

# Decolonization, Hurricanes and Solidarity: OSCAR LÓPEZ RIVERA'S SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA TOUR February 5-9, 2018

Oscar López Rivera is an inspiring example of the power of principled commitment and resistance to oppression and repression. A decorated veteran of the Vietnam War, he served more than 35 years in federal prison for his commitment to independence for Puerto Rico; post-release, he is more dedicated than ever to serving his homeland and its working people.

Oscar López Rivera brings word of the historic struggle of all Puerto Ricans, and particularly Puerto Rican workers, on the island and in the US, for human dignity and economic rights, and of the current self-determined efforts at the grassroots to meet people's needs.

Despite the efforts of organized labor, working people in Puerto Rico get a smaller share of total income than do their counterparts here in the U.S. Thousands of jobs are threatened by the onerous "PROMESA" Fiscal Control Board. Effectively a junta mainly appointed by the Republican-dominated US Congress, it oversees the budget and government spending in Puerto Rico in order to meet the demands of Wall Street and hedge funds for debt

repayment. Unlike US states and municipalities, Puerto Rico is denied by the US Congress the power to arrange for an orderly court-supervised bankruptcy process, and so its creditors get first claim on its funds, forcing the closing of schools and other essential services, and lay-offs of workers. The debt and the financial straits, artifacts of US colonialism in Puerto Rico, have been worsened by the devastation caused by Hurricane Maria and the response by the US government and the Trump administration.

Upon finally being freed, López Rivera was greeted by tens of thousands of cheering Puerto Ricans. He is considered the "Nelson Mandela of Latin America" due to his long imprisonment and principled commitment. Since his release in May 2017, López Rivera has worked to provide community and labor aid for recovery in Puerto Rico, as well as addressing the needs of the Puerto Rican diaspora in the U.S. as he did in the years before his incarceration. This tour is raising funds for the Oscar López Rivera Foundation (Fundación Oscar López Rivera-Libertá) to support its important work and relief efforts.



Oscar is available for press interviews and media appearances prior to and during his visit to Southern California. He has been engaged in relief efforts for Puerto Rico in the wake of Hurricane Maria and the subsequent response by the US colonial government. He also continues to advocate for decolonization of Puerto Rico and liberation of political prisoners still held in the U.S., such as Leonard Peltier and former members of the Black Panther Party.

For more information and to schedule media events and interviews, please call 310-460-8586. More information about Oscar López Rivera and the colonial case of Puerto Rico is available here: <https://www.un.org/press/en/2017/gacol3312.doc.htm>. Updated information about the Southern California visit itinerary is available here: <https://www.facebook.com/events/163039650972667/>

## COMMEMORATIVE BOOK OF THE TOUR

To commemorate this tour and welcome Oscar López Rivera to Southern California, the organizing committee for the tour is producing a commemorative book, 7x8.5

inches, that will include writings by and photos of Oscar, greetings to Oscar from a number of Native, Black and other political prisoners in the US, as well as international greetings from Cuba, the Philippines and elsewhere. We are also soliciting your endorsement or co-sponsorship for the tour or any of the events in your vicinity.

We are soliciting ads for this journal, in which you can express your solidarity with Oscar and the struggle of the Puerto Rican people. Copies will be available at each of the venues on the tour. Rates for ads are as follows: Full-page: \$350 (image area 6x7.5 inches portrait) 1/2 page: \$185 (image area 2.75x7.5 portrait or 6x3.5 inches landscape) 1/3 page: \$120 (image area 6x2.6 inches landscape) 1/4 page: \$90 (image area 2.75x3.25 inches portrait) Business card: \$50 (image area 1.75x3.125 inches portrait)

Name mention, \$5 for name, \$10 for name + 1 line of contact info in a page of Thank You's.

Payment and copy should be submitted by January 20, 2018. Copy can be submitted electronically to [oscarlopezsocaltour@gmail.com](mailto:oscarlopezsocaltour@gmail.com). Attach either camera-ready copy (.jpg format) or text (.doc format) and graphics (.jpg format) and any layout instructions. Put "Commemorative tour book ad" in the subject line of your email. Payment according to the above rate sheet can be made out and sent to The Foundation for Economic and Social Justice with "OLR Tour" in the memo, at 714 W. Olympic Blvd., Suite 450, Los Angeles, CA 90015. Please include a note that it is payment for an ad, and specify which ad.

Que Viva Puerto Rico Libre!

You can also donate directly, separately, to support the Foundation, by sending a check made out to GLACTS (Great Lakes Asian Center for Theologies and Strategies) (Fiscal Agent for Oscar Lopez Rivera Foundation) and mailed to:

**Fundación Oscar López Rivera-Libertá**  
c/o Toby Emmer  
483 17th Street, #2A  
Brooklyn NY 11215

## TOUR ITINERARY

Oscar López Rivera will be speaking at **UC Santa Barbara** on Monday, February 5; at **CSU Channel Islands** on Tuesday, February 6, with a major community and labor public event and reception that evening in Los Angeles at **Dr. Maya Angelou Community High School**; at **Pasadena City College** and then **Cal State Los Angeles** on Wednesday, February 7, with a political/cultural event and theatrical performance at the **Kirk Douglas Theater** in Culver City that evening; at **Pomona College** in Claremont at noon on Thursday, February 8, and at **UCLA** that evening; a meeting with Rev. James Lawson and other clergy, a speech at **Chapman College** in Orange County on Friday, Feb. 9, and finally in **San Diego** that evening.

## AT OUR OWN PERIL: US DEFENSE DEPARTMENT RISK ASSESSMENT IN A POST-PRIMACY WORLD

Excerpts from "Executive Summary," Strategic Studies Institute and U.S. Army War College Press (TTT Know the Enemy Series)

*At Our Own Peril* is the product of a year-long U.S. Army War College (USAWC) research effort. It answers a single simple question: How should DoD adapt its current risk conventions to accommodate an environment defined by persistent, disruptive change?

To arrive at actionable recommendations, the USAWC study team examined DoD's risk assessment in four areas: describing, identifying, assessing, and effectively communicating risk. The team found three clear vulnerabilities in current risk convention.

First, it's excessively focused on near-term military threats. Second, it lacks meaningful connection to concrete defense objectives. Finally, it's proven an insufficient catalyst for essential post-primacy defense innovation and adaptation. These are reflected in dissatisfaction among many DoD stakeholders on the state of risk as it relates to corporate-level strategy.

In response, this study recommends that risk become the persistent business of DoD's senior leadership. It argues that risk judgments should revolve around a new post-primacy risk concept and its four governing principles of diversity, dynamism, persistent dialogue, and adaptation.

The imperative for fresh perspectives emerge from the broad recognition of two adverse realities confronting the US: the increasing vulnerability, erosion, and, in some cases, the loss of an assumed U.S. military advantage vis-à-vis many consequential

defense challenges; and the volatile restructuring of international security affairs in ways that appear hostile to unchallenged U.S. leadership. *At Our Own Peril* identifies this period as one of "post-U.S. primacy."

Post-primacy has five interrelated characteristics: Hyperconnectivity and weaponization of information, disinformation, and disaffection; A rapidly fracturing post-Cold War status quo; Proliferation, diversification, and atomization of effective counter-U.S. resistance; Resurgent but transformed great power competition; and, Violent or disruptive dissolution of political cohesion and identity.

The five post-primacy characteristics call for more dynamic, forward-looking, and adaptive approaches to both strategy development and risk assessment.

The study group surveyed 25 years of national security, defense, and military policy and identified six enduring defense objectives to apply against the current and future environment. These objectives help senior leadership to determine the most appropriate strategic approaches to the environment's hazards and the specific military demands those approaches imply. The objectives are:

Secure U.S. territory, people, infrastructure, and property against

significant harm; Secure access to the global commons and strategic regions, markets, and resources; Meet foreign security obligations; Underwrite a stable, resilient, rules-based international order; Build and maintain a favorable and adaptive global security architecture; and, Create, preserve, and extend U.S. military advantage and options.

Post-primacy risk assessment has at its core the objective of adaptation. The report concludes that this process begins with the identification of enduring objectives, strategy development in support of them, the identification of strategy-driven military demands, and determination of which of the demands are important enough to be included in the principal risk portfolio.

All corporate-level risk identification and assessment within DoD must have as its purpose, adaptation to ever-changing strategic circumstances. The study team outlined a risk concept with four governing principles: diversity, dynamism, persistent dialogue, and adaptation. The report argues that the last is the most important among them. If risk assessment is not linked to meaningful adaptation, then it is a wasted exercise.

Read more at [ssi.armywarcollege.edu](http://ssi.armywarcollege.edu)

# SELF-CRITICISM

## Regarding my Relationship with T.A.C.O. and the Black Riders Liberation Party

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

This is an attempt to begin to rectify serious errors I have made, and stubbornly and individualistically persisted in for a protracted period, in maintaining a relationship with the BRLP under its current leadership, in defiance of and contradiction with sanctions against their leader T.A.C.O., subsequently extended to me. I incorrectly saw the matter as a dispute within the Black Liberation movement which I wanted to avoid intervening in. I incorrectly tried to rely on the fact that some in the Black movement said nothing about the sanctions or continued to work with the BRLP or with me. I incorrectly allowed my personal loyalty and indebtedness to the BRLP, because they had had my back repeatedly around threats from white supremacists, and had demonstrated resilience against state repression, to serve as an excuse not to respect principles over personalities, or to criticize and oppose improper practice.

I incorrectly allowed my personal stake in the time, effort and resources I had devoted to solidarity with the BRLP to blind me to failings and offenses that I refused to believe were true. The expressed anti-capitalist, inter-communal political perspectives of the BRLP and some of their anti-fascist, anti-repression practice and revolutionary education efforts with gangs and prisoners have been important contributions to the movement, but they have been undermined and outweighed by a pattern and practice of unacceptable, abusive and patriarchal behavior and leadership. Their practice of severe physical discipline and personalistic, paternalistic and unaccountable leadership was correctly exposed and condemned by the Committee and the Tribunal, and I have been wrong in continuing to support the current leadership in their lack of accountability. This was a manifestation of my own political weaknesses and errors. I incorrectly valued my partial and subjective assessment of the BRLP and its leadership over the longer, more complete and well-documented assessment made by the Committee and the Tribunal.

I accommodated myself to fundamental, unacceptable errors in the BRLP leadership's practice and approach that I should have gone public about rather than only critiquing privately. I allowed resentment against people who called me out for these failures, to increase my stubborn persistence in them. I enmeshed myself further in material aid relationships with the BRLP by using my good financial credit on their behalf in ways that were difficult to extract myself from. For all that, I am self-critical; the BRLP's leadership errors have become my errors and I need to acknowledge them. Otherwise, I will do further damage to my capacity to sustain the solidarity I have tried to engage in with the Black liberation movement as a whole, with Puerto Rican independentistas, the Chicano/Mexicano struggle, Native American and other indigenous sovereignty efforts, and Asian/Pacific Islander activists and movements. My refusal to speak out, and my persistence in publishing BRLP writings in disregard of the sanctions, has abetted the BRLP leadership's non-responsiveness to the charges and conclusions of the Tribunal and the sanctions to enforce its findings.

Like an ostrich burying its head in the sand, I thought somehow by remaining silent I could seal off my continuing relationship with the BRLP under its existing leadership from the rest of my political practice. This was wrong-headed, destructive and ultimately impossible. My persistence in that approach and resistance to the judgment and sanctions has done damage to the TORCH Antifa Network, to whom I was not forthcoming about the extent or nature of the issue. By maintaining a public silence about the charges and sanctions, I withheld critical information from TORCH, and self-protectively avoided opening up the extent of my contradiction with other anti-fascists and anti-racists, which would have allowed me to get criticism and counsel from my comrades. Comrades from TORCH who learned independently about the sanctions correctly challenged me, which, along with the stepped-up sanctions against me, cadres continuing to leave the BRLP, and the increasing social exposures of the widespread plague of patriarchal violence and sexual abuse and harassment, forced me to recognize that my position was wrong and counter-productive. I noted with some bitter irony that, according to CNN, Judge Roy Moore, the Alabama US Senate candidate charged with sexual abuse and harassment of young girls, declared to his supporters: "We are neck deep in alligators." This is the same terminology the BRLP has used to discount the Tribunal and the sanctions. Although I did not print such attacks on the Committee or Tribunal in *Turning The Tide*, I incorrectly assisted the BRLP in producing

an issue of their own newspaper that did so, for which, again, I apologize.

The BRLP has been the target of state repression and COINTELPRO, but The Committee and the African People's Liberation Tribunal were correct in bringing forth community charges against the BRLP's leader. That was not a COINTELPRO operation, because both the members of The Committee and the Tribunal have been open about who they are, their movement histories and their process. None of that dovetails with COINTELPRO, which generally operates through secrecy, false identities and covert ops. Additionally, unlike COINTELPRO operations, which sought and seek to promote factional violence in the Black Liberation movement, American Indian Movement and other struggles, the Committee and Tribunal have specifically sought to forestall and prevent such violence and to carry out a process of community criticism and enforcement of ethical standards. They sought a way to deal with the issues without turning to the state by proposing a path towards accountability to the community. I should have immediately united with and upheld that process and its conclusions, and that I am doing so only belatedly reveals weaknesses of individualism and arrogance on my part.

The charges that treatment of some BRLP members amounted to torture cannot be discounted by the idea that severe physical discipline was part of an agreed-to disciplinary process. This is unacceptable and inconsistent with the BRLP's professed revolutionary goals. I am not a Maoist and have always been open with them and others about the fact that I disagree with vanguardism or democratic centralism, but I pointed out privately to them that in "On Guerrilla Warfare" by Mao Tse-Tung, Mao says (p. 90-91 in the Dover edition) "... the basis for guerrilla discipline must be the individual conscience. With guerrillas, a discipline of compulsion is ineffective. ... within such an army, discipline is self-imposed..." Mao continues a bit later: "In any system where discipline is externally imposed, the relationship that exists between officer and man [sic] is characterized by the indifference of the one to the other. The idea that officers can physically beat or severely tongue-lash their men [sic] is a feudal one and is not in accord with the conception of self-imposed discipline. Discipline of the feudal type will destroy internal unity and fighting strength." I think this applies to the BRLP leadership's unacceptable practices with cadres and associates.

The fact that the Riders operate in a lumpen milieu, and aim to transform people towards revolutionary politics from street organizations that engage in violence towards each other and towards other Black people, does not excuse or justify improper conduct by the BRLP leadership towards its own cadre or others. The BRLP had always prided itself that it had never been infiltrated by agents, but the degree to which a significant number of former cadres have left and continue to leave, and that some have denounced the BRLP and its leadership, is an indication that the BRLP leadership has made significant, serious errors, and that the criticisms must be responded to with self-criticism and correction of those errors.

Improper physical discipline transforms an understanding of the need for a revolutionary consciousness about military or martial matters into an incorrect, counter-revolutionary militarism and commandism. It reflects broader and deeper errors of a patriarchal or even misogynistic and hierarchical leadership, that sanctioned abuse under the guise of 'security' or 'discipline'. The BRLP was a unique combination of politicized lumpen from street tribes and prison, offspring of Black radicals, and radicalized Black collegians and did not properly deal with the resulting internal contradictions.

At the time the Tribunal took place and made its findings known, I was part of the "Inter-communal Solidarity Committee," a group which the BRLP participated in and helped initiate and lead, incorporating in particular a number of people like me involved in the former radical caucus of Occupy LA. The Inter-communal Solidarity Committee (ISC) in L.A. was predicated on building internationalist, inter-communal anti-fascist, anti-imperialist capacity, based on a strategy of a Black United Front and Black-Brown unity. The ISC helped build survival type programs such as the Hood Health program, worked to end the solitary confinement of political prisoner Russell Maroon Shoatz, and with BRLP leadership, took one of the most significant actions to support CA prisoner hunger strikers, a mobilization that shut down a CDC-R office in south LA to oppose proposed torturous force feeding of hunger strikers. But due to the practice by the BRLP leadership that needs

self-criticism and correction, due to my own incorrect intransigence, and to the resultant sanctions, instead of a Black united front or Black-Brown unity, there are now substantial sectors of Black and Brown, indigenous, Asian and European-descent political and community forces that are united in opposition to the BRLP under T.A.C.O.'s leadership, and sanctioned me as a result of my non-compliance. In not speaking out, I set myself against them all. The ISC at the time accepted the denials (of sexual assault and domestic abuse) that were made by T.A.C.O. and several women leaders in the BRLP, including one identified as the target of abuse, relating those charges to intra-familial disputes. We erroneously decided collectively not to relate to the Tribunal process, and I incorrectly concurred in that. Worse, I continued to maintain my silent defiance of the community sanctions even after the collapse of the ISC.

This is also a self-criticism of my own practice with the European-descent people I had attempted to help recruit to and worked with in the Inter-communal Solidarity Committee. That formation crumbled and scattered because I (among others) did not apply good methods to evaluating or retaining cadre or deal properly with the sanctions. I think this is reflective of long-standing weaknesses of mine as an organizer. I have always relied on coalition-type efforts, whether out of individualism, an inability to make deeper personal connections, or being incapable of winning people to my political positions. The ISC represented the strongest formation I had been part of in years that incorporated European-descent people in an anti-fascist, anti-colonial, and anti-sexist collectivity with others, and I attributed that to the role of the BRLP in pushing for it. I regret the ISC's disintegration and accept my share of the responsibility for its errors and its consequent failure.

I allowed my disagreement with some of the procedures or findings of The Committee and the Tribunal to rationalize my refusal to acknowledge the basic correctness of their approach and the principal aspect, which was unprincipled activity on the part of the BRLP's leadership. (Some of those disagreements: I don't think the Tribunal should have considered the BRLP's silence as proof of guilt, given the heavy state repression against the BRLP going on simultaneously. The charge that TACO and the BRLP are enriching themselves at the peoples' expense is contradicted by the reality that they arise from and live within the same conditions of poverty, police brutality and harassment, un- and under-employment, poor housing and poor schools that plague the people they live among and organize.) I believe it was correct to defend Mecca and Etana Shakur of the BRLP against state charges brought against them in Inglewood for defending themselves against a racist, sexist assault by a cop. It was correct to urge people to denounce LAPD Chief Charlie Beck and the LAPD's deputy chief for Homeland Security for targeting the BRLP. It was correct to defend the BRLP against false charges by the Southern Poverty Law Center, which collaborates closely with law enforcement, that the Riders are a Black separatist "hate group". It would have been wrong to stay silent about those state attacks.

Despite all that, however, I should have spoken out publicly and honored the sanctions sooner. T.A.C.O. and the BRLP need to overcome their contradiction with Black radical and community forces expressed in the judgment of the Tribunal, by responding affirmatively and self-critically to the ethical standards, corrective measures, and the sanctions that enforce them.

I was also made aware of the situation regarding mistreatment of a sister from the Brown Riders. I was given credible testimony from a Mexicano/indigenous comrade that she suffered serious injury requiring hospitalization when leaving that organization and disassociating from the BRLP. As a result, many organizations and individuals in that community want nothing to do with T.A.C.O. or the Black Riders, or with me as long as I have continued to associate with and promote them. The BRLP can only rectify their relationship with the Mexicano/indigenous community by dealing with this, perhaps by finding some way to make amends and to correct improper practice. I need to do the same.

I should note that the New Afrikan Black Panther Party (Prison Chapter) issued a statement rejecting the sanctions and in doing so, quoted and referred to me.

...See "*Self-Criticism*," p. 3

# Herman Bell Speaks of the Attack on Him

From an episode of *Rattling the Bars*, Eddie Conway looks at the motivations behind the brutal assault on Herman Bell, a 69-year old political prisoner incarcerated since 1973.

<http://therealnews.com/t2/story:20377:Rattling-the-Bars%3A-Herman-Bell> [excerpts]

**HERMAN BELL:** Hi. This is a message from Herman Bell. Here's something direct from me. So where to begin, what to say? As I want you to connect with me, I want you to feel my hand in yours. I want you to see and experience my journey.

**EDDIE CONWAY:** Welcome to this episode of *Rattling The Bars*. I'm Eddie Conway coming to you from Baltimore, Maryland. Recently, a political prisoner in the state of New York named Herman Bell, who was a member of the Black Liberation Army and a former member of the Black Panther Party was assaulted and attacked in a New York state prison. We want to look at circumstances of that attack and what it actually means for this particular political prisoner who's been in prison for several decades now. Is the investigation, internal investigation by the administration on this?

**ROBERT BOYLE:** From what I understand, but they would know more about what's going on internally. It's important to note that there's still these very serious disciplinary charges against Herman. I would want to add that not only does he have a clean disciplinary record, the following day, September 6th, he was scheduled to have his first three-day family reunion visit with his wife in nearly three years.

**EDDIE CONWAY:** You're saying three days before that visit that you all had been fighting for, for years, he got beat up?

**NANCY BELL:** Right. Now, I don't know. I could speculate that this guy knew that he was going to have the visit and that's why he started. I don't know.

**EDDIE CONWAY:** I'm not going to ask you to speculate but does it seem like this might have been an incident created to stop him from getting parole or winning release?

**ROBERT BELL:** Well, that certainly is not beyond something that they would do.

**NANCY BELL:** He was on the phone in the yard. He was talking to me on the morning of September 5th. He was on the phone. When we were on the phone, I remember him saying, "Oh, there's some guys having a fight over there." Just two guys, you know? It's a common occurrence. It happens. Then he says, "Oh, there's another two guys over there having a fight." Then he says, "Oh, now all these guards are coming out. They're probably going to close the yard pretty soon." Then all of a sudden he goes, "I gotta go. Goodbye." He hangs up the phone. I remember thinking I never heard him hang up the phone that quick, you know?

**ROBERT BELL:** This particular prison, Great Meadow, known as Comstock, is notorious for arbitrary excessive force and beatings of inmates. It is a prison where 99% of the guards are Caucasian and from the area and over 80 to 85% of the prisoners are men of color. It is notorious for beatings, and then reports on it in the exposés in the newspapers and essentially, they get away with it. They very well know who he is, but it's also systemic. The violence is systemic.

**NANCY BELL:** This guard thought that Herman hung up the phone too slow, like one or two seconds too slowly. Apparently, Herman was in line with the other guys to go back to the, you know, you go back in through the same way. They were all lined up to do that and then this guy, Saunders, pulls Herman out of the line and takes him, you know, tells him to put his hands behind his back but no

cuffs. That's how they do it in an escort. They walked into another area. It was a foyer between two mess halls or something like that. There were no cameras in there, there were no other prisoners in there and it was only Herman he took there. Then all of a sudden, this guard, Saunders hauls off and hits him. He told me he was so shocked and stunned that he did that. He couldn't figure out why would he do that.

**HERMAN BELL:** See, I'm not a criminal in this strict sense of the word. I've never posed a danger to civil society. I never sought personal gain for my political action, never robbed, never threatened, coerced nor intimidated anyone in civil society. I've never sold drugs. But I did, as did many others, militantly resist the unrelenting structural violence of white racist domination and control that have afflicted the Black community since Black people were brought here as slaves.

**NANCY BELL:** They picked him up at one point, you know, just lifted him off the ground. One of them did that so they could knee him in his chest and that's how they broke his ribs. Then another one grabbed his head, on the left side of his head and slammed it into the concrete ground three times.

**EDDIE CONWAY:** Throughout his years of imprisonment, Herman Bell has been actively working to serve the interests of the community. He has started garden projects in Maine to help communities that were in food deserts. He has actively helped organize activities around the United Nations human rights programs and encourage other young people to engage in school, college, etc. Since Herman Bell's beating, he has been moved to another prison and placed in general population. There's an ongoing pending investigation of the officer's acts.

## SELF-CRITICISM

...Continued from p. 2

The BRLP and the NABPP (PC) have their own separate relationship and differences, unrelated to the fact that material from both has appeared in *TTT*. I was never consulted about the NABPP (PC) statement. However, while I never spoke out publicly against the sanctions, I also said nothing about the NABPP (PC) statement, did not share with them my private criticisms or concerns, nor disassociated myself from their quoting of my remarks about the BRLP. This was a disservice to the NABPP (PC).

I failed to recognize two key things that play out in all contradictions. 1) In any set of contradictions, one is primary, and the primary contradiction here is the improper, abusive physical mistreatment of women and men within or associated with the BRLP or in interpersonal relationships with T.A.C.O. 2) Contradictions can cause things to turn into their opposite -- the improper practices undermined the revolutionary character or aspirations of the party, and my unprincipled silence, and defiance of the communities' sanctions, undermined and transgressed my commitment to anti-racism and inter-communal solidarity.

BRLP disregard of the sanctions on T.A.C.O., which my practice helped enable, has also allowed further, false rumors, such as of pimping and drug-dealing, to gain traction. The pimping rumors as far as I am aware, were first raised, falsely, regarding the solidarity with the BRLP of 'white' members of the Inter-communal Solidarity Committee, some of whom were independent radical queer sex workers. Given the level of state repression and surveillance constantly directed against the BRLP, which has been repeatedly named as a threat by high-ranking members of the LAPD and which has recently been named in press reports of the FBI's invention of "Black Identity Extremists", if any current party members or leaders were engaged in drug-dealing or prostitution, I think they would be immediately arrested and charged, and the arrests ballyhooed. The state's enmity towards radical Black organizations, particularly those that espouse and practice self-defense, has only intensified under the Trump regime. But such attacks mean that it is all the more important for Black radical groups and those in solidarity with them to rectify improper practice and thereby overcome divisions and isolation.

My stubborn silence had no positive effect on resolving or even minimizing the contradictions, and reflected an incorrect "white savior" attitude. My response was both individualistic and resistant to Black, Asian, Mexicano, Puerto Rican, indigenous and European-descent comrades who tried to engage me and correct my error.

My silence was deceptive to readers of *Turning The Tide*, especially prisoners, and to other political associates and affiliates less aware of the issues, and for that deception I again apologize. I abetted the BRLP leadership's resistance to correcting their practice or responding more self-critically. The disbanding of the LA chapter of the Jericho Movement, for example, was a set-back to efforts to free political prisoners. The BRLP's self-imposed isolation has limited their capacity to struggle for peace or truces in the hood. Although the Black Riders have developed new chapters nationally since the Tribunal, there are reports that persistent errors rooted in patriarchal, hierarchical and personalistic leadership and thinking have resulted in new setbacks and departures. I acknowledge that I have damaged my capacity to do work and to unite with others in struggle. As a result I notified the BRLP that I am breaking off my relationship with them, and making this public self-criticism, as well as making public the criticisms I had made privately to them. I have also been in the process of extricating myself from material aid connections to them.

So I am speaking out and acting to try to correct my own errors and to invite further criticism to understand those errors and failings more deeply. I believe that the BRLP must also be self-critical and seek to correct their errors and improper practice, leadership methods and structure. I cannot and will not continue my prior practice of printing BRLP material in *TTT* unless such a response is forthcoming from T.A.C.O. and the BRLP, satisfactory to the Black and Brown forces who brought the charges and imposed the sanctions. I will not provide any further material aid or services. I had previously printed material in *Turning The Tide* from the Black Riders, (and from many other Black liberation formations as well as other liberation movements) without regard to my political differences with the BRLP or the others, or differences and rivalries those various formations may have with each other. For example, the "Extreme Loyalty is African

Royalty" graphic that was printed as part of a BRLP article in the March-April 2017 issue of *TTT* represents their political position, not my own or that generally reflected in *TTT*. But that is not the issue; this is clearly about improper, unethical practice, not just ideological differences or disagreements.

The last issue of *TTT* (Nov.-Dec. 2017) as a result had no material by the BRLP. Since the disintegration of the Inter-communal Solidarity Committee, printing BRLP material in *TTT* has been the main aspect of my connection with them. I have not been involved in any joint work such as the Hood Health project or other "serve the people" programs. I am making this statement public in *TTT* and other media platforms. I hope that the BRLP will be forthcoming with transformative public responses that rectify and make amends for their erroneous practice, correct any structural errors, resolve contradictions moving forward, and hopefully rebuild unity. That rectification must respond to the sanctions from the Tribunal and to the critique of T.A.C.O. from Mexicano/indigenous activists.

I look for guidance from Black, Brown, Native & Asian comrades who publicly raised correct criticisms of T.A.C.O. and the BRLP, and me, for what my own path forward should be. I hope that I can undertake a rectification process of my own with those comrades to overcome the contradictions I have created for myself, and reverse the isolation I have brought on myself vis a vis other anti-racist and anti-fascist groups and individuals. I spent several years feeling myself on the horns of a dilemma, torn between conflicting personal and political loyalties and beliefs. Admitting my errors and breaking with T.A.C.O. and the BRLP under his leadership is also painful, but I hope it will push them to correct their errors and overcome them. I do not expect that errors I have persisted in for a substantial period of time can be reversed overnight, and I recognize that I cannot seal off my errors and the weaknesses that produced them from the rest of my work. In response to the sanctions, I have previously withdrawn from some significant associations and participation, including White People for Black Lives, the TORCH Antifa Network, and most recently the December 10 Repression Breeds Resistance Human Rights Day coalition. I hope I can rebuild those relationships on a more accountable basis in the future.

Note: The findings and discussion of the African People's Liberation Tribunal initiated by The Committee can be found here:

<https://www.facebook.com/TheCommitteePeoplesTribunal/posts/1554633668100765> or email <[the.committee.black.law@gmail.com](mailto:the.committee.black.law@gmail.com)>

# LA VIDA DE UN ABOLICIONISTA

by Mumia Abú-Jamal  
09-28-2017

¿Qué significa éso de que uno se llame abolicionista?

Esa palabra no significa ahora lo que significó hace 150 años. En ese tiempo significó el final de lo que unos llaman, el "Pecado Original de los Estados Unidos" -- La Esclavitud.

¿Dije, ahora? Bueno, hoy no es palabra común; pero debe ser. Fue el primer Movimiento bi-racial, creado por Negros y Blancos para oponerse a la perversa Esclavitud.

Pero es important para nosotros reconocer hoy que cuando los abolicionistas eran activos, en los años de los 1830s, '40s y '50s, ellos y ellas fueron presentados por los medios de prensa y mencionados por hombres prominentes y poderosos como hombres locos y mujeres desquiciadas que se atrevían a combatir algo tan fundamental a la riqueza de los Estados Unidos, la Esclavitud.

Antes de ser electo Presidente, Abraham Lincoln, hablando en Cooper Union, Nueva York, deució a John Brown, el abolicionista radical, como un loco y dijo que no era miembro del Partido Republicano.

## An Abolitionist Life

[col. writ. 9/28/17] ©2017 Mumia Abu-Jamal

What does it mean to call oneself an abolitionist?

The word doesn't mean today what it meant 150 years ago. Then, it meant an end to what some have called 'America's Original Sin'--Slavery.

Today? Well, it's not a common term today, but it should be. It was the nation's first bi-racial Movement, built by both Blacks and white, to oppose the evils of Slavery.

But it's important for us today to recognize that when they were active, during the 1830s, '40s and '50s,

Solo fue después de la Guerra Civil de los Estados Unidos que los abolicionistas fueron considerados como gente cuerda -- no antes.

Aquí hay una lección, especialmente para quienes son parte del Foro Abolicionista: no se preocupen por lo que los poderosos y los medios de comunicación dicen sobre Ustedes.

Hágase la pregunta si lo que Usted está haciendo es correcto -- y si lo és, ¡siga nomás!

Es correcto oponerse a encarcelamientos masivos.

Es correcto buscar abolir la racista pena de muerte.

Es correcto luchar contra la represión por parte del estado.

Y el tiempo correcto de hacer éso -- es ¡AHORA!

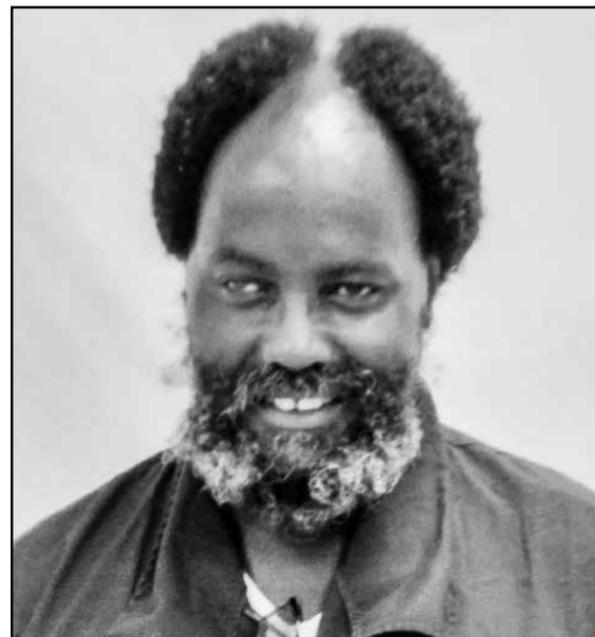
--© '17maj English original follows below.  
Traducción libre del inglés enviado por Fatirah Aziz, hecha en REFUGIO DEL RIO GRANDE, Texas.

they were portrayed in the press, and spoken about by prominent and powerful men as madmen and crazy women, who dared to oppose something so fundamental to American wealth like Slavery.

Abraham Lincoln, speaking at New York's Cooper Union before his election, depicted the radical abolitionist, John Brown as a madman, and not a member of the Republican Party.

It was only after the US Civil War that abolitionists were regarded as sane people -- not before.

There is a lesson here for you all; people at the Abolitionist Forum. That is, don't worry about what people in power or media say about you.



Por favor, compartir este ensayo con sus amigos y colaboradores.

Ask yourself if what you're doing is right -- then roll with it.

It's right to oppose mass incarceration.

It's right to seek to abolish the racist death penalty.

It's right to fight against state repression.

And the right time to do that -- is Now!

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Please share this essay with your friends and contacts.

## Prisoner pen-pal programs:

You can write to these following programs if you are willing to correspond with a prisoner on a regular basis, and they will provide you guidelines for the program and contact with an individual prisoner looking for a correspondent from the "free world" beyond the bars. Although these programs are not necessarily political or abolitionist, by engaging with a prisoner through them, you can help tear down the walls!

<http://prisonpenpals.com/directory.html>

<http://www.writeaprisoner.com/>

<http://www.meet-an-inmate.com/>

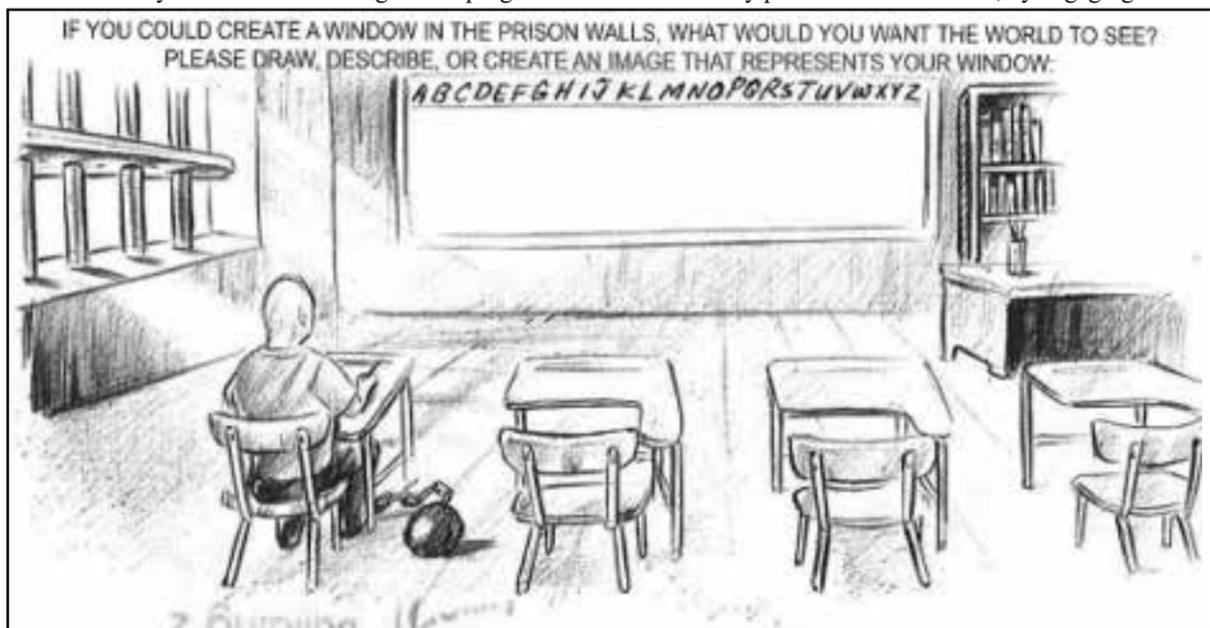
<http://www.friendsbeyondthewall.com/>

<http://www.inmate.com/>

<http://www.prisoninmates.com/>

<http://www.blackandpink.org/prison-penpals/>

<http://www.lostvault.com/>



### On-Line Resources for Turning the Tide & ARA-LA.

You can find archives of *Turning the Tide* at [www.antiracist.org](http://www.antiracist.org) that go back more than 10 years. In addition, there are several Facebook pages, such as [facebook.com/tideturning](https://www.facebook.com/tideturning), and [facebook.com/intercommunal solidarity](https://www.facebook.com/intercommunal solidarity). You can follow [@ara\\_losangeles](https://twitter.com/ara_losangeles) on Twitter, and the De-Colonize LA! blog at [ara-la.tumblr.com](http://ara-la.tumblr.com).

## 100X100 Campaign to Increase Publication Frequency of Turning the Tide

This issue marks the beginning of *Turning The Tide's* 30th year of publication. Launched in 1988, *TTT* has been published in magazine format, as a 24-page tabloid, and from time to time on a bi-monthly basis, six issues a year. For the last few years, economic necessity has dictated that we print four 8-page issues a year. Last year we published six bimonthly issues, but it broke our limited bank. To try to sustain that, we have launched a fund-raising campaign we've dubbed "100X100."

We are looking for one hundred people who will donate \$100 a year, or \$10/mo, to make it possible for *TTT* to resume publishing six issues a year, and continue mailing nearly 2000 copies of each issue into the prisons. You can donate online at <http://gofundme.com/eugzgg>.

*Turning the Tide* doesn't print itself, or mail itself. Some prisoners who get the paper contribute a few stamps; their contribution more often comes by writing articles, letters and poems or sending in drawings. Often, they pass the copy of *TTT* that they received from hand to hand, cell to cell, or they send in the names and addresses of half-a-dozen or more other prisoners. **Prisoners, if you can find donors or subscribers outside prison to subsidize your sub, that would help a lot.**

If you'd like to see *Turning the Tide* more frequently, if you want to contribute to breaking down the walls of isolation and separation imposed by the prison system, please contribute. If you can't manage \$100 all at once, you could donate \$10 a month. But any donation you make can help. Postage costs for a single issue of *TTT* are almost \$1000 and climbing. If you can't donate yourself,

please help spread the campaign via your social media, to your Facebook friends, Twitter followers, and email contacts. Everything helps. In L.A., set up a house meeting with friends and *TTT* editor Michael Novick will come talk and hopefully raise some funds for the paper.

Postage is our biggest expense. Nobody gets paid at *TTT*. But the Postal Service is not so generous. We have a handful of people who are sustainers, making a monthly donation, a larger number of people who subscribe once a year or so. Right now, we are at 10% of our goal. LA supporters could set up house meetings, where the editor will pitch to your friends for support. The future of *Turning the Tide* is in your hands. Now, while you're thinking about it, go to: <http://gofundme.com/eugzgg> and donate. Then share it with your contacts; help it go viral. With your help, *Turning the Tide* can step up to the "urgency of now" -- the necessity for radical organizing and educating to respond to the crisis of the Empire -- endless war, police terror with impunity, mass incarceration, colonialism, ecological devastation.

If you think *TTT* is a useful tool in the struggle for people's power and a new world, please donate today. If you wish, you can also just send cash, check or money order to **Anti-Racist Action, PO Box 1055, Culver City CA 90232.**

# Trial to Begin in Columbus OH, February 5, 2018: Free the Black Pride Four!

by John deVincent

When I first heard of the Black Pride 4, it was a vague account on Facebook of Black Queer protestors in Ohio being shut down by white parade-goers at a Gay Pride event, and my thought was not again, not another instance of white ‘social justice warriors’ failing to recognize, and actually being harmful toward, intersectional struggles of Black people.

The arrests of Wriply Bennet, Kendall Denton, Ashley Braxton and Deandre Miles took place during the 2017 Columbus (OH) Stonewall Pride Parade while the group was staging a peaceful protest against the shooting of Philando Castile and the acquittal of the police officer who killed him, as well as against violence toward and lack of safe space for Black and Brown people at the Pride parade and in the LGBTQIA+ community.

Black and Queer Intersectional Columbus (BQIC) posted: “On June 17, 2017, a group of Black queer and trans activists and their allies were assaulted and pepper sprayed by the Columbus Police during the Columbus Pride Parade. Four of these peaceful protestors were arrested, and they are now facing unjust, trumped-up criminal charges in court. These people, now known as the #BlackPride4, were nonviolent and silent while exercising their constitutional rights to free speech and peaceful assembly.”

According to LGBTQNation.com, which reported on the arrests the next day, “The protestors joined arms and blocked the parade, explaining that they wanted seven minutes of silence – one minute for each bullet that Yanez shot at Castile. According to Stephanie Ewen, one of the protestors, the parade marchers stopped and were listening to the protestors. Police say they got a report that the parade route was being blocked and officers arrived on bicycles. They used the bicycles to move the protestors in order to clear the parade route. Officers say that four of the protestors didn’t comply and they were arrested.”

Protestors who were not arrested and supporters of the Black Pride 4 have called the felony charge of aggravated robbery false and trumped up. BQIC and others have organized protests, a petition to the prosecutors to drop the charges, and recently an ongoing selfie support campaign on social media to #FreeTheBlackPride4.

For a court hearing on November 20, BQIC issued the following statement:

“Five months after the #BlackPride4 were brutalized and arrested by CPD officers during their peaceful protest at the Columbus Pride parade, two of the #BP4 are scheduled to return to court on November 20, 2017. This is the same trial date for the twelve No Justice No Pride (NJNP) protestors arrested during the NYC Pride Parade. This date is also the national



Black Pride 4, l-r: Ashley Braxton, Wriply Bennett, Deandre Miles, Kendall Denton. Photo credit: Rob Hardin

Transgender Day of Remembrance, a day [when] queer and trans people should be honoring their fallen siblings, not going to court after being victimized by the state. In a display of solidarity with both the #BlackPride4 and the NJNP protestors in NYC, we are calling for a rally to take place in front of the Franklin County Courthouse (375 S. High St) on November 20, 2017 at 8:30 AM.

“After our rally, we will all go inside to pack the courthouse in a collective demonstration of support for the #BlackPride4 during their 9:30 AM court proceedings. We are OUTRAGED that these heinous, trumped-up charges stand after all this time, so we invite community members from Columbus and beyond to join us in demanding that prosecutors drop all charges against the #BlackPride4, in addition to demanding justice for our comrades in New York! We will also be holding space for the individuals that we have lost to transphobic violence.”

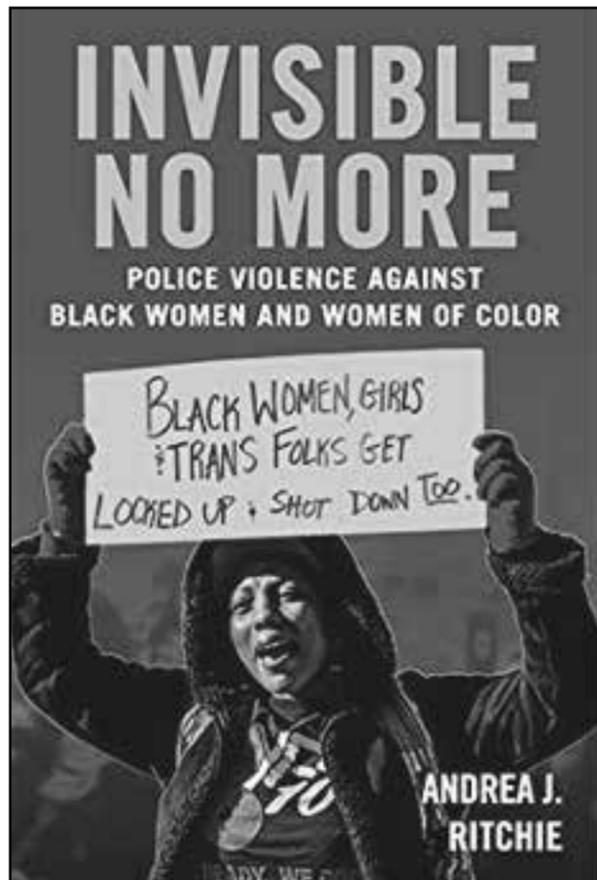
The activists are facing charges ranging from misdemeanors of resisting arrest, failure to comply with a police officer’s order, and disorderly conduct, to one felony charge of aggravated robbery for allegedly attempting to disarm an officer during the incident. Columbus PD claimed that officers were injured during the arrest. City Attorney Richard C. Pfeiffer Jr. (for the #BP4 with misdemeanor charges including Wriply Bennet and Kendall Denton) can be reached by calling (614) 645-7385. Franklin County Prosecutor Ron O’Brien (for Deandre Miles’ felony charge) can be reached at (614) 525-3555.

Wriply told Teen Vogue, “We were brutalized in the streets, and we were unjustly arrested. We were disrespected and dehumanized, but we’re still alive.... But black folks have been murdered in this city, and it will take forever for them to get a trial date — they weren’t considered ‘high profile.’”

DeAndre, 21, who was arrested on charges of “aggravated robbery and accused of attempting to remove an officer’s firearm,” declined to speak to Teen Vogue but noted that their bond was set at \$100,000. They said that the bond system “continues to capitalize upon black pain in service of the prison industrial complex.”

Lori Gum, Pride Festival Coordinator and Program Coordinator at Stonewall Columbus, resigned from her position, stating: “I personally call for the dismissal of all charges against the four protestors. Regardless of how one feels about what the protestors did, they have sparked a brutal and necessary community conversation that needed to happen long ago, and this is the only way they could have done that. Real protest for change should not ask for permission; it should march into the middle of the street and demand change. But in this violent world, it can be hard to separate unidentified protest from the hate that endangers our queer communities.”

Trial for the four activists is scheduled to begin on February 5, 2018. If found guilty, they could face jail time and pay \$40,000 in legal fees, collectively. Those interested in supporting the arrestees can follow updates on Black Queer & Intersectional Columbus (BQIC) or donate to the Black Pride 4 legal fund at <https://www.youcaring.com/blackpride4ashleywriplydeandreandkendal-852184>.  
1) <https://www.lgbtqnation.com/2017/06/4-protestors-arrested-columbus-pride-parade/>  
2) <https://www.teenvogue.com/story/ohios-black-pride-4-were-arrested-at-the-stonewall-columbus-pride-festival-and-parade>  
3) <https://outlookohio.com/2017/06/stonewall-columbus-pride-organizer-resigns/>



## INVISIBLE NO MORE

Police Violence Against Black Women & Women of Color  
by Andrea J. Ritchie Foreword by Angela Davis. Boston, Beacon Press, 2017. \$21 ISBN 978-0-8070-8898-2

A timely examination of how Black women, Indigenous women, and women of color experience racial profiling, police brutality, and immigration enforcement. Placing stories of individual women—such as Sandra Bland, Rekia Boyd, Dajerria Becton, Monica Jones, and Mya Hall—in the broader context of the twin epidemics of police violence and mass incarceration, it documents the evolution of movements centering women’s experiences of policing and demands a radical rethinking of our visions of safety—and the means we devote to achieving it. <http://www.beacon.org/Invisible-No-More-P1275.aspx>

## URGENT APPEAL

We need your financial support to continue sending the paper free to nearly 2000 prisoners around CA and the US.

### PLEASE SUBSCRIBE TODAY!

[ ] \$20 a year individual [ ] \$50 sustainer [ ] \$30 institutional/international

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Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_ St: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

Tel: \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Postage alone for this issue comes to nearly \$1000. We would like to increase the size and frequency of Turning the Tide, but we can only do it with your support. If you’re a prisoner and can send stamps or get someone outside the walls to subsidize your subscription, please do so. If you work with an info shop or other zine or record distro, please consider ordering a bundle of TTT to distribute; \$5 will get you 20 copies. And check out our 100X100 campaign elsewhere in this issue. If you live in L.A. or nearby, we can come to house meetings to speak and collect donations for the paper. Email [antiracistaction\\_la@yahoo.com](mailto:antiracistaction_la@yahoo.com)

## Stop F.B.I Intimidation of GMF & All Social and Political Justice Organizations!

# Free Rakem Balogun!

By Yafeuh Balogun Shamsid-Deen: Rakem Balogun Defense Committee <<https://hueypnewtongunclub.org/>>

We as African/Black people have been burdened in the Americas for over five centuries. We rise and organize against oppression when we meet it. We are often discouraged from fighting for liberation and seeking freedom. Our mothers and fathers keep us safe from a world considered not for the children of the enslaved or the undesired. A system of bondage often referred to as the Prison Industrial Complex, becomes a place where millions of us are held daily. Now the U.S government, through the F.B.I., has created a new terrorist classification known as “Black Identity Extremists.” This conjured classification targets our political leadership and mirrors J. Edgar Hoover’s infamous COINTELPRO program of the ’60s and ’70s. Both programs have been specifically designed to disrupt and destroy black political organizations from achieving real equality and justice.

On Monday morning Dec. 11, at 5:00 AM, the FBI and ATF kicked down Rakem Balogun’s door and took him into custody, on a seek and destroy mission in search for illegal weapons. Since that day he has been held captive; essentially kidnapped by the F.B.I.

The F.B.I. report detailing the perceived BIE threat specifically discusses the shooting of Dallas police officers in July 2016. The document was prepared by the F.B.I Domestic Terrorism Analysis Unit and has shown an effort to “criminalize” political organizers with progressive and revolutionary ethics. The Trump



administration and prior presidents have made their desire to derail black revolutionaries crystal clear through declarations and actions. Our struggle as change agents is to instruct and liberate the masses with revolutionary discourse, and we will continue to do so.

Simply, we have a love for our community and people that allow us sanctuary even in the midst of a fraudulent criminal justice system. Rakem Balogun is a co-founder

of Geronimo Tactical, Huey P. Newton Gun Club, and a principal member of Guerrilla Mainframe. Our comrade has been a part of many discussions and activities for Black liberation. He synchronized security operations on April 2, 2017 in South Dallas that ran BAIR, a right-wing group of armed Trump supporters, out of the Black community and away from Mosque 48. Rakem has stood as an example for the community on issues such as political education, community development, and opposing fratricide. He has been committed to the community, so we will be committed to him.

We, the Rakem Balogun Defense Committee request that you materially and financially support our brother as he fights prosecution by the Federal Government. We, GUERRILLA MAINFRAME, believe in our right to bear arms and to advocate for political freedom. Finally, we must state that we have had a number of visitations and issues as it relates to the FBI this year. The BIE classification has grown from a report on paper to a national investigation of Black Lives Matter and black gun ownership advocates. Rakem Balogun has been classified as B.I.E, we must defend him, stand with him as he has stood with us!

DONATE TO: Cash App; Account: \$gmf214 or use Paypal to [geronimotactical2017@gmail.com](mailto:geronimotactical2017@gmail.com)

“If they come for me in the morning, they will come for you in the night.”- Angela Davis  
Guerrilla Mainframe [www.guerrillamainframe.org/](http://www.guerrillamainframe.org/)

## The Destruction of Psyches in Texas Ad-Seg Units

by Keith ‘Comrade Malik’ Washington

Happy Holidays Everyone! I pray that this message finds all of you doing well. Without a doubt, the holiday season is a rough time for those incarcerated in Amerikan prisons and jails.

Suicides are an un-wanted but common occurrence especially for prisoners who are forced to endure the torture of solitary confinement.

The State of Texas has labeled their solitary confinement units as Administrative Segregation Units. Texas has been allowed to transform these places into horrible places where un-mentionable human rights abuses take place.

For some strange reason Mainstream Media Correspondents have ignored my pleas for coverage and help.

In 2018 I’d like to see a change. I’d like to form a coalition of journalists and activists who are willing to confront the corrupt prison agency in Texas. I’d like us to start holding the Texas Prison Agency (TDCJ) accountable for the destruction of humyn lives.

It is a well known fact that Ad-Seg has a detrimental effect on a human being’s psyche. Prison officials may be held liable for denying to a prisoner humane conditions of confinement -- this falls under the rule that an official’s deliberate indifference to a substantial risk of serious harm to a prisoner violates the cruel & unusual punishment clause of the US Constitution’s 8th Amendment. In 2018 please try and begin to listen to



Prisoner Voices.  
Enjoy your holiday and keep me in your thoughts and prayers.

Addendum, Dec. 6:

Revolutionary Greetings, Comrades, Friends and Free-World Allies. It is Comrade Malik reporting from behind enemy lines. The assistant warden over Ad-Seg here at Eastham has been re-assigned to the Estelle Unit!

Of course, this is confirmation of what Comrade Kado and I have been trying to show the media and public -- *for months!!*

The abuse, mistreatment, and dehumanization of Eastham Ad-Seg Unit prisoners was promoted, condoned, and sanctioned by Assistant Warden Gregory Vaughn! Now, he has been sent to Estelle Unit to abuse the prisoners there. Let’s not remain silent. Fire Gregory Vaughn now!

In solidarity,  
Malik

Keith ‘Malik’ Washington is a co-founder and chief spokesperson for the End Prison Slavery in Texas Movement, a proud member of the Incarcerated Workers Organizing Committee and he is the Deputy Chairman of the New Afrikan Black Panther Party (Prison Chapter). Malik has been instrumental in calling for the abolition of legalized slavery in Amerika and is very active in the Fight Toxic Prisons campaign. You can view his work at [comrademalik.com](http://comrademalik.com) or you can write him directly at:

**Keith ‘Comrade Malik’ Washington**  
**TDC #1487958**  
**Eastham Unit**  
**2665 Prison Rd. #1**  
**Lovelady, Texas 75851**

## Coates and West in Jackson

by Robin D. G. Kelley

[Excerpts from <https://new.portside.org/2017-12-26/coates-and-west-jackson>]

What are the substantive differences between West and Coates? At the end of his Guardian essay, West writes that we cannot afford “to disconnect white supremacy from the realities of class, empire, and other forms of domination—be it ecological, sexual, or others.” Coates would agree. He treats these forms of domination as deeply intertwined but not synonymous: “I have never seen a contradiction between calling for reparations and calling for a living wage, on calling for legitimate law enforcement and single-payer health care. They are related—but cannot stand in for one another. I see the fight against sexism, racism, poverty, and even war finding their union not in synonymy but in their ultimate goal—a world more humane.”

It’s true that *We Were Eight Years in Power* doesn’t give us a sustained critique of Wall Street or the global War on Terror, or keep “track of our fightback.” Rather, the book offers personal reflections on the Obama years and the period leading up to Obama’s political ascendance, interspersed between eight essays that explore a range of topics: the rabbit hole of black bourgeois respectability politics; race and Civil War history; the case for reparations; the impact of mass incarceration on black families and communities; the prophetic voice of Jeremiah Wright; the devastating price that Shirley Sherrod paid when Obama succumbed to right-wing pressure to fire her; and the constraints and contradictions of the Obama presidency.

Coates’s title is a reference not to Obama’s administration, but rather to Reconstruction and the white backlash that followed its overthrow. Coates quotes Du Bois’s *Black Reconstruction* (1935): “If there was one thing that South Carolina feared more than bad Negro government, it was good Negro government.” Du Bois’s insight is key here; he

recognizes that it was the success of Reconstruction in creating arguably the world’s first social democracy that posed the greatest threat to white supremacy. The ways in which formerly enslaved people not only helped overthrow the Confederacy but went to work building a new society—armed, organized, and fighting back—is the story that haunts and illuminates Obama’s presidency.

Coates is attentive to the forces arrayed against the Obama administration, and to the hope black people invested in him, but he is no apologist for Obama. He writes:

“Obama was elected amid widespread panic and, in his eight years, emerged as a caretaker and measured architect. He established the framework of a national healthcare system from a conservative model. He prevented an economic collapse and neglected to prosecute those largely responsible for that collapse. He ended state-sanctioned torture but continued the generational war in the Middle East. . . He was deliberate to a fault, and if he was bothered by his country’s sins, he ultimately believed it to be a force for good in the world. In short, Obama, his family, and his administration were a walking advertisement for the ease with which black people could be fully integrated into the unthreatening mainstream of American culture, politics, and myth. And that was always the problem.”

Coates chose the word “caretaker” very carefully. “Good Negro government” here might be described more precisely as “good Negro in government,” especially since the Obama years were a far cry from Reconstruction, when black legislators were empowered to rewrite state constitutions and were ubiquitous at virtually every level of local government. Coates also describes what he calls a “theory of personal Good Negro Government,” or the theory that if black people comport themselves

...Continued on next page

# Jury Finds Six #J20 Defendants “Not Guilty” on All Charges

Based on reports by Unicorn Riot @UR\_Ninja <https://www.unicornriot.ninja> and Defend #J20 Resistance [www.defendj20resistance.org](http://www.defendj20resistance.org)

On January 20, 2017, 230 people were mass arrested by DC Metro police during demonstrations against Donald Trump’s Inauguration. The arrests were made by use of a “kettle” technique on individuals present on the corners of L and 12th Street, without orders to disperse being given. 214 of these arrestees were charged under the Federal Riot Statute. On April 27, multiple additional felony charges were added. The 194 remaining defendants could face up to 60 years in prison. These heavy felony charges represent a clear intent to chill dissent and suppress future protests.

Under dubious and flimsy legal standards, prosecutors under the Trump presidency are attempting to turn protesters into felons and working to set dangerous legal precedents for all those who work for change. These cases have disrupted the lives of the J20 defendants, who have lost jobs, incurred legal expenses, and been forced to make repeated trips to DC. Despite these circumstances, there has been an astonishing display of solidarity—with almost two hundred people committed to fighting these charges. These defendants are investing in collective legal strategies when possible, using solidarity and mutual support to keep each other safe, and are choosing to go to trial and fight the charges instead of accepting plea deals.

Reflecting the strength of the resistance and the weakness of the state’s case, a jury in Washington, D.C. found six J20 defendants not guilty on all charges in December, a major defeat for federal prosecutors in the first full trial. One-hundred-eighty-eight people still face trial for participating in the Jan. 20, 2017 inauguration-day protests against Trump in Washington, D.C. So far, 42 of the protest-related charges have been rejected at jury trial.

After the courtroom victory defendants cried and hugged supporters in the hallway as US Marshals aggressively reminded people not to record any media. Unicorn Riot streamed live outside the courthouse after the verdict and was able to talk with cleared defendant Alexei Wood, who faced a possible sentence of decades in prison for live-streaming property damage associated with a group of people at the inauguration protests.

UR also interviewed one of the jurors, Steve, after the not guilty verdict came down. He said: “It was not a close



call. The prosecution admitted the morning of day one that they would present no evidence that any of the defendants committed any acts of violence or any vandalism. From that point, before the defense ever uttered a sound, it was clear to me that ultimately we would find everyone not guilty. And while there was a great deal of careful discussion among the jurors, it ultimately at no point was ... did it seem even possible that a guilty verdict would come down. This was not close.” – Steve, a juror in the J20 trials.

A statement was issued by the U.S. Attorney’s Office for the District of Columbia regarding the verdicts today in the trial of six defendants charged with taking part in a riot on January 20, 2017:

“The U.S. Attorney’s Office for the District of Columbia believes that the evidence shows that a riot occurred on January 20, 2017, during which numerous public and private properties were damaged or destroyed. This

destruction impacted many who live and work in the District of Columbia, and created a danger for all who were nearby. The criminal justice process ensures that every defendant is judged based on his or her personal conduct and intent. We appreciate the jury’s close examination of the individual conduct and intent of each defendant during this trial and respect its verdict. In the remaining pending cases, we look forward to the same rigorous review for each defendant.”

For in-depth coverage of how trial support played out, see our interview with the “Defend J20” team supporting Trump Inauguration arrestees: <https://vimeo.com/248014044>

Since the feds are clearly intent on pursuing the prosecutions despite their failures to obtain convictions so far, there is a continuing need for financial support for the defense efforts. You can donate on-line here: [https://fundrazr.com/j20resistance?ref=ab\\_2rENqNq8IIL2rENqNq8IIL](https://fundrazr.com/j20resistance?ref=ab_2rENqNq8IIL2rENqNq8IIL)

## Coates and West in Jackson

...Continued from previous page

respectably, dress and speak well, they can gain citizenship and acceptance. But as Coates correctly argues, this theory “denies the existence of racism and white supremacy as meaningful forces in American life. In its more nuanced and reputable form, the theory pitches itself as an equal complement to anti-racism. But [my argument] is that Good Negro Government—personal and political—often augments the very white supremacy it seeks to combat.”

“Good Negro Government,” the maintenance of the neoliberal order in black face, will not free us. On the contrary, it reinforces hegemony of the ruling racial regime, patriarchy, class domination, and U.S. empire. So Obama did good for a segment of the ruling class, but the ruling bloc is also composed of white people outside of elite circles whose deeply entrenched racism obscured their class anxieties and saw in Obama a symbolic threat to their status.

Coates writes, “the country holds to the common theory that emancipation and civil rights were redemptive, a fraught and still-incomplete resolution of the accidental hypocrisy of a nation founded by slaveholders extolling a gospel of freedom. This common theory dominates much of American discourse, from left to right. ...[I]f right-thinking individuals can dedicate themselves to finishing the work of ensuring freedom for all, then perhaps the ghosts of history can be escaped.” This theory is an illusion: the belief that we’re on the right track, we just need time and patience and a reminder of [our] ideals. But this is the same democracy that sanctions the violence of the state, stand your ground laws, militias, vigilantes, and lynching as a form of popular justice (and entertainment). In other words, Coates rejects the American myth of democracy’s promise and the notion that liberalism is incompatible with slavery and white supremacy. It is a perspective found in Cedric Robinson’s writings on democracy, powerfully elaborated by Lisa Lowe’s *Intimacies of Four Continents* (2015).

This is where West and Coates part ways. West understands that U.S. “democracy” was built on slavery, capitalism, and settler colonialism. But he also recognizes its fragility or malleability in the face of a radical democratic tradition.

This radical democratic tradition can’t be traced to the founding fathers or the Declaration of Independence. It’s manifest in the struggles of the dispossessed to overturn the Eurocentric, elitist, patriarchal, and dehumanizing structures of racial capitalism and its liberal underpinnings. It is manifest in the struggle to restore the “commons” to the commonwealth, which has been at the heart of radical abolitionism—or what Du Bois called the Abolition Democracy. West knows that social movements, or what he calls “our fightback,” have and will alter history. West believes that we can win. While I wouldn’t call Coates’s vision fatalistic, it’s deeply pessimistic. [H]is focus is on structures of race and class oppression, and ideologies that shore up these structures. He’s concerned that we survive.



Our movements have had to do both—find ways to survive and dare to win. Political mobilization and a vision of a liberated future matter, but so does a sober assessment of the forces arrayed against us (and by “us,” I mean all oppressed people everywhere). Sometimes we confront power directly; other times, we struggle to build power where we are—through collectives, mutual aid, community economic development, and the like. All of this is happening now, in Jackson, Mississippi, where a genuinely revolutionary movement is building our first cooperative commonwealth dedicated to the principles of democracy, human rights, workers’ power, environmental sustainability, and socialism.

The movement in Jackson embodies the best of West’s prophetic vision and Coates’s concern with building power amidst white supremacy. Although the struggle to make Mississippi a safe, livable, and sustainable place for black people has deep roots in Reconstruction, the promise of Jackson didn’t come on the radar of most progressives until 2013, when the late Chokwe Lumumba, a radical lawyer and leader in the New Afrikan People’s Organization (NAPO) and the Malcolm X Grassroots Movement (MXGM), was elected mayor. Lumumba had come to Mississippi from Detroit in 1971 with the Provisional Government of the Republic of New Afrika, a movement for black self-determination that envisioned the South as the site for establishing an independent black nation. The PGRNA initially demanded that the U.S. government hand over the territory to black people and recognize the PGRNA as a government in exile. In

addition to the transfer of land, the PGRNA called for reparations from the U.S. government in the amount of \$400 billion in order to sustain the new nation during its first few years. Although the demand for reparations never disappeared, the group eventually purchased land, set up cooperative farms, built institutions, and, despite relentless state repression, took root in the city of Jackson.

In the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina, the MXGM developed the “Jackson Plan,” which included establishing a “solidarity economy,” akin to the Mondragon Corporation in Spain’s Basque region, through worker cooperatives; eco-friendly community gardens—an effort to restore the “commons.” But the plan also included a political strategy of creating People’s Assemblies, open meetings to discuss community needs, ensure full democratic participation, and mobilize working people to win political power. The People’s Assemblies were not only responsible for Chokwe Lumumba’s victory and the recent mayoral election of his son, Chokwe Antar Lumumba, but for creating a structure for participatory budgeting.

The city’s latest initiatives focus on addressing the needs of Jackson’s poor and working-class communities through cooperative economic strategies. In other words, concern with survival and the creation of new democratic institutions can consolidate power and move the city toward a sustainable future. Rather than see Jackson’s immense poverty and revenue shortfalls as barriers to building a radical movement, the People’s Assemblies and veteran organizers realized that the city’s ongoing crisis demanded a radical response.

The struggle for Jackson is no cakewalk. State government is trying to strip the predominantly black city council of local control, has already reallocated revenues from the city’s 1 percent sales tax to other state initiatives, and has introduced legislation that would strip Jackson’s control of the airport and related commerce.

I propose that we turn away from the latest celebrity death match, turn our attention to Jackson, Mississippi. Read *Jackson Rising: The Struggle for Economic Democracy and Black Self-Determination in Jackson, Mississippi* (2017), edited by Kali Akuno and Ajamu Nangwaya. I stand with West and his commitment to the power of collective resistance, his optimism of the will. I stand with Coates and his insistence on a pessimism of the intellect that questions everything, stays curious, and is not afraid of self-reflection, uncomfortable questions, or where the evidence takes him.

And above all, I stand with the people of Jackson, who have built the country’s most radical movement, mobilized new forms of political participation, and elected a people’s government committed to building a socialist commonwealth. **Free the Land!**

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# TURNING THE TIDE

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## UPCOMING EVENTS:

- ★ Jan 6, 1pm, Alliance of White Anti-Racists Everywhere LA Sat. drop-in
- ★ Jan 11, 12n-2p, Close Guantanamo, Stop Torture Vigil, DTLA Fed. Bldg.
- ★ Jan 11, JusticelA Town Hall, 7p, Hollywood Utd. Meth Church, 6817 Franklin Av
- ★ Jan 15, MLK Day holiday and 'Kingdom Day' march in Crenshaw district
- ★ Jan 20, Women's March - Oppose Trump, Misogyny, Colonialism & Capitalism!
- ★ Feb 5-9, Decolonization, Hurricanes & Solidarity-Oscar López Rivera's Southern California Tour (see p.1) Tues, Feb 6, 7:30p Main LA Community event: Dr. Maya Angelou Community High School, 300 E 53rd St., LA 90011

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**Feb 5-9, Decolonization, Hurricanes & Solidarity-Oscar López Rivera's Southern California Tour Info on p. 1**