the overall process. Bush's "solution" for New Orleans was to send in Blackwater. But to imagine these processes will be reversed by election of a Democrat as president is as futile as the hopes of those who voted for a Democratic legislature have already proven to be. Clinton and Janet Reno

gave the biggest boost to the militarization of police and the border through technology transfer from the Pentagon to local law enforcement, and through the creation of the border fence and Operation Gatekeeper. Replacing Alberto Gonzales with another Attorney General will not even slow down the legitimization of torture, the criminalization of poverty or the immanence of martial law.

If the elections offer no hope or avenue for changing the conditions besetting us, what does? Independent direct action, deeply rooted communities of resistance in any and every area where the Empire is currently waging war against us. This is a fractal and holographic system -- its contradictions, its oppressive and exploitative nature are evident identically in every part, on every corner and at any degree of magnification. If you wage survival struggles in any area -- the environment, the schools, the media, housing, health care, against war, occupation, gentrification, slave labor -- you will come into inevitable conflict with the empire.

Engage that conflict with the understanding that it is war to the teeth, that compromise is impossible. Decent housing, effective schools, safe streets, environmental justice, racial reconciliation, and peace are all laudable goals. But they require the destruction of the Empire to achieve. The question to ask yourself in any struggle is: "How is this undermining the Empire? How is this building the capacity of the forces of liberation to fight for freedom? How is this opening the eyes and minds of those who identify with or as oppressors even while they are exploited and oppressed?"

TIME IS OF THE ESSENCE!

We have no more time to repeat the errors of the past. We must understand now that the problem is not a foreign policy or a domestic reform that can be changed, but a system that must be uprooted and replaced. There is no time for loyal opposition or other half-measures. Ecocide, femicide and genocide are the marching orders for an implacable enemy. If the Empire extends its lease on life another generation, the oceans will probably be unfit to support current marine life; massive detention and/or depopulation of oppressed people will become the order of the day. We cannot remain asleep or wallow in despair a moment longer. Only by recognizing our enmity with that system, our irreconcilable contradiction with the system of colonialism, capitalism and white supremacy, can we build the alliance of oppressed and exploited people necessary to defeat it.

During a lifetime in the struggle, I have been committed to the long view, to the intergenerational struggle, to the necessity of waging a patient battle from one generation to the next, understanding that no victory is irreversible. But with every passing year my sense of urgency has increased, as the intersecting political, military, economic, social and environmental crises and consequences of continued Empire become ever more apparent.

If the war continues one-sided, the damage to the planet and to human society will be incalculable and possibly irreversible.

Urgency does not mean foolhardiness. It means we cannot afford any more illusions. We must steadily, daily increase the fighting capacity of the forces of liberation, justice, sanity and environmental sustainability by every means at our disposal, while subverting and dismantling the weapons and powers of the Empire, in order to shift the balance of forces in our favor.

The essence of the revolutionary disillusionment that is required is the abandonment of white supremacy, neo-colonialism and the electoral farce. Only internationalist solidarity and deep-rooted direct action can turn the tide now.

Anti-war Air Force officer threatened with discharge

Now is the time for us to stand up and stand together

by
Rev. Lennox Yearwood, Jr.

The power of our voices against the U.S. occupation of Iraq is reaching the top echelons of the military and the administration. Our government is persecuting Americans who speak out against the U.S. military presence in Iraq. The U.S. military has launched politicized attacks on its own military members and moral leaders who oppose the war to discredit their voices of dissent. We have seen them target Cpl. Adam Kokesh to stop him from exercising his freedom of speech, after risking his life in Fallujah, Iraq. We have seen them threaten Sgt. Liam Madden for publicly stating the legal fact that the U.S. invasion is a war crime according to the Nuremberg principles. They have targeted Cpl. Cloy Richards, a soldier put in the media spotlight when his mother Tina Richards worked to get him the health care he needs after returning from Iraq eighty percent disabled. These are not happenstance targets. These young men are leaders of the Iraq Veterans Against the War and they are speaking out in a strong and coordinated way. And now I have been targeted.

Who am I? Many of you know me as a reverend, an activist, an architect of Hip Hop politics and a freedom fighter, but I am also an Officer in the US Air Force Reserve. I have long been in the struggle for peace and freedom and I serve proudly as a leader of faith. I joined the military as part of the "poor peoples draft" - to help pay for my education. In May 2000 I was commissioned as an Officer in the US Air Force Reserve and was accepted into the Chaplain Candidates program. In 2002 I graduated from Howard University School of Divinity, Magna Cum Laude. I was ordained a Reverend and Elder in the Church of God in Christ shortly after my graduation and today I remain in good standing in the Church. In May 2003 I completed the Chaplain Candidates program, but I decided not to pursue a career as a Chaplain in the Air Force. I have been in the Air Force Reserve Individual Reserve program ever since.

On March 26 I received notice from the Air Force that they're taking action to honorably discharge me on the basis of "behavior ... inconsistent with the interest of national security." Ironically, this letter arrived six days after I announced the launching of a national "Make Hip Hop Not War" Tour at a press conference on Capitol Hill. On July 12, 2007, when I leave Robbins Air Force Base after my discharge hearing, whether I remain an Officer or not, I will be a leader always, and evermore committed to ending this immoral war.

In February 2003 I felt the sense of urgency many felt to speak out in the lead-up to the invasion of Iraq. Even though I was only a Chaplain Candidate and a 2nd Lieutenant, when I had the opportunity to preach at Andrews AF Base, home of Air Force One, the message I preached was "Who Would Jesus Bomb?" Since then hundreds of thousands of Iraqis and thousands of Americans have lost their lives and we now face a state of permanent warfare in our world.

This moment in history is our generation's lunch-counter moment - Iraq is our Vietnam and New Orleans is our Birmingham. Our generation could be the generation to defeat racism, poverty and war, but only if we come together as people of conscience. In the movements of the 60's, solidarity among the civil rights movement and the anti-war movement was never truly achieved. As the "Hip Hop generation" - a generation where the sons and daughters of former slaves work side by side with the sons and daughters

of former slave owners - we have the ability to bridge the gap and link movements for peace, justice, civil rights and the environment in true solidarity.

We will not make the world safer or achieve true national security by starting wars that put our humanity at risk. We're certainly not making our country safer by intimidating veterans who courageously speak out. Policies that address poverty, racism, climate change, the economy and jobs are at the core of national security. I will continue to speak out against the war, seek justice for Katrina survivors, fight against racism, struggle for equality and advocate for a healthy planet. I hardly think that this sort of behavior is "inconsistent with the interest of national security."

Brothers and sisters, opposition to this illegal war and occupation is not a cause - it's a response to a state of emergency. It's our urgent responsibility to stop this war. According to Psalms, "Weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning." I know it looks bad now and our hope seems to wane and sometimes we want to give up. But if we can all come together - black and white, brown and yellow, rich and poor, male and female, straight and gay - whether you still love this country or are withdrawn in anger, not only can we defeat this war and restore justice and democracy, there will once again be joy in the morning.

For Future Generations,
Rev. Lennox Yearwood, Jr.

Rev. Lennox Yearwood, Jr. is President of the Hip Hop Caucus. Donations to his legal defense can be made at: www.hiphopcaucus.org You can also mail a donation to: Hip Hop Caucus, 1112 16th St. NW, Suite 600, Washington, DC 20036; 202.787.5256; info@hiphopcaucus.org

Security culture and anti-fascism

by Philly ARA

As anti-fascists, we must always be sure to be aware of our surroundings and the environment we're in. Though we often wish otherwise, not everyone views us in a favorable light and there are those who would do us harm if given the chance.

In this light, it's important to maintain a culture of security to ensure the safety of our selves, our work, and those around us. To that end, here are a few methods that will help maintain our work and safety. The following suggestions are not meant to make people paranoid, rather to make them cautious and aware. We must evolve in our methods if we are to succeed.

-Change your routines: If fascists are targeting you and have information on your whereabouts, it's important to try to catch them off guard. Leave home/work/school at different times, take different routes to wherever you're going. This does more than throw the fash off your regular schedule; it gives you a chance to become familiar with alternative routes and settings in your area.

-Be aware of people following you: It never hurts to glance in the rear-view mirror and see if someone has been behind you for more than a couple blocks. Nor does it hurt to stop in a convenience store and take a look at people standing by idly on the street. You must be prepared for the possibility of the fash dressing to blend in easily with the population at large.

-Keep informed on strange neighborhood activity: Ask a neighbor you trust if they've noticed new people coming around door to door asking for information or driving by slowly late at night, or generally acting shady.

-Loose talk costs lives: We all like to brag from time to time about our victories. Just don't do it in public. You never know who's listening. If you do discuss sensitive topics, do so in privacy and with those who can be vouched for.

-Use the buddy system whenever possible: If there's the slightest doubt of who can show up when you go out at night, bring a friend and legal means of protection. Make sure that buddy is on the same page and knows the possibilities of what could happen in a worst case scenario. Make sure that person is comfortable defending themselves if need be.

-Self-defense: Learn what legal methods of self-defense are permissible in your local area. Be knowledgeable about local laws concerning mace, stun guns, etc. Take self-defense classes by yourself or with a group of others. In the unfortunate situation of being in a physical confrontation, it's better safe than sorry. While some may denounce the use of pepper spray as cowardly, we aren't out to fight fair, we are fighting to win!

-Keep channels of communication open among comrades: It never hurts to call a comrade to check in and make sure they're all right. Keep track of the fash in your area. Make sure everyone knows where they drink, hang out, buy music, and those who provide them safe haven while knowing their beliefs. Nothing will hurt business more than outing someone as a racist sympathizer who hosts nazis and other scumbags.

-Reach out to other activist groups: Building bridges with like minded groups will bolster our numbers and provide help in the future. Chances are you'll also make friends in the process and maybe learn a thing or two along the way.

-Keep alert: During lulls in activity by the fash, it's easy for people to lose sight of the fact that they're still out there. Chances are they're waiting for us to be caught so off guard that we will never recover in the event of an unexpected resurgence of activity. Maintain a dialogue with other activists and those in the community so they know that the fash continue to lurk in the shadows and that it is always important to maintain a state of awareness.

Be aware of possible set-ups. Police have worked with fascists in a number of recent incidents to draw out, identify and arrest anti-fascists. Check out intel on Klan activities and approach them copwatch style with back-up and our own video.



Open Letter to the Left and the AIDS Movement: Ships passing on our winding way to a new dawn

by Suzy Subways

[Note: I am a queer, white, HIV-negative person who uses female pronouns and has non-transgender privilege. These ideas are the result of conversations with many people, but I wrote this as an independent AIDS community journalist and a leftist, and I don't speak for any group. Many thanks to my mentors who gave me feedback yesterday! It has changed a lot.] [Excerpted.—*Ed.*]

The US Social Forum blew my mind, it grew my mind like a wild weed, it heard my voice and it rendered me inaudible-I talked and cheered and chanted so much that I couldn't speak above a whisper for days. It gave me a feeling like, the Left is finally getting its shit together. I got a sense that people of color-especially immigrants, indigenous people, women of color and queer people of color-were like, "the Left is ours," and were bringing the most innovative strategies and concepts to be seen in years, rocketing the whole thing into another dimension.

The speech by Andrea Smith of INCITE! Women of Color Against Violence at the plenary on Liberating Gender and Sexuality: Integrating Gender and Sexual Justice Across Our Movements - and the audience of hundreds' overwhelming response to it-was one of the most inspiring moments of my life. Not only did Smith question the domestic violence movement's reliance on the state to protect us, her organization's work offers all our movements the building blocks of an alternative.

I've been an activist for 17 years (mostly on access to higher education and queer and AIDS issues), and I feel like this is what many of us have been hoping for, yet not daring to imagine. Could the Left really be shedding its massive layers of racism, sexism, and homophobia? But the most inspiring moments always leave room for us to grow. This is a moment of great possibility for the AIDS movement and the Left. I won't make a list of reasons why the AIDS movement had moments of feeling marginalized at the USSF, but to illustrate this, I will say that HIV/AIDS was not mentioned once at the plenary on gender and sexuality.

For those of us in the AIDS movement, this kind of silence tugs at old wounds, because Reagan did not say "AIDS" out loud until 1987, by which time an average of nine Americans had died of AIDS for every day that he had been in office. Now, we have lifesaving medicines in the US and other rich countries, but about 8,500 people around the world die of AIDS every day, and according to the NAACP, every day 72 African Americans contract HIV.

My goal with this letter is to point toward the light the Left offers the AIDS movement now, and ways the Left can learn from the AIDS movement now. The Social Forum illuminates both, because without women of color at the center, neither will ever find its way-and without the innovative new strategies emerging now, we would all just be talking.

Life after nonprofits

INCITE's second book, *The Revolution Will Not Be Funded: Beyond the Non-Profit Industrial Complex*, sold out all copies at the Forum, and its panel by the same name filled up so quickly that organizers had to post a sign on the door saying, "Please do not open - Fire Hazard!"-and still people squeezed in. Southerners on New Ground (SONG, a multiracial LGBT/queer group) held a workshop where participants also discussed the limits of the 501c3 model (for example, competition for funding between community groups; letting funders set your agenda; allowing college graduates to serve as front lines in communities they know nothing about or are themselves gentrifying; big nonprofits setting movement goals; grassroots groups not being taken seriously; self-perpetuation being valued over service and honesty, etc.) and exciting new ways to do what SONG called "free organizing." There were also "hybrid models," with some aspects of both the 501c3 and the free, such as a working board of directors with no staff, or having members vote on organizational decisions and pay dues. (For questions to ask yourself and help stimulate more ideas, see <http://www.southernersonnewground.org/?p=53>)

In the AIDS movement, we know how the move from street action to institution-building meant that we had built the capacity to provide lifesaving services to our communities. Plus, AIDS organizations are the biggest employer of LGBT people in the US-and in some places, a provider of jobs to many people in our community who have a hard time finding work in a discriminatory environment due to their experience with prison, homelessness, drug use, or sex work, or because they're trans or gender non-conforming or living with HIV.

But our institutions are now turning on their creators-people living with HIV-and turning them into passive "consumers" of services, as if your local AIDS service organization were the local mall and HIV is no longer political. And "AIDS, Inc." took us off the streets, cooled off our activism. Who among us hasn't feared losing our jobs if we speak at that demo, or been told protests are a relic from the past?

SONG members pointed out that whether or not we choose to find new ways of serving and organizing our communities, we'll be forced to anyway, because our community-based nonprofits are dying. This especially speaks to the AIDS movement. Small HIV prevention and support organizations that Black, Latino, gay and other communities started 20 years ago are closing their doors all over the country because the federal money is being cut back to just cover medical care and HIV testing, not vital programs like condom distribution, street outreach, counseling, buddy programs, language interpretation, and housing. (For more info see http://www.poz.com/articles/401_11463.shtml)

The most inspiring and transformative HIV/AIDS program I've ever witnessed, Philadelphia's TEACH Outside, has been on the chopping block several times this year. Run by John Bell, who was a leader in ACT UP for years and is an HIV positive, African American Vietnam vet in recovery who spent years in prison, TEACH Outside is a class for people living with HIV who are newly released from incarceration. John Bell teaches how to live healthy with HIV and strategies for dealing with life on the outside, mentors students in activism, and tells them to call him anytime-but the biggest challenge for students is dealing with the double stigma of prison and HIV. I asked him once if the program is more than just a class, and he said, "It has to be. Because people aren't just unfeeling beings. Even though people have been incarcerated they're still human beings. To allow that person to become a working member of society, we're going to have to actually address the totality

of their being. The emotional side, the spiritual side, the intellectual side."

Protecting each other

We can also learn new ways to protect our communities from violence. At another Social Forum panel, the Young Women's Empowerment Project (a youth leadership organization grounded in harm reduction and social justice organizing by and for girls and young women ages 12-23 impacted by the sex trade and street economies) from Chicago talked about defending each other from street violence without relying on the police, who offer their own forms of violence.

Taking inspiration from each other's movements

In the HIV/AIDS movement, we need to make sure that women of color and queer people of color are at the center, and also that HIV positive people are at the center. We need to take inspiration from this moment in the Left and be reminded that we can't afford to compromise on taking the time to build new leadership among people directly affected by the issues, even when our time is urgently demanded to push for policy that can save millions of lives around the world. A strong movement is a social force that shifts policy in its wake or renders government decisions irrelevant by taking care of its own community's needs.

We also need for the Left to understand that our leaders are still dying. And it's mostly the people of color in our movement who are dying, for many reasons related to intersecting forms of oppression, but also because people with both HIV and hepatitis C have even more complex health challenges and treatment options than those with HIV alone. In other words, neither the Left nor the AIDS movement can afford to sleep on the issue of hepatitis C.

AIDS is now the leading cause of death among Black women aged 25 to 34. Nearly half of Black men who have sex with men are HIV positive. I'm not saying that people with HIV aren't living full, healthy lives, with stigma being their most pressing HIV-related problem. But ACT UP Philly still has too many funerals. But it's also a movement full of life. Have you ever been to a global AIDS conference? The Zapatistas' Other Campaign (La Otra Campaña) was there last summer in Toronto. Korean activists were marching through the conference site against the impending US-Korea Free Trade Agreement. South Africans demanded treatment, Indian activists in bright colors chanted, "Big Pharma - Quit India!" and a Russian activist speaking at the closing plenary said, "Down with the imperialism of the pharmaceutical companies!" It was like the Social Forum, without the standing ovation (activists had to demand that people with AIDS be allowed to speak at the global AIDS conference).

The AIDS movement at its best links together some of the most pressing issues of our time: homelessness, prison, the war on drugs, gender, sexuality, immigration, and displacement.

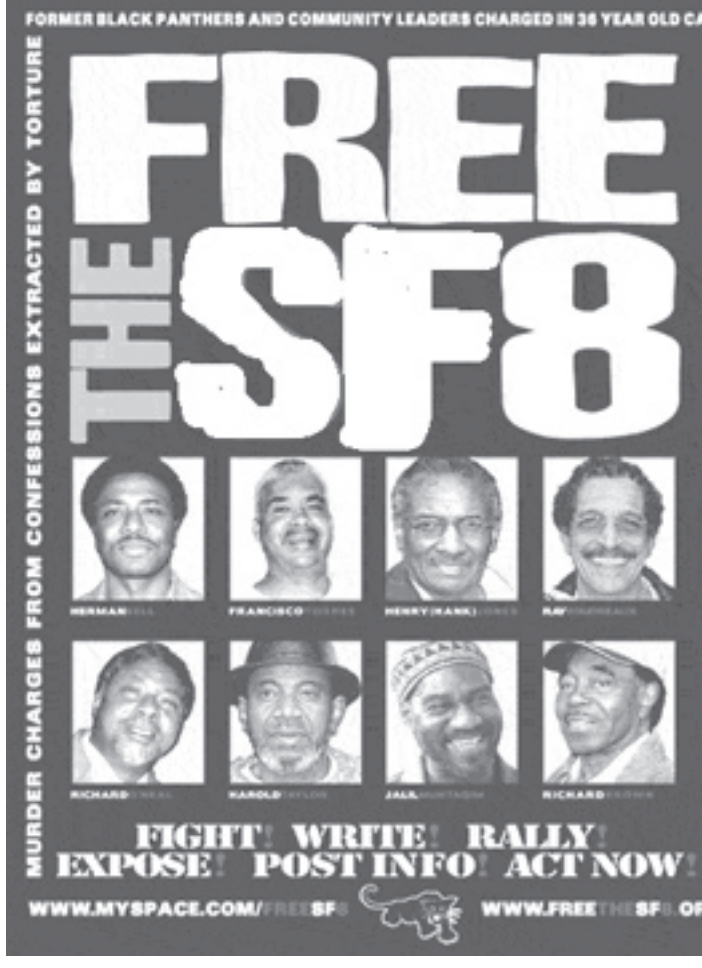
But if you want to tackle one thing, I'd say the Left can start with stamping out any tendencies toward HIV denialism, the idea that HIV does not really cause AIDS. While handing out flyers for the AIDS march at the Social Forum, my friend encountered some folks who said things like, "Well, if they would just stop taking those medicines that make them sick..." These comments were fairly insulting to my friend, who is HIV positive. This foolishness would not take root in the Left without our (the Left's) willingness to let our intelligent distrust of pharmaceutical companies go uncomplicated by any understanding of the privilege many of us experience-not having to deal with HIV, and not living in communities whose health is compromised in so many ways by systemic racism, poverty, homophobia and transphobia. For more information about HIV denialism, please see AIDSTruth.org or the website of South Africa's Treatment Action Campaign

A moment of possibilities

Partly to push visibility of AIDS issues in the Left, and in the tradition of marches at the global AIDS conference, AIDS activists at the Social Forum decided to march up from the basement of the Atlanta Civic Center, through the lobby filled with people milling around t-shirts and literature, out the doors and past the tables outside. It was a fun, chaotic moment that people responded to with excitement and support. We stopped across from the Health Tent, where among the activists who joined us was Panama Vicente Alba, a longtime New York City labor and police brutality activist and former Young Lords Party member. I was thrilled and surprised to see him get on the mic (at the invitation of NYCAHN), because I'd never thought of him as an AIDS activist. NYCAHN's Jennifer Flynn enlightened me to the fact that Panama has been an AIDS activist for more than 15 years. "Needle exchange exists in the Bronx because of Panama," she said, and I was struck by how within my own mind I have such a separation between my lefty world and my AIDS activist world that it has gotten me to where I'm putting people into boxes. Jennifer also pointed out that the Young Lords were well known for tackling tuberculosis, and for their understanding of how government neglect in communities of color leads to epidemics.

I had slept on the fact of Panama's deep involvement with the campaign to demand HIV treatment for people on waiting lists in Puerto Rico. He had been in New Orleans at the HIV Prevention Leadership Summit in May, one of the activists whose graceful and somber protest interrupted a Bush administration speaker to draw attention to the crisis in Puerto Rico. "We know that more than a thousand people are on waiting lists for HIV medicines," Panama told me. "But the mayor of San Juan said nobody died. As long as Puerto Rico is a colony of the U.S., this is the political reality that exists. We need a third party, outside the colonial government, to allocate the funds." The moment Panama united the AIDS movement and the Left was for me a moment of the clouds parting and the stars emerging to show our ships the way forward. Let's take the opportunity now, with the excitement the Social Forum has hopefully instilled in us, to chart our courses a little closer together, share our stories, and really listen to each other.

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