Support 4strugglemag

Each issue, we send more than 200 copies to prisoners across North America, at no cost to them. Your support is needed to continue this project. Please help subsidize these costs by subscribing to the magazine and/or offering a one-time donation. Please check out the ‘subscribe and donate’ link on our website: www.4strugglemag.org

Your support is much appreciated.

love 4SM
Notes for “No one ever asks what a man’s role in the revolution is?”. Gender politics and leadership in the Black Panther Party, 1966-71

*note: some (non-essential) endnotes have been cut to save space. If you would like the full citations, we can send them to you.


15. See Ehloch, Daring to Be Bad, for an excellent account of the problems and activities of white radical and cultural feminists.


17. See, for example, Evans, Personal Politics, 101; Paula Gil- dings, When and Where I Enter: The Impact of Black Women on Race and Sex in America (New York: Bantam Books, 1984).


27. Newton, To Die for the People, 81.


32. See Marine, The Black Panthers, 63; and Seale, Seize the Time, 153.


38. Seale, Seize the Time, 132-34. Newton, Revolutionary Suicide, 128-33.

39. Cleaver, Soul on Ice, 14-16.

Table of Contents

- “Look, do you see the smoke from Athens?”, by Dave Cunningham
- The pitfalls of race consciousness, by Dhoruba Bin-Wahad
- Obama-Mania (remix), by Jalil Mutaqin
- The current financial crisis: capitalism as usual, by Troy Cochrane
- Eyewitness report from Gaza: riding on fire and a third intifada, by Ewa Jasiewicz, Jabalya & Beit Hanoun
- Likud, Kadima MK’s submit bill to worsen conditions of Palestinian detainees, by IMEMC & Agencies
- Palestinian detainees to protest Israeli decisions against them, by Saed Bannoura
- Women in the struggle
- Chicana feminism, by Anna Nietogomez
- “No one ever asks what a man’s role in the revolution is?”. Gender politics and leadership in the Black Panther Party, 1966-71, by Tracey A. Matthews
- Sexism in the anarchist movement, by Angela Bealor
- Why protest Vancouver’s 2010 Olympics?, by Gord Hill
- No Independence, by Ciron B. Springfield
- Jericho 10/10 March, by Ashanti Alston
- CONTELPRO tactics of the Boston FBI included widespread spying on campuses and dirty tricks in the black community, by Michael Richardson
- Update on Marie Mason
- FMLN Triumphs in Elections in El Salvador, But the Struggle Continues, by Nicolas Lopez
- Puerto Rico solidarity against repression
- In support of the Cuban 5, fire prisons everywhere, by Gina Mariela Rodriguez
- Glossary of terms

Artists:

Thanks to Kevin “Rashid” Johnson, for agreeing to be our resident artist. His art appears on our cover, as well as pages 28 and 34.

Art on pages 12 and 13 by Eric Ruin.

Note: We’ve placed updates in textboxes throughout - be sure to check these out.
Welcome to issue 12

Depending on whom you ask, we are either in an era of hope and change, or one of hardship and collapse. The historic event of an African being elected to the highest office in America came about largely due to the huge concerted effort of grassroots voter mobilization, on a scale not seen in recent memory. The sense of having achieved something monumental swept through most sectors of the working class and oppressed communities. Internationally, many of us outside the U.S. stood witness to something of a watershed moment for people held in the belly of the beast and around the world.

And yet, we still stand witness to the largest theft of wealth to America. What remains of a domestic manufacturing sector sinks into non-existence, unattended while finance capital is showered with public monies. Thousands of evacuators, foreclosures, layoffs, firings, layoffs, and incarcerations play out hourly in working and poor communities. It seems as though the dream so touted as being real is being deferred once again.

This ship we’re all on is sinking. The captains and first class passengers are securing their lifeboats. Those of us who have been riding in servants’ quarters and steerage are offered two options: Pray toward the heavens or swim toward the shore. When the promise of a new dawn rings hollow, we need words and deeds of strategy, guidance, and encouragement from those less beset by struggle and study. The voices of PWSs, PPs, and PPOCs can give that to us. And this magazine is one venue that will continue to make sure that voice is heard.

Welcome to issue 12 of 4Strugglemag. In this issue, we see that continuing the oppression of women within revolutionary movements is not only politically indefensible but mars those movements. We have the successes and continued struggle of people as far removed from each other as Guangzhou, Salvador, and Vancouver. From inside the empire, solidarity can be built with Palestine, even as death rains down on its people. As with the articles on historical and dialectical materialism in the previous issue, #12 underscores the importance of understanding the larger economic conditions at play all around us.

We have completed this issue without the usual level of input from our editor, anti-imperialist political prisoner Juan Laaman. He was being transferred from Massachusetts to Arizona, where he has begun serving a federal sentence. Recently we’re sorry not to be able to bring you his usual warm and inspirational greeting, we’re glad to have this opportunity to ask you to help us make 4struggle better than ever.

At 4-struggle we continue to get great feedback and contributions from behind the razor wire and cinderblock. We want to build on that. This is the space where hard questions should be asked. Analysis should be developed in these pages. In other words... Speak up! What have you been talking with others? What have others been talking about with you? What have you studied and read? What do you think? What do you want? What should be done?

Put it down and send it in!

From here on out, let’s step up our game. It isn’t just right that this modest project grow larger and stronger – it is necessary. The struggle is obviously not yet won but surely not lost. This is our fight to win.

Bryan, karen emily and Sara
Toronto Anarchist Black Cross Federation

P.S. Thanks to the National Jericho Movement in NYC, some articles in this issue give us a sneak peek of their upcoming Freedom Times newspaper, highlighting the 10/10 Jericho Anniversary, and renewing a call to “Pick up the work!” Thanks to former PP (and Jericho co-chair) Kazi Toure for his help.

Stay tuned for issue 13 for a special feature: An updated History of the New African Prison Struggle by Sundai Acoli

Letters
Dear 4Strugglemag:

Hello! I am currently caged under the watchful eye of Corruption Services Canada (CSC). I recently found a summer copy of your magazine at the library here. Being familiar with prisons and prisoners and other organizations that support prisoners’ issues, I know Canada fails to be the “civilized and democratic” society it claims if more and more prisoners are getting locked up in little cages. It’s sad to know that Canada and its Tough On Crime advocates are turning this country into another failing system like that of Texas and California. Sn-spinners keep fear alive and more power goes to the ever-growing prison industrial complex. Over time more and more tax dollars will get redirected from social and community programs to feed the hungry maw of the injustice system.

In the December 16, 2005 issue of The Daily (Stucan.ca) it states the decline in the use of provincial parole over a decade has decreased by 76% and 25% federally. Fear and Risk Assessment, a.k.a. crystal-ballling by POs, politicians, cops, at likely plays the biggest role in the decline. Recently we’ve been sent a touch with Janet Polony at the University of Toronto to ask her what she thinks of the damage prisoners suffer in hoping for a parole that never comes, Dr. Polony is the author of a study titled False-Hope Syndrome.

I have been incarcerated for over seven years now with three more to go. I also have a manuscript titled The Criminal’s Handbook that I would like to place on the web for much the same way as collaboration with white supremacy, men that support patriarchal systems and the sexism that perpetuates them not only make a mockery of humanity but serve the interests of the system that oppresses us all.

Working class: Those who work. As opposed to capitalists, who own property and make money off of other people’s labor.

Proletariat: The employed “productive” working class at the “point of production.” The working class gets paid less than the full value of their work. Capitalist exploitation robs the proletariat of its labour value to produce profits without which the capitalist system would grind to a halt.

For this strategic reason, the classic left has viewed the proletariat as the sector of the working class that has the capacity to lead the class struggle towards revolution.

In memory of the martyr Bashir Hamed

BY RUSSELL MAROON SHOATZ
September 11, 2008

For over 40 years, Bashir Hamed, dedicated his life to the struggle for Black Liberation and the uplift- ing of humanity in general. As a former member of both the Black Panther Party and the Black Libera- tion Army, and later a long held political prisoner, he NEVER tired in giving his all. Every day across the globe thousands die without ever having strike a blow against oppression.

Not Bashir! For decades he remained a lion against those who strive to keep us oppressed. An example of the type of dedication that will one day seize the mass- es of downtrodden and propel them to sweep away all manner of injustice. Until then, we will remember the Martyr Bashir Hamed and draw strength and courage from the selfless example he set. LONG LIVE THE MARTYR BASHIR HAMED!

Descendant Writers in Prisons Issue:
Call for Submissions

Deadline July 1, 2009

In fall 2010, Descant aims to further and challenge the discourse on the nature of the prison, confinement and exile. We want to hear and know the voices, the rhythms and the shapes of captivity, the histories, contexts and politics of this particular social exile. We are seeking any kind of writing — fiction, memoir, essays, poetry — or art related to prisons, especially submissions by those who have been directly affected by the prison system.

Content: Descant considers submissions of poetry (sub- mit about six poems), short stories, novel excerpts, essays, journal excerpts, artwork, photographs, graphic illustrations. Standards for acceptance are high. We receive a large number of submissions each month — please send only your best, carefully edited work. No submission may be under consideration by another publisher, nor can it have been previously published.

Format: Submissions must be typed, double-spaced on one side of the page, with ample margins. Good quality photocopies or computer printouts are acceptable. On your envelope please print your full name, type of submission and complete address. Art submissions can be mailed to us, either on hard copy or on CD-R. If sending on CD-R, use low-resolution jps or pdf. preferably Mac format, but PC is acceptable as well. we do not accept email submission or links to websites.

Return: Our preferred method of responding to submis- sions is by email; that you should choose to have us communicate using this method is not a return policy, but it will be recycled following our response. If you would prefer a more permanent record of your manuscript return, include a SASE (self-addressed stamped envelope) with adequate Canadian postage or International Reply Cou-pons. Americans please note: U.S. postage on SASEs is not sufficient! Please use IRCs or Canadian postage on your SASE.

If Accepted: If accepted, it may take Descant up to 12 months to publish accepted work (longer, in some cases, often shorter). Descant pays a $100 honourarium upon publication.

Descant
PG Box 314, Station E
Toronto, MSS 2S8

Now in its third decade, Descant is a quarterly journal publishing new and established contemporary writers and visual artists from Canada and around the world.
Glossary of terms

Some have requested that 4StruggleMag include a glossary of terms in our issues. We agree it’s important for all of us to be on relatively the same page in our discussions.

Back in the day, when a group of academics set out to write the first comprehensive English dictionary they understood it was too big and important to be left to them alone to create. The first Oxford English Dictionary (OED) was written by soliciting contributions from the public (and over 11,000 definitions were provided by ONE man: a prisoner named W C Minor). If it was good enough a model for the OED, it’s good enough for 4SM.

But just as the history books of the bosses tell side of the story, so too do the dictionaries define our words on their terms. When WE say “working class” we don’t mean the poor and destitute, we mean the people that produce the wealth of this world and thereby share in it. When WE say “capitalism” we don’t mean the free-market and private enterprise, we mean a system based on theft, greed, and inequality. OUR definitions should reflect that.

This list is not complete and the definitions are far from set in stone. We’re just trying to get the ball rolling. Everyone’s encouraged to contribute new defined words or revisions to definitions that feel they aren’t accurate. This is only the starting point.

Capitalism: An economic system in which property owners (capitalists) pay low wages to workers as if their labour is worth, in order to make profit. This is the relation of exploitation through wage labour that differentiates capitalism from other economic systems. Within capitalism, the lazily few get rich off the labour power of the many for the primary benefit of a very small class of non-producing elites.

Colonialism: The process of a foreign power setting up local outposts of control for the purpose of expropriating local wealth (e.g. land, labour power, raw materials) for the benefit of those colonial foreign powers. The western expansion of the American government, the following genocide of Native people and theft of the land are prime examples of American capitalism’s reliance on colonialism.

Imperialism: The process of building empire – a system of imperial colonial to workers that are politically and economically governed by the same central power. In recent history, Imperialism isn’t pursued in only the manner of the Roman Empire. While not directly controlling their governments, the new American Empire can control nations economically with debt and the standardized US dollar, or politically with puppet governments. If the newer, subtler forms of imperialism fail though, the new empire is obviously not only reverting to the tried and true methods of military invasion and occupation as in Iraq and Afghanistan, presently.

Democracy (liberal/bourgeois/capitalist): The appearance of democracy maintained by capitalists that allow a few surface decision-making powers for the general population but never allow true power to be in the hands of the people. Capitalist democracy might applaud when we vote for such stupid choices as a barely war if its white supremacy is truly challenged.

Fascism: In theory, fascism is a political ideology that is authoritarian (“obey”), anti-democratic (“shut up”), populist (“the leader will express the will of the nation!”), and violently repressive towards opposition (“Welcome to Attica”). In practice, fascism erupts when the capitalists give up the appearance of democracy and turn to outright dictatorship to maintain their control of the working and oppressed classes.

White supremacy: A social system designed for the legal, political, economic benefit of white people to the detriment of non-white people. Our society is in collaboration with the bosses by white workers will earn them privileges from the capitalists, but ultimately this betrayal serves to divide the working class and makes class-traitors of those white workers.

Patriarchy: A social system designed for the legal, political, economic benefit of men to the detriment of women. In free but am I having some difficulty. It’s difficult to do many things when trapped in a cage but we must struggle on. Professor Bob Gauker of the University of Ottawa and editor of Journal of Prisoners on Prisons, and others have sent me lots of data. I can now receive emails via phone calls to my sister, but this is a luxury few prisoners have.

Obtaining data and contact with the outside is becoming more difficult for prisoners. This is exactly what CSC wants. I’m attempting a few projects with a group of prisoners here but I must be careful not to end up being transferred to a max. We would appreciate being put on your mailing list and any information about prison issues or anti-oppression issues would be welcomed. Anything you send us will be happily copied and handed out to others here. Thanks!

Chris Watts
P.O. Box 760
Calumet ON
KI9 LO Canada

Sincere greetings:

I am one of the exiles currently held on San Quentin’s Death Row. I am writing with extended appreciation for the boundless energy and creativity displayed through your zeal in looking out for the fellows – we the condemned exiles whose plight within the CJS is much like – to borrow a phrase from Fade to Bell – Sitiphys in hell without hope of a brighter future.

Concerning my position here I am an old school militant worker. My brothers and sisters are still fairly in the “patriarch” in the actuality of perceiving something far greater than this notion of work. President Bush and his colleagues in this land comrades, the repressive hierarchies of state capitalism is reproducing peoples into mere shells of what they really should be, ought to be. Stunting their equilibrium in ways unimaginable. They are then taught or counselled to blame the self for almost every hardship encountered in their life’s journey, rather than to question critically the institutional root of the problem.

In sync with all this of course is the routine scheduled behind these walls, enriched somewhat by rigorous exercise and meditation. We also hold (periodically) yard class group studies in issues of black history, philosophy and politics are given in-depth review.

Strength and Solidarity, Cliff.

Dear 4StruggleMag:

I just recently received issue #11 of your publication. It took me awhile to respond because only days after receiving it I was involved in a protest that not only led to the use of chemical agents against a number of inmates but also led to me being placed on property restriction. Eventually I was recommended for a third tour of Close Management (Florida’s equivalent of a SHU) and in the midst of this protest I was transferred to where I writing you from now. On the bus / slave ship ride over here I had the opportunity to snatch the envelope with your mailing address on it.

Let me begin by saying I was impressed by your publication. What captured my interest in #11, above everything else, was the roll call of contributors – including but not limited to Marilyn Buck, Sundari Acoti, Mumia Abu-Jamal, Polite Contematorio and many more. What’s also striking is this is that I’ve set myself a campaign for. That campaign is to build a bridge of solidarity connecting the patriarchs of no-latin american resistance with the lumpen-proletariat of north american consequence. It is my opinion here in n. america that since the fall of the Black Panther Party that Fanon’s engagement to entice the lumpen proletariat (the “spearhead” of the revolution) in the revolution and his warning against neglecting that same class (the class I am here representing) has all but been forgotten. It is also my opinion that in order for this bridge to be built between the patriarchs (whom the majority of my class have never heard of) and the lumpen proletariat, it must first be constructed by the patriarchs and the inspiring leaders of the lumpen-proletariat organizations (LPO’s). 4StruggleMag is the ideal platform for such a construction to be founded.

I would like to submit an article on “lumpen-proletarianism” to be featured in your publication and to serve some what as a voice and a message not only to the “patriarchs” but also to such recognized up-and-coming revolutionary organizations as the WPO and the New Africans, but to the revolutionary community as a whole...

In closing I also want to take this opportunity to inform you that the state chapter of the LPO that I represent has recently begun publishing a zine of our own. It is a revolutionary newsletter titled “The Brotherhood of Man.” As the principle purpose is to combat the psychological effects that outlets as the government controlled media and capitalist dominated music industry have had upon the minds of our people by presenting our true history and potential as lumpenized members of the working class. We would appreciate your support in this project and would be open to further discussions on how we could support one another. This would not only serve to expand your network (amongst the lumpen-proletariat) but also demonstrate to our readership that there are recognized revolutionary organisations, collectives, publications, etc. out there that are living up to the word so many of us are just now wanting to add to our vocabulary.

Solidarity, Morin.
‘Look, do you see the smoke from Athens?’

BY DAVE CUNNINGHAM

On December 6, 2008, 15-year-old Alexandros Grigoropoulos was fatally shot by a policeman in Athens. As the Greek community reacted, large protests and demonstrations escalated into riots. Solidarity demonstrations against state murders also took place in over 40 cities around the world throughout December. The reaction below is from a long-time anti-poverty activist and author living in Vancouver, Canada.

There. It’s happened again. Revolt of near insurrectionary proportions.

Unbeknownst to the rest of us. Waiting with baited breath as we do, ‘Look, do you see the smoke from Athens?’ asks the banner hung in Istanbul, at the bridge closest to the sight of Greece. We strain to the see the smoke from here. We search the internet for walls of smoke, images of smoke rising. And we see a massive Christmas tree on fire. Thousands in black reaching into the smoke and throwing back canisters of teargas. Back to the charging cops who are the last to lose control in riotiose economies.

Is this then what the end of the economy looks like? Is this then what the end of our collective movement looks like? Revolt without warning. Without postings. Wildcat uprisings!!

Athens has it comin’ for some time now. I was there a few (bunch?) years ago and there was civil war. Anarchists were readied and so were communists. (Who is a rebel and who is a rebel elsewhere). Tit-for-tat street fights of pipe bombs and drive-by moped attacks. Squats were occupied fortresses made into urban bunkers. What if this preparation made revolt more exact then declared on the State whole? What type of preparation can we point too?

This then is what happens. Fire and smoke, for days. (weeks?), (months?). We are not there. None of us is seems we cannot google ‘leader’ and hit any results. The planned general strike went ahead and added smoke to the air and did not put out the fires or remove the barricades. It left the smoke piled up in the air to be recorded as the year of ’68. What we see here is a vulgar ’68. One with masks and black. Not in bloc’s, not in retreat, but everywhere.

What could be the relationship to the revolt and the proletariat? In the country that produced the concept of history its relevance is high. I think I once heard that Greece has had more governments in power since WW2 than any other country. I don’t really know what that might mean. But when the reporter made the obvious remark that the birthplace of democracy has turned into anarchy, I feel that to be so.

Having been there I know nothing about it. Having spent time with Greek anarchists in their squats in Athens, I know nothing about them. I get the feeling politics means something more to them: something extreme. And something with a working class feel. I felt this on a Greek island of exiled communists. I felt this laying beside a Greek terrorist in a military hospital in Genoa. I remember hearing cheers within the smoke somewhere, “the Greeks are coming, the Greeks are coming!” and feeling reasurred.

So far, hundreds of buildings have been destroyed, dozens of cops have received retribution, checkpoints and prisons set alight, as well as at least one (above mentioned) Christmas tree (out from parliament?). The stats of our side don’t matter. Let’s not make this an equation. Let’s take what we can. And get is all we get? To sit and surf-solidarity? Of course in Berlin the anarchists are out and there was smoke for a night. But what of here?

Here’s a comparison between here and there... Remember when the teachers went on strike? No, you’ve forgotten. That’s because nothing happened. When the teachers went on strike in Athens in ’78, the people went with them. Ecating into full-blown insurrection, students and teachers and many others threw themselves into the smoke. At first were the contradictions and dynamics that turn us lazy organizers away, but ‘the teachers had a chance to move to ‘trouble makers,’ familiarize themselves with masked people and mask up themselves... many of the teachers who discredited the stone throwing on Friday helped make the cocktails and covered those who threw them on Sunday.

The well-known proletarians who reported the above also described the overall solidarity that’s conditions here too can strive to create: ‘the flying pickets (striking work- the increase in police activities in which the few play the leading role show us the formal establishment of a police state that already existed in hidden form, in the United States as well as in Puerto Rico. The Attorney General had already warned that telephones could be intercepted, something prohibited by the Constitution of Puerto Rico, but permitted by federal jurisdiction, making clear that the feds will be in charge of the administration of justice in Puerto Rico.

Criminality is a social problem that emerges from inequality and lack of opportunities. The new government of Puerto Rico, from the beginning, threatens to deepen the inequalities with new taxes and deprivation of services that bring unemployment and conditions of misery. Some of the measures to confirm dur- ing the Roselló administration. That is why the group of political prisoners asks for the immediate termination of the repressive measures. And that is why Fortuno named FBI agent José Figueroa Sánchez to head the Puerto Rico Police.

The Table of Solidarity Against Repression calls for the rejection of these repressive policies against a people and a working class exploited and attacked by businessmen who hold the reins of the government. We reject the policies that seek to shut down organisms that defend civil rights, such as the Bar Association. We reject the policies announced by the Coast Guard and the governments of Luis Fortuno against movements in struggle and the Puerto Rican left.

The Table of Solidarity Against Repression calls on people to organize to defend the right to intimacy and civil rights. We must learn to recognize these repressive acts and demand them, without fear. We join with the people in demanding justice and freedom.

The Table of Solidarity Against Repression April 2, 2009

Contacts:
Luis Labay (787) 406-1838
Norberto Cintrón Fiallo (787) 4...

Jan Susler
People’s Law Office
1180 N.
Milwaukee
Chicago, IL 60642

In support of the Cuban 5, fight prisons everywhere

BY GINA MARIELA RODRIGUEZ

On September 12, 1998, five Cuban men were arrested and falsely ac- cused of illegal espionage activities against the US government. The five—Antonio Guerrero, Fernando González, Gerardo Hernández, Ramón Labalino, and René González—worked for the Cuban govern- ment as undercover agents sent to spy not on the activities of the US but on Miami-based anti-Cuba terrorist organizations that attempt to over- throw the Castro regime. Their job was to infiltrate terrorist organizations led by the former CIA operative Luis Posada, who envisioned the string of terrorist bombings that hit Cuba in 1996 and 1997, and the 1996 bombing of Cuban Flight 455 which killed 73 people, the ma- jority of them teenagers. While Miami-based anti-Cuba terrorist organi- zations had often worked with the CIA, the Castros ordered a new direction: a violent act, have faced unjust imprisonment. First, the men were held in solitary confinement in a Miami jail for seventeen months before being charged with cocaine and heroin possession and smuggling. Finally, in 2001, the Castros decided to release the five men peacefully. After a series of legal battles, the five men were charged with murder and terrorism and sentenced to a total of 150 years in prison.

The 1959 Revolution was fought as a popular movement that after its vic- tory nationalized formerly US-owned industries and expropriated lands that were rightfully theirs. This attack on US imperial aggression was celebrated throughout the world, and the freedom fighters movements in the US, Cuba, as a nation, as a military, has not hit the US, it did not threaten to Cuba. The US trade embargo against Cuba has economically strangled the island for close to 50 years, keeping basic necessities such as fuel and medicine out of the country not only from the US but from other nations who cannot afford to risk the consequences of trading with Cuba. The US government is also committed to militarily attacking Cuba through covert means. In response to the Cuban Revolution, the School of the Americas, (renamed the Western Hemisphere Institute for Security Cooperation in 2000) aided the training of thousands of Central and South American military and political leaders in military and physiological and political torture tech- niques. These soldiers then returned to their home countries and worked alongside US intelligence and interests in preventing further “commu- nist” developments in Latin America. It is clear the development of the struggle against American empire are quick to support the Castro regime and those who work on the same time, however, it is irresponsible to blindly support the Cuban government, or any government, for that matter. We have to remember that the Castro regime is not without its own repressions and human rights viola- tions. We can guess that Obama’s win is not going to bring any significant changes to the ways the American government imprisons people (or the motivations behind those the Empire imprisons). Castro has been teach- ing us this for the past 50 years—there can be a “progressive” turn in the regime, but the prisons remain. No doubt there is a prison-indural rela- tionship there, too. And brown and black police officers who are the same as any other cop everywhere. What are we to do with that?
Puerto Rico solidarity against repression

April 3, 2009

From November 19, 2008, the Table of Solidarity Against Repression warned people of the continuing ten- dency to federalize institutions and life in Puerto Rico. The current governor Luis Fortuño continues and emphasizes the hand-over of our institutions, especially those related to justice, to the hands of the U.S. Attorney, the FBI, and the federal court in Puerto Rico.

Events that have been happening in the past three months prove this. The federalization of the Puerto Rico Police is a fact. The brutal murder of the professor Sergio Suárez to head the Police was necessary for the success of the comprehen- sive plans at the bunker run by the public administration of Luis Fortuño. The FBI has prepared long ago for Puerto Rico. This plan includes, among other elements, the sale of government public services to private enterprise, the elimination of dissent from institutions that orient people about their rights, and the elimination of rights acquired by workers.

Let’s look at what has been happening:

1. Immediately after his nomination, the FBI agent who heads the Police began training the Shock Force, PURA, SWAT, and others, something new favorable social uspings which the economic measures to be imple- mented by Fortuño would cause.

2. The difference between federal authorities and Puerto Rican authorities was erased, in a supposed effort to coor- dinate the Municipal Police, the Puerto Rico Police and the national FBI and to create a monolithic structure, or to intervene in any type of that. This facilitates the FBI claim- ing credit for solving crimes and applying the death pen- alty in Puerto Rico. The latter will be possible because the governor himself has affirmed that he will not intervene to avoid the application of the death penalty for crimes com- mitted in Puerto Rico, in spite of the fact the Constitution he swore to uphold prohibits the death penalty.

3. The coordination of the previously mentioned forces was apparent first, not at the scene of crime, but against some unions that tried to participate in harrowing the new budget at the beginning of March of 2009. The mobiliza- tion of these combined forces at the Capitol prevented the workers from entering the Capitol halls.

4. These coordinated forces perfectly coincide with an- nouncements from federal agencies, such as the coast Guard, indicating an intent to persecute those who oppose, in any mode, the policies of the government and those it calls subversive.

5. In the legislature, they have begun dismantling the Bar Association, with a project that eliminates obligatory membership of attorneys.

6. Two days ago, the police attacked a group of Telephone Company workers who were demonstrating in front of the Department of Labor. We also attacked those demonstrating against the gas pipeline.

7. A legislator submitted a resolution seeking a legisla- tive investigation of the University of Puerto Rico student protests against the expectation of the return of military practices to the Río Piedras campus. The following day he accused the Brotherhood of Non Teaching Enrolled Em- ployees, the Pro-Independent Students Front, and Mothers Against the War of having made a threatening telephone call to him.

8. The Attorney General issued instructions to the pros- ecution plans at the bunker run by the public administration of Luis Fortuño, and an additional duty attorney to be in charge of attending to complaints generated by demonstrations by “citizens af- fected.” Insurrections are not spontaneous, and regardless of the hopes of Insurrectionists, are not created from desperation. It seems if our gaze is currently held by Athens, we should investigate, (the what has become chicle) role of workers in a working-class revolt. Because surely it can’t be just the anarchists that continue to hold the line in Greece.

The smoke that chokes Athens has filled the city for long- er and longer by the discussions of many-never summits that have taken place. And still our friends in black fight and fight. Even without help from within. In Europe all those squat fights over the years were fought by Europeans. By the trainload they would get there overnight in time to set the next day on fire. But in Athens it seems different. They’re holding their own without excuses or reservations to the customs of an imported global-left. They look to their next door neigh- bors who stand beside them at the burning barricades.

But lets not fantasize. Fancy is what’s brought us to our current situation. A policy of riots no longer lasts a day. This revolt in Greece is high drama (remember that bit about the birthplace of democracy? It seems as obvious to police/Roco authorities that this is the role of theater). Heroes and villains are enshrined within a history of class antagonisms. Our friends are well stocked. Be- cause they organize without a hope for the big-one. Fuck, the big-one is such an obsession here on the fault line, so close to Seattle.

It helps that the country has always been at war. And when powerful people helps is, that by running-out of the military department, the Regime of Colonials in ‘74, the movement then left some victories behind, such as no cops allowed on the universities.

These universities are currently being used as stages to plan what to do with neighborhoods and children, and it is this the true support referred to in the Quality of Life program.

This so-called support to communities is an attempt to con- vert the residents of those communities into informants, or, as the people say, “snitches.” With this, they achieve the development of lack of trust among neighbors, which will impede communities from organizing to struggle for their well-being and social and economic advancement.

In the sectarian conflict between buildings, a readiness to take the strength out of walls of cultural mural – to the people. What would our universities look like if we captured just a little piece? How would we be able to use them?

From the smoke in Athens it seems clear here, that we (I) forgot what is to be done. Some sit and wait for the next big one on our sling-shot calendar, and others organize in the quagmire of community, others for the identity integrity of others, some wait for the day to be tourists at an Indian blockade and be given the chance to seize the opportunity to wash the camp’s dishes, and still others (the most self-gratifying) in writing about what needs to be done.

This is not a collective statement made by some commit- tee. It is collective in no way. It’s alone in writing when it wants to be with others destroying the Greek embassy, and still others (the most self-gratifying) in writing about what needs to be done.

Update: Ali Khalid Abdullah

My name is Ali Khalid Abdullah and I was released from prison on August 1, 2008. Since my release I have lived very hard and have had a lot of disappointments both from myself and the greater revolutionary/activist community.

I want to stress that it is not easy being out here after 19 years of incarceration. It is not easy trying to find your way in a world that has radically changed and you literally question whether or not you are still relevant for anyone or anything. There is a learning process here and that I will not end this fight. It has taken a little more time to get adjusted than but I am coming along and will be lending my voice to the struggle just as I had done all the years of my incarceration.

I also want to say that, we need to fight for our beloved brothers and sisters who are on death row and longed down in prison kamps. We cannot forget them and we must not allow the system to act as if they do not exist.

Siddique Abdullah Hasaan is one example of someone from whom we cannot forget. He is my brother, both in religion and in struggle and he deserves all the help he can get, just like I do. We need to fight for our people in the Lucasville Five, the Angola 3, the San Francisco 8 and a host of others too long of a list to name here.

Meantime, if anyone wishes to contact me they can email: ulakabd@yahoo.com
The pitfalls of race consciousness

America's substitution of political reform over fiscal capitalism for social empowerment of the poor

BY DHORUBIN BAHNAD

Barack Obama’s ascendency to the U.S. presidency has been consistently portrayed as the culmination of the Afri-
can-Americans’ protracted struggle for “equality” in America. This is only superficially true because each advance of
Africans toward civil and human rights in America has also come at a cost. While some of these advances
seldom moved the majority of Africans in America out of economic and political doldrums. The brutal truth is this
portrait of the “American Dream” is both facetious and inaccurate.

While it is true that for the first time white Americans in significant numbers have voted for a “black” man as Presi-
dent, it is of course inaccurate to say that Barack Obama represents or even reflects the historical or contemporary experience (legacy) of African-Americans who have been connected to the history of race in America. After all, with the existence of Tiger Woods (who tried inventing a race
to match his background), how many Africans in America were raised by white grandparents and went to
Harvard Law school?

Clearly white Americans, by and large, voted for Obama based partly on the “American Storybook” version of
“Dreams of My Father” rather than Nightmares of my Ancestors. Hence, Obama’s claim of majority of white voters consciously voted for an “African-American”
descentendant of the “Dreams of My Father” who bears the burden of a retributive and terrorized and ex-
ploted for centuries—they voted for an African-American without that baggage, perhaps trusting that he couldn’t
experience a DNA induced psychological flashback to the ball-whip days on the plantation and go back-wild as
Commander-in-Chief. White America’s “guilt syndrome” is folded neatly into their notion of “American Exceptional-
ility,” hence the persistent media implication during the Presidential campaign that Obama was either an “under-
cover” Muslim or Black Nationalist revolutionary in dis-
 guise resonated in so called “white middle-America”.

It took the looming doom of failing capitalism for many white Americans to vote for a black man.

Many white voters harbored media generated suspicion of Obama’s political and religious sympathies, especially from among “undecided” and liberal Republican
candidates. Such misperceptions are often the strand of thread upon which history dangles. Blacks and liberal white

supporters of President Obama from all classes get upset when this is brought up. Yet, there were those liberal folk
who insisted that he wouldn’t express similar disdain in an analysis of Franklin Delano Roosevelt’s disability as an important subjective factor in his political career, nor in John F Kennedy’s relationship to his Quasi-Gangster father and
Kahlilaniach as inappropriate in ascertaining what influ-
enced JFK’s character. Yet when it comes to race, personal is not political and the political is not personal.

Clearly Obama is an extraordinary individual. His suc-
cess has opened up self-hating African minds to their own self-value, and has bestowed a bloodless “emancipation” on white Americans unwilling to contemplate “payback”
[reparations]. But just feeling good about one’s self won’t stop one’s other people from detracting
their nefarious ambitions. In this sense, the Presidency of Barack Obama is symbolically the ascendency of a “po-

tical anti-black” during one of the most profound crisis global imperialism has ever faced.

That the Obama campaign was able to almost entirely
avoid the influence of a race-based power paradigm in form-
ulation of U.S. foreign policy in no small part was due to the
McCain campaign’s absolute lack of racial savvy.

The racist and reactionary right wing supporting McCain
attacked Obama with excerpts from the sermons of his
family Pastor Jeremiah Wright, an activist and Libera-

tion Theologian, in an attempt to associate the ideology of
Black Nationalism, the noble legacy of black militancy
with Obama and thereby frighten white voters into knee
jerking racist apathy. Not a distant past for minority
groups that has never confronted the true legacy of its history.

Clearly the objective was to portray Obama’s personal
journey to self-recognition as an “African” as subversive. As if “thinking black,” “thinking African, or viewing his-

tory from the experiences of one’s own people was a form of subversive moral blasphemy. Perhaps it is. Indeed, Michelle Obama (who does the bullwhip days in her
family DNA memory) was attacked as “un-American” for
saying when Obama received the Democratic nomination that for the first time she felt proud to be American”
-a sentiment shared by 90 % of African Americans.

To reassure white folks that African history in America was not his legacy, or his basis of analysis and frame of refer-
ence, Obama renounced all association with Rev. Wright and
defined Wright’s views as “divisive” rather than wor-
ty of challenge by American historians.

Moreover, Obama didn’t take the Wright imbroglio as
an opportunity to educate America about race; instead he
merely distanced himself from the issue and moved on to
win the ultimate political prize in the land, the Presidency of
the United States. To many of course this was “strategy,”

FMLN Triumphs in Elections in El Salvador, But the Struggle Continues

BY NICOLAS LOPEZ

Patiently enduring a long road of suffering and disil-
lusionment, the FMLN, the main party’s people of El
Salvador, has set an example of how perseverance and
conviction can achieve what it aims for.

On March 15, 2009 the Farabundo Martí National

Liberation Front (FMLN) triumphed in El Salvador’s
presidential elections, bringing a major political defeat to
the right-wing governing party, ARENA, and bringing
into the presidential office a deep commitment to the
realities of social and economic justice.

During the 1980’s, five insurgent groups united to form the
FMLN coalition, which they named after the internation-
alist-minded Farabundo Martí, a Salvadoran leader of
a peasant and working class uprising against electoral
fraud in January 1932.

Dictator Maximiliano Hernandez Martinez reacted with
furious violence against the movement, backed by U.S. and
European support. During an event known as ‘La Matanza’ (The Massacre), Farabundo Martí was executed and historians estimate that some 30,000 people
were killed during four years. Since then, the people’s
movement in El Salvador took to the underground to
organize themselves clandestinely to overcome repres-
sion. Under cover, the Salvadoran government began
using death squads to kill the revolutions’ social base.
During the 1980’s, the movement was forced to take
armored struggle as a way to defend the poor from the
violence imposed on them, enduring the hardships of a
guerrilla war that lasted from 1979 until 1992.

Although the people’s movement was unable to seize
power from the powerful Salvadoran army aided by a
million-dollar-a-day U.S. investment in paramilitary
squads, the movement was still able to achieve wide
political support and legitimacy, laying the foundation
of what today is a victorious movement.

This is the brutal history that set the tone for the 2009
Presidential elections in El Salvador.

A week before the elections, the FMLN closed the
campaign in the capital, San Salvador. Hundreds of
thousands of people participated in a public gathering,
the largest crowd for a political event in decades. It was a
show of support far superior to what the right wing party
displayed the last day. It was obvious by then that the
FMLN had a greater following than the opposing party,
and during the days of that week ARENA (Republican
National Alliance) desperately tried to give a false image
through an intensive media bombardment that if FMLN
were to be elected, El Salvador would become subordi-
nate to Venezuela and “a financial expansionist project”,
and that Salvadorans would risk having remittances from family members in the U.S. halted by
the U.S. government.

ARENA’s maneuvers to discredit the revolutionaries
included personal attacks against FMLN candidate Mau-
ricio Funes, to which Funes responded by highlighting his
party’s proposals to overcome the political and economic
neoliberal capitalist policies implemented by ARENA
since 1993. ARENA has a long track record of using trick
and fraud, and it is reasonable to assume that the frustrated population would not allow another fraud to
occur and perhaps wouldn’t limit their furious reaction.

ARENA has in past handed out thousands of fake IDs to
people they brought in from neighboring countries to fraudulently vote for their party. Although widespread
evidence indicates this also happened on March 15th.
FMLN was still able to move their voters and suppor-
tors to the vote and defend their electoral rights against
these ‘tactics’ of ARENA.

However, change will occur gradually in El Salva-
dor, with the right still firmly entrenched in the bureau-
cracy, the judiciary, and with a majority of seats of the
Parliament. At best, the FMLN’s presence in the
government will only be able to pave the ground for
social reforms. It will begin with opening the books and
taxing big business and recover the $2 billion lost every year on tax evasion.

This could allow them to increase wages and subsidies to basic social services, implement labor reform and increase agricultural production, increase employment and scho-
larship opportunities and reduce gang violence in urban areas. Along these lines, the FMLN’s political base will
provide them the opportunity to strengthen the social and political capacity of the mass movements, for example by strengthening community sindicato. Furthermore, with the FMLN at the
head of the executive branch of government, they will
be able to establish independent foreign relations, which under ARENA’s governments were so submissive to U.S.
policy.

All of this, however, will only be possible through the
continued participation and increased development of
an organized mass movement to defend and advance the
struggle for the economic and social power of the people

4 STRUGGLE MAG ISSUE 12
Update on Marie Mason

Lifelong community organizer and mother of two Marie Mason was arrested last March by a small army of FBI, Homeland Security, and local police. Marie was arrested for a laundry list of farfetched Front acts some dat- ing back over a decade. Her arrest was prompted by what we now know was her ex husband turning paid FBI in- formant, Frank “The Fink” Ambrose. She has since been remanded into custody pending sentencing which is sched- uled for Feb. 5, 2009.

As a friend of Marie’s and as part of her support Crew I was somewhat shocked and devastated throughout her plea ne- gotiations. I can honestly say Marie’s only concern during her plea negotiations was that she maintain her integrity and not jeopardize anyone, including herself, in her own inter- actions with the state. She repeatedly refused plea agree- ments that required her to provide info on others in ex- change for lesser time.

In late summer the US attorney offered a plea that would name her ex husband as name only and would provide no new information that Frank had not already provided and Frank had already plead guilty. The US attorney made it clear this was the final offer on the table and that if Marie risked trial she would get life in prison as opposed to the 15-20 year recommendation in the plea. This plea required no interviews or deprivations outside of what was normally required to account for one’s own actions in a guilty plea. In the spirit of non-co- operation Marie accounted for only her own actions and provided no information to assist the state in any ongoing investigation. Much of the frustration of the FBI and US attorney’s office her non co- operation is mentioned numer- ous time in court documents.

After her arrest Marie consulted with many close friends within the African American, Jewish, and political prisoner support movements and after lengthy discussion and debate all agreed that facing life to de- fend a witch who has already sold her soul and everyone he ever knew was ridiculous. As long as no new info or names other than her ex-husband were named we would stand behind Marie and the plea and work to explain the situational details to the rest of the movement. A sign on statement of support accurately explaining the situation was written up by a friend at ecoprisoners.org and distributed widely.

In an attempt to further paint property destruction as ter- rorism the US Attorney scheduled Marie’s change of plea for Sept. 11.

Since pleading guilty and being remanded the state has continued its attempt to break Marie and get her to provide info on others by constantly harassing her in county jail and targeting her family. Recently Marie’s cell was raided and all her personal belongings were stolen, including sen- sitive legal documents she was working on for sentencing.

Under what we assumed was the direction of the FBI, agents of the Cincinnati Intelligence Unit followed and harassed Marie’s teenage daughter while she was on her way to school. FBI agents have raided her 72 old mothers house numerous times since Marie’s arrest trash her home and threatening her mother. The FBI had Marie’s son arrested (who was in town for the holidays) while visiting Marie at the jail on Dec. 28 for allegedly being a car while Frank stopped to burn out of place. Marie was booked and charged with several misdemeanors and was restricted to a state he has not lived in years. Marie’s sons arrest was prompted by info her ex husband Frank “The Fink” provided against his own step son.

The state has also attempted to isolate Marie from her sup- porters by threatening, following, and harassing members of her support group to no end. In the latest in a long line of bad stout, Marie was trans- ferred from Clinton County Jail to another County jail where she was told she would be going be- fore a Grand Jury.

The State is doing everything it can to not only punish Marie for her acts but for standing strong to her principles. It is now our turn as individuals and a movement to stand strong with Marie. A let- er of support is one of the most important things you can do right now to support Marie. Marie ap- preciates letters from the outside. She enjoys hearing about the change others are attempting to bring about and the work they are doing. Letters from the outside are one of the few ways of hope while she is locked down to discuss her case or the Green Scare in any way with her. Money for her mushrooming legal, commissary, family travel and col- lect call bills is also needed. If you are able to financially contribute please consider it.

To write Marie, donate or for the latest updates please see www.freemarie.org

After all, you can’t scare “white people,” who believe they have an infinite right to pass on the rest of the world while whistling the Battle Hymn of the Republic, and expect to win a national election.

Only a monumental crisis that threatened everyone’s livelihood could shake up white folks more than the prospect of black president, and lo and behold, finance capitalism’s October surprise — economic meltdown. America woke up to the reality of debt-based prosperity as the American empire stumbled into financial distress. Fannie and Freddie were on Viagra, and the pharmacy wasn’t taking any more credit. Of course, this opportunist view in itself is depre- cating because it also presumes that white Americans are so historically challenged they are unable to be trusted to think beyond their narrow self-interests. So the economy gave Obama a boost -- but he probably would have won anyway.

Even if McCain had run his campaign like the Clintons, he may still have failed, but he would have had a broader spec- trum of support. Obama won on the left and conserva- tive self-hating Negroes applauding his virtues. Indeed, up until the Democratic convention, disgruntled Hillary sup- porters were anti-Obama and nimbled their support for McCain ostensibly because of his “inexperience.”

Hanoi Shorty, as McCain is known in the “Hood,” tried to exploit this discontent among white female Democrats by appointing “Muffy” from Alaska, Sarah Palin as his run- ning mate.She was a true political Palindrome -- an air- head spelled the same backwards as forwards -- an affront to any thinking woman, white or black. Few could believe it! Obama couldn’t have chosen a better opposition to run against if he wanted to.

The McCain - Obama contrasts were so stark and glar- ing that they could have illuminated Ray Charles’s way to Georgia, were he still alive. Clearly the only way Obama could lose was if the Republicans “Borgot” the elections as they did the previous two national elections. Now all of this is “history” (his-story) and as George Will the erudite right-wing pundit explained, the Obama campaign has re- lieved white America of the loadstone of race — “Obama is white America’s Emancipation Proclamation.”

I would suppose George Will envisions a different “Recon- struction” scenario than the one that took place at the end of the American Civil War.

Dhoruba al-Majahid bin Wahad (born Richard Moore, 1945) is an American writer and activist, who is a former prisoner, Black Panther Party founder, and co-founder of the Black Liberation Army.

Support the Turtle Mountain Band of Chippewa Indians’ Request for Peltier’s Transfer

The Turtle Mountain Band of Chippewa Indians passed a resolution late last year requesting Peltier’s transfer into their custody to serve the remainder of his sentence. Family members are supportive of such a transfer. Alternatively, family members want Peltier transferred closer to home, either to FCI Sandstone (MN) or FCI Oxford (WI). Peltier’s security rating has been greatly reduced by the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) in recognition of his model behavior for the past 30 years.

Due to YOUR actions, Leonard was transferred back to Lewisburg after being attacked and injured by young gang members at USP Canaan in Waymart, Pennsylvania. But we must keep up the pressure on the BOP to transfer Leonard to one of the above locations. Today and every day, make your voices heard. Send letters, call, and/or e-mail the director of BOP.

Harley G. Lappin, Director
Bureau of Prisons
U.S. Department of Justice
320 First Street., NW
Room 654
Washington, DC 20534
Phone: (202) 514-3250
Fax: (202) 514-6097
E-Mail: hlappin@bop.gov
Obama-Mania (remix)

BY JALIL MUNTAQIM
February 24, 2009

I am not faulting you or hating on you for your affection for the 44th President, it is obvious in retrospect it is a universal affliction without contrition to the reality of socio-economic restrictions of the poor and oppressed. I just want you to keep your eyes on the prize so you will not be surprise by the lies, alibis and distortions that comes with the White House territory, with all of its political contortions and false glory. You see, the situation requires more than an address to impress that change will manifest simply by being professed at press conferences, in a cabinet or a town hall meeting, when the greedy continues exploit in capitalist elitist void any hesitation because CEOs believe they are safe with no fear of incrimination.

You say give him time to unwind a stimulus plan, while the Republican’s continue to make demands to undermine retooling of America. They being obstructionist seeking to slow the rush in us to live better lives. Yet, those in the know knows this is no time to repose when economic woes cascades like Niagara falls leaving the lower classes under black and white kaffiyeh shawls of socio-economic malnutrition. They starving for relief that welfare and food stamps can’t ease the lack of funds that has undone middle class dreams of prosperity. For clarity it should be reiterated the stimulus package will result in Barack being demeaned, prompt the implementation of new schemes, to ensure the plutocrats continue to govern with Obama as the leader of their economic team. However, in his State of the Union speech in an effort to teach, Obama sought to distinguished himself from the general political leech. But not since LBJ and MLK has government policies supported minorities in any significant way. So, don’t blame me for being cynical when U.S. political history towards people of color has proven to be criminal.

I only ask that you consider the pathology of a polymorphous pertinacious politician, a chameleon of kaleidoscopic proportion posturing as a people person whose policies are dictated by the highest bidder. A transmitter of the ideals of homogeneity with the proclivity to speak with a silver fork tongue, when all is said and done, the plutocrats will have gotten more money and run. Another multi-billion dollar bailout from one who may not epitomize the proverbial sellout with a charismatic smile. I am just exclaiming progressive young folks need to keep a watch-out all the while, since poor people are hanging on to his every word as he gesticulate like a puppeteer with a messiah complex having no fear, urging genuflection to enhance his Presidential career, steering the masses to support him for another 4 years.

given to the SDS chapter by one of the faculty, an assistant professor of biology. But all was well because the student body refused an SDS request to donate the cost of the senior class dinner to “the Negro cause.”

Brandeis University in Waltham was not left out. The FBI had two informants on campus spying on the SDS. The “ringleaders” were a graduate couple, a sociology major, and a biology graduate student. There was also a reference to a Harvard law student that had studied in a Soviet city. The married couple were of particular interest because they “planned to give up their careers and work full time for the Progressive Labor Party.”

Four Brandeis students took part in a demonstration where 25 protesters renounced their draft deferments at the federal building in downtown Boston. There was also a sit-in at Brandeis protesting the presence of Dow Chemical recruiters on campus.

Brandeis also had a chapter of the May 2nd Movement. The May 2nd group organized at Yale University in 1964 following a ‘Socialism in America’ conference at the school. “The M2M was dominated and controlled by the Progressive Labor Party and had for its aim and purpose the embarrasement of the United States Government.”

Meanwhile the dreaded Progressive Labor Party “would have as its ultimate objective the establishment of a militant working class movement based on Marxism and Leninism.”

“The above mentioned sources on June 26, 1968, advised that the physical location of Brandeis university on the outskirts of Waltham, Massachusetts, away from the hub of organized political activities in the general Boston area, does not lend itself to major organized demonstrations occurring on campus.”

Harvard University in Cambridge had its FBI informant. The SDS was known as the Harvard-Radcliffe SDS Chapter. An organizational meeting held at Memorial Hall had 72 attendees. The “ringleaders” were identified. One was associated with Labor Youth League, a purposely subver- sive organization. Another was linked to the Harvard Draft Union. During the first half of 1968 the Harvard chapter had ten meetings. Another student leader had attended 26 meetings the prior year.

The FBI source concluded that the Harvard chapter was very close to the national leadership of SDS and might be tied to the Progressive Labor Party.

In October 1968, the Boston FBI office learned through an MIT informant of the National Mobilization Committee To End War in Vietnam meeting at Bush Hall. Speakers from New York and Baltimore were present at the gathering of 40 that included at least one Communist. The group was planning demonstrations at the January 1969 inauguration “Discussion included need for tight security against FBI investigations.”

By 1969, the spying on campus groups had turned uglier and now individuals were targeted for dirty tricks. One SDS member was allegedly paid to exploit the family money to embarrass the student with a bogus anonymous letter sent to the Black Panthers, the SDS headquarters, the Progressive Labor Party and known SDS members.

The FBI task issued against the unaware student is contained in the PRA archive. The poison pen maarred referred to the Black Panther Party, a CIA and FBI funded “revolutionary” and “son of an imperialist.” The letter urges the student “go back to your palace” calling him an “imperialist racist” and “antimaterialist.” The FBI closed the letter with, “Off the pig [REDACTED] the pig is you.”

By 1969, J. Edgar Hoover had focused his attention on squashing the Black Panther Party. The time for snogging was over, now it was time for action and field offices were ordered to produce results.

On November 19, 1969, the Boston FBI office requested permission from Hoover to send an anonymous letter to Black Panther Party headquarters in Berkeley, California. “It is anticipated that this letter will create additional fric- tion between the Black Panther Party-Boston and Republic of New Africa-Boston.”

“The enclosed letter conforms with the style of memoran- dums prepared by [REDACTED] which is typewritten and unsigned, and is to be delivered to the Black Panther Party-Boston.”

“A carbon copy of the letter will be mailed to the Black Panther Party-Boston and the Black Panther Party-New Haven.”

The bogus letter is also located in the PRA archive. “I am beginning to believe the Connecticut ‘Pigs’ have done a job on the Black people when they arrested [RE- DACTED] of the Black Boston Panther party, now in New Haven. Anyone who is a faggot and homosexual does not deserve a position of leadership. We brothers and sisters have too much at stake. If [REDACTED] moral character should be doubted andpublised in the black press, it would prove embar- rassing to all Black movements.”

In 1970, the Boston FBI office requested another anony- mous mailing against the Black Panthers. Hoover sent the command on July 20, 1970 approving the COINTELPRO proposal. “This technique would appear to have extreme value” and “indicates your office is giving careful thought
COINTELPRO tactics of the Boston FBI included widespread spying on campuses and dirty tricks in the black community

BY MICHAEL RICHARDSON

Operation COINTELPRO was an illegal and clandestine war conducted secretly by agents of the Federal Bureau of Investigation against domestic political activists in the 1960’s and 1970’s. Larger than the Watergate operation that sunk Richard Nixon’s presidency, COINTELPRO was created by FBI director J. Edgar Hoover.

COINTELPRO was a “no holds barred” operation that focused on results and secrecy, illegal was of no concern to the FBI plotters so long as Hoover approved. Hundreds of organizations and thousands of individuals were targeted for improper snooping, harassment and other dirty tricks designed to ‘disrupt’ the activists.

The Black Panther Party was targeted by Hoover for the most lethal ferocity of the hidden war and FBI agents planted evidence, withheld evidence and falsified evidence to obtain false convictions of Panther leaders. Gun battles and shootout became the norm until the FBI initiated the Chicane Police Department to shoot-ins with the 1969 deaths of Fred Hampton and Mark Clark.

As an academic center Boston, with its many outstanding universities, kept agents busy spying on the ‘New Left’ and infiltrating local campuses with informants. The full scope of FBI misconduct under COINTELPRO will never be known. Bits and pieces of the secret operation have emerged in litigation and with Freedom of Information requests.

Political Research Associates in Somerville has an archive of COINTELPRO documents and some of the long-held secrets of FBI misconduct are now available to extract from the heavily redacted documents.

The first COINTELPRO memos in the PRA archive are dated July 16, 1968 and is a listing of infiltration at a number of schools. The Boston FBI office extended its reach to Dartmouth College in New Hampshire. A memo from the New York FBI office to FBI headquarters in Washing- ton, D.C. notes, “On December 10, 1967, a source who has furnished reliable information in the past, advised that the Dartmouth College SDS chapter has approximately 15 members.”

The Dartmouth informant monitored three events of the Students for a Democratic Society: a protest against a Dow Chemicals recruiter, an anti-war protest and a protest against the ROTC on campus.

The Massachusetts Institute of Technology in Cambridge also had a reliable source on campus where the SDS had an active chapter. Actually, there were two FBI informants at MIT with one expressing an opinion on the school itself.

“A second source who has provided reliable information in the past also advised in June, 1968 that MIT is a rather unique educational institution in that most students in attendance are serious-minded young people who are all engaged in serious academic pursuits which leaves little time for outside activity. Those campus organizations that are active are usually run by a small group of activists and the membership is in attendance at meetings is usually very small and will fluctuate depending on the amount of class work each student has or the time of year.”

The Bureau identified the “ringleaders” by reading “The Tech”, a student paper. One student of interest had moved to Bogota, Columbia and was noted for his authorship of a study called “MIT and the Welfare State.”

Someone named Silverstone was alleged to be a Communi- list Party leader. Another SDS member was linked to the Boston Draft Resistance Group and had spoken at an antiwar rally. The SDS protest of an army recruiter on campus garnered an entry in the memo as did the protest of a Dow representative.

Tufts University in Medford had its own ‘source’ and a 50-member SDS chapter. The “ringleaders” had already been identified in the “Tufts Weekly”, an undergraduate student newspaper. One of the leaders, name redacted, worked to keep military recruiters off campus. Further, he has cited his career goal as being an outside agitator.

Three protests at Tufts were monitored including “the first draft card burning in Tufts history during the annual Navy and Air Force ROTC Review” at Tufts Oval. A group of philosophy student and 20 ‘sympathizers’ confronted the university president and demanded he cancel their draft cards. “The president refused, [REDACTED] then tore the card up, placed it on Hallowell’s lap and left.”

The student then told the campus newspaper that the school head had to make a choice. “He can’t continue to be a mor- al coward. He can’t continue to play both sides. Hallowell must either renounce his obligations to the government or he must show his support of it by reporting my felony (of mutilating a draft card).”

The big news the FBI informant had was the support being as this seemingly ubiquitous incestuous system of avarice, continuously carnivorously nourish on its own people, on the putrid green altar at the Temple of the Federal Reserve Bank, where they ritualistically proclaim “In God We Trust.” “We The People” must discuss and organize our collective disgust of this global economic bust. Globalization has taken its toll, manufacturing has slowed, the stock market has foreclosed that conspicuous consumption has closed. Common folks produce the wealth, but have no say in how it is shared, their lives in dispair full of despair with foreclosures, pink slips and no way to spare a dime in this clique, void a collective survival mode there is no extol of a humanitarian code that we are all suffering together.

So, how can I blame you for falling for a White House color change, after being told Americans could once again compete, after recovering from this global economic retreat, even through the name of the game remains the same, class struggle should now be claimed, if progressive folks take the reins, and forge a mass and popular movement including a national agenda to upend the capitalist-imperialist reign. To demand reparations and redistribution of the wealth, now that is a stimulus plan without the stealth, can it be said such notion is like magic potion, that only a social revolution can dispense without suspence, by applying a little common sense. Putting the money directly in the hands of the oppressed masses, unfortunately, such idea passes as socialist. But it is often said if common sense were common, all of these Fools would have it.

Obama-mania has claimed you! But can you see the forest beyond the tree? “We The People” must take a stand, and free the land of political leeches, with their speeches blinding us with rhetoric about bipartisan unity. I am not splitting hairs, it is just that I care that we learn to share what it comes to our socio-economic affairs. Damn the politicians with their flair, because it makes no difference when they don’t dare to hold capitalist institutions accountable. Mass mobilization, general strikes, taking the fight to D.C., demanding the US of Imperialist wars from sea to shining seas, for public ownership of the means of production, that will cause a reduction in capitalist greed. For big agri-businesses, the building of cooperative farming like, Victory Garden would be alarming, bartering and trading no longer delaying our collective voices must be heard. If market forces and consumer spending is the engine of this machine, then, “We The People” must take control, reclaim our revolutionary souls, like in the laws of the natural order of things.

Remember: We Are Our Own Liberators!

Jalil A. Mutaajim

Anthony Bottom) 2311826
San Francisco County Jail
850 Bryant St
San Francisco, CA 94103

For more of Jalil’s poems logon to: www.freejalil.com
The current financial crisis: capitalism is usual

BY TROY COCHRANE

When the government and media discuss the recent eco-nomic crisis, we realize how effectively capitalism has alienated us from our own economic systems. We asked our friend Troy to describe some of the mechanisms of modern capitalism that allowed this crisis to come about, hoping that a clearer understanding will empower us all to understand and articulate the ways in which capitalism is clearly an unsustainable, predatory economic model.

Why did the number of foreclosures increase in the past three years? How did this increase decimate the US and global financial systems? What caused the money that was ‘lost’? Why is the government handing so much money over to the banks? And why are all these major finan-cial going-ons have to do with car manufacturers and other producers of physical goods? Who is to blame?

If you take out a mortgage to buy a house, the bank consid-ers this loan an asset. It gives this asset a value based on 1) expected earnings and 2) expected risk. The expected earnings are the interest paid on the loan. The expected risk is the probability of default. If the expected earnings increase or the expected risk decreases, then the value of the asset increases, and vice versa. This is exactly the same way the value of a company is assessed. Its market capitalization is determined by the perceived risk. If the value of a company is decreasing, the expectation for its future profits are decreasing, or are being increased paid to the profits.

A large portion of the value of the Big Banks is based on expected earnings and expected risk. If these change as these provide much of their earnings. For a bank to increase its valuation it can a) increase its total lending, b) increase the interest rate or c) decrease the perceived risk associated with the default. The banks have done all three. Bet-ween 1997 and 2007 the growth mortgage debt to wages increased from 13.6% to 229%.

Although interest rates generally remained flat or slightly decreased the much maligned ‘subprime mortgage’ carries higher interest rates and these mortgages have accounted for a disproportionate share of the growth in mortgage lending. In 2007 subprime mortgage rates were just over three percent of total mortgage debt. By 2008, that had risen to almost 10%.

The expansion of mortgage debt was partially driven by extending higher lending limits and more mortgages they, which will be discussed in greater detail below. However, the banks managed to reduce the risks through the creation of the infamous ‘derivatives’, which will also be discussed further on. For the payoff for this expanded lending, particu-larly of subprime mortgage with higher interest rates and a redisclosure of risk of a higher rate of 1 percent per year for the ‘Biggest Banks,’ between 2000 and 2007. This compares to a 5% increase in interest rates in the big- gest corporations in general. Lehman Brothers and Bear Stearns, two of the casualties of the financial crisis, had even greater growth rates: 20% in 2005.

‘Subprime mortgages’ have been identified as the primary culprits in the financial crisis. However, the mainstream coverage of the crisis rarely explains that what these mortgages are, how they work, or why the rates of default suddenly skyrocketed. Let’s start with the name, which makes little sense if we think of ‘prime’ and ‘subprime’ as referring to interest rates, given that subprime mortgages carry higher interest rates. However, it does make sense to use ‘prime’ and ‘subprime’ as referring to the borrowers: prime borrowers get lower rates because they have a higher likelihood of paying back the loan. Subprime mortgages often had adjustable interest rates. The rate charged moves with changes in the prime rate. However, they lock in a certain interest rate for the duration of the loan.

The subprime loans were also occasionally hybrid loans, which had a low fixed rate for a period of time, typically a loan, meaning even higher rates for the remainder. Some-times borrowers were offered ‘interest only’ loans for the first five years. This meant that their monthly payments did not reduce the principle and only covered the interest being charged.

So, what caused the spike in defaults among subprime bor-rowers?

The interest rate of adjustable rate mortgages (ARMs) is ultimately tied to the Fed Fund rate set by the Federal Re-serve Board. Beginning in early 2006, interest rates began to rise. This also marks the beginning of the rapid expansion of mortgage debt.

For almost 12 months, beginning in late 2003, the Fed Fund rate was held at 1% by the Federal Reserve. Beginning in early 2006, the Fed began to raise the Fed funds rate five times. At the end of the year, the Federal Reserve had increased the Fed Fund rate in July of 2004, the official line is that the rate hikes were needed to combat inflation. However, these rates are also what impact investors to US Treasury Bills, the means by which the government funds its deficits.

Of course, the Bush Administration’s tax cuts for the rich and the war on Afghanistan, the Iraq War and the subprime mortgage deficits. Shortly before the Federal Reserve began to increase the Fed Fund, foreign demand for US Treasury bills fell to begin. It is possible that these issues was necessary to re-open this important source of credit.

The combination of rising interest rates and the hybrid mort-gage

Jericho Internationals meet with South African Unionists

On Sunday morning, October 26, 2008, representa-tives from our movement met with a delegation of the Jericho campaign met with Myrtle Witherbo, a founding mem-ber of and spokesperson for the Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU), and member of the South African Presidential Working Group as an advisor on gender issues. A former domestic worker, Witherbo is the leader of the South African Domestic Service and Allied Worker’s Union (SADSAW), and was joined by SADSAW’s President Hestor Stephens.

Jericho International members Ashanti Alston, Dhornria bin Wahad, Ana Lopez, Sandra Suzuki and Katerätze D’Auster, there by the presence of their movement.

Jericho International formed on 10/08, at a meeting at the United Nations on Jericho’s tenth anniversary. Focused on bringing the case of U.S. politicians and other prisoners more widely to an international arena—both governmental and non-governmental—Jericho Interna-tional took the opportunity of the UN to bring our case to the US for a sit-down strategy session. Noting that it would be useful to take a resolution to the full Board of COSATU, Witherbo agreed to also get us in touch with an organization of former South African political prisoners, and all South African activists who are currently doing work on the case of the Cuban Five. Agreeing that solidarity must be a two-way street, Stephens stated: “We’ve got to continue doing work together—locally and internationally—and let our voices be heard.”

meeting with international community friends, and key sup-porters of the Puerto Rican Independence movement, out-side across the street at Das Hamaysold Park, a lively crowd grew to a few hundred to rally and sound the message:

FREE ALL POLITICAL PRISONERS & POWS!

The Muslim community was there, the anarchists, the nationalists, the animal & earth liberationists, the Elders from various movements were there. And theאיזו allocator of a vigorous and non-permitted march from the UN to Madi-son Square Park on 23rd Street to hear speakers. The sight of their numbers, led by Anarchist People of Color & the New Black Panther Party with stalwart Pam Africa, was powerful! Folks came from Pittsburgh, Portland, Philadelphia, New Hampshire, Canada. Folks were en-ergetic. Many lamented the fact that it was held on a Friday, when most workers would not be able to take the day off.

Day Two began in the center of Harlem, the same place where the International spoke, in the same intersection where Malcolm X and so many Black Nationalists spoke and Comandante Fidel stayed at the historic Theresa Hotel.

The folks came. More and more. In front of the Harlem State Office building. A group of Mid-wives, gathered for their own demonstration, asked if they could join us. Why of course. And what a gift their presence was. So spirited and creative in their protest and support of our cause! Mu-tual aid/mutual support…SAME FIGHT.

From there we took the streets to Morningside Park as community residents took our flyers, listen to our message with some even joining us. Most readily agreed with us.

FREE THE POLITICAL PRISONERS! As we marched past the building where the Harlem chapter of the Black Panther Party, would enthusiasm and voices grew louder. We reached the park with about 200 people and ral-lied with the messages and words of various speakers.

Speakers included Chief Billy Taya of the Piscataway Na-tion, who has followed the methane explosion on his people’s land. Mama Iyabula and Baba Herman Ferguson, Elders of the Black Nation, Ashanti Alston, a former political prisoner from the Black Panther Party, former political prisoners from the Puerto Rican Independence movement and other speakers. Folkscare also present was Brian Dunne, a former political prisoner and a powerful rendition of Bob Marley’s Redemption Song was done by Borgen anarchical Not-4-Prophet of Rirconucation appropriately towards the end.

Prisoner-of-war Jall Muntajam came with the idea in 1996. That idea came to fruition in 1998. A rejuvenation of the political prisoner movement began. The idea, the vision – it seizes you, your spirit, your energy. You look around for like minds and hearts. Then you meet, plan, and then…

ACT YES, we are not doing enough. We have decided that we are going to change that NOW. That is our renewed commitment coming out of this 10th Anniversary. Our commitment to Salva & Jall, and Bob, and Meryl and all who have given their lives, and those who are still LOCKED DOWN because they dared to stand and fight.

DO YOU GOT THE 411 on 10-10? JERIKHO IS HERE. WE ARE YOU. As Safiya Bukhari would say: PICK UP THE WORK! FREE ALL POLITICAL PRISONERS & POWS – NOW!

Jericho International meets with South African Unionists

On Sunday morning, October 26, 2008, representa-tives from our movement met with a delegation of the Jericho campaign met with Myrtle Witherbo, a founding mem-ber of and spokesperson for the Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU), and member of the South African Presidential Working Group as an advisor on gender issues. A former domestic worker, Witherbo is the leader of the South African Domestic Service and Allied Worker’s Union (SADSAW), and was joined by SADSAW’s President Hestor Stephens.

Jericho International members Ashanti Alston, Dhornria bin Wahad, Ana Lopez, Sandra Suzuki and Katerätze D’Auster, there by the presence of their movement.

Jericho International formed on 10/08, at a meeting at the United Nations on Jericho’s tenth anniversary. Focused on bringing the case of U.S. politicians and other prisoners more widely to an international arena—both governmental and non-governmental—Jericho Interna-tional took the opportunity of the UN to bring our case to the US for a sit-down strategy session. Noting that it would be useful to take a resolution to the full Board of COSATU, Witherbo agreed to also get us in touch with an organization of former South African political prisoners, and all South African activists who are currently doing work on the case of the Cuban Five. Agreeing that solidarity must be a two-way street, Stephens stated: “We’ve got to continue doing work together–locally and internationally–and let our voices be heard.”

Do you get the 411 on 10-10? Jericho is here. We are you. As Safiya Bukhari would say: Pick up the work! Free all political prisoners & POWs–now!

8
Jericho 10/10 march

BY ASHANTI ALSTON
Co-chair, National Jericho Movement

Marissa Kupenda said back on 1998:

“The Vision of Jericho ‘98 is derived from that old spiritual which said, ‘Joshua fought the battle of Jericho. Jericho, Joshua fought the battle of Jericho’ and the walls came tumbling down.” The United States government has consistently denied the existence of political prisoners in their name, and that a concert of organized ef-
fort over the next 14 months will effectively eradicate the United States’ ability to deny the existence of these brothers and sisters and set the stage for Amnestee and Freedom for All U.S. held Political Prisoners and Prisoners of War.”

That vision is still there, and the 14 months have turned into 10 years. We may not have many successes with win-
ing the freedom of our imprisoned ones but we dam sure re-
put POLITICAL PRISONERS & POW’s back on the map with pure stubbornness.

For that alone, we feel good but unsatisfied...

In all of them are free we gonna do this work. Stumbin’ but stubbinin’ re-assessing and rebuilding.

2008 was the year of the 10th anniversary of the Jer-
icho Amesty Movement. For those who remember its founding march on Wash-
ington, DC in 1998, this march, which was unexpected turn-out of 5,000 to possibly 8,000 people.

Encouraging to see the least. In fact so encouraging that the enormous enthusiasm gener-
ated from this turnout woke up the government march resulted in chapters spring up in at least 10 cities. The next phase of free ALL POLITICAL PRISON-
ERS & PRISONERS-OF-WAR work began. The march, because of July 4th, July 5th & other PPs had paid off. With veterans like Baba Herman Freeman & Sadia Bhukari at the helm, the JERICHO MOVEMENT was in full swing.

Indispensable organizations joined, like League of Indig-

enous Sovereign Nations, Pro-Libertad & Movimiento Libercion Nacional (MLN/Puerto Rico), Malcolm X Commemoration Committee, MOVIE and Friends & Famil-

y of Mumia Abu-Jamal, the Coalition Political Prison-
ners’ Committee, Resistance in Brooklyn, People’s Video Network, Asias for Jericho, International American Prisoner Support Network X Grassroots Movement and more. Elders came in, as well as young bloods. There have been highs and lows. The presidential race of most former political inde-

pendentistas due to a strong grassroots Island and main-
land pressure mobilization. That provided motivations and lessons for all. We’ve given up esteemed comrades to the Anccestors, like Santa, Meryl Africa, Richard Williams, Standing Deer, Teddy Jah Heath, BPP & recently Bashir Hamid (a.k.a. Mighty York) & all of them are free we gonna do this work. Stumbin’ but stubbinin’ re-assessing and rebuilding.

For that alone, we feel good but unsatisfied...

In all of them are free we gonna do this work. Stumbin’ but stubbinin’ re-assessing and rebuilding.

On Day One in Manhattan, as a delegation of former po-
litical prisoners and key supporters went inside the UN to

- gages meant borrowers held to make substantially higher mortgage payments. In late 2005, as the Fed Fund rate pay-

ed, the mortgage defaults began to increase. By 2007, those who had refinanced their homes were ‘delinquent’ and just under 1% had been foreclosed upon. This means that the value of roughly one out of every eight single-family homes in the United States has lost the most of the value of the mortgage-backed securities. Demand for the assets dried up and their value plummeted.

Banks carry large amounts of debt as part of their opera-
tions. They require the constant creation of new debt in order to meet existing debt obligations. When their asset values were high and they appeared to be safe and sound, it was not difficult for them to get these loans. When the values of the assets they held declined, they began to lose the money they needed and were themselves at risk of default. Furt-

her, the banks and their customers faced a host of toxic assets like MBSs. They are at risk of bankruptcy. This is why the government has stepped in to prevent the failure of the banks and providing loans to the automobile industry to prevent it from collapsing.

Foreclosures have disproportionately hit the poor, immi-
grants, people of color, and other disadvantaged groups and yet they are also the one’s being ultimately blamed for the crisis. Although a lot of attention is being directed at poorly constructed derivative valuation programs, unscrupu-

ulous and other financial industry misdeeds, the underlying assumption is that borrowers were irresponsi-
ble. However, the mortgages they were being offered were time bombs and the industry was driving for profit. Homeowners became the collateral damage when the bombs exploded.

In my memory before Congress former Federal Reserve Chairman Alan Greenspan, as much an architect of the cri-

sis as anyone, asserted, “I found a flaw in the model that I perceived was critical to the functioning structure that defines how the world works.” But the crisis is really just capi-

talism. The greed of the vested interests created the conditions for collapse, the government steps in to bail them out and the masses pay the price.

[1] By ‘Biggest Banks’ I mean the financial corporations included among the 500 largest in the world, as measured by market value.

[2] This refers to a comment on CNBC by recommator Rick San-

niti: “Why don’t you put up a website and have people vote on the internet, as a referendum, to see if we really want to subsidize the losers in the mortgage crisis.” In an interaction between Sanniti and the host, he goes on to state that even with -2% interest rates, most of these ‘losers’ couldn’t service their mortgages.

[3] It isn’t zero because the bank ends up with the home, with

housing prices falling, and credit drying up, these are not exactly valuable assets, as far as they are concerned.

[4] This was about the average default rate prior to the recent cri-

sis.
Eyewitness report from Gaza: riding on fire and a third intifada

BY EWA JASIEJEWICZ, JABALIYA & BEIT HANOUN Thursday January 8th 2008

3am. As I write this the offices of the Ramatan news agency have been infiltrated with the smoke of the burning central police station in Rimal close by its destruction that just shook the whole building. Even though its close and we’re all journalists, none of us want to take the risk to go and check it out. ‘They may strike again and we may die, they may kill us’ says one producer from Jabalaya. Another strike has just hit the whole building again, down the street. Another 3 minutes later, again another strike. ‘Kussil’ - bombing, again and again. If we had windows here they’d be shattered.

I’ve been working with the Palestinian Red Crescent ambulance services in Jabalaya, Beit Hanoun and Beit Lahiya for the past 5 days and nights.

For the past five days the Red Cross and the Red Crescent emergency services have been blocked from evacuating the injured and the dead from key areas surrounding Jabalaya and Gaza City. Special Forces have occupied houses in the areas of Zeitoun, Ataraturk, Zoumu and Salaheddin.

Paramedic Ali Khalil’s team was shot at on Monday afternoon. He told me, ‘We had been told we had the go-ahead from the Israeli army through co-ordination with the Red Cross but when we arrived at the area we were shot at. We had to turn back’. Yesterday afternoon, a medical volunteer, Hassan, was shot in the leg as he and his colleague had to drop the stretcher they were carrying after coming under Israeli sniper fire. There are reports of scores of dead bodies lying in the streets un-claimed. The Palestinian Red Crescent Society estimates there are 230 injured which they haven’t been able to pick up.

There are reports of 18 corpses in one home alone and the injured dying from treatable wounds because of a lack of access to medical treatment.

Last night, at around 9pm, Marwan, an experienced paramedic, bearing the scars of years of Israeli invasions, sustained another yet another. He was shot in the leg by an Israeli sniper in Eastern Jabalaya. Gurneled by his work, picking up the pieces after Israeli attacks, he had said only the day before yesterday, ‘This is no life, its better to die. It would be better to be dead than this shit’.

The blockade on any rescuing is reminiscent of the battle of Jenin in April 2002. Israeli ‘forbade’ ambulances from entering the camp, blowing up one with a tank shell and killing Dr Khalil Suleiman, the Head of the Palestinian Red Crescent. The army cut water and electricity and bulldozed an entire neighbourhood, complete with residents still in their homes, over the course of 11 days. The death count in the 11-day Jenin massacre was 58, but estimated to be much higher. Here in Jabalaya, this is the equivalent to around 4 days in the past week or almost the whole of yesterday. Between December 27th and January 5th, in Jabalaya alone, 119 people had been killed and 662 injured. An average of 15 people dying, violently, every day. On January 6th, with the Fakhoura school massacre, 50 people were killed in just one day.

Hospital authorities mark the day as the single worst day they have ever seen in Jabalaya.

Sporadic battles are taking place between Palestinian resistance fighters, armed with basic machine guns, the odd grenade, and warm clothes. They’re up against the fourth most powerful army in the world, armed with state-of-the-art war planes, Merkava tanks, regional governmental co-ordination and intelligence, a green light to kill with impunity in the name of self defence, body armor, night vision, and holidays in Gouw when it all gets too much...

The paramedics, drivers and volunteers at the emergency services risk their lives every time they leave their base and even working within their bases. Medics evacuated their original base near Salahadeen street due to heavy shelling from Israeli forces early last week. They then moved to the Al Awda Hospital in Beit Lahiya because again, it was too close to the battle front, and again to a community centre in MSoskar Jabalaya to be ‘safer’.

However, against a backdrop of devastating crashes and bangs of bombs falling close by, on Monday at 12.45pm, on Israeli suicide planes fired two missiles into the Al Awda Hospital compound. The first slammed into a police car, the second, impacted two minutes later into the ground just meters from the entrance of the Hospital’s clinic. Two nurses and workers were injured in the head and face, but we were all lucky to escape without any serious damage.

Right now we’re back at the Jabalaya base, still close to the sound of pounding tank shells, apache strikes, and light gunfire met with staggering rapid fire 50 caliber tank gun fire, the odd grenade and the ever menacing and maddening sneer of surveillance drones.

Yesterday around 1am we were called out to a strike in the Msoskar township area. The area was pitch black, our feeble torches lighting up broken pipes streaming water, glass, chunks of concrete and twisted metal. ‘They’re down there, they’re down there, take care’, people said. The smell of fresh severed flesh, a smell that can only come from the shedding of pints of blood and open insides, was in the air. I got called back by a medic who screamed at me to stay by his side. It turned out he’d been following the Civil Defence, the front line responders who check to see if buildings are safe and put out fires, rather than the medics.

No Independence

BY CIRON B. SPRINGFIELD

Am I free, or is Independence Day a revelation to tell me my soul is under siege. My life is clouded by mischief, and the misuse of the American philosophy. I recollect on the day my ancestors were help in captivity for the extortion of their body’s, and sent outside to work in inhuman heat to pluck crops for no fee.

Should I celebrate or represent all the fallen soldiers that died with the belief of grasping better days. I’m a link to that chain, but I have no concrete attachment to my habitat. I can’t state the tribe I come from, let alone advocate foe someone who administers these United States because his malicious attacks, and greed is the cause of all hate.

Why can’t we salute all the greats like Frederick Douglass, Marcus Garvey, and Meger Evers who displayed noble trait’s despite the vengeance inflicted due to the color of their face. Why can’t we give credence to their excellence, and the freedom they generated.

Am I amiss if I pray for a revolution against poverty, and the growing crime rate, instead of paying homage to a date that camouflage the countless soul’s they’ve broke, and spirit’s they raped. I can’t resent or forsake Abraham Lincoln’s name, because he did release one or two slaves, but his intent was motivated to lessen the blow of the reaper stalking his fate.

My only hope is to sanitize the conscience of those who think the Declaration of Independence is a niece of paper tailored for their emancipation. It wouldn’t be wise to shuffle through the calendar, and see if there is any balance to race, gender or your creed. What if this day was constructed to subtract attention away from the corrupt Judge or person specifically chose to monopolize the treasury system.

I don’t oppose independence, nor can I express admiration or a eucharistic emotion for a day that is tainted by the people who were unwillingly expelled over the North Atlantic sea with no water to drink or food to eat. So I pose this question to all those who wore a American flag or red, white, and blue emblem to signify their reverence for the 4th of July...

“ All those who participated in the pre staged event of Independence, I ask can you firmly say that you experience liberty, & equality in the life you lead ? ”

Ciron B. Springfield
Csp Lac (P-7004)
P.O. Box 4430
(A2/135)
Lancaster, CA 93539
www.myspace.com/kingcironsacle

Ciron is a 26 year-old incarcerated African male confined at Lancaster State Prison for murder, who was erroneously tried and convicted as a adult at the tender age of 13.
head wrapped in bandages, to AI Nasser hospital with its specialist eye unit and mental health clinic. When we get there, its pitch black, doctors are sitting around candles, the place is filled with the smell of human waste and the doctors and their have been blinded by Israeli-controlled power cuts that intensify the confusion, fear, and psycho- logical darkness caving in on people.

Burning shrapnel in eyes - like those of three year old She- dar Altham, Khalid Abd from Beit Hanoun, ‘injured in the left eye, explosive injury, full thickness corneal wound, iris prolapse and vitreous loss’ according to her medical report. Her father approaches my friend, quietly, to ask if its possible for me to help him, so he had to get out her to have eye sur- gery, ‘This girl, she was like me, harm she has received to her old and her beauty is robbed from her.

Extremely hot, shrapnel lodges in legs, faces, hands, stomachs, and skulls. I’ve been taught, don’t focus on stopping bleeding with shrapnel injuries, it is kind of like keeping a little blood, the foreign bodies burn inside. Many casualties we’ve brought in that seem ok, literally, on ‘the surface’, only to die a few days later. People talk about the missiles being poison tipped, and there have been reports of white phosphorous being used.

Dead for buying bread

The following day, at the family’s grieving tent, five of El Deyem’s relatives were killed when a missile smashed into the tent in the Beit Hanoun area. Arafat Mohammed Ab- dein, 10, Mohammad Jamal Abedt Dein, 25, Maher Younis Abed Dein, 30, and Said Jamal Said, 27, all died from head and internal injuries. They did not claim the missile was fired by an Israeli surveillance drone.

The Ministry of Health confirmed that Doctor Anis Naeem, a nephew of the Hamas Minister of Health, Bassam Naeem, and a colleague were killed in the Zeitoun area on Sunday afternoon when a missile strike from an Israeli surveillance plane impact- ing them, and they had entered in order to retrieve casualties. Rescue workers Ihab el-Maduoun, 35, and Mohammed Abu Elhai, 24, were struck by Israeli missiles when try- ing to collect casualties in the Jabal el Rais area of Jabalia on Tues- day. Witnesses said Ihab went to as sist his colleague following a strike on the rescue workers. He too was then struck.

Abu Hasira was brought to the Ka mal Ahdwan governmental hospital in Jabalia and died at 7.30am ac- cording to hospital records. The cause of death was mul- tiple trauma injuries. Ihab died from massive internal injuries following an operation on his chest and abdominal area five hours of heroic being tried.

Khalid Abu Shammal, Director of AI Dhumeer Associa- tion based in Gaza City said: “It is a breach of the fourth Geneva Convention to target emergency medical services under any form of war and occupied territories, for services are also protected under the Geneva Conventions and cannot be targeted once injured. Israel is in breach of in- ternational law.”

The Israeli news agency YNet recently reported that Yu- val Duskin, Director of the Israeli intelligence agency Shin Bet, told the Israeli cabinet that large numbers Hamas operatives are hiding in hospitals and dressing as medical workers. Palestinian medical officials have dismissed the claims as ‘nonsense’. Rescue workers are terrified that hospitals now join other targets including homes, schools, universities, mosques, and shops hit in Israel’s offensive so far.

People and their homes are being pulverized by Israeli tank shells, F16s and bulldozers. I traveled to the buffer zone area of Sikka Street close to the Erez checkpoint, to see the damage. 27 houses had been crushed by either bulldozers

Sara Jane Olson released

On March 17, political prisoner Sara Jane Olson, 62, a former member of the Symbionese Liberation Army, was freed from the Central California Women’s Facility in Chowchilla, where her husband was waiting for her. She will be allowed to serve her year-long parole in Minneso- ta, the state she adopted while living underground for 23 years. She served seven years - half her sentence - after pleading guilty to helping place pipe bombs under Los Angeles Police Department patrol cars and participating in the robbery of a bank in a Sacramento suburb.

Zolo Agona Azania no longer faces death penalty

On October 17, 2008, just before his third death penalty trial, the State of Indiana finally abandoned their 27 year campaign to execute political prisoner Zolo Agona. Zolo no longer faces the death penalty. This is a real victory for all Zolo’s supporters and all of those who oppose the death penalty. However, he remains imprisoned for a crime he adamantly denies committing. With good time credit, Zolo hopes to be released from prison in 7 years. Zolo would be 60 years old.

Zolo Agona Azania #49696
Indiana Prison
1 Park Row Street
Michigan City, Ind. 46360-6597

To create an egaliatarian society, our movement must be egalitarian and presently it is not. Working to create revolutionary change must begin today by challenging our sexist, racist, and heterosexist capitalist society. It means challenging that which is in ourselves, our families, our neighborhoods, our communities and our movements. As Kevin Powell said, “Just as I feel it is whites who need to be more vociferous about racism in their communities, I feel it is men who need to speak long and loud about sex- ism among each other.”

The anarchist movement needs to be more vocal and active in the struggle against sexism. All our lives depend on it.

Zolo Agona Azania Azania no longer faces death penalty

On October 17, 2008, just before his third death penalty trial, the State of Indiana finally abandoned their 27 year campaign to execute political prisoner Zolo Agona. Zolo no longer faces the death penalty. This is a real victory for all Zolo’s supporters and all of those who oppose the death penalty. However, he remains imprisoned for a crime he adamantly denies committing. With good time credit, Zolo hopes to be released from prison in 7 years. Zolo would be 60 years old.

Zolo Agona Azania #49696
Indiana Prison
1 Park Row Street
Michigan City, Ind. 46360-6597

To create an egaliatarian society, our movement must be egalitarian and presently it is not. Working to create revolutionary change must begin today by challenging our sexist, racist, and heterosexist capitalist society. It means challenging that which is in ourselves, our families, our neighborhoods, our communities and our movements. As Kevin Powell said, “Just as I feel it is whites who need to be more vociferous about racism in their communities, I feel it is men who need to speak long and loud about sex- ism among each other.”

The anarchist movement needs to be more vocal and active in the struggle against sexism. All our lives depend on it.

Zolo Agona Azania Azania no longer faces death penalty

On October 17, 2008, just before his third death penalty trial, the State of Indiana finally abandoned their 27 year campaign to execute political prisoner Zolo Agona. Zolo no longer faces the death penalty. This is a real victory for all Zolo’s supporters and all of those who oppose the death penalty. However, he remains imprisoned for a crime he adamantly denies committing. With good time credit, Zolo hopes to be released from prison in 7 years. Zolo would be 60 years old.

Zolo Agona Azania #49696
Indiana Prison
1 Park Row Street
Michigan City, Ind. 46360-6597

To create an egaliatarian society, our movement must be egalitarian and presently it is not. Working to create revolutionary change must begin today by challenging our sexist, racist, and heterosexist capitalist society. It means challenging that which is in ourselves, our families, our neighborhoods, our communities and our movements. As Kevin Powell said, “Just as I feel it is whites who need to be more vociferous about racism in their communities, I feel it is men who need to speak long and loud about sex- ism among each other.”

The anarchist movement needs to be more vocal and active in the struggle against sexism. All our lives depend on it.

Zolo Agona Azania Azania no longer faces death penalty

On October 17, 2008, just before his third death penalty trial, the State of Indiana finally abandoned their 27 year campaign to execute political prisoner Zolo Agona. Zolo no longer faces the death penalty. This is a real victory for all Zolo’s supporters and all of those who oppose the death penalty. However, he remains imprisoned for a crime he adamantly denies committing. With good time credit, Zolo hopes to be released from prison in 7 years. Zolo would be 60 years old.

Zolo Agona Azania #49696
Indiana Prison
1 Park Row Street
Michigan City, Ind. 46360-6597

To create an egaliatarian society, our movement must be egalitarian and presently it is not. Working to create revolutionary change must begin today by challenging our sexist, racist, and heterosexist capitalist society. It means challenging that which is in ourselves, our families, our neighborhoods, our communities and our movements. As Kevin Powell said, “Just as I feel it is whites who need to be more vociferous about racism in their communities, I feel it is men who need to speak long and loud about sex- ism among each other.”

The anarchist movement needs to be more vocal and active in the struggle against sexism. All our lives depend on it.

Zolo Agona Azania Azania no longer faces death penalty

On October 17, 2008, just before his third death penalty trial, the State of Indiana finally abandoned their 27 year campaign to execute political prisoner Zolo Agona. Zolo no longer faces the death penalty. This is a real victory for all Zolo’s supporters and all of those who oppose the death penalty. However, he remains imprisoned for a crime he adamantly denies committing. With good time credit, Zolo hopes to be released from prison in 7 years. Zolo would be 60 years old.

Zolo Agona Azania #49696
Indiana Prison
1 Park Row Street
Michigan City, Ind. 46360-6597

To create an egaliatarian society, our movement must be egalitarian and presently it is not. Working to create revolutionary change must begin today by challenging our sexist, racist, and heterosexist capitalist society. It means challenging that which is in ourselves, our families, our neighborhoods, our communities and our movements. As Kevin Powell said, “Just as I feel it is whites who need to be more vociferous about racism in their communities, I feel it is men who need to speak long and loud about sex- ism among each other.”

The anarchist movement needs to be more vocal and active in the struggle against sexism. All our lives depend on it.
When examining women’s involvement in political struggle, we have to examine the root causes. Women are so- cialized to look at politics as outside of our realm. When the political party of the day starts by establishing more women within our organizations and movements. This first involves putting sexism as one of the main points of orga- nization alongside the other issues affecting women (and all humans): racism, heterosexism, ableism, colonialism, and class oppression. While we cannot place all of our en- ergy into all of these problems at once, we must ensure we are dealing holistically with all of these issues within our focus. Second we must actively recruit women into our organizations. This takes various forms such as tabling at women’s events, consistent outreach to women and partici- pating in women-centric struggles.

Once women are in our organizations, we must look at the same level of participation of women within our organiza- tion. I have been involved with politics for 7+ years. It has only been within the past year and a half that I have fully participated in politics. This is because I have had to learn that I could speak in meetings, that I could contribute in meaningful and positive ways, and that it is my place to contribute to the group as a whole to help us overcome the internalization I felt when I was working with men who looked up to and respected. I had to overcome the mental challenges that were holding me back.

A couple factors contributed to this change. A dear com- rade helped me realize that I am fully capable of partici- pating and that no one can say different. For him, it was crucial that I participate on an equal level and he put a great deal of time and energy in encouraging me. I love to see more men take up this task. Then, my level of commit- ment, seriousness, and sense of responsibility to liberatory politics forced me to put my level of involvement above my sense of comfort. This was not an easy task at all and I am still working on this today. This is something that we all have to battle within ourselves; men can help women get to this point by treating women equally and respect- ing them above all else. Our organizational behav- iors. Are we consistently encouraging women to take up leadership positions? Is it mostly men or women who are taken as assault (and at times violence). I have talked to some- one who facilitates meetings? Who does the work of the organization? Additionally, all of us should have to be very perceptive of men talking over women, invalidat- ing and/or ignoring a woman’s words and contributions.

We all must make an extra effort to look at the gender dy- namics of our functions and meetings. Without the direct leadership of women in any movement, our important voices are left out of the dialogue and the fight against sex- ism.

Anarchist Organizational Structures

One of the biggest challenges to the anarchist movement is creating viable anti-authoritarian structures for our orga- nizations. We are struggling to create new ideas of orga- nization from the examples we have had and through new ideas of the people. Not only an internal revolution for our movement in an anarchist fashion but it is also a testing ground for a future society.

Anarchism seeks to create a society based on a great sense of personal responsibility and accountability to ourselves and each other. We want a society based on mutual aid and communalism. This cannot happen out of spontaneous ac- tivity. We need to put in the necessary labor and time into our organizations. This takes various forms such as tabling at women’s events, consistent outreach to women and parti- cipating in women-centric struggles.

The Al Naim Mosque was also comple- tely destroyed, holy books still smoldering after the violent attack. Not only the mosque but also the home of one of the last 100 mosques in the Jabel Al Akhdar area has been completely destroyed by a military assaul. ‘We see them as personal cen- ters for us, they’re not Hamas, and we paid for them out of our own money, they belong to us, no one else,’ explained one Imam based in Jabi- liya.

The demolition of Mosques means many people are praying in the streets, at the Kamal Odwan hospital, people pray in the garden area opposite, and at the front of the house, mostly children, massacred at the Fakhoura School, hundreds prayed on the ground that was turned into an early graveyard.

The fabric of life

Everyone here knows someone who has been killed in Is- raeli attacks. But there are also the families of the stricken cousins, nephews, brothers, the jealous, the humili- ated, the shot, the unreachables, the homeless, the now even more vulnerable than ever, people, not pieces, piled up in morgues all over Gaza, not pieces, people. These people are struggling to live and breathe another day, to avoid the lethal flow of missiles.

We observed at the Gun Ships, Israeli naval gun ships, that are targeting them.

These networks and vision have held strong for 60 years, but another fabric of life is being planned by Israel. Whilst people say they are resisting and fighting their way through the Nakba, Israel proceeds to compensate the West Bank, un- der a project of roads and tunnels ‘for Palestinians’ which reinforce the existing illegal settler system. They separate wall, land and water theft and Palestinian bantustanisation. Under the banner of ‘development’, this network of new facts on the ground, ‘for the Palestinian’ is called, ‘The Fabric of Life’. Israel is blasting holes in one corner of the Palestinian fabric of life through extreme violence, and tearing up another part with the help of international com-
companias and governments and internal authority complicity. Back at Kamull Odwan hospital, Dr Mouyan, explains, 'It's not about just riding the streets of civilians, because, they are being bombarded'. They have left, when we are inside supposedly safe compounds. I have left my house, and now have nowhere else to go, nowhere else to go.' He continues to say what hundreds of people are saying. 'This is the worst we have ever seen, we have never had this level of violence. It has shocked even us. In Lebanon they killed over 1700 people, will it come to this here?

The global intifada

This killing continues, day and night, and its not just the people who are being physically dismembered, their families are being dismembered, their communities are being dismembered, the landscape of Gaza is full of holes. The fabric of the neighborhood, the relationship with one another, our friends, our neighbors, that families no longer living or alive together is being stretched to breaking point. People are being made refugees, tents as homes all over them again, as no buildings or building materials are available for people to even rebuild their shattered lives, their smashed homes, shops, mosques, governmental buildings, community centers, charities, offices, clinics, youth centers.

How do you break a people that won’t be broken? They will have to kill each and every of us’ people tell me. From the first days here people were expecting the ‘shohah’ threatened upon them by Matan Villal , Israel’s deputy defense minister this February. It is happening. It is happening now. This is the Shoah.

The third Intifada being urged now has to be our intifada too. The story of the Palestinian people, we need to step up our reconstruction of our resistance, our movements, of our communities in our own country. It is not to be left to the aggression and isolation. We need to be the third intifada - people here need more and say repeatedly that they need more than the demonstration. The demonstration, they are not stopping the killing here. Demonstrations alone, are not stopping the killing here.

The arms companies making the weapons that are targetting people here, the companies that are selling stolen goods from occupied land pillaging settlements, the companies building the apartheid wall [the East Jerusalem to Light railway system. These companies, Carmel Agrexco, Caterpillar Inc., Boeing (BAE) Systems, they are complicit in the crimes against humanity being committed here. If the international community will not uphold international law it is up to us to uphold that should and can - we can use the legal system of international law as one of many means to hold on to our collective humanity.

The European Union decision, undertaken by the Council of Ministers this December, to upgrade relations with Israel, from economic ties to cultural, security, and political relations must be reversed. The EU represents a core strategic market of legitimacy and political economic re-inforcement of Israel and as such its capacity to commit crimes against humanity, with impunity.

We can cut this tie, we can halt this decision which if approved will embolden them. It is closer to the ‘community of nations’ of the EU, and give a green light for further terror and crimes against humanity by being applied upon the Palestinian people. This is a decision which has not yet been ratified. We can influence that which hasn’t happened yet.

There are concrete steps that people can take, learning from the lessons of the first Intifada and the Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions campaign to dismantle the South African Apartheid regime. Strategies of popular resistance, strike, fabric of the neighborhood direct actions, on the streets in the offices, factories and headquarters is where we need to take this fight, to the heart of decision-makers who are supposely making decisions on our behalf. The violent nature of this killing or making a killing out of the occupation. The third intifada needs to be a global intifada.

Ewa Jasiewicz is an experienced journalist, community and union organizer, and solidarity worker. She is currently Gaza Project Co-coordinator for the Free Gaza Movement. www.freegaza.org

Sexism in the anarchist movement

BY ANGELA REALLOR (Formerly Kent ABCF)
Reprinted from Northeastern Anarchist #2 Spring 2001

This article is an attempt to add to the discourse that is (or should be) occurring around sexism within the very movements that purport to be fighting it. It was a hard process to distinguish between sexism within the anarchist movement and the general sexism within society because so many of the criticisms that can be leveled against the anarcho-feminists are criticisms of the greater society. There is a void where critical anarchist feminist/anti-sexist critiques should be which has lead to a lack of dialogue in the anarchist community on sexism. This article is based upon many of the weaknesses within the anarchist movement, which are often compounded around issues of sexism which are part of the anarchist paradigm of thought and concrete action which anarchists must address to transform our solidarity and sexism in the greater society.

Challenging Ideas and Behaviors

The continuum begins with our personal thoughts and behavior. Growing up in a sexist society imbues within us the idea that women are inferior to men. Unless these ideas are thoroughly challenged, in every aspect of our lives, every waking moment, these ideas are allowed to flourish in our behavior. Many may feel this is an obvious point, but as Kevin Powell wrote in a recent Ms. article, “Everyday I see us all working to use the language of patriarchal oppression, to see the sexist inherent in every aspect of America, to challenge all injustices, not just those that are coded and marked as racist, as sexist.”

Anti-sexism is not just about fighting overt forms of sexism - violent rape, domestic violence, overtly sexist words - it is also about challenging our relationships, the ideas that exist in a rape culture, the ideas that women are socialized, etc. These are not convenient issues to struggle around for they involve digging deep within ourselves, traveling back in our development, and dedicating time to the difficult process of self-change. We must challenge the ideas and behaviors that promote sexism to other men and alienate women-both in personal relationships and in organizations.

Recognizing that anti-sexist work is a deep, hard process is very important but a point many miss. All too often men who are genuinely against sexism fail to acknowledge and challenge the sexism that lies within themselves. “I AM anti-sexist,” they proclaim. But it is said so loudly that they fail to hear the voices of women. It becomes a label to proudly sport instead of a serious and difficult process.

Don’t get me wrong, if a man is indeed anti-sexist, he needs to display it, but this is accomplished through his actions and in his explanations of our current reality--especially to women. We must challenge sexism by taking the mainstream notions of masculinity and that take more than a simple label.

Often complexities arise, however, when women challenge “anti-sexist” men. Men get defensive when women criticize their oppressive and sexist behaviors. Rather than listening and benefiting from criticism, a defensive stance is taken and women’s voices are ignored once again. No one is above being questioned, there should be no unnecessary hierarchy. The lack of principled criticism and self-criticism within the anarchist movement is the first problem that is then compounded when applied to issues of sexism and other forms of oppression. Women must be genuinely equal within the group. Otherwise no one needs to speak to her or him. Women and men should seek to change their thoughts and their actions.

Political Study

Understanding sexism is important to all within the anarchist movement. However, as a woman, it is not my duty to always answer questions and educate men on how sexism affects my life. Many anarchist groups already have a program in place that could be utilized to gain a better understanding of sexism without burdening women with the task of explaining our lives: the political study group. When was the last time your group read something on women, sexism, feminism, or women’s liberation?

Many times, and I have been guilty of this, we feel that readings on women’s issues are not as important as read- ings on revolution, machete combat or anti-colonial struggle, etc. We have to stop considering women’s liberation as a side project or issue and view it as an integral part of the liberation struggle. Women, we have to face the fact that we are critically anarchist or even revolutionary to give us good insights. When was the last time you read something by Andre Breton? Janet Biehl? Stella Davis, Patricia Hill Collins, or Emma Goldman? We must take the initiative to read that which women have placed before us.

Encouraging Women

Since I was a little girl, I was socialized to feel inferior to men. I learned to recognize where my “place” was in society and it was not participating in an equal dialogue with men, certainly not in any type of politics, and it was definitely not participating in the anti-colonial struggle. I often look around at meetings and events (that are not women-centric) and see that I am one of a handful of women in attendance or worse yet, the only woman there. Alternately, even when there are a lot of women in the room, I find that I am the only woman contributing to the dialogue.

MANA: Social Justice Committee

Support for Revolutionary Political Prisoners in the United States

Over two months after the successful 2nd Annual MANA (Muslim Alliance in North America) Convention in Philadelphia on Thanksgiving weekend, MANA’s Social Justice Committee, to the best of our ability, have begun to commit to its commitment to begin forming working alliances and collaborations with other front-line organizations that organize, access and support efforts and strategies to free the remaining political prisoners from the ‘60s, ‘70s and ‘80s who were involved in the liberation movements of that day. The Committee recognizes that support for these political prisoners is an essential component of the ongoing struggle to address racism, social injustices, and exploitation even as it exists today. The Social Justice Committee also recognizes that fair and just changes in society cannot and will not sincerely and thoroughly occur if people of color and people of conscience abandon those who have put their lives on the line and have struggled valiantly for many of the freedoms and advancements presently experienced. Along with its commitment, the Social Justice Committee recognizes that we, as women, can muster in supporting those efforts that already exist, as well as educating and organizing the Muslim communities across the nation to do so.

4STRUGGLE MAG ISSUE 12

35
The insidious attempts by the U.S. government to destroy the organization and individual members restricted the development of a more self-reflective theory and practice by BPP members. Party members did not always have the luxury or the space to reflect and revise past errors. Nevertheless, it is somewhat paradoxical and instructive that a movement that was initially so thoroughly male centered in many ways broke ground for subsequent explicitly feminist/womanist activism by black women and, in some ways, engaged in more nuanced discussions of gender roles than those found in social movements, academic texts, and popular culture in the 1990s. For example, the movie Panther fails to treat in any substantial manner the role of women in the Party, not to mention the internal struggles over gender roles and sexist/misogynistic behavior, a point made by many reviews of the film. However, some of these subtle cultural crits replicate this error of omission by making summary comments such as, in the sixties “it was believed that the greatest threat to the nation was a black man with a gun: (103) and that the film is a “stirring affirmation of black masculinity, an image of what the Panthers could have, and maybe should have been,” (104). Statements like these justify and excuse the movie’s inattention to gender politics as critical to the story of the Party and, in effect, further the notion that the central actors and focus of black struggle should be black men/manhood. Through an emphasis on “gun barrel politics” in both the film and the reviews, the critical presence and actions of female Panthers are virtually ignored, while the complexities of black masculinity are constrained by romanticized, flat images of angry, hard bodied with guns (103). Many of the intracomunal debates raised by the Black Panther Party have resurfaced once again in the context of a re-emergent cultural nationalism in black communities in the United States. Unfortunately, both the language and the content of many contemporary discussions reflect little if any recognition of the historical depth of these issues, nor of the progress made, however limited, in addressing them in the past. Black men are once again talked about and talked about themselves as castrated or as “endangered species.” Black women are often cited as being complicit in this process or as succeeding at the expense of black men.

The most popular formulations blame poor, working-class black women for their alleged inability to raise black boys/men, and accuse black women in general of being the willing recipients of alleged special treatment and unearned entitlements from white society. To paraphrase the official recruitment literature form the Million Man March, black men need to resume their rightful place as patriarchs of black families and communities. The interrelationship between the ways black people are targeted for gender-, class-, and sexual-orientation specific attacks are unrecognized in our acceptance of linear, “either/or” analyses of problems facing black communities as a whole. For the sake of so-called black unity, we often sacrifice or ignore the needs of some of the most oppressed and marginalized sectors of our communities to the detriment of all. Those who dare to assert our heterogeneity and identify oppressive practices within and between black communities are silenced and ascribed as divisive or assimilationist, as race traitors, or worst of all, as just not authentically, purely black enough. Witness the virtual gag order and public attacks against those within the community, particularly black women such as Angela Davis, who disagreed with the Million Man March’s gender politics, focus, and agenda (or lack thereof). We would all benefit from a closer, more complex interoration and public discussion of historical struggles over these same issues, from slavery to the present, one that does not gloss over mistakes or internal differences, to aid us in redefining our roles and relationships in ways that can nurture and sustain the community and build a progressive black movement for the twenty-first century.

See back pages for notes

Likud, Kadima MK’s submit bill to worsen conditions of Palestinian detainees

BY IMEMC & AGENCIES
http://www.imemc.org/article/59527
March 24, 2009

Israeli online daily, Haaretz, reported on Monday that Likud member of Knesset (MK), Yariv Levin, and Kadima MK, Yoel Hasson, submitted a bill that calls for worsening the living conditions of imprisoned Hamas members.

They said that those who are responsible for “terrorist attacks, and for holding captive Gilad Shalit, should be denied all privileges”, Israeli online daily, Haaretz, reported.

The bill calls for placing some detainees in solitary confinement during some periods, denying visitations, and imposing the Administrative Detention orders against the detainees who finish their terms, and barring detained students from continuing their education.

Several members of Knesset already declared their support to the new proposal. The MK’s who expressed support to the illegal bill are of the Yisrael Beiteinu Party, Shas Party, National Union Party, the Likud, and the Jewish Home.

It also aims at increasing Israel’s bargaining power over Hamas in talks for the release of the captured Israeli soldier.

The two MK’s claimed that Palestinian detainees imprisoned by Israel “are living in better conditions than the captured soldier”.

Likud MK, Levin, who used to the vice-president of the Israeli Bar Association, claimed that the bill “would be balanced, and will be in line with the international law”.

He also claimed that the bill will not violate the Geneva Convention. He said that the Convention only applies to prisoners of war and Israeli does not recognize the Palestinian detainees as prisoners of war.

Furthermore, Haaretz reported that a ministerial committee in Israel urged on Thursday the government to revoke some right of Palestinian detainees in order to increase the pressure on Hamas. Such a decision is a violation to the basic rights of the detainees and constitutes collective punishment. Israel claims this decision is against detained Hamas members, but on the ground all detainees are imprisoned together and face the same agony.

All Palestinian detainees are prisoners of war as Israel is illegally occupying the Palestinians land and fully ignores and disregards the international law which labels occupation as a war crime.

Hundreds of detainees died in Israeli prisons since 1967. Most of them died due to extreme torture, while the rest died as the Israeli Prisons Authority denied them access to adequate medical treatment.

Israeli legalizes torturing detainees to obtain confessions, and several detainees died due to torture. Approximately 10,000 Palestinians, including hundreds of women and children, are imprisoned by Israel. The number of Israelis imprisoned by the Palestinians is One.

Palestinian detainees to protest Israeli decisions against them

BY SAED BANNOURA
IMEMC News - www.imemc.org/article/59536
March 24, 2009

The Prisoners Center for Studies (PCS) reported on Tuesday that Palestinian detainees in Israeli prisons have decided to protest against the Israeli decisions against them, specifically calls for placing some in solitary confinement, and denying them visits and the right to education.

The PCS said that the decision came after the Israeli government decided several measures of collective punishment were taken against them following failed prisoner-swap talks with Hamas.

The measures also include barring prisoners from watching al-Jazeera new agency, and placing some in solitary confinement for indefinite periods, in addition to denying the detainees the right to education.

The center said that the detainees will not surrender and will not accept that Israel removes achievements they obtained through years of struggle and hunger strikes.

Furthermore, the PSC stated that there will be cooperation between the detainees and several factions and institutions in Palestine in order to organize massive protests marking April 17, the Palestinian Prisoners Day.

Ra’fat Hamdoula, head of the center, said that there are serious threats and violations against the detainees, especially the recent decision of the Israeli government to impose further restrictions on them.

Hamdoula appealed to the international community and different human rights groups to intervene and stop Israel’s violations of human rights and international treaties that call for protecting detainees.
Women in the struggle

Just as our previous discussion on the “hip-hop generation” and political consciousness was sparked by one of our prison readers, a contribution by Comrade Spider of the White Panther Organization inspired this exploration of roles and identity of women within the Panther movement. In Issue 11 of 4strugglemag, we printed “Free the Wimmin,” in which Spider presented a strong argument that women’s liberation is nowhere near complete, and that women “not only have [to deal with the crushing weight of capitalist exploitation, but also the double weight of gender oppression.”

Our editor, anti-imperialist political prisoner Jaan Laaman, liked the article and wanted to expand the discussion: “A young man who graduated from a recent college grad and radical activist - was just telling me about his concerns about the level and widespreadness of sexist attitudes and practices in the activist communes. Jaan wrote: ‘I guess I shouldn’t be, but I was kind of surprised and intrigued and wanted to hear this. Some of what he was describing sounded similar to shit that was real and also largely resolved in a progressive revolutionary way like 30 years ago. Society itself is still so sexist, so I guess things have gone back in radical circles too.”

As Spider pointed out, despite the victories and concessions of the women’s liberation movements of the 1920s and 1960s (as well as LGBT movements), traditional gender roles for women and men are still very much embedded in mainstream societies. And our social justice movements unintentionally continue to reproduce and repress in many cases. The common misconception that sexism is over or no longer an issue is as dangerous as the idea that racism is no longer an issue in contemporary society. It needs to be confronted head-on by men and women alike.

At 4strugglemag, we are committed to not only providing a space for the expression of important refer- ences to aid in education and dialogue. In the print edition of this section on women in the struggle, we are running two discussions on the subject from the history of the Black Panther Party and the Chicano/Chicana movement, as well as a more contemporary piece on the continued prevalence of sexism in the US. We hope that our readers who are not in prison will seek these excellent books out too.

We know that many of you use 4strugglemag in your study groups. We hope that you will explore these rich and complex readings in detail, and that you will begin or renew discussions on how men can challenge their own sexism and build stronger movements based on comradely respect and love. We are also interested in hearing about the ways in which gender identities/dynamics manifest themselves in prisons, where people are segregated by gender. We encourage you to share your responses with us in Issue 13, so that we can expand this “class of people who don’t have study groups in their institutions.”

As for our female readers, we hope that you will raise your voices in this discussion and share your experiences and opinions with us. And that you will encourage others to join in as well.

These articles do not provide definitive answers, but we offer them as a starting point for this essential process of understanding that class struggle, anti-racist and anti-sexist work, and socialist revolution must be oriented towards liberation. As Spider put it, “Not only do wimmin need revolution, but the revolution needs wimmin.”

Because women’s work is never done and is underpaid or unpaid or boring or repetitious and we’re the first to get the sack and what we look like is more important than what we do and if we get raped it’s our fault and if we get blasted we have must have provoked it and if we raise our voices we’re nagging bitches and if we enjoy sex we’re nymph and if we don’t we’re frigid and if we love women it’s because we can’t get a “real” man and if we ask our doctor too many questions we’re neurotic and pushy and if we expect community care for our children we’re selfish and if we stand up for our rights we’re aggressive and “unfeminine” and if we don’t we’re typical feminist and if we want to get married we’re out to trap a man and if we don’t we’re un-natural and because we still can’t get an adequate safe contraceptive but men can walk on the moon and if we can’t cope or don’t want a pregnancy we’re made to feel guilty about abortion and...for lots and lots of other reasons we are part of the women’s liberation move- ment. And I was given several direct orders which I disobeyed quite directly (laugh). And then to top it off, the street I lived on had alternate side of the street parking and this car got towed in the morning because they overslept.”

After this episode, Cyril was expelled for sabotage. She later found out through research in the FBI’s Counter Terrorism Program (CTP) PRO file that the FBI deliberately planted misinformation by using an actual informant, which made it appear that Cyril was the informant. This particular tactic was called “bad-jacketing” or “snitch-jacketing.” (98). An FBI internal agency memorandum, she recalls, stated that she should be targeted for “neutralization” because of her effectiveness as an organizer.

This example points to the significance of community ser- vices programs in lending credibility and longevity to the BPP, as well as the FBI’s efforts to undermine them. It also gives a concrete example of the how the FBI misused its sexual interactions in that Cyril was expelled at least once for refusing to partici- pate in what some Party members referred to as “socialist infiltration,” or engaging in sexual relations ostensibly as a revolutionary duty (99). In this case, the political impact of the attempted power play by the male leader actually served the interests of the oppressive state apparatus and helped to undermine the effectiveness of one of the Party’s key local leaders and programs. Here, the contradictions between the theory and practice of leadership with regard to sexual relationships and sexual self-determina- tion directly and adversely affected the Panthers’ capacity to function as a viable political organization.

Conclusion

The ideological development of Party members was an on- going process, shaped by the particular material and cultural conditions of the late 1960s and early 1970s. The increasing numbers of women in the Party as recruits and leaders and the variety of state repression directed at all Panthers provided the pres- sure-cooker setting for testing our new ideas about gender and revolution.

The members of the BPP were themselves products of the larger society. Thus the terrain on which intra-organizational debates over gender, class, and race took place was one influenced by the terms of the so-called dominant culture and its agents. The Party was both critic and purveyor of Afrocentric content, New African ideals. Panthers decried the class and gender biases of their contemporaries and the larger white society, but at the same time they reaffirmed many of the elements of the culture of the former female member of the Party’s Brooklyn branch recalled, “[We] could talk about this stuff [gender and sexism]. We could talk about it just as groups. We’re Imperialists. But I don’t know that we internalized it. I think we saw that our Party line was that there was no difference [between men and women]. We tried to be progressive in our thinking. But I think what we didn’t realize was that we were just as much victims of a social condition that perpetuated it and that we carried these traits with us” (100).

She acknowledges that men and women engaged each oth- er in discussions about gender issues, yet basic contradic- tions remained. She points out that “we [the Party] did not have full command of the contemporary language and theory of gender politics that was being developed, revised, and disseminated during this period. Many of their short- comings arose from the lack of experience addressing such concerns in an explicitly political context. This was prob- ably especially true for those who had no previous activist involvement. Their contradictions were part and parcel of the lives of most of us, which reinforced the unequal gender roles and power relations between men and women, and intra-communal struggles, which attempted to redefine the terms of this discourse both internally and ex- ternally.

Despite their limitations (or perhaps because of them) and the generally dire circumstances in which they found them- selves (a nation running out of most of other black, nationalistic organizations and many white leftist and main- stream organizations in their progress towards addressing at least rhetorically) “the woman question,” According to Assata Shakur, “The BPP was the most progressive orga- nization at that time [and] had the most positive images in the community. We were a part of the struggle to end black supremacy. I felt it was the most positive thing that I could do because many of the other organizations at the time were so sex- ist, I mean the extreme. There was a whole saturation of the whole climate with this quest for manhood, even though that might be oppressive to us as a human being. For me being the BPP was one of the best options at the time” (101).

Thus, for Shakur and many other black women seeking in- volvement in the Black Power Movement and grassroots organizations, the fight for liberation and the struggle for a grammatic focus of the Party after 1968 directly addressed the needs of poor black women, especially those who were marginal or even marginalizing by their own actions. BPP membership could also offer women and men a sense of control over their lives. Having been in a movement where their time in their lives, were able to contest directly the larg- er society’s representations and perceptions of them and to fight for the Party. The Party’s stance on black supremacy and its suppression of its lives and their communities. Through its ideology, rhetoric, imagery, and praxis, the BPP engaged in dominant culture in a debate about the perceptual and embodied identities of black racial and sexual identity and its impact on politics and policy. This was particularly significant given the history of struggles by black people to be recognized as a respectable, fully human beings. They also engaged each other and the larger black community about what it meant to be a black woman, man, revolutionary – not in the abstract – but in the heat of political struggle.”

Sayat-Sarkisyan women: defending their land, their families, and themselves, ca. 1980s. Militia members in the Bluefields, on Atlantic Coast, Nicaragua. Sandista women: defending their land, their families, and themselves, ca. 1980s. Militia members in the Bluefields, on Atlantic Coast, Nicaragua.
Chicana feminism

BY ANNA NIETOGOMEZ


I want to address myself to the common questions that come up in regard to Chicana feminism. What is Chicana feminism? I am a Chicana feminist. I make that statement very proudly, although there is a lot of intimidation in our community and in the society in general, against people who define themselves as Chicana feminists. It sounds like an oxymoron when you say you’re a Chicana you’re on one side, if you’re a feminist, you must be on the other side. They say you can’t stand on both sides of the fence. When you say you’re Chicana, you mean you come from a particular community, one that is subject to racism and the exploitation of women. When you say you’re a Chicana, you mean you’re a woman who opposes the oppression of men, that you stand up for your rights and the rights of others, but of women in particular. In fact, the statement is not contradictory at all, it is a very unified statement: I support my community and I do not ignore the women in my community (who have been long forgotten). The feminist movement is a unified front made up of both men and women – a feminist can be a man as well as a woman – it is a group of people that advocates the end of women’s oppression.

People – reactionaries I call them – sometimes define a feminist as someone who hates men. Maybe this is not totally erroneous, but the label is a tactic used to keep people from discussing feminism. Among Chicana Americans, being a Chicana feminist, he’s diverting attention from some of the important issues at hand. What are these issues? It is mostly a matter of social and political issues in regard to the position of women – the way the Chicana sees the woman. The Chicana is a woman and she cannot separate herself from that. One of the primary social issues is the double standard. It says that there is such a thing as male privilege and such a thing as female submission. Another issue is education – women have the right to education. When the woman was conceived it was not automatically determined that she was going to be barefoot, pregnant and tied to the stove. A third issue is child care – it’s not a female duty, it is a communal duty. And finally, the woman should have equal employment regardless of race – equal pay, equal training and an economic position which is not dependent on the position of the Chicana. The Chicana is a woman. She will always have to accept the second place. Politically, it means equal participation, equal representation, and inclusion of issues which address her as a woman, as a Chicana in the Raza community.

Is Feminism for Anglos?

Marta Cotera wrote an article several years ago saying that feminisms are for Anglos. And the term feminism means that if you’re a feminist you have somehow become an Anglo or been influenced by Anglos. That’s a sexist remark, whether you call it that or not. Why? Because of what it is saying – that you, as a Chicana, a Chicana woman, don’t have the mentality to think for your- self. We don’t have that capability – we can’t do math. Everything we say is either his idea, or the white angle “her” idea, but not our idea. When we’re confronted with these remarks about Chicana feminism, we can say, “Just a minute. Chicanas can think, too. You’d better sit down and think about what you’re thinking, because we’re not only thinking it, we’re doing it.”

The History of Feminism

Let me prove to you that feminism is a world-wide event. It has been in existence for almost 300 years. You can find the roots of women’s struggle to end oppression of people and of themselves as far back as 200 years before the birth of Christ, in Viet Nam, in China, in Gaul, in Africa, and in the valley of Mexico. We have documentation of women who were queens, rulers, who were feminists: addressed those human rights of men and women in their communities, their nations. One of the most renowned feminists of the past is well known throughout the world, though she is not well known by Chicanas. Her name is Sor Juana, and she has been called one of the first feminists. Sor Juana was a Mexican (there were many pre-Columbian feminists). Several of the North American Indian societies were matriarchal and advocated the equal rights of women, and the protection of any person. Sor Juana was a seventeenth century genius. She was a genius who happened to be a woman and who thought in terms of the equality of men and women. She was a very motley, very free, very brave, very independent woman. She felt that if she felt it would offer her more flexibility and more opportunity to study. And she did study – she studied very hard. She was enthusiastic, to say the least, about learning. She spoke about women’s hair – how the hair was a symbol of women and how it should be comfortable and not a mask. She said that not until a woman’s mind was equal in beauty to her long hair she should have her long hair. She thought she would plan to read a cer- tain amount, and if she didn’t she wouldn’t cut off her hair. In three years, she had read 80 volumes. She passed in three volumes, the hair to go right back until the goal was reached. Sor Juana is famous for resposta, a letter to the Pope. And in his letter, in Sor Juana’s letter of resposta, Sor Juana for her brilliance but telling her that her duty was not to be brilliant but to serve God. The role of women was to be silent, not heard. Sor Juana very politely wrote back, “Surely you must know more than I; however, I recall, Jesus did not say that women should be silent and not heard. You forgot that the temple was a place of learning...”
ing and discussion, and that women were preaching and talking to their people there, not just bowing their heads in silent prayer or absent-mindedly planning their week’s activities. “The people and I identified him-
self to the people there, those who were speaking there, and those people were the women. Yes, it’s my duty to be a servant of the people and to push the liberation—theology was a high point of learning in Mexico and in fact it still is – ‘How can I understand that, if I can’t understand geography?’ I was supposed to be a manifestation of God’s great goodness, how can I understand that if I don’t know anything about it? These are the prerequisites for my understanding of His great and powerful powers.” So she advocated that women have the right to be educated and to have this right until after the Revolution. During the eighteen century they did open some convents where women could go and be educated, but the education was primarily in religious studies.

Feminism in Tejas

Here in the United States we have women who are very involved in the labor movement. I’m sure you know that most of the outstanding, internationally recognized women for their efforts in the labor movement are Tejanas. Lydon became associated with the Haymarket Massacre. She was involved in organizing an international workers’ alliance, and she advocated women’s workers’ rights to pressure unions, to remind unions that women were working in the factories and should have their needs addressed and support the movement for workers issues of the union. You have Emma Tenayuca, who was a farmer-worker organizer, who at the age of 18 had to support her family and 6 members, and of them were Chicanas. The women who went around the nation to ask people to strike for Fair Pay For Chicanas did a fantastic thing, and in fact, within a short period of time, women were coming to say, “You’d better strike Fair Pay –.” Because we are workers. Because we demand workers’ rights. So I do not think that there are all that many that might leave, because we ask for free birth control (and not false birth control), and because we ask for better working conditions for women, 85% of the history of the Tejana, and they are things that Chicanas all over the nation admire and identify with.

Today, What is Chicanas Feminism Doing?

Today, Chicana feminism is trying to rally enough women and get them to come out from behind the doors so that everybody can hear us say, “We’re a legitimate body. No one can deny that any more. Ask us about our jobs, not our validity, as women fighting for women’s rights within the Chicano community.” Right now, we’re in the process of making the Chicano movement responsible to Chicana issues, making it support issues that involve race, welfare rights, forced sterilization – making the Chicano movement responsible itself to the Chicana and to female workers, and making it live up to its cry of Carnalismo and community responsibility. We’re saying, “Pastor! Ouravnent for a pregnant woman! Lady!” Our government leaders are not our individual responsibility but the responsibility of our community.” We are working to get women together to build up a base, and working to get the Chicano movement to support and advocate our issues as women.

Is the Chicana Feminist Movement Different from the Anglo Women’s Movement?

I myself feel that some of the distinctions made are irrelevant, but it’s still very much like asking how the Chicano movement can be like the BPP. It from branch to branch. Other questions indicate that you’re still fighting for recognition of your own identity, and at times I just think, “Well, I’m not going to talk about the Chicana as a man’s work.” If you want to find out about the Anglo movement, you go and find out, and then go and find out about the Chicana movement, and compare them for yourself.” Besides, the answers are obvious. The Chicana movement has to address itself to racism and it is obvious from what Martha Cotera has written, what Evey Chapa has written, in terms of the Texas Women’s Caucus (which is primarily Anglo), what you have to deal with. The issue of racism and the issue of class interest. And that class interest is not our interest. However, at the same time, I believe that not all Anglo women are middle class. It’s the media that leads you to believe that, and you swallow it. What is the Anglo women’s movement? First, you have to understand that it is not a movement, but a series of groups and organiza-

Observation and Participation: Gendered Struggle in Ideology and Practice

Huey P. Newton was often quoted as saying that black people learned primarily through observation and participa-
tion. Participation in the working environment and the everyday life were important in shaping the consciousness and practice of Party members (87). It is critical, then, that we examine the struggles over gender and definitions of black manhood and womanhood and not just moments of extraordinary rupture and conflict (although those are also important). For example, when the BPP was a hotbed of critical inquiry on gender issues in the academic sense. Instead, many of these dialogic in-
teractions have been distributed in moments of struggle and working together. In other words, the actions of Party members like Marissa Carolina feminism is in revealing how exemplars drawn from the experiences of women in the Party will serve to illustrate the impact of gender politics and power dynamics on everyday life.

The late Connie Matthews, who worked in both the inter-
national chapter and Oakland headquarters, recounts that “In theory, the Panter party was for equality of the sexes...” on a day-to-day struggle with rank-and-file brothers, she got a lot of disrespect, you know... Because, I mean, it’s one thing to get up and talk about ideologically you believe this. But you’re asking people to change attitudes and lifestyles overnight, which is not just possible. So I would say that there was no problem with mixing the sexes was a lot of male chauvinism... But I would say all in all, in terms of equality...that women had very, very strong leadership roles which were not as ideal as such. It didn’t mean it came automatically” (89).

Matthews acknowledges the existence of sexism in the Pan-

ty, but at the same time highlights the existence of struggle on the part of women (and men) to grapple with the dispar-
i

Statements by Assata Shakur corroborate Mathews’ ac-

knowledgements of the daily struggles of women for re-

spect in the Party. According to Shakur, “[A] lot of us [women] adopted that kind of machismo in order to survive in the Black Panther Party. It was very difficult to say ‘well listen brother, I think that... we should do this and this’.” In order to be listened to, you had to just say, “look mothafucka,” you know. You had to develop this whole ar-

riage, in order to be heard... We were just involved in those day to day battles for respect in the Black Panther Party” (90).

Here, Shakur presents one strategy employed by some women in the BPP to exert authority/participation by as-

such as dominating the decision-making process, by setting a style, actions, and words associated with male preoga-

potentially undermined the notion of men’s inherent aggressiveness, which was the basis of masculinist gender ideologies, including some of the BPP’s earlier formulations. While this macho posturing by women may have been part of the struggle with respect as dominating, it also challenged the idea that only black men should lead and “protect” black women. In other words, women who had to modify their public personas in order to be respected is indicative of the extent to which gendered power dynamics pervaded the lives of Party members. Such intraclass struggles, which Matthews and Shakur describe, directly affected the organization’s cul-

ture and ability to function, yet are hidden in analyses that fail to look at gender relations as relations of power. The ways in which women and men understood their respective
and families in the Party and elsewhere. This anonymous Panther was obviously influenced by the pseudohistorical analysis of black women as dominating matriarchs and that black women more than other groups have been the most striking figures in the Pan-African movement. This writer also suggests that such an analysis illuminates the extent to which the Party rhetoric is at odds with the emerging new Black Panther movement. She writes: "In my view, the Party has been too quick to lump all black women together and to make sweeping generalizations about the role of women in the Party. It is clear that the Party's rhetoric is inconsistent and does not always reflect the actual experiences of black women.

The Party's rhetoric is at odds with the emerging new Black Panther movement. It is clear that the Party has been too quick to lump all black women together and to make sweeping generalizations about the role of women in the Party. It is important to recognize the contributions of black women and to ensure that they are included in Party activities and decision-making processes."

Taken together, these two articles both contradict and support the idea that the Party is a male-dominated institution. They highlight the need for a more inclusive and participatory approach to Party decision-making.

In conclusion, this article provides a valuable insight into the experiences of black women and their role in the emerging new Black Panther movement. It challenges the Party's rhetoric and calls for a more inclusive and participatory approach to Party decision-making. It is important to recognize the contributions of black women and to ensure that they are included in Party activities and decision-making processes.


donald_garcia@letter.org
“No one ever asks what a man’s role in the revolution is”: Gender politics and leadership in the Black Panther Party, 1966-71


The goal of this essay is to provide a perspective on an oft-neglected aspect of the history and legacy of the Black Panther Party, namely, its gender politics. The gender ideology of the BPP, both as formally stated and as exemplified in the Party’s daily functioning as well as in its analysis of race and class dynamics in black society, was a major factor in the Party’s ability to transcend the traditional black community and to build a militant black power movement.

In analyzing gender, it is not to be understood as a discrete category unto itself, but one of several interacting factors, such as race, class, color, and age, and sexual orientation, that together provide a more complete picture of the terrain upon which we experience our realities. To say that I am examining gender and the politics of the BPP does not mean that I am asking questions for men or women’s experiences. Instead, a gendered analysis also encompasses the experiences of men; definitions of manhood and womanhood, the intersections between gender, race, and class-based oppression; and the impact of all of these factors on the successes and shortcomings of the BPP.

The category of gender was not as fully politicized and theorized during the late 1960s as it is today, thus one must resist the temptation to impose current standards to measure the historical, national, and revolutionary potential of the BPP. Each of these social theories and categories must be understood as being situationally and historically specific to the broader political and ideological context of the local time period. Nevertheless, it is useful to compare and contrast feminist perspectives that attempt to redefine these categories of examination and to assess which theories and actions constitute a challenge to status quo power relations in different eras, and thus to assess the merits of political organizations on their own terms and in their particular historical contexts.

One possible way to think about gender and gender roles far from static within the BPP. As the Party spread numerically and geographically, Black women and gender diversity within its ranks increased. New members brought new (and old) ideas with them, which fed into an initial self-consciousness about the leadership of a masculine public identity for the Panthers, some women and men in the Party challenged the characteristics as male-dominated and typical of the leadership of black manhood, and worked within its constraints to serve the interests of the entire black community. The stories of the BPP cannot be reduced to a monotheistic line on “the woman question,” or a linear progression from an overtly and overwhelmingly sexist organization to a pro-black feminist/womanist one. Instead, one must pay

I can see since the time I joined the Party that the Party has undergone radical change in the direction of women’s rights. For the first time we have come to realize that male chauvinism and all its manifestations are bourgeois and that one of the things we’re fighting against is a traditional, reactive, and revolutionary emancipation of women is primary (73).

The women in the interview also challenge black men to rethink their own definitions of manhood. One sister remarks that “it’s important that within the context of the struggle that black men understand that their manhood is not dependent on keeping their black women subordinated.”

Because of the heterogeneity of the Party, the articulation and representation of its ideology by its leadership was both varied and not easily reduced to a single interpretation. Such complexity, in combination with periods of rapid growth and periods of decline (such as surveillance and political education mechanisms could) not keep pace with rising membership numbers, contributed to a state of flux in the Party’s internal power relations. Nevertheless, an examination of the written and spoken communication of Party members reveals the complexities of their analyses, and their attempts, as a “vanguard party,” to articulate their ideology to each other and the masses of black people.

The examples thus far have been drawn from men and women speaking in an official capacity for the Party. There is, however, evidence in the newspapers of the Party and of individual Party members’ perspectives on questions of gender politics. These articles are very useful for the insights they present on how members interpreted the Party’s and other communities’ petting ideologies about gender roles and related them to their own experiences. The writer of a 1969 article examines black women’s role in their families and in the revolution. He argues that black women’s role is to use their special firmness and toughness to educate black men for engaging in armed self-defense. He sees Black men as inherently revolutionary – “curiously or uncuriously” – and women are for the most part selfless and subjective. In past times black men existed in a matriarchal society, where the women were the decision-makers to work. This condition created a feeling of superiority in black women... To a great extent her attitude explains the high rate of divorce among Panthar and other temptation.

This author’s assertions place black women squarely at the root of many of the problems in black communities. His statement affirms the basic premise of the Moyihan report as a means of dealing with the black condition.

In this Panther’s analysis, “black women have failed to see that this unbalanced economic condition helped to rob men of their manhood” (79). According to him, it is female chauvinism and black women’s complicity in the castration of black men primarily through the receipt of an alleged economic advantage that destroyed relationships.
Huey Newton had made pronouncements against male chauvinism and called for its eradication from the ranks of the BPP. In fact, point seven on the BPP’s “8 Points of Black Women’s Consciousness” did not exist (67). While this rule was limited in terms of clarity, detail and scope, Party members were required to memorize these points and correctly state them. At the very least, they probably sparked debate and discussion among the rank and file (68).

Panther women also began to make more prominent public pronouncements on gender relations in 1969. The analysis of gender as part and parcel of class struggle began to permeate “official” party rhetoric. In July 1969, Panther Roberta Lapp conducted a panel on women’s issues at the BPP-sponsored United Front Against Fascism (UFAP) Conference. In her speech, she confirms that there indeed is a struggle going on. She goes on to say that within the Panther Party and that people are “confused about the Black Panther Party on the women’s question.” She observes that “the Black Panther Party reflects the International Women’s Liberation Movement” because they are workers and oppressed because they are black. In addition, black women are oppressed by black men. The problem of male supremacy can’t be overcome unless it’s a two-way street. Men must struggle too.”

The following September, the Panthers published the article “Sisters,” which was widely circulated as a four-page leaflet entitled “Panther Sisters on Women’s Liberation.” Between 1967 and 1969, there was increased reporting of events by the Panthers and by Ericka Huggins and the revolutionary Vietnamese women; greater political analysis and understanding of the proletarian revolution within the Party; and forces of repression outside the Party. According to these women, “[o]ur use was to be a different use, it will be the use because sisters were relegated to certain duties. This was due to the backwardness and lack of political perspective on the part of both sisters and brothers” (72). Regarding the oppression of women, the interviewees reassess the class-based analysis presented earlier at the UFAP. One sister adds that attention to internal conflict as well as conflict overall, as well as covert manifestations of this dialogue, change over time, diversity of individual experiences, and interest in seeing the world exist. To not make it clear can be argued that the BPP at various points in its history was a male-centered, male-dominated organization, this point should be considered an important ideological and organizational contribution of its female members or of the men who resisted chauvinistic and sexist tendencies. Indeed, the divisions and creative energy and power discussions that came through them, of course, many other hegemonic and counterhegemonic theoretical constructs vary for prominence. These three are highlighted because of their impact on the consciousness of the period in general and on the BPP specifically.

One of the most popular proponents of black cultural nationalism, at least on the West Coast in the late 1960s, was the San Jose-based artist and educator Maulana Karenga. The US organization stressed the necessity for cultural awareness among blacks to be gained primarily through art, music, dance, drama, poetry, or invention – of dress, language, religion, and familial arrangements as well as the rejection of white supremacy. The relationship between Karenga, the US organization, and the BPP changed over time. Just as the Panthers’ own ideological positions changed. In the early years of the Party, Karenga participated in meetings and rallies in support of the BPP. However, over time as their respective ideologies were clarified and contradictions were exposed, the BPP became scathing critical of the US organization. Chiefly, the Party’s critique was based on the fact that Karenga’s group promoted cultural nationalism and black capitalism. Drawing on the theories of Frantz Fanon, the Panthers repeatedly asserted that cultural pride was a necessary phase in black people’s political development, before it could proceed to be addressed by the entire community/movement.

With the intention of recognizing the polymorphisms embedded in this stanza of African American history, I begin this chapter with an overview of the larger socio-political context in which these ideas were born and developed. I continue with an examination of some “official” representations of gender ideology by various BPP spokespeople. The weight of these ideological renderings of rank-and-file members. Finally, I present some examples of BPP theory in action in an attempt to assess the conflictual and creative tension between the two organizations.

Competing Gender Ideologies

The designation, conscious or otherwise, of specific gender-based roles for women and men within the Black Panther Party began with the party’s inception. Of course, this process used to be a difference in roles, it will be first to briefly examine the gendered context in which the Panthers operated. In addition to having their own ideas about the roles men and women should play in society and within the Party, the founders and members were also influenced by competing ideologies and vice versa. These competing ideologies could be either supportive of or opposed to the status quo of American society. Three such ideologies that bear mentioning because of their enormous impact on the period are cultural nationalism, feminism, and anti-essentialist stances on gender identity and phylogeny of pathology theories (10).

Three of these ideological discourses illustrate historian E. Frances White’s contention that “counter discourse struggles to forge new ideological terrains by questioning, destabilizing, and challenging the taken-for-grantedness of ideological discourses” (11). In other words, the oppositional rhetoric of the BPP challenged and was challenged by other “alternative” discourses and ideologies. The reality, of course, many other hegemonic and counterhegemonic theoretical constructs vary for prominence. These three are highlighted because of their impact on the consciousness of the period in general and on the BPP specifically. One of the most popular proponents of black cultural nationalism, at least on the West Coast in the late 1960s, was the San Jose-based artist and educator Maulana Karenga. The US organization stressed the necessity for cultural awareness among blacks to be gained primarily through art, music, dance, drama, poetry, or invention – of dress, language, religion, and familial arrangements as well as the rejection of white supremacy. The relationship between Karenga, the US organization, and the BPP changed over time. Just as the Panthers’ own ideological positions changed. In the early years of the Party, Karenga participated in meetings and rallies in support of the BPP. However, over time as their respective ideologies were clarified and contradictions were exposed, the BPP became scathing critical of the US organization. Chiefly, the Party’s critique was based on the fact that Karenga’s group promoted cultural nationalism and black capitalism. Drawing on the theories of Frantz Fanon, the Panthers repeatedly asserted that cultural pride was a necessary phase in black people’s political development, before it could proceed.
The role of the woman is to inspire her man, educate their children, and participate in social development... We say male supremacy is based on three things: tradition, acceptance, and the devil's concept. Our concept is complementary. Complementary means you complete or make perfect which is imperfect (16).

Karenga and other proponents of complementary gender roles for men and women rarely addressed the power imbalances between the roles prescribed. These theories also tended to rely heavily on biological determinism and notions of “natural order” in assigning and assessing separate roles for black women and men. In practice, complementary theory often led to ridiculous incidents of sexism even within US, such as when Panther Elaine Brown was told she had to wait to eat until the male “warriors” had been fed, and, on another occasion, a young woman was dragged on the ground for taking on a leadership role because it was declared a “man’s” job (17).

E. Frances White’s important article “Africa on My Mind: Gender, Counter Discourse, and African-American Nationalism” provides a thorough critique of various strains of cultural nationalism, including Karenga’s, that “can be radical and progressive in relation to white racism and conservative and reactionary to the internal organization of the black community.” As White points out, Karenga and other nationalists construct “collective political stances of African culture... that both counter racism... and construct utopian and regressive gender relations.” In particular, White points to the deficiencies of being student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) (24). Black women in black (mixed-gender) organizations did not necessarily relate to the label feminist as defined by the theories and activities of the predominantly white WLM organizations. However, this lack of identification for badges of masculinity. In fact, the reverse is true: the Party acted as it did because we were men. Many failed to perceive the difference” (58). Needless to say, his own preference, and thus the party’s policy, did not help clarify his arguments. In fact, even this reflection fails to address the limitations of such a male-centered definition of politics and continues to play the importance of black women to the life of the Party by promoting the misperception that all Panthers were male.

In this context of sexualized representations of race and gender politics, black men’s and women’s sexuality—how they defined themselves or were defined in terms of their sexual preferences, orientations, and practices—was an omission in between the social scientists and the Party. Many women’s activism was often described as related to the potential successes or failures of the movement and were integrated into the context of political behavior in specific situations. During Eldridge Cleaver’s 1968 presidential campaign, he promoted the idea of “pussy power,” women’s ability to work and be effective in the political and social fields. He told women, “Until he [sic] ready to pick up a gun and be a man, don’t give him no sugar. Politics comes from the lips of a pussy. I don’t know how you can stand to have them faggots laying in’ and suckin’ on you. You can always have a real man” (59). Here again, sex and women’s bodies, in particular, are viewed as commodities to be exchanged in service to the revolution. It can be argued that women and men both use sex/sexuality to exert an influence on the behavior of others in certain situations, and that there are sexual politics and power dynamics at work in the revolutionary context. This is precisely the type of thing to engage in sexual power struggles in personal relationships which in the context of a political organization/movement also has a black liberation in it, and because it is a core social influence to promote this as a preferred method of political praxis.

Also implied in the statement is an antity or heterosexist component to Cleaver’s and the BPP’s construction of a black man’s identity. “Real men” are identified only by their political commitment to joining the BPP, but also by their participation in “appropriate” sexual practices with a woman. “A black man who drops sex with a white woman, drops the male domination.” (20). For Scale, the link between race and sex is that both were practices of domination that fed upon each other through some unspecification process. He presented the BPP as a viable alternative to bi-racial politics in order to recognize the existence of male chauvinism within its ranks and refine its gender ideology. It may also have been an attempt to deflect negative attention away from the Party’s own contradictions on these issues.

A second ideological trend that influenced the social and political terrain of the 1960s is contained under the rubric of feminism and the predominantly white Women’s Liberation Movement (WLM). Many young women who were coming of age in the second wave of the feminist movement in the United States had been previously politically involved and developed their budding gender consciousness in the southern Black Freedom Movement and the New Left (21). For example, in 1965, responding to a buildup of gender tensions within Students for a Democratic Society (SDS) and a heightened recognition of their own capabilities, women in the organization pressed that group to issue a statement on women’s role in the student movement and women’s liberation (22). The growth of various factions in the women’s movement, such as radical feminism, lesbian separatism, and women of color or caucuses, continued throughout the decade and into the 1970s (23). Although early proponents of the WLM pro- fessed to encompass the issues, needs, and demands of all women, its initial definition of the term feminism, and its strategies, ideology, tactics, and membership, were domi- nated by white middle-class women.

The rise in visibility of a feminist women’s movement in the mid to late sixties is portrayed as the exclusive do- main of white women in most historical texts. While the proliferation of explicitly feminist organizations among white women cannot be denied, some of the earliest stirrings of an incipient gender consciousness can be found within the black community. Joni Eareckson’s first effort to bring such organizations among black student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) (24). Black women in black (mixed-gender) organizations did not necessarily relate to the label feminist as defined by the theories and activities of the predominantly white WLM organizations. However, this lack of identification for badges of masculinity. In fact, the reverse is true: the Party acted as it did because we were men. Many failed to perceive the difference” (58). Needless to say, his own preference, and thus the party’s policy, did not help clarify his arguments. In fact, even this reflection fails to address the limitations of such a male-centered definition of politics and continues to play the importance of black women to the life of the Party by promoting the misperception that all Panthers were male. People were arrested by the FBI on charges of murder, kidnap- ping and conspiracy in New Haven, Connecticut. Of the four leaders of the organization, Frances Carter, gave birth while under armed guard (63).

Eldridge Cleaver’s statement may seem somewhat unchar- acteristic at this point, yet it was likely the product of ongo- ing dialogue and struggle within the Party. While Cleaver did not clarify the steps that led to his revised perspective, his words reflect an intellectual or rational understanding of black women. In 1969, Huggins and two other Party leaders, undoubtedly, a more intuitive emphasis based on his own experiences of incarceration (64). Cleaver was a very articulate and strong, black, nonviolent movement of people. During Eldridge Cleaver’s 1968 presidential campaign, he suc- ceeded in building support for Huggins’ defense cam- paign as it was an edict to Party members. In any case, his statement reveals the ways in which women begin to assert their own concerns and claim space, and how they reveal a significant shift in the public rhetoric about roles for women in the Party:

I know Erica [sic], and I know that she’s a very strong sis- ter. But I know that she is now being subjected to a form of torture that is horrible... Let it be known that I represent all to the sisters, particularly all to all of the brothers, that we must understand that our suffering are suffering strongly and enthusiastically as we are participating in the struggle. The incarceration and the suffering of Sister Erica [sic] shows the alluring rebuke that black and white, male chauvinism... But that we must too realize that a woman can be just as revolutionary as a man and it doesn’t matter if she is a woman. In other words... revolution... revolutionary standards of principles demand that we go to great lengths to see to it that disciplinary action is taken on all levels against those who manifest manly chau- vinism behavior.

Because the liberation of women is one of the most impor- tant issues facing the world today... I know from my own experiences that the... demand for liberation of women in Black America is huge... and if we are not careful it’s going to destroy our ranks, destroy our or- ganization, because women want to be liberated just as all people want to be liberated. So it is not a question of... In this statement, previous disparities between women’s and men’s roles are discredited, rhetorically at least. Cleaver goes on to say that “if we want to go around and call ourselves a revolutionary organization, then we’ve got to be... the vanguard also in the area of women’s liberation, and set an example in that area... [Sisters] have a duty and the right to do whatever they want to do in order to see to it that they’re not relegated to an inferior position” (66). Cleaver challenged the notion of gender-specific role models and called on both women and men to learn from

Women, Free Huey Rally, Oakland (1968). Photo by Pickle Jones
philosophy of Malcolm X, and the fact that he spent time in prison (like Malcolm) (51). It is an interesting and rarely commented on point that one of the key leaders of the BPP was a convicted and self-described rapist. His reflections on rape in Soul on Ice are bleak and challenging. He redefined his technique for raping white women by “practicing” on black women. Although Cleaver repudiated his previous assessment as an “unconventional and reactionary” in the book, he maintains that “the black man’s sick attitude toward the white woman is a revolutionary sickness” which has to be dealt with openly and resolved for the sake of the nation as a whole (52). These were the themes, the explicit authorial voice, in one key passage of the book in which he promotes women as members (especially on the West Coast) and often cited as influential by male Party leaders (53).

Using exaggerated stereotypes and caricatures in Soul on Ice, Cleaver describes in some detail his assessment of the historical relationship between blacks and whites, and women and men. Black men are described as “supermasculine” menials who, during slavery, were stripped of their mental abilities and capacities by the men, the “omnipotent administrators.” White women, allegedly idealized by all men, are dubbed “superfeminine freaks.” And black women, denied any semblance of femininity because of their “domestic role,” are characterized as “subfeminine” or “submasculine.” In this description, Cleaver hypothesizes that black women hold black men in contempt because of their inability to be “real men.”

In this analysis, Cleaver corroborates other racist and sexist descriptions of slavery and black male/female relations that cast black men as victims of collaboration in the oppression/caste system of black men. According to Cleaver, the interactions among these various groups explain the basis of gender and racial differences, with the ultimate battle being between “the Omnipotent Administrator and the Supermasculine Male for control of the Superfeminine Female.” What Cleaver describes here is a racialized struggle for male supremacy between black and white men for sexual access to white women and control of black women, as well as (childbearing) capacities of black women. References to capitalism and the division of labor in the workplace are absent. Class struggle is reduced to a psychological power struggle over sexual territory in which sex and women’s bodies are commodities to be possessed and controlled by men.

Huey P. Newton reiterated and expanded the thesis presented by Cleaver. As part of this, it is evident that this is to be found in Newton’s exposition on the legacy of slavery in the U.S.: “The historical relationship between black and white here in America has been the relationship between the slave and the master, the master being the mind and the slave the body… The master took the manhood from the slave because he stripped him of a man… In the process the master stripped himself of individuality and impinged upon the slave-master to become very envious of the slave because he pictured the slave as being more of a man, being superior because the penis is part of the body. He attempted to bind the penis of the slave… he physiologically wants to castrate the black man” (56).

Newton goes on to describe the black liberation movement in terms of the black man’s search for unity of his body with his mind, in order “to gain respect from his woman.” Because women want one who can control… [if] he [the black man] is experienced enough to just let him know he will lose all fear and will be free to determine his destiny… The Black Panther Party acted all with revolutionary Black Power (57). Here Newton reasserts the desirability of black male domination and black female acquiescence, while assuming that one woman can control one man. He misses the term “balls” in a metaphorical sense to refer to the courage and bravery required to stand up to the oppressor (which could possibly be attributable to a man or woman). Yet his comment about black women’s alleged desire to be controlled interrelates with the notion that phrases like “recapturing our balls” and “regaining our manhood” are merely figures of speech. Instead, this language is linked to specific practices. Its usage in this context seems to preclude the possibility that black women can be an active part of this process of resistance to oppression and clearly asserts an “self-identified man” as the active agent referred to him as a tool to Black liberation. In essence, black men must learn to be better patriarchs. Black women, too, will be reconstructed in the process by manhandling not only to respect, but defer to black male authority.

These theoretical formulations give us important clues about gender role construction within the Party as it was put forth by key men in leadership positions. Here, women are always characterized in terms of an active or passive role in black liberation struggle. In male Party leaders’ historical analyses, black women are either viewed as co-conspirators in the castration process or idle sideline observers waiting for black men to get their balls back. Meanwhile, men are the primary actors and agents of change and the protectors of children, women, and communities. Much of the assertions in the majority culture that place men were in- deed suitable to the role of political or civil rights leadership, if they do not enforce patriarchic/male dominance in their sexual and family arrangements. At the same time, such assertions are charged with negative attributes of the black woman, women who reject such gender hierarchies, and they present no viable alternative models of male/female (hetero)sexual interaction.

In hindsight, Newton would write that it was a common misconception at the time – that the party was searching with the terms “feminist” or “women’s lib” should not preclude recognizing that black women who organized on issues, such as police brutality, racism, poverty, imperialism, and so forth, bore responsibility for the development of black liberation movement. In fact, their influence and leadership in these struggles have an impact on all of these issues. Women’s liberation is not a separate issue but is of collective concern. They do not have the luxury to view all of these issues as indeed black women’s issues, as well as concerns for the community as a whole. Their participation in black organizations was often crucial to a recognition of the sexism in some of those organizations and of the racism and middle-class biases of many women’s groups. Historian Deborah King reminds us that “black feminist concerns… have existed well over a century before civil rights activists began to speak out for women’s issues in the 1970s” (26). Nor did they need to rely on white women’s organizations and theories to define the terms of their womanhood or political interests.

The Black Panther Party came into direct contact with various patterns of thinking in a libertarian ideology. The level of these interactions differed between chapters and even varied from person to person. In some areas, local WLM groups organized fundraisers and rallies for Panther political prisoners. For example, an article in The Black Panther newspaper reported the attendance of more than five thousand people at a rally in support of the Panther New Haven 14 in protest of the particularly cruel treatment of imprisoned Panther women. According to the author of that article:

Black Panther Party Chapters and Branches, and Women’s Liberation groups from Massachusetts, Connecticut, New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Maryland, and Washington: for the first time, the major women’s groups from the New Haven Chapter of the Black Panther party, and Women’s Liberation groups mostly from New York, the act of show support by hordes of pig women’s groups…against the people’s servants – the Black Panther Party (27).

The Party did not have an official position on the ideologies and tactics of WLM organizations until Huey P. Newton’s statement concerning the “Black Women’s Liberation Movements” in August 1970, calling for the formation of working coalitions with the revolutionary factions of both movements. The statement went on: “While Panther Party members had a variety of critical perspectives. Some of us think that the activities of the local WLM groups were forthcoming from Panther women. Panther women (and men) eventually came to the conclusion that the struggle must be independent from the traditional Party. Black liberation struggle, but the Party felt the need to make more formal pronouncements on the issues in part because of the growth and visibility of the WLM (29).

Panther sisters stated in a 1969 interview that to the extent that women’s liberation organizations don’t address the class struggle or to national liberation struggles they are not really furthering the women’s liberation movement, because “[o]ther women… and in this country there’s going to have to be a socialist revolution. Their critique of various women’s lib organizations grew from a critical evaluation of activist experiences. Hence, the WLM viewed “the contradictions among men and women as one of the major contradictions in capitalist society… and developed it into an antagonistic contra- diction, when actually it is a contradiction among people. It’s a contradiction of the society that men and women act in. Women also acknowledged that black women’s relationship to black men was qualitatively different from gender relationships in white society. Black Panther leader Kathleen Cleaver stated that “the problems of black women and the problems of white women are so completely diverse they cannot even be seen in a single category, nor met by the same type of activity…” I can understand how a white woman cannot relate to a black man. And I feel sorry for white women who have to deal with that type of people [sic] (31).

In addition to such theoretical differences, the BPP women interviewed also questioned the structure and practice of some women’s liberation organizations. One sister rejected the anti-male and female separatist structures and strategies employed by some organizations as “illogical… because they are not connected to the struggle.” You can’t be liberated from male chauvinism if you don’t even deal with it – if you run away from it” (32). Although some other black women rejected the causes and separatist groups outright, others agreed that they should be judged by their practice and reserve commitment to the anti-oppression principle of the BLM. These formations furthered the struggle for socialism. Although women in the BPP generally chose not to work in female-only organizations, and most did not think of themselves as feminists, this did not necessarily mean that they accepted male chauvinism or sexism. Most expected to be treated as equals by black men and women. The development of new black women’s roles in the movement…

A final important piece of the ideological landscape of this period that influenced thinking about gender concerned the alleged structural and cultural deficiencies of the capitalist society. Development of “the Family: A Case for National Action, published in March 1965 under the auspices of the U.S. Department of Labor, became the cornerstone of the debate in a variety of settings. Moynihan’s report used sociological, historical, anecdotal, and statistical information regarding the status of black families to draw the conclusions that black
families were matriarchal, that black men were unable to fulfill the roles required of men in a patriarchal society, and that the resulting pattern of female-headed households was largely responsible for the pathology, which black people found themselves. According to Moynihan, "the Negro community has been forced into a matriarchal pattern as a result of the breakdown of the white family in the rest of the American society, seriously retards the progress of the group as a whole and imposes a crushing burden on the negro male, and in consequence, on a great many Negro women as well" (33).

The ideas presented in this report, which suggested a change in focus for the government's civil rights policies, were even more shocking. It came from all sectors of black communities, including academics, grassroots activists, politicians, service providers, artists, and intellectuals. While the implications of the Moynihan report on the internal debate in the black community were important, this should not be confused with the occasions about a black matriarchy, black male castration, and the like. Moynihan inserted himself, and by extension, the federal government and the media, into previously existing discussions within black communities. Moynihan built upon earlier works on black family structure to buttress his claims, especially E. Franklin Frazier’s The Negro Family in the United States (35).

Direct references to the Moynihan report in BPP literature are few. However, engagements of its major theses can be found in vitriol, by Panthers on black family structure, slavery, and the sexual politics of black-white relations. In this 1967 essay “Fear and Doubt,” Huey P. Newton wrote that “he had the sense that in the past, less than a man... Often his wife (who is able to secure a job as a maid, cleaning for white people) is the breadwinner. He is, therefore, a mother-figure by his wife and children. He is ineffectual both in and out of the home. He cannot provide for, or protect his family... Society will not acknowledge him as a man” (36).

Newton was not far from Moynihan in his assessment of the dilemma of black men. In an era in which black men’s seeming inability to live up to the patriarchal norms of the larger society in particular. In this instance, Newton failed to chart the role of men as sole providers and protectors of black families while corroborating the opinion that black women were of little respect and dominated black men, and were privileged with economic advantages at the expense of black manhood.

Discussions within the party regarding gender roles and responses related to the thesis of black matriarchy and cultural pathology in varied and sometimes contradictory ways. Panthers could condemn the racism of the larger society in its assessment of black families and reject the notion that black culture is inherently pathological, while at the same time affirming an ideal of male-dominated gender relations. To complicate matters further, Newton’s own questioning of the validity and usefulness of “the bourgeois approach which he detested - enslaving and suffocating experience,” eventually led the Party to experiment with communal living and communal sexual structure. Although Black Panther notions of nuclear family structures might be perceived as radical, an acceptance of male dominance within these alternative arrangements - was diminished somewhat in the awareness of the realities of the larger social environment (42). The development of an overt and public discourse within the Party about male chauvinism also intensified in late 1968 and continued throughout 1969. As will become clearer, each of these events influenced the ideological and practical development of the BPP.

Initially, for the Panthers, as for many other black groups in this period, the quest for liberation was directly connected to the "regaining" of black manhood. This was evident in much of the Party’s early language and ideology about gender roles generally, and men’s roles in particular. In fact, the Black Panther Party for Self-Defense was an all-male organization at the outset (45). From the first issue of the official Party newspaper, The Black Panther, leaders Huey Newton, Bobby Seale, and Eldridge Cleaver presented a gendered vision of the Party’s potential composition. A recruitment call read:

The BLACK PANTHER PARTY FOR SELF-DEFENSE really has something going. These Brothers are the cream of black manhood. They are there for the protection and defense of our black community... BLACK MEN!!! It is your duty to your women and children, to your mothers and sisters, to investigate the program of the PARTY (46).

Men were the primary recruitment targets of early Panther campaigns. The language in this statement clearly asserted the role of black men as protectors of women and children - self-defense and the concept that the Negro male was ideally suited to know what’s happening. But the brothers on the block who the man’s been calling thugs and hoodlums for four hundred years, son say, ‘Them same out of sight of thugs and hoodlums up there!’... Well, they’ve been calling us niggas, thugs and hoodlums for four hundred years, that ain’t gon’ hurt me, I’m going to check out what these brothers are doing” (47).

Here, Seale continued to create a self-consciously masculinist, “lumpen” public identity for the Party that served to balance out the New Black Woman of 1968, when the paramilitary functions of the organization were less prominent (48). Statements such as these, along with the Party’s militaristic style and male dominated national (leadership) structures, suggested a particular definition of black masculinity that assumed men had the skill, inclination, and obligation to fight while women (inversely, women (and children) did not. In many ways, this posturing was an attempt to counter racist and anti-working class biases, and irresponsible, incapable, and emasculated patriarchs. At the same time that the Party’s alternative self-representation was given a firm pedagogical grounding in pride from sectors of black communities, they also mirrored the restrictive gender codes of the larger society that limited the options of both women and men. In other words, the public image was interpreted and exploited by mainstream media in ways that capitalized on white people’s fear of allegedly black male masculinity in the form of an armed and dangerous black male.

While the ten-point platform and program of the BPP ostensibly outlined the needs of the entire black community, the other rhetoric of Party leaders presented a less gender-inclusive message. In a series of formal statements by Newton and Seale linked black oppression to black male castration and focused squarely on the sexual politics of gender, the Party may have undermined the Party’s public positions on questions of gender took on increasingly sexual overtones.

Perhaps the most extensive and most often reference pre sentations of the Party’s stance on women was through Eld ridge Cleaver in his best-seller Soul on Ice (50). Cleaver joined the BPP in February of 1967. Prior to this, he had been released on parole December 12, 1966 after serving nine years of a one-to-fourteen year sentence for rape. Newton and Seale were impressed by Cleaver’s speaking and writing abilities, his commitment to the self-defense movement, and his potential to reach a wide audience.

Kathleen Cleaver (far left), communications secretary for the Black Panther Party, talks with other party members before a Free Huey rally in Defremery Park, Oakland, 1968.