

PART's Perspective: Obama, Imperialism and the Paradox of Plenty amid Poverty

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

In the 1950s and '60s, liberal and conservative social theorists used to speculate about the reasons for "the paradox of poverty amid plenty." How could we account for persistent and unyielding cross-generational poverty in certain sectors of the US population, when the US was the richest and most powerful country in the world? These 'thinkers' shared the assumption that the Empire was capable of endless growth, producing ever-increasing wealth. The idea that this horn of plenty could not seem to eradicate poverty even inside its own borders was a nagging perplexity. Neither school of thought could admit or even contemplate the reality that increasing wealth was extracted from, and in turn produced, increasing poverty. Nor could they begin to acknowledge the on-going process of race-based settler colonialism and "primitive accumulation"

that characterizes the US Empire. Openly racial explanations were either too discredited or too embarrassing to allow in the era of the civil rights struggle and decolonization in Africa, Latin America and Asia. So the liberals and conservatives alike tended towards slightly different varieties of blaming the victim. Liberals focused on a lack of education; conservatives blamed sociopathic family inadequacy. These were two different sets of code for pinning the problem on Black women. Perhaps the fact that most of these social critics were well-educated and well-paid white men helps explain how this 'analysis' developed. Some lined up with JFK's New Frontier and LBJ's War on Poverty; others cast their lot with Nixon's "benign neglect" and later Reagan's "supply side" economics. Globally, the permutations of neo-liberalism and neo-conservatism used imperial 'rule-making' and austerity measures, in combination with imperial saber-rattling and direct military intervention, to impose "solutions" that further enriched US corporate interests at the expense of the rest of the world.

Forty years on, we can begin to recast, in fact reverse, the nature of the paradox they attempted to explain - the paradox in fact is the existence of plenty amid poverty. This is the era of peak oil, limits to growth, and the environmental devastation of global warming, mass extinctions and oceanic acidification. Now it is clear that endless growth is a cancerous, destructive and unsustainable delusion. So the paradox is not why a few people insist on staying poor amid all the wealth. Rather, the paradox is how it's possible for a handful to become increasingly, obscenely wealthy when so many billions of people in the world, and the planet itself, seem doomed to misery and poverty.

IMPERIALISM & IMMISERATION

Seen from that angle, the explanation is self-evident. All the wealth has been extracted from the masses of exploited and colonized people and from the biosphere of the planet itself. All the power is amassed by transferring it from the masses of oppressed and colonized people and nations into the hands of the oppressors and colonizers. Not really a paradox at all, it is simply the irreconcilable and inescapable contradiction that is at the heart of the system of colonialism/capitalism. The stratagems of liberal or neo-liberal, conservative or neo-conservative theorists and practitioners only serve to delay and increase the enormity of the inevitable explosive resolution of that contradiction through the expropriation of the expropriators and the suppression of the oppressors.

OLD PARADIGM, NEW PARADOX

However, socially, culturally and politically, new paradoxes do seem to emerge in this stage of not merely moribund but necrotic capitalism. One that springs to mind is the paradox of how a Black man can emerge as the front runner for the Democratic nomination and the presidency, at the same time that a majority of all Black men in the US serve time at some time in prisons and jails. How is it possible that simultaneously with the nation-wide spread of nooses at high schools, colleges and workplaces - when the noose is a symbol of mass white complicity in racist terror through lynchings - that a Black candidate for president would garner compelling majorities in predominantly white states? Yet really, the two phenomena are flip sides of the same coin, the desperation of the doomed social system of settler colonial empire and white supremacy. It is not uncommon in the history and life span of empires that in their decadence and senescence, they seek rejuvenation and a new lease on life by conferring the imperial throne on someone from the ranks of the colonized. Neither is the last-ditch, die-hard turn to reactionary violence and terror uncommon, particularly among settler-colonial societies that see the handwriting on the wall, such as in the Reconstruction-era South, "French" Algeria or Rhodesia.

A CANDIDACY IS NOT A 'MOVEMENT'

The notion that Barack Obama is to any degree the candidate of a "movement" is a measure of the degradation of both language and politics in the period since the defeat and disorientation of the revolutionary struggles of the 60s and 70s through COINTELPRO and other counter-insurgency warfare. It is not racist to compare the Obama candidacy to Jesse Jackson's reformist Rainbow Coalition campaigns in the 1980s. Doing so makes it immediately clear that Obama is simply a youthful, charismatic and rhetorically gifted speaker and a conventional politician. He has never challenged or opposed the Empire or even its most retrograde and reactionary sectors through any form of mass action, militance or grassroots organizing and resistance during his entire career or in his current platform. Jackson, for all his personal flaws and political reformism, at least came out of a massive social movement, and attempted to unite various opposition sectors beginning with poor and working people. Jackson staked his campaign on voter registration of the disenfranchised, unity among Black, Mexicano, Asian and white workers. He actually had success in winning some white 'Reagan Democrat' workers in places like Michigan, because he created a pole of attraction by uniting significant movement sectors of people of color and by speaking out forcefully against unfair privilege and advantage.

Obama, on the heels of massive electoral fraud and ongoing disenfranchisement directed against Black people, of the institutionalization of thuggishness in the Republicans and spinelessness in the Democrats, presents himself as a post-racial, post-partisan "unifier." Democrats who spent eight years praying for someone who would stand up to and stick it to the Republicans are now falling head-over-heels for someone who presents himself as a paragon of bipartisanship. This only serves to underline the deeply delusional nature of a belief in the efficacy of the US electoral system to produce any meaningful or significant change. Supporting Obama allows people who are not prepared to acknowledge or break with the system of white supremacy and settler colonial empire the ability to feel that they are color-blind and have transcended racism. Thus their extreme discomfort with Hillary Clinton and her "injection" of race into the race. Aren't we beyond that?

Obama, conveniently for Euro-American society, answers the paradox of poverty amid plenty - he 'proves' that poverty, particularly Black poverty, is the fault of the poor - while allowing the privileged to ignore the paradox of plenty amid poverty. Perhaps more pertinent than the comparison to Jackson would be one to Cynthia McKinney. McKinney fought back ferociously against Black disenfranchisement, opposed US support for Zionist aggression, questioned the official story of '9-11' and opposed gentrification, mass incarceration and the locking up of political dissidents and Muslims. As a result, she was twice ousted from her Congressional seat, and her campaign for the presidency via the Green Party receives scant media attention, all of it negative.

END THE WAR OR DRAW DOWN TROOPS?

By contrast, Obama politely opposed the war in Iraq when he could do little officially, and has done little officially against it since he could. As the war enters its 6th (or really, 16th) year, he now proposes to withdraw 'combat' troops - not all US forces. So he is the Democratic front runner. To get there and stay there, Obama has had to discipline and/or distance himself not only from Farrakhan but even from his own wife and his spiritual advisor. John Edwards has had more to say about New Orleans than Obama. George Bush, for that matter, spoke out more forcefully about the spate of nooses in the aftermath of the Jena Six case than Obama did. Is it possible to even imagine Obama drawing attention to the selective

prosecution and set-up case of the Black Rider 3 in Los Angeles, or calling for a moratorium on the incarceration of Black and Mexicano/indigenous youth, or speaking out against the unparalleled increase in police killings in Los Angeles and around the US? Would Obama use his candidacy to draw attention to the Winter Soldier hearings organized by Iraq Veterans Against the War, let alone support active duty resisters inside the military? Obama asks us only to put rage and resentment behind us, and trust him.

It's noteworthy that Obama's candidacy has in fact failed to stimulate an outpouring of Black voters from the ranks of the poor and dispossessed. He is winning high percentages of the Black people who cast ballots, but the new voters he is drawing to the polls have come not from the poor Black masses but from young college graduates, predominantly white. His candidacy is a manifestation of the class divide that has opened inside the Black community between the downtrodden, dispossessed poor and the stratum that has been given a degree of entry into positions of status and wealth within the corporate economic and political system. Where once relatively well-to-do Black people functioned in relationship to, and drew their support and their wealth from, the Black masses, perhaps serving as interlocutors between them and white society, today's so-called Black bourgeoisie owes its status to separation from the Black masses and incorporation into the white power structure. We have moved beyond the 'house negro/field negro' distinction drawn by Malcolm X, to a distinction between Black overseers, managers and consiglieres of white property interests on the one hand, and Black lumpen, super-exploited and current, former and future prisoners on the other.

TOO LITTLE, TOO LATE FOR THE EMPIRE

The smart money in the Empire is betting on Obama in hopes that he will prove clever enough, charismatic enough and capable enough to pull their chestnuts from the fire, to buy a little more time for them to maneuver. This is a pipe dream. The decay and disarray of imperialism, particularly that of the US Empire, is too far along to be easily surmounted (in which case Obama may then serve as a convenient fall guy if he does win). The paradox of plenty amid poverty is reaching its over-extended conclusion. No amount of "confidence-restoring" infusions of credit or monetary tinkering with interest rates will solve the ballooning crises of the US economic system, because the crisis is not one of confidence - it is a crisis of the disappearance of wealth and productive capacity. The bursting of the housing bubble and the inevitable toppling of the rest of the house of cards derived from it is because the median-priced house is now far beyond the capacity of the median-income family. No amount of gentrification and no amount of sub-prime lending can create a market that will sustain the unsustainable. If there is no market for housing, because oppressed and exploited people cannot afford to buy, the price will collapse. Speculative flipping, interest-only loans, and packaging of mortgages into financial instruments have only made the collapse more colossal and damaging to the entire financial and banking system. In an economic system whose growth sectors are prisons and health care, in which most productive capacity has been exported abroad to take advantage of super-exploited labor in China and India, and where even high-tech, high-value service jobs have followed the flight of capital, Obama has no solutions to offer. He will not deter US aggression against Iran or China.

The oppressed, colonized and exploited inside the US must take responsibility for our own survival and future, in the first place by making common cause with the oppressed, exploited and colonized around the world, and by learning from them. We need to apply the methods of horizontal organizing, of environmentally-sound food production, of factory and land takeovers that are developing in Latin America, Africa and Asia. We need to recognize that those who rule this society - those who benefit from the paradox of plenty amid poverty - are our enemies. White supremacy, neo-colonialism and other forms of privilege within the empire will only bind us to a sinking ship and take us down with it. It is time to make a break with illusion, and end our identification with the Empire and the oppressor. We need to begin to strategize now, not how to ensure Obama's election, but how to deal with the Empire if Obama indeed becomes Emperor.

A Punishment of Unusual Cruelty

by
Shane Martinez, ARA Toronto

From time to time we read or hear about sentences for startling amounts of time to be served by those convicted of serious crimes south of the border. Hundreds of years in prison or multiple life sentences are examples of some of the extreme punishments ordered by U.S. judges in cases where society is expected to agree that the crime committed is simply so heinous that the offender should never be free again.

What are some of the offenses that come to mind when reading of sentences so grave that they effectively eradicate any true liberty the convicted person may ever enjoy again someday? Murder? Rape? Terrorism? Indeed it must be a type of crime sufficiently horrific and appalling that it would cause any reasonable person to nod their head in agreement with the sentence and bid good riddance to the accused.

Would burglary be such a crime?

Derek Twyman was 14 years old when he and his family moved from the province of Ontario to the state of North Carolina. His father, Donald, had plans to start a furniture business there, and the family was going to build a future for themselves in the south. Unfortunately, shortly after moving to the U.S., Derek fell in with the wrong crowd and got caught up in a

lifestyle that included a tendency to participate in acts of juvenile delinquency.

In 1989 he was on parole when he was picked up by the police in connection with a series of break-and-enters of homes belonging to affluent residents in North Carolina. Derek pled guilty to the offenses he was accused of, but was shown little mercy by Judge Thomas W. Ross, who sentenced him to four consecutive 40-year sentences in prison – an astonishing total of 160 years behind bars for non-violent property offenses.

The law that provided for such an excessive sentence was the misnamed Fair Sentencing Act, which was replaced in 1994 by the Structured Sentencing Act in an attempt to restore credibility and appropriateness to sentencing. Under the new law, someone who is facing the charges that Derek did in 1989 would only serve a maximum of 7 ½ years upon conviction, as opposed to the unthinkable century and a half that was given to Derek.

Putting aside for a moment the well-founded allegations that the original sentence constitutes cruel and unusual punishment, many would think that the new law would at least apply retroactively in order to halt the continuation of unjust sentences set down under the old law. Unfortunately, the Structured Sentencing Act does not apply to offenses committed before October 1994, undeterred by the fact that a comparison between the old and new legislation clearly depicts a gross disproportionality between the sentences that raises serious human rights concerns.

And given that Canada is the only country to which Derek holds citizenship, where might the political forces of Ottawa enter into this mess? Nowhere it seems. Despite Canada being a signatory to the International Prisoner Transfer Program with the U.S., Derek says that to date the Canadian government has not yet attempted to help him in any way, instead choosing to ignore such inhumane treatment of a Canadian citizen imprisoned abroad. If one looks to the requirements a prisoner must meet in order to be considered for a transfer, he is a perfect candidate with the exception of one thing: restitution.

The presiding judge who sentenced Derek to prison also ordered that he pay over \$60,000 in restitution to the affluent residents whose homes he was convicted of burglarizing, even though insurance policies likely covered most (if not all) of the losses. The restitution

order states that this amount must be paid before Derek can even be considered for deportation to Canada. Apparently it wasn't considered at sentencing that the convicted person going to prison for 160 years eliminates any realistic possibility of the restitution ever being paid.

Nor did it appear to dawn on the court that by the time Derek is eligible for his next parole review (on merely the second of the four 40-year sentences) the total cost of incarcerating him will be approximately \$675,000. In the unlikely event that the intended recipients of the restitution were not covered by insurance, and actually needed it as compensation, the fulfillment of that opportunity was quashed in the most ironic of ways.

So, does the punishment fit the crime? Would you try to justify the lifetime imprisonment of a non-violent offender if it was you who lost a few material possessions? Would you shrug and try to rationalize it if the person locked up was a loved one of yours? Would you sit quietly in your concrete cell as the years passed by, trying to convince yourself that you deserve to never have freedom again?

Even through the desperate arguments that the prison sentence and accompanying restitution were attempts at promoting deterrence, this entire fiasco reeks of a typical "tough on crime" attitude gone terribly wrong. Word of this travesty is spreading, but at the present time Derek's liberty is the price being paid for the complete and ignominious failure that was the Fair Sentencing Act.

Derek hasn't lost hope. Having now spent over 18 years behind bars for this crime, he still manages to keep his spirit up and remains confident that people will take notice of this injustice. No human being should have to endure the kind of wrongful treatment that he has been subjected to. Now is the time for all of us to add our voices to the growing call for Derek Twyman's long overdue release.

To help Derek gain the justice and freedom he deserves, please take a moment to sign this online petition: www.petitiononline.com/dtwyman/petition.html

You can also write to Derek directly at:
Derek Twyman – #0414714
Columbus Correctional Institution
P.O. Box 8
Brunswick, North Carolina
28424 USA

SOLIDARITY WITH ANTI-FASCISTS IN RUSSIA

by Antifa-Net

Anti-fascists are under attack in Russia. Intimidation, terror and murder by a new generation of neo-nazis are daily occurrences. The wave of violence reached a peak this past summer when film of the cold-blooded fascist assassination of two people was posted on the Internet. That this is occurring in a country that lost many millions of people to Hitler's Nazis in WWII is more shocking. The facts speak for themselves:

- 122 people have been killed by fascists since 2005.
- There are 70,000 nazi boneheads in Russia today.
- Anti-fascists are being systematically attacked.
- Perpetrators are often charged only with "hooliganism".

Putin promised to stamp out rightwing extremism but has done little. Anti-fascists are not only few in number, but they are politically isolated in the face of an enemy that whips up hatred and brutality against immigrants and national, ethnic, religious and sexual minorities. Merely "looking anti-fascist" means being targeted by the nazis who patrol parts of most Russian cities. In St. Petersburg and Moscow, nazis gather intelligence to track down anti-fascists, attack and, in some cases, murder them.

The most recent killing took place on March 16, 2008, in Moscow, when about 15 neo-nazis attacked a group of seven people on their way to an antifascist rock concert. A teenager from Noginsk in the Moscow region was stabbed to death. The attack had been discussed on a "Spartak" football team fansite forum. The attack took place near a metro station a short distance from the Kremlin.

The antifascists believe it to be a planned action, because the "Spartak" fan web-site contained instructions on how to conduct reconnaissance in the area of the "Art Garbage" club, where the concert was to take place. Earlier anti-fascist campaigns against the public use of fascist symbols and the sale of racist propaganda achieved some success but the nazis reacted by murdering Professor Nikolai Girenko, one of the most high profile anti-fascist specialists who had supported these campaigns, at his St. Petersburg home.

According to a June 2004 report by Oksana Yablokova, Girenko, 64, "was shot dead in his St. Petersburg apartment...when he went to answer the doorbell at 9 am Saturday, investigators said. The killer fired a rifle through the closed door....Deputy Prosecutor Andrei Zhukov said investigators believe Girenko was killed because of his work as a researcher and expert witness. Over the past two years, he carried out about two dozen studies of neo-Nazi and skinhead groups for Moscow and St. Petersburg authorities. The work has helped lead to several convictions." An extreme nationalist group claimed responsibility for the murder. Russkaya Respublika (Russian Republic), did so in an announcement posted on its website, Rusrepublic.ru, on June 24, 2004.

The authorities talk of the war against Hitler, but from a nationalist standpoint. The nazis claim to be defending "Russian identity" and the toleration of violent nazi gangs stems from the fact that Russian nationalism is touted, even officially, as a remedy for the continuing feelings of defeat resulting from the collapse of the Soviet Union.

Anti-fascists in Russia need financial assistance. With funds, they can produce leaflets, organize campaigns and pay for lawyers. This can only come about through the international solidarity of progressive people, and all anti-fascists and anti-racists outside Russia. Donate to the Russian Human Rights Solidarity Fund Please send donations to: Russian Human Rights Solidarity Campaign, c/o Searchlight, PO Box 1576, Ilford, Essex England IG50NG Or pay directly into our account at: Russian Human Rights Solidarity Campaign, Branch Sort Code: 40-03-36 Account Number: 41284479, IBAN : GB76MIDL40033641284479 SWIFT CODE : IDLGB22 http://www.searchlightmagazine.com/index.php?link=RussiaSolidarity_

ANTI-RACIST ACTION NETWORK

FOUR POINTS OF UNITY

- 1) WE GO WHERE THEY GO:** Whenever fascists are organizing or active in public, we're there. We don't believe in ignoring them or staying away from them. Never let the nazis have the street!
- 2) WE DON'T RELY ON THE COPS OR THE COURTS TO DO OUR WORK FOR US:** This doesn't mean we never go to court. But we must rely on ourselves to protect ourselves and stop the fascists.
- 3) NON-SECTARIAN DEFENSE OF OTHER ANTI-FASCISTS:** In ARA, we have lots of 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 and discrimination against the disabled, the oldest, the youngest and the most oppressed people. **WE INTEND TO WIN!**

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Free the Black Riders!

Editor's Note: Three leading members of the Black Riders Liberation Party, a Los Angeles-based new generation Black Panther-type organization, are facing trumped up conspiracy charges in the LA criminal courts on \$1,000,000 bond each. General T.A.C.O. (Taking All Capitalists Out), and comrades Stress and Aryana recently got the judge to dismiss a gang enhancement sought by the DA in an effort to criminalize the entire Party. As we go to press, the DA may be dropping the charges, but only in order to refile and bring back the gang enhancement. This further exposes the baseless and essentially political nature of the case. Meanwhile, BRLP Chief of Staff Nadia Shakur, who was arrested with T.A.C.O. in Pinole, CA is still doing time in San Bernardino on a related frame-up after police, deputies and FBI raided a Black Riders' home in an effort to provoke a shoot-out. Other members of the Riders, including Kambui Sadiki, are fighting charges or facing restrictions on their community organizing due to bogus convictions for political activity.

It is no accident that several of the key targets of this repression are young Black women like Nadia Shakur, whose essay from behind prison walls we are printing below, or a young Black mother and freedom fighter like Aryana Gladney, whose son has been ripped away by the state while she fights these charges. Like the original BPP, the Black Riders' ranks are filled with many African women whose leadership helps sustain the entire community.

What has the impact been of this attempt to criminalize and disorient a group seeking to bring revolutionary African Intercommunal Consciousness on a street level to youths caught up in set tripping and criminality? The Black Riders came under the gun of the LAPD and the courts when three aspects of their program became increasingly successful – building gang truces through political and physical intervention that reduced Black-on-Black hostility by identifying the true enemy; developing a Watch-a-Pig program to deter police abuse and killings in the Black community; and standing up for Black-Brown unity on the basis of anti-imperialist intercommunal solidarity. With many key members locked up and the Party forced to focus resources on defense efforts, all these efforts have been negatively impacted. This has been a factor in the increase in so-called gang violence, the dramatic increase in police killings, and the ratcheting up of Black-Brown tension at the street level in the months since the all-out state onslaught on the BRLP commenced with last summer's raid in San Bernardino. Other factors have of course contributed to all these ills. But the fact that the police and the courts have directed their fire against the one group with the street level credibility to reduce gang hostilities and build solidarity makes it clear that Black on Black violence, Black-Brown rivalry, and police killings are designed to serve the interests of the rulers. The LA elite wants to destabilize Black and Mexicano/indigenous communities of resistance in order to carry out the gentrification of the city and defuse a threat of revolutionary opposition as the economic crisis deepens. This underscores the importance of defending the Black Rider Three.

The state attack has also served, however, to expose and exploit certain weaknesses in the BRLP, based on their self-designation as a 'vanguard,' particularly an over-centralized reliance on a military-style discipline and an isolation from elders and other important sectors of the Black and other colonized communities. In understanding the importance of its own role, the Party should learn from the errors of the original Black Panther Party for Self-Defense as well as its successes. To free the Black Riders and rebuild a revolutionary offensive against the empire, a united front is necessary, both within the Black community, and intercommunally among all revolutionary-minded forces of oppressed, colonized and exploited peoples. This requires a more horizontal approach that promotes the leadership and deepens the political capabilities of everyone in the struggle. -- Editor

Black faces in High Places: Another game of fascism

By Nadia Shakur, Black Riders Liberation Party Chief of Staff

The counter-revolution of 2008 is not a figment of our imagination, but the malicious, systematic manipulation of our lives in AmeriKKKa. If we continue to evaluate the progress of the struggle by the dogmatism of the so-called civil rights leaders, then we will fall into a meaningless pit of defeatist reformism. One of the key figures in the effort to transform revolutionary action into criminalistic idealism is none other than Barack Obama. Now before Black people start jumping down my throat, I think you should first sit down and listen to my logic and come to an educated conclusion.

First and foremost, this is not an attack on Obama personally, but a political analysis of his position and of the malignant hypocrisy of a government he is striving so hard to command. In the 453 years since we as African people were first tortured and brought to this country as slaves, we have been fighting for our freedom. Over the years, we have gained some 'rights' to equalize our status to Europeans, but we are still made to be the floor mats of Amerikkkan society. There's no doubt that this is a fascist country, a country built off our free labor, on our backs, from capitalism to the rise of corporations to imperial expansionism through its colonies. Amerikkka is truly a land for the upper class. Now in contemporary times, a few people of color have been allowed to be entered into the aristocracy, thereby giving that old and ridiculously reformist slogan of "picking yourself up by your bootstraps" a seeming validity.

As long as some of 'us' can walk, talk, and live by the standards of the so-called nobility, we feel like we've won, that we're free. But that is the game the fascists play. This level of fascism will spend trillions in wars for economic gain and political domination, in which it kills thousands more and cultivates a society of 'citizens' who live in a state of constant fear, thereby creating the 'necessity' for a militarily obese government that can pry into everybody's business. They obviously have no regard for the rights or equality of their 'citizens' because it took until 2008 for not only a Black man but a white woman to get a chance to be president. The question I pose to the people is, why now?

Is the revolutionary push or threat of the people so strong that they wish to pacify our movement? I believe that's the case. My entire life, I have heard, "What we need is a Black President." But if we get it, it will only be because we have reached the final stage in our colonial domination, Neo-Colonialism. Barack Obama will only be a representative of this oppressive government, that has so brutally distorted democracy, not us. Do not put all our faith in this man, do not demobilize and disarm our movement when we are so close to real freedom! If they have played this wild card now, it is because they have no more cards to pull! So we shall call their bluff. You can change the color or gender of the commander-in-chief, but the system of government will not change, it will simply take on a new disguise.

I am not against local political action, because local political consciousness we control, the better the people can control our own communities. This builds the commune. This should correspond with the developing revolutionary acts of a vanguard party. But the class system and its state apparatus must be destroyed without exception. A new system of values, ethics and morality must be instilled in this country, a morality that will not tolerate slavery, exploitation or oppression. Only then can we begin the transformation of this decadent society into a true civilization that doesn't feed off the blood of so many others like some kind of pathological vampire.

The very fact that you need millions of dollars and Ivy League credentials to enlist in their political rat race shows the ruling class nature of the whole electoral process.

So where do we stand now? Should we encourage the masses to vote for Obama as our African enslaved American savior? Or are we our own liberators? I think the

point will be proven soon enough if he is elected, that the orders to incarcerate, assassinate and dismantle the movement will still come from the top – and the president is not the top. The ruling elite makes the rules, and sorry, Obama, but you are not part of the pack.

So in conclusion, Obama only means that we must organize and fight harder than ever before. We will not allow this token to assimilate us into their matrix, their false façade of a free country built on truth, liberty and justice for all. That's one of the worst lies this government has ever told, and I hope when Obama looks at that flag he is fighting so adamantly to represent that he really thinks about that statement and the irony of its falsehood.

But we are not dependent on his seeing the light; we never were. Condeleeza Rice and Clarence Thomas have shown us the lengths that a house-negro will go to in order to show their masters that they can be as greedy and cold-hearted as the best of them.

So we push forward, no matter what the outcome of this political rat race, because when it comes down to it, the only thing that can change the Amerikkkan culture is true revolution, and that depends on the Power of the People!

All Power to the People!

No Justice – No Peace!

by
Nadia Shakur, BRLP Chief of Staff

Global warming and polluted air.
Lethal injections and the electric chair.
Ku Klux Klansmen at the County Fair.
The planet's dying and no one cares.
No Justice – No Peace!

Medgar Evers, Martin Luther King and
Malcolm X were shot down.
Huey Newton, George Jackson and Fred
Hampton, put in the ground.
Bunchy Carter, John Huggins and Lil'
Bobby got knocked off.
So excuse the hell out of me if I'm still
pissed off.
No Justice – No Peace!

Down with Oppression! Free the Land!
Fight the Power! Take a Stand!
No more begging! No more singing!
Ball our fists and start to swinging!
Tell the rulers, We don't need their
police!
No Damn Justice – No Damn Peace!

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General T.A.C.O. (Taking All Capitalists Out) [center] with former CRIP and former Blood members of BRLP at funeral of Stanley "Tookie" Williams.

In the Prison-house of Nations

Written and copyright © 3/3/08 by Mumia Abu-Jamal

With the release of the Pew Center on the States report, comes news that proves, without question, that the U.S. is the world's champion, when it comes to incarceration rates:

One out of 100 American adults is in prison today.

According to news reports detailing the Pew Center research, the year 2008 began with 2,319,258 people in U.S. prisons and jails.

No other nation can boast such a raw number, or per capita rate, of incarceration. Not India, which has over 3 times the population, nor China, which has 4 times the U.S. population.

That's because the U.S. transformed its prisons into a job-making program, and a business. The 50 states have spent over \$49 billion on their 2007 prison budgets, up from \$11 billion spent on the 1987 prison budgets.

Over a decade ago, I warned of precisely this outcome in my book, *Live from Death Row* (1995). That's because we were then in the midst of the incarceration boom, due to tougher and tougher sentencing.

The so-called drug war has fed this binge, and only now, over a decade after the rash and harsh imprisonment of many, many people, the Sentencing Commission is easing the rules on sentencing for possession of crack cocaine vs. powder.

Why would the government ease up?

It may be because the states are drowning in red ink over burgeoning prison costs. Because, decades after the onset of the drug war, in 2005 over 33.6 million Americans over 12 years old used cocaine. As for crack, some 8 million people reported usage of the drug in their lifetime.

If we look at U.S. high school seniors, we find an astonishing figure. In 1975, 1.9% of these students reported cocaine use. In 2005, that number was 2.5%.¹

So much for the so-called drug war. For these figures show, after billions of dollars were spent on prisons, and an incredible number of people were imprisoned at rates that no other nation has yet faced, the rate of drug use not only hasn't declined, it has increased.

Guess who's winning?

[Note 1: Wright, John W., ed., 2008: *The New York Times Almanac* (New York: Penguin Books, 2007), p.389.]



WriteAPrisoner.Com

"Write a Prisoner" is a business that allows prisoners to advertise for pen-pals, and people outside the walls to learn more about prison issues and correspond with prisoner. On their website they say:

"If you choose to submit the ad via postal mail, please go to our web-site, <http://www.writeaprisoner.com/howtolist.aspx>, print and complete an application. If you pay for the inmate's ad, we will permit you to sign the application on the inmate's behalf. Once we receive both the ad content and payment in full, the Inmate's Ad will be posted promptly and will appear under the Newest Members section of our site. You can send an Inmate Ad and/or send Payment via check, money order, or international money order. Be sure to include the inmate's Department of Corrections number and full name. Please make payable to WriteAPrisoner.com and mail to:

WriteAPrisoner.com
P.O. Box 10
Edgewater, FL 32132 USA"

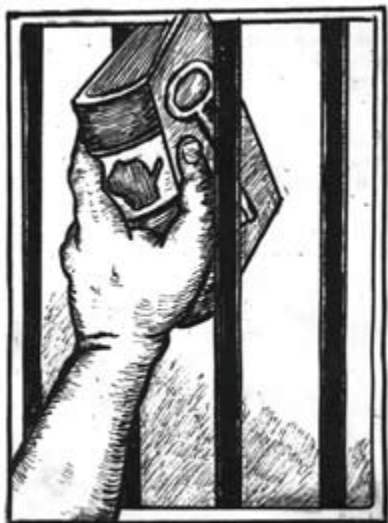
Turning the Tide and ARA-LA/PART are not in a position to evaluate their service beyond what is on the website which seems to make available a number of valuable resources and opportunities. If readers are aware of any comparable free service, we would be glad to publicize it, but for now, as we cannot offer such services ourselves this seems like the next-best thing.

Books to Prisoners Programs around the U.S. (check for state served)

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Quincy, MA 02169
Phone: 617-423-3298 (no collect calls)
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Email: books2prisoners@riseup.net

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San Francisco, CA 94117



Portland Books To Prisoners c/o BTOP
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Portland, OR 97211
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Books to Prisoners
c/o Left Bank Books
92 Pike Street
Seattle, WA 98101
Email: bookstoprisoners@cs.com

Read Between the Bars
PO Box 1589
Tucson AZ 85702-1589
(AZ prisoners only)

Bread and Roses: The 1912 Lawrence Textile Strike

By Joyce Kornbluh

In Jan. 1912 IWW activity focused on a 10-week strike of 25,000 textile workers in Lawrence, MA. It became the most widely publicized IWW conflict, acquainting the nation with the plight of unskilled, foreign-born workers as well as with the Wobbly philosophy of radical unionism. "Lawrence was not an ordinary strike. It was a social revolution in parvo," wrote one observer.

Lawrence was a textile center, #1 in woolen and worsted goods. Its principal mills were those of the American Woolen Co., a consolidation of 34 factories whose yearly output was valued at \$45,000,000. The mills employed over 40,000, about half Lawrence's population over age 14. Most were unskilled workers who had come from Europe after 1900, attracted by the promises of labor contractors. But U. S. Comm. of Labor Charles Neil reported that for the week ending November 25, 1911, 22,000 textile employees including foremen, supervisors, and office workers, averaged \$8.76 for a week's work. In addition, the cost of living was higher in Lawrence than elsewhere. Bread, molasses, and beans were

the diet of most workers. Of 22,000 textile workers investigated by Commissioner Neil, over half were women and children. Half the workers in the Lawrence mills of American Woolen were girls aged 14-18. Dr. Elizabeth Shapleigh, a Lawrence physician, wrote: "A considerable number of the boys and girls die within the first 2-3 years after beginning work....36 of every 100 men and women who work in the mill die by age 25," stated Shapleigh.

The IWW claimed 1000 members, but only about 300 paid up on its rolls. They sent a letter to the president of American Woolen asking how wages would be affected under a new labor law limiting the workweek to 54 hours. There was no reply. Textile workers realized a 2-hour cut would mean, as IWW publicity pointed out, three fewer loaves of bread each week. Polish women weavers were the first to notice a shortage of 32 cents in their pay envelopes on January 11. They stopped their looms and left, shouting "short pay!" Other outbursts took place throughout Lawrence. The next morning workers at other mills joined the walkout. For the first time, the bells of the Lawrence City Hall rang the general riot alarm. That afternoon a mass meeting was held, and a telegram was sent to Joseph Ettor, IWW Board member, asking that he come from New York to assist the strike.

Ettor, 27, had visited Lawrence in the past. He was known in the Italian community as an organizer who had worked in the shipyards of San Francisco, traveled through mining and lumber camps, and led foreign-born workers in a 1909 steel car strike. Pragmatic and decisive, Ettor could speak English, Italian, and Polish and understand Hungarian and Yiddish. Under his leadership, a strike committee was formed of two representatives from each of the nationalities represented among the mill workers. They met each morning and took charge of the strike. The demands were a 15% increase in wages on a 54-hour workweek, double time for overtime, and no retaliation against any workers for the strike.

In response, Mayor Scanlon ordered a company of local militia to spend the night at the armory and patrol the streets around the mills. Mass picketing and mass arrests started the first week of the strike. It was the first time there had been mass picketing in a New England town. When workers demonstrated, they were drenched by fire hoses. They retaliated by throwing chunks of ice. 36 were arrested and most sentenced to a year in prison. As the judge stated, "The only way we can teach them is to deal out the severest sentences." The governor ordered out the state militia and state police.

A few days after the strike began, Arturo Giovannitti, an Italian poet and orator, came to Lawrence from NY to take charge of strike relief. He came on behalf of *Il Proletario*, the paper he edited for the Italian Socialist Federation. Relief committees, soup kitchens, and food distribution stations were set up by each nationality group. Families received \$2-\$5 each week from the funds raised in response to the strike committee's appeal. "The problem of relief was so efficiently handled," wrote labor historian Samuel Yellin, "that during the 10-week strike there was no wavering in the strikers' ranks."

"It was the spirit of the workers that was dangerous," wrote labor reporter Mary Heaton Vorse. "They are always marching and singing. The crowds flowing perpetually into the mills had waked and opened their mouths to sing."

Less than a week after the strike started, the police found dynamite in a tenement house, an empty lot, and a shoemaker's shop next door to the print shop where Ettor received his mail. The press and the police were quick to assign guilt to the strikers. The IWW claimed that the

Boston-American, a Hearst paper, was on sale with the details of the discovery *before* the dynamite was actually found. Soon after, John Breen, a member of the Lawrence school board, was arrested and charged with planting the explosives to discredit the workers. He was fined \$500 and released on bail. President Wood of American Woolen was implicated, but cleared though he couldn't explain why he had recently made a cash payment to Breen.

One of the largest demonstrations took place on January 29. That evening, independent of the earlier demo, a woman striker, was killed when police tried to break up a picket line. The strikers said she was shot by a Lawrence police officer. Nevertheless, Ettor and Giovannitti, who were miles away talking to a meeting of German workers, were arrested as "accessories to murder" and charged with provoking the violence. They were refused bail and imprisoned for eight months without trial. Martial law was enforced following their arrest. City officials declared all public meetings illegal, and Lawrence authorities called out 22 more militia companies on patrol. A militiaman killed a 15-year-old Syrian boy in another clash.

The arrest was aimed at disrupting the strike. But the Wobblies sent Bill Haywood, William Trautmann, Elizabeth Gurley Flynn, and Carlo Tresca, an Italian anarchist, to Lawrence. More than 15,000 strikers met Haywood at the station and carried him to the Common, where he addressed a group of 25,000 strikers. They sang the *Internationale* in their various tongues. Haywood urged passive resistance, but this took many forms. One innovation was an endless picket line of thousands, who marched through the mill districts with white arm bands reading, "Don't scab." When this was disrupted by police, crowds of mill workers would move in and out of stores, not buying anything. As the head of the police later testified, "They had our shopkeepers in a state of terror; it was a question whether or not they would shut up their shops."

By far the most dramatic episode of the strike involved sending the strikers' children to sympathetic families in other cities. About 120 children left Lawrence on February 10 and in were placed in homes that had been selected by a women's committee of sympathizers. Margaret Sanger, later famous for her work in birth control, was one of the nurses who accompanied the children on the train. She testified before Congress: "Of the 119 children, only four had underwear ... their outerwear was in rags ... their coats torn to shreds ... and it was the bitterest weather we have had this winter." 92 more children arrived in NY and paraded down Fifth Avenue. Alarmed, Lawrence authorities ordered that no more children could leave the city. On Feb. 24 when a group of 150 more children made ready to leave for Philadelphia, 50 police and two militia companies surrounded the train station. They tore children from their parents, threw women and children into a patrol wagon, and detained 30. One woman testified: "The children, two by two in an orderly procession with the parents near, were about to make their way to the train when the police...closed in on us with their clubs, beating with no thought of the children who were in desperate danger of being trampled to death. The mothers and the children were thus hurled in a mass and bodily dragged to a military truck and even then clubbed, irrespective of the cries of the mothers and children."

This was the turning point of the strike. Protests from every part of the country reached Congress. In March, a House Committee heard testimony from Lawrence strikers including girls under 16. The young workers testified that the companies held back a week of their wages, required -5- them to do unpaid clean-



Women workers still struggle for justice today.

up work on Saturdays, and made them pay to get drinking water in the mills. So great was national indignation, President Taft ordered an investigation of industrial conditions throughout the nation. Concerned over public reaction, and the possible threat to their tariff protection, American Woolen Co. agreed to the strikers' demands on Mar. 12. The rest of the Lawrence textile companies fell in line. Wages were raised for textile workers in all New England. And on Mar. 30 the children in NY were brought home.

The trial of Ettor and Giovannitti began in Salem, MA, at the end of September; it lasted two months. The defendants were kept in metal cages in the courtroom. Crowds waited outside to cheer them as they entered and left. Delegations visited Taft at his summer home to plead for the prisoners' release. The prosecution accused them of inciting the strikers to murder, though witnesses proved that they were speaking to a meeting of workers miles from where LoPizzo was shot. Two Pinkertons testified that Giovannitti had urged strikers to "sleep in the daytime and prowl like wild beasts at night." But the detectives admitted that the speech they referred to was in Italian, and they had no written notes of the meeting to quote. Before the end of the trial, Ettor said in part: "Does the DA believe . . . that the gallows or guillotine ever settled an idea? An idea lives because history judges it right. I ask only for justice.... The scaffold has never yet and never will destroy an idea or a movement.... Whatever my social views are, they are what they are. They cannot be tried in this courtroom." On Nov. 26, the men were acquitted and released.

Membership in the Lawrence IWW local swelled to 10,000 in the year after the strike but dropped to 400 by 1914 as a depression cut into employment. Textile bosses initiated espionage in the mills to counter any further radical influence. A 50% speedup of machines after 1912 led to additional unemployment and offset the wage increase in the settlement. But the immediate effect of the Lawrence strike was to hearten workers in other areas and to prepare for the strike in the Paterson mills. The strike made a profound impression on the public and the rest of labor by dramatizing the living and working conditions of unorganized, foreign-born workers in crowded industrial areas, and communicating the spirit of their rebellion. Literary critic Ken McGowan wrote: "Whatever its future, the IWW has accomplished one tremendous thing, ... the individual awakening of 'illiterates' and 'scum' to an original conception of society and the realization of the dignity and rights of their part in it. They have learned more than class consciousness; they have learned consciousness of Self..."

This was a fitting interpretation of the spirit of the striking mill girls who carried picket signs which read:

WE WANT BREAD AND ROSES TOO.

Source: Kornbluh, *Rebel Voices: An IWW Anthology*, Charles H. Kerr Publishing, Chicago, 1988

STOPMAX Conference: May 30, 2008-June 1st, 2008

Student Activity Center, Temple University, Philadelphia, PA

by Naima Black, AFSC

Featured Speakers

Rubin "Hurricane" Carter, human rights activist, former boxer, exonerated from a triple life sentence.

Jimmy Santiago Baca, poet, teacher, and former Supermax prisoner.

Susan Rosenberg, former political control unit prisoner

Terry Kupers M.D., psychiatrist, author, and expert witness in several class action lawsuits on the quality of mental health services inside control unit prisons and jails.

The conference kick-off event on Friday evening May 30th, at Eastern State Penitentiary, where solitary confinement was first practiced in the United States, will feature:

Rubin Hurricane Carter

Aztec dancers with loved ones in isolation;

A Thousand Kites theatrical performance,

A reading of names of isolation prisoners.

Human Rights Training workshops will take place the following two days. In the STOPMAX Campaign Plenary, STOPMAX staff and partners will give an overview of the history of the campaign and its future goals. In a panel of Survivors of Isolation, you can hear directly from people who have endured solitary confinement and torture in US prisons. A workshop on *Juvenile Life Without Parole (JLWOP): Human Rights Abuses and International Law* will address human rights abuses of youth sentenced to JLWOP

The conference will also include:

Converting a Supermax through Litigation/Negotiations- learn about the strategies employed to reduce the use of isolation at Mississippi Parchman Prison's notoriously brutal Unit 32

Recognizing Families Role in Re-entry - interactive workshop led by experienced family members and former prisoners focused on empowering families to understand and support the specific needs of prisoners returning from solitary confinement.

Regional Strategic Planning Meetings- meet with families, former prisoners and activists to plan regional campaign efforts

Nightwind: Hector Aristizábal's theatrical portrayal of transformation from torture by the US-supported military in Columbia

Up the Ridge: a Thousand Kites documentary performance on the Supermax at Wallens Ridge, VA

For more information and to register, contact <http://www.afsc.org/stopmax/> or call or email Naima Black, Coordinator, National STOPMAX Campaign, 215-241-7137, stopmax@afsc.org

FOR THE SLAVES WHO DON'T KNOW THAT THEY ARE SLAVES

by
Ras Jahaziel

How come you have been the busiest and the hardest workers from generation to generation, for over 500 years on Hell plantation, and yet today the vast majority of you are little more than SQUATTERS and Concrete Nomads, living from rent to rent on the land of your enslavement, and there is no place that you can call your own?

YOU HAVE ALWAYS BEEN THE BUSIEST AND THE HARDEST WORKERS ON THE PLANTATION.

From dawn till dusk, from sun-up till sun-down, from 8 till 4, from 9 till 5, from century to century till this present day, you have been FORCED AND COMPELLED BY SEEN AND UNSEEN FORCES to build another man's house.

And yet at the beginning of the twenty-first century the vast majority of you scotch in someone else's house on someone else's land, because there is no place that you can call your own.

Even when you think you own your house you do so at the expense of LIFE-LONG SERVICE TO THE PLANTATION and if you dare take a break, the real owner will show up at your gate and you will have to hurriedly evacuate.

LOOK AT YOURSELF AND ARISE FROM YOUR STUPOR.

Arise and look at the shepherds that lead you like blind sheep, and ask yourself why they do not speak this truth about your continuing enslavement. They are either blind sheep too or they are collaborators because it is profitable to collaborate with the master.

Your parents, your uncles, your aunts, your cousins, your grandfathers and your grandmothers and their parents and their grandparents have always been THE BUSIEST AND THE HARDEST WORKERS ON THE PLANTATION, generation after generation after generation. And still today you own nowhere and yet you say that slavery is a thing of the past. Look around at all the construction that is going on, look at all the buildings that are going up to the sky and ask your-self who owns them. Look around and take a careful assessment of EVERYTHING THAT YOU NEED AND EVERYTHING THAT YOU DEPEND ON and ask yourself who owns it all. Why is it that after five hundred years of hard labor you still do not own and control THE MOST VITAL NECESSITIES THAT YOUR LIFE DEPENDS ON?

Do you really understand what slavery is?

Slavery is a condition where you are FORCED AND COMPELLED every day to build another man's wealth, and your LABOR and your STRENGTH, and your TIME on earth do not contribute to your own progress.

Yesterday the forces that compelled you were clear and visible and very physical. Today the forces that drive and compel you are unseen to the physical eye, but if you study the economic matrix that governs your life you will see how you are still being driven, still being forced, and still being compelled to labor in an evil system where somebody else gets wealthy and you barely get enough to keep you working till you die.

So if today after five hundred years of hard labor you still do not own and control anything, not even the very basic necessities that your life depends on, then it is because you are either CURSED OR ENSLAVED. It has to be one or the other. Please take a reality check and ask yourself which one it is.

The slave-master has tricked you by placing a righteous cloak on the system of evil. He has enlisted the help of "MEN OF THE CLOTH" to blindfold you with superstition and SPIRIT-ISM so that your eyes will not see the stark naked truth of your present reality.

He has deceived you by constantly parading before your eyes the very small minority of fatted Negroes that he has deliberately fattened with wealth. These are the SMOKE-SCREEN NEGROES who are used to contradict the truth of the bondage that keeps down the vast majority. These are used to feed you the story that there are no chains and no restrictions on your progress, because according to their mantra "IF I DID IT ANYBODY CAN DO IT". It is time to think. Ask yourself why something that anybody can do is only accomplished by a very small minority, despite the fact that the vast majority have been sweating, working, laboring, trying, and dying for centuries without ever accomplishing the thing that anybody can do.

If hard work is supposed to pay, how come from generation to generation the hardest workers have still gotten nowhere? How come every new generation of Black children rises up to find the same LANDLESS-NESS and the same POWERLESS-NESS and they are still saddled with RENT TO PAY?

In the natural order of things every generation builds on the accomplishments of past generations. If each new generation is still landless and still powerless it has to be because the accomplishments of fathers and forefathers continue to benefit someone else.

Ask yourself how come the vast majority of you live on a string from rent to rent in uncertainty and total vulnerability so that if the white man catches a cold you are the first to die? Did Katrina not uncover the truth of your powerless hand to mouth reality?

But you have been DOMESTICATED like a cat or a dog and that is why you question not your present-day slave reality. You have been domesticated and indoctrinated to come to terms with and accept the official rationale for continued slavery. And that is why in the midst of your bondage you will not accept that it is slavery unless the slave-master tells you that it is slavery, or unless the Church tells you that it is slavery, or unless the University tells you that it is slavery. And that is because you cannot see that every institution on a slave plantation is part of the apparatus of slavery and slave-master dominion.

Just for one moment, look away from the small minority that fill the parade of "successful Blacks" and look at the vast majority. Look at the totality of their condition, and if your eyes are truly open, you will be forced to conclude that they are indeed EITHER CURSED OR ENSLAVED.

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WHAT REALLY IS SLAVERY?

Avelino González -- A Tireless Fighter for Puerto Rico

by Friends and Family of Avelino González Claudio

In August of 1985, Avelino González, along with other Puerto Ricans and 2 North Americans, were accused of having participated in the planning and authorization of an operation to secure \$7,117,000.00 from a Wells Fargo armored truck in Hartford, Connecticut on September 12, 1983. That operation was carried out by the then PRTP-Macheteros. They are accused of being part of the Central Committee and Political Commission of the PRTP-Macheteros. Avelino, his brother Norberto and Victor Gerena, the main person accused, could not be arrested at that time. Norberto and Victor remain underground to this day.

The charges against those arrested that year ended in a trial of a group of the accused (Carlos Ayes, Filiberto Ojeda, Juan Segarra, Norman Ramirez and Roberto Maldonado) in 1989 and finally led to a political-legal agreement in 1992 with the accused Orlando González, Hilton Fernández Diamante, Jorge A. Farinacci,

Isaac Camacho, Elías Castro and Angel Días Ruiz and later led to another trial of the accused Ivone Meléndez Carrión. The legal agreement reached recognized the Macheteros as a political organization that fights for the independence of their homeland.

Avelino was born in the town of Vega Baja on October 8, 1942. Since his days as a student in the public schools of his country he established himself as a fighter for the freedom of his homeland. Upon entering the University of Puerto Rico he became a member of the Pro-Independence University Federation (Federación Universitaria Pro Independencia –FUPI), a student organization founded in 1956 that has stood out for its struggle for university reforms to improve conditions at the university for our people. Avelino became its vice-president. Avelino stood out as one of its best militants and as a person for whom no task was too small or too big to take on. Since becoming a student he embraced socialist ideas as his own, becoming a constant student of the history of our working people and their struggles, as well as, studying the socialist ideological classics. He always stood out for his knowledge of the history of the workers' international struggles and their revolutions.

He married in the mid-1960's and had 4 children who today are part of the professional classes of our country. At that time he moved to New York City where he lived until the beginning of the 1970's. He worked in Wall Street in that city while he carried out political work with the Puerto Rican community and organized part of the resistance of the revolutionary forces that were beginning to organize themselves in "the belly of the Yankee beast" and had begun to stand out by the end of the 1960's. Avelino became part of the leadership of the Vito Marcantonio Mission of the Movimiento Pro-Independencia (MPI) in New York.

Avelino returned to his homeland to integrate into the political work where he stands out as one of its most capable and disciplined leaders. At the time of the arrests in 1985 he was known for his role in the administration of the operations of the political magazine *Pensamiento Crítico* (Critical Thought). It is at that time that he becomes one of the Puerto Ricans most sought by the enemy and he transforms himself into the citizen José Ortega.

Upon getting to know Avelino as one of the leaders most committed with his ideas of freedom for our homeland and the program of struggle of his organization, we do not doubt that he has been in the heart of our people, struggling alongside them for their civil rights to freedom and social justice for its working classes. Many have been the trenches of struggle of this well-known leader and militant of the revolutionary struggles of our people and its movement for national liberation for the past 50 years. Following the arrests of August 30, 1985, Avelino became part of the struggles of our people as "José Ortega". For the past 22 years he eluded the enemy and was able to participate not only in the struggle for our people's liberation but also as a worker and computer teacher, where he realized work for the improvement of the services provided by the Department of Education of Puerto Rico.



Avelino Gonzalez Claudio, also known as Jose Ortega, is a Puerto Rican political prisoner captured by the U.S. and accused of participation in the *Macheteros*, a clandestine pro-independence organization that has carried out attacks on US military targets in Puerto Rico, expropriations, and denounced from clandestinity a recent wave of repression, including the assassination of *Machetero* leader Filiberto Ojeda Rios last year on the anniversary of Puerto Rico's call for independence.--*Editor*.

Avelino is known for his calm tolerant manner but at the same time for his firmness in the expression of his positions and political ideas. For him there is no room for hypocrisy when it's time to combat ideas that he considers incorrect. His personality, his demeanor and his ideas regarding the necessity for unity in the liberation movement led him to always espouse that differences should not be a motive for divisions. He has never been heard to make mean-spirited or derogatory accusations of those he has political differences, either in his organization or toward those outside it with whom he has differences because of their political practice or strategy. He said in his first communication after his arrest, "... Pandora left desperation out of her box and because of this they may chain and imprison my body, but never my spirit and my ideas."

Avelino today finds himself incarcerated in a state prison in the city of Hartford in conditions of "maximum security". 23 hours in isolation in a jail cell, with one hour to get fresh air, with no access to his family and denied communication by telephone with his family members, his lawyers or friends. They propose to judge him, as they have his comrades in struggle, faraway from his Puerto Rican homeland. The U.S. government must recognize Avelino's status as a fighter for independence and a political prisoner, as he demanded in its imperial courts! We know that Avelino is man in very good health at the time of his arrest and we hope that he remains so. Any change in his health condition will be the responsibility of his enemy jailers. Let Us Support the Defense of Avelino!

Comité familiares y Amigos de Avelino González Claudio, apartado postal #22282, San Juan. P.R.00931-2282, avelinogonzalezclaudio@yahoo.com

For the Unconditional Sovereignty of the Puerto Rican People, the National Independence of Puerto Rico, and the Unconditional Release of the Puerto Rican Political Prisoners and Prisoners Of War

by
Lawrence Reyes, Coordinator, Puerto Rican Alliance Of Los Angeles

Oscar Lopez Rivera and Carlos Alberto Torres, and Haydee Beltran, imprisoned since April 4, 1980, are symbols of Puerto Rican resistance and national identity. Come celebrate the Puerto Rican culture of resistance with Puerto Rican ex-political prisoner, artist and filmmaker Dylcia Pagan. Dylcia was convicted of seditious conspiracy to overthrow the government of the U.S. in Puerto Rico for advocating for the self-determination and liberation of Puerto Rico and its people from US colonialism and oppressive policies of political and economic subjugation.

From the environmental destruction of Vieques by its occupational military-industrial complex, to the FBI and CIA's new COINTELPRO tactics against advocates of independence, the yoke of the United States government over Puerto Rico has been criminal and illegal. We demand that the UN Charter, Resolutions 1213, 1214 and other UN resolutions past and present be adhered to. Under these resolutions calling for the decolonization of Puerto Rico and its people, and calling colonialism a 'Crime against Humanity,' we call for the World Court in the Hague to file 'Crime Against Humanity' charges against the US government on behalf of the Puerto Rican people and the Island Nation known as Puerto Rico.



We further call for the unconditional release of Puerto Rico Prisoners Of War and political prisoners Oscar Lopez and Carlos Alberto Torres, Haydee Beltran and Avelino Gonzales.

We also call for the release of all political prisoners such as Mumia Abu-Jamal and Leonard Peltier, as their human rights have been repeatedly violated by the US. We also assert the people's right as human beings to move about the world and recognize no borders or barriers of the occupational forces violating the free movement of human beings. We call for charges to be filed against the US government for restricting human beings from freely traveling within the Americas by building borders, walls or fences in direct violation of human rights. Further we call for the return of the so-called 'Southwest' to its native inhabitants and the people of Mexico and their descendants, the Xicano/a people of the occupied lands.

Como Siempre, Pa'lante en la Lucha!

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21st year of publication of Turning the Tide



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