

4STRUGGLEMAG

from the hearts and minds of north american political prisoners and friends



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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

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love 4SM

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Global Resistance ● Poetry ● and more

Welcome to 4strugglemag

You have just come to a dynamic and unique publication, where Truth (real and raw) speaks to power. This magazine focuses the insights and experiences of U.S. political prisoners on major issues of the day. While a lot of the writing is by political prisoners, other activists, allies, revolutionaries and insightful outside voices are included. We publish 3 issues a year and all back issues remain posted on the website (4strugglemag.org).

4strugglemag is an independent non-sectarian revolutionary voice. We are unapologetically anti-imperialist and solidly in support of progressive National Liberation, especially the struggles of New African/Black, Mexicano/Chicano, Puerto Rican and Native American Nations presently controlled by U.S. imperialism. Reflecting the work and principles of political prisoners held by the United States, 4strugglemag advocates for Justice, Equality, Freedom, Socialism, Protection of our Mother Earth, Human Rights and Peace.

www.4strugglemag.org is primarily an e-magazine, but hard copies are available (free to prisoners, \$6 an issue for people outside -- yearly \$15 subscriptions are available). We encourage readers to respond, critique and carry on discussions in the magazine. We have a discussion board at www.4strugglemag.org/board, and we welcome email and mail at our P.O. Box. We value and encourage feedback and discussion. The address of each political prisoner is posted with their article so people can directly communicate with them (no political prisoners have access to the internet). We like dialog, but we are not going to print racist or pro-imperialist messages, so you government agents and klansmen don't bother wasting your time.

Each issue of 4strugglemag focuses on at least 3 main topics. Additional unrelated poems, graphics, essays, announcements and more are included. Unsolicited writings and graphics are accepted and welcomed. We won't guarantee printing, but we'd like to see your work. This and other correspondence should be sent via regular mail to the following address: (remember it costs 69 cents to send a letter to Canada from the U.S.).

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or via email to:
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Jaan Laaman, editor
anti-imperialist political prisoner

Call for contributors

4strugglemag is looking for quality writing that contributes to critical, revolutionary thought and reflection. In particular, we are interested in the following:

Feature articles: We're looking for in depth, analytical articles that critically examine a particular issue, historical occurrence, political idea, or current event. We are looking for well-researched articles that broaden and challenge revolutionary thought. If you are in need of research help, don't hesitate to ask. We may be able to help supply some of the resources needed in order to write a well-informed piece. We can also help with the editing and/or process. Let us know if you have any idea.

Book reviews: Is there a book you'd like to review for 4strugglemag? Let us know. If you don't have the book, we can arrange to get it to you.

Letters: We love to hear from you. Please let us know if we have permission to print your letter in the next issue.

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53. Seale, *Seize the Time*, 247-48, 266-68.
55. Cleaver, "The Primeval Mitosis," in *Soul on Ice*, 176-90.
56. Huey P. Newton, "Huey P. Newton Talks to the Movement" (Chicago: SDS, 1968).
57. *Ibid.*, 506-8.
58. Newton, *Revolutionary Suicide*, 133 (emphasis in original).
59. Robert Igriega, "Eldridge for 'Pussy Power,'" *Open City* (Los Angeles), 9 August 1968, 1; Eldridge Cleaver, "Speech to the Nebraska Peace and Freedom Party Convention," 24 August 1968, 22.
60. For more on conservative constructions of sexuality among black nationalists, see White, "Africa on My Mind," 75, 81-82.
61. Newton, "The Women's Liberation and Gay Liberation Movements: 15 August 1970," in *To Die for the People*, 154. In this statement, Newton still tends to associate homosexuality (and feminism) with whiteness.
62. For one example of a disapproving reaction to Newton's statement from Chicago Panthers, see J.F. Rice, *Up on Madison Down on 75th Street: A History of the Illinois Black Panther Party* (Evanston, IL: J.F. Rice/The Committee, 1983), 53.
63. Cappy Pinderhughes, "Free Our Sisters," *The Black Panther*, 6 December 1969.
64. Kathleen Cleaver, phone interview with author, 27 November 1994.
65. Eldridge Cleaver, "Message to Sister Erica Huggins of the Black Panther Party, Excerpt from Tape of Eldridge Breaking His Silence from Somewhere in the Third World," *The Black Panther*, 5 July 1969.
66. *Ibid.*, 99.
67. See Appendix B, "8 Points of Attention," reprinted in Foner, *The Black Panthers Speak*, 6.
68. Seale, *Seize the Time*, 374-76.
69. Margie Stamberg, "Women at the UFAF and After," *Guardian*, 2 August 1969, 5.
71. Anon., "Panther Sisters on Women's Liberation," in Heath, ed. *Off the Pigs!*, 339. One name mentioned during the interview is "Roberta," presumably the same woman from the UFAF panel.
72. *Ibid.*, 339.
73. *Ibid.*, 341.
74. *Ibid.*, 343 (emphasis added).
75. Jamal Joseph, interview with the author, 30 September 1994; Harlem, New York.
78. Anonymous, "'Subjectivism'... from a Male's point of view." *The Black Panther*, March 1969, 9.
79. *Ibid.*
80. Linda Greene, "The Black Revolutionary Woman," *The Black Panther*, 28 September 1968, 11.
81. Gloria Bartholomew, "A Black Woman's Thoughts," *The Black Panther*, 28 September 1968, 11.
82. Anonymous, "Black Woman, By a Black Revolutionary," *The Black Panther*, 14 September 1968, 6.

83. Assata Shakur, *Assata: An Autobiography* (London: Zed Books, Ltd; and Chicago: Lawrence Hill Books, 1987), 223-24.
84. *Ibid.*, 223.
86. Jamal Joseph, interview with the author, 30 September 1994; Harlem, New York.
87. Newton, *To Die for the People*, 15.
88. Elsa Barkely Brown, "Womanist Consciousness," in *Black Women in America*, ed. Mason et al., 194.
89. Connie Matthews, interview with the author, June 26, 1991, Kingston, Jamaica.
90. Assata Shakur, interview with the author, July 30, 1993, Havana, Cuba; Assata Shakur, *Assata: An Autobiography* (Westport, CT: Lawrence Hill and Company, 1987), 20.
91. Shakur, *Assata*, 204.
92. For specific mainstream media articles about Joan Bird, see *New York Post*, May 14, July 7, December 1970; and *New York Times*, July 7 and 15, 1970; For information about Afeni Shakur, see *New York Times*, July 15, 1970. About Ericka Huggins, see *New York Times*, December 2, 1969, and March 22, 1970.
93. Heath, *Off the Pigs!* 100; See also *The Black Panther*, September 7, 1986, 7.
94. Frankye Malika Adams, interview with the author, September 29, 1994, Harlem, New York.
95. *Ibid.*; Adams stresses that although men also participated in these programs, women organized and led them.
96. "FBI Airtel from Director to SAC's in 27 field offices," May 15, 1969, cited in Huey P. Newton, "War Against the Panthers: A Study of Repression in America" (Ph.D. Diss., University of California, June 1980), 109.
97. Janet Cyril, interview with the author, September 29, 1994, Brooklyn, NY.
98. For additional definitions of these terms, see Churchill and Vander Wall, *Agents of Repression*, 49-51.
99. Frankye Malika Adams, interview with the author, September 29, 1994, Harlem, New York.
100. *Ibid.*
101. Assata Shakur, interview with the author, July 30, 1993, Havana Cuba.
103. Michael Eric Dyson, "The Panthers, Still Untamed, Roars Back," review of Gramercy film, *New York Times*, April 30, 1995, 17, 25.
104. Michael Robinson, "The Van Peebleses Prowl Through the Panthers' History," *American Visions*, 10, 2 (April/May 1995): 16-18.
105. See House Committee on Internal Security, "Gun Barrel Politics: The Black Panther Party, 1966-1971," 92d Cong., 1st sess., 1971, H. Rept. 92-470.

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.

1. The quote in the chapter title is from an interview with Kathleen Cleaver cited in Philip S. Foner, ed., *The Black Panthers Speak* (Philadelphia: Lippincott, 1970), 145.

5. For examples of primary sources written in the 1960s and 1970s, see Gene Marine, *The Black Panthers*, and Huey P. Newton, *Revolutionary Suicide* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1973); G. Louis Heath, ed., *Off the Pigs: The History and Literature of the Black Panther Party* (Metuchen, NJ: Scarecrow Press, 1976).

8. Evelyn Brooks Higginbotham, “African-American Women’s History and the Metalanguage of Race,” *Signs* 17.2 (Winter 1992): 225, 274.

9. Elsa Barkley Brown, “African-American Women’s Quilting: A Framework for Conceptualizing and Teaching African-American Women’s History,” in *Black Women in America: Social Science Perspectives*, ed. Micheline R. Malson et al. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988), 9-18.

10. Daniel Patrick Moynihan, *The Negro Family: The Case for National Action* (Office of Policy Planning and Research, U.S. Department of Labor, March 1965).

11. E. Frances White, “Africa on My Mind: Gender, Counter Discourse and African-American Nationalism,” *Journal of Women’s History* 2, 1 (Spring 1990): 80.

14. Ward Churchill and Jim Vander Wall, *Agents of Repression: The FBI’s Secret Wars Against the Black Panther Party and the American Indian Movement* (Boston: South End Press, 1988).

15. For example, see *The Black Panther*, February 2, 1969, 3; and March 3, 1969, 4; Newton, *Revolutionary Suicide*, 255; and Louis Tackwood and The Citizens Research and Investigation Committee, *The Glass House Tapes* (New York: Avon Books, 1973), 105.

16. Clyde Halisi, ed., *The Quotable Karenga* (Los Angeles: US Organization, 1967), 27-28.

17. Elaine Brown, *A Taste of Power: A Black Woman’s Story* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1992), 109; Angela Davis, *Angela Davis: An Autobiography* (New York International Publishers, 1974, 1988), 161.

18. White, “Africa on My Mind,” 73-77.

20. Bobby Seale, “Bobby Seale Explains Panther Politics,” *The Guardian*, February 1970, 4, US’s anti-white polemics were interpreted as “black racism” by the BPP.

21. Sara Evans, *Personal Politics: The Roots of Women’s Liberation in the Civil Rights Movement and the New Left* (New York: Vintage Books, 1979), 57, 193-95.

22. Alice Echols, *Daring to Be Bad: Radical Feminism in America, 1967-1975* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1989), 34-35.

23. See Echols, *Daring to Be Bad*, for an excellent account of the politics and activities of white radical and cultural feminists.

24. See Robin Morgan, ed., *Sisterhood is Powerful* (New York:

Vintage Books, 1970), xxi.

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

26. Deborah King, “Multiple Jeopardy, Multiple Consciousness: The Context of a Black Feminist Ideology,” *Signs* 14, 1 (Autumn 1988).

27. Cappy Pinderhughes, “Free Our Sisters,” *The Black Panther*, 6 December 1969, 2.

28. Huey Newton, “The Women’s Liberation and Gay Liberation Movements: 15 August, 1970,” in *To Die for the People: The Writings of Huey Newton* (New York: Vintage Books, 1972), 152-55.

29. Kathleen Cleaver in a telephone conversation with the author, 27 November 1994.

30. Anonymous, “Black Panther Sisters Talk about Women’s Liberation,” pamphlet reprinted from *The Movement* (September 1969).

31. “Black Scholar Interviews Kathleen Cleaver,” *Black Scholar* (December 1971): 56.

32. Anon., “Panther Sisters on Women’s Liberation” in *Off the Pigs!*, ed., Heath, 348, “Sisters,” in *The Black Panther*, 13 September 1969, 12.

33. Lee Rainwater and William L. Yancey, *The Moynihan Report and the Politics of Controversy* (Cambridge, MA: The M.I.T. Press, 1967), 75.

35. E. Franklin Frazier, *The Negro Family in the United States* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994).

36. Newton, *To Die for the People*, 81.

37. White, “Africa on My Mind,” 79.

39. Quote from Elaine Brown, “A Black Panther Song,” reprinted in Foner, ed., *The Black Panthers Speak*, 31.

41. Heath, ed. *Off the Pigs!*, 96-108.

42. Foner, ed. *The Black Panthers Speak*, xviii-xix; Bobby Seale, *Seize the Time: The Story of the Black Panther Party and Huey Newton* (Baltimore: Black Classic Press, 1991).

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

46. “Armed Black Brothers in the Richmond Community,” *The Black Panther*, 25 April 1967, 5.

47. Bobby Seale, “Free Huey,” in *Rhetoric of Black Revolution*, ed. Arthur L. Smith (Boston: Allyn and Bacon, 1969), 177-78.

48. Elsewhere, Seale wrote that women comprised about sixty percent of the BPP membership by 1968. See Bobby Seale, *A Lonely Rage: The Autobiography of Bobby Seale* (New York: Times Books, 1978), 177.

49. See Appendix A, “What We Want, What We Believe,” BPP Platform and Program, reprinted in Foner, ed. *The Black Panthers Speak*, 2-4.

50. Eldridge Cleaver, *Soul on Ice* (New York: Dell, 1968).

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

52. Cleaver, *Soul on Ice*, 14-16.

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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 afrikan 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. With that, a 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 hit black America in over a century. What little remains of a domestic manufacturing sector sinks into non-existence, unattended while finance capital is showered with public monies. Thousands of evictions, foreclosures, firings, layoffs, and incarcerations play out hourly in working and poor communities. It seems as though the dream so touted as being realized 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 hard lessons borne of struggle and study. The voices of POWs, 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 marries those movements to failure. We see the successes and continued struggle of people as far removed from each other as Greece, El Salvador and Vancouver. From inside the empire, solidarity can be built with Palestine, even as death rains down on its people. As with the article 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 Jaan Laaman. He was being transferred from Massachusetts to Arizona, where he has begun serving a federal sentence. While 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 4struggle 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 about 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 Afrikan Prison Struggle by Sundiata 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 prison issues and statistics as well as other organizations that support prisoners' issues, I know Canada fails to be the 'civilized and democratic' society it claims if more and more people 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. Sin-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.

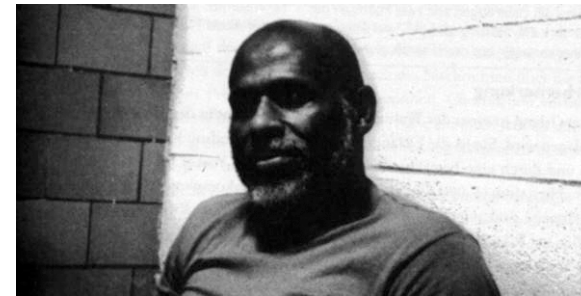
In the December 16, 2005 issue of The Daily (Statcan.ca) it states the decline in the use of provincial parole over a decade had decreased by 76% and 25% federally. Fear and Risk Assessment, a.k.a. crystal-balling by POs, politicians, cops, et al likely plays the biggest role in the decline. Recently, I've also been in touch with Janet Polivy 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. Polivy 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 work.

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 Hameed

BY RUSSELL MAROON SHOATZ
September 11, 2008

For over 40 years, Bashir Hameed, dedicated his life to the struggle for Black Liberation and the uplifting of humanity in general. As a former member of both the Black Panther Party and the Black Liberation 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 struck 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 masses of downtrodden and propel them to sweep away all manner of injustice. Until then, we will remember the Martyr Bashir Hameed and draw strength and courage from the selfless example he set. LONG LIVE THE MARTYR BASHIR HAMEED!

Descant 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 (submit about six poems), short stories, novel excerpts, plays, essays, interviews, musical scores and visual presentations. Standards for acceptance are high. We receive a large number of submissions every 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 jpgs or pdf, preferably Mac format, but PC is acceptable. As with writing, we do not accept email submission or links to websites.

Return: Our preferred method of responding to submissions is by email; note that should you choose to have us communicate using this method, unsuccessful applications will be recycled following our response. If you would prefer a paper response and/or your manuscript returned, include a SASE (self-addressed stamped envelope) with adequate Canadian postage or International Reply Coupons. 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 works (occasionally longer, often shorter). Descant pays a \$100 honourarium upon publication.

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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 their side of the story, so too the bosses' 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 but hardly 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 they feel aren't accurate. This is only the starting point.



Capitalism: An economic system in which property owners (capitalists) pay wages to workers at less than what 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. In other words, within capitalism, the lazy few get rich off thieving 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 capital's reliance on colonialism.

Imperialism: The process of building empire – a system of interconnected colonial outposts that are politically 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 above 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 a black president but will surely wage 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's will expresses the will of the nation!"), and violently repressive towards opposition ("Welcome to Attica"). In practice, fascism erupts when the capitalists give up on 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. White supremacist 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 having some difficulty. It's difficult to do many things when trapped in a cage but we must struggle on. Professor Bob Gaucher 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
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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 fellas – we the condemned exiles whose plight within the CJS is much like – to borrow a phrase from comrade Bell – Sisypheus in hell without hope of a brighter future.

Concerning my position here I am an old school militant whose theoretical views are still fairly constant in the actuality of perceiving something far greater than this notion of westernized democracy. Like here 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 synch 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 which issues of cultural 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 receiv-

ing 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 process I was transferred to where I'm 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, Sundiata Acoli, Mumia Abu-Jamal, Jalil Muntaqim and more. The primary reason for this is that I've set a campaign for myself. That campaign is to build a bridge of solidarity connecting the patriarchs of north-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 Frantz Fanon's encouragement to enlist 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 (LPOs). 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 somewhat as a voice and a message not only to the "patriarchs" and such recognized up-and-coming revolutionary organizations as the WPO and the New Afrikans, 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." Its 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 readership (amongst the lumpen-proletariat) but also demonstrate to our readership that there are recognized revolutionary organizations, 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. Hoping to see smoke on the horizon. ‘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 see the smoke from here. We search the internet for wafts 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 riotshield 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 had it comin’ for some time now. I was there a few (bunch?) years ago and there was civil war. Anarchists were real. And so were fascists (who are less-real 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 when 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 it seems. We cannot google ‘leader’ and hit any results. The pre-planned general strike went ahead and added smoke to the air and did not put out the fires or remove the barricades. If allowed to choose our dreams we dream 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 proletarian? In the country that produced the concept of history, its history is relevant here. 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 got 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 reassured.

So far, hundreds of buildings have been destroyed, dozens of cops have received retribution, copshops and prisons set alight, as well as at least one (above mentioned) Christmas tree (out front of parliament!). The stats of our side don’t matter. Let’s not make this an equation. Let’s take what we can get. And is this 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 ‘98, the people went with them. Escalating into full-blown insurrection, students and teachers and workers threw-down together against the Greek police. At first were the contradictions and dynamics that turn us lazy organizers away, but ‘the teachers’ had a chance to meet the ‘trouble makers,’ familiarize themselves with masked people and mask up themselves ... many of the teachers who discredited the stone throwing on Friday helped make molotov 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 we here too can strive to create: ‘the flying pickets (striking work-



The increase in police activities in which the feds 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 corruption, as we were able to confirm during the Roselló administration. That is why the government must increase repressive measures. And that is why Fortuño named FBI agent José Figueroa Sancha 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 Fortuño and Barack Obama 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 denounce them, without fear. We join with the people in demanding justice and freedom.

The Table of Solidarity Against Repression
April 2, 2009

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In support of the Cuban 5, fight prisons everywhere

BY GINA MARIELA RODRIGUEZ

On September 12, 1998, five Cuban men were arrested and falsely accused of illegal espionage activities against the US government. The five—Antonio Guerrero, Fernando González, Gerardo Hernández, Ramón Labañino, and René González—worked for the Cuban government as undercover agents sent to spy not on the activities of the US but on Miami based anti-Cuba terrorist organizations that attempt to overthrow 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 1998 and who was responsible for the 1976 bombing of Cuban Flight 455 which killed 73 people, the majority of them teenagers. While Miami-based anti-Cuba terrorist organizations often work with immunity, the Cuban Five, who never committed a violent act, have faced unjust imprisonment. First, the men were held in solitary confinement in a Miami jail for seventeen months before being convicted and sentenced in 2001 to four life terms and 75 years collectively. They were granted an unfair trial in Miami—where anti-Cuba sentiment is high—and appeals for a new and fair trial were denied in 2005. The case is now being petitioned to appear before the Supreme Court.

The 1959 Revolution was fought as a popular movement that after its victory nationalized formerly US-owned industries and expropriated lands that were rightfully theirs. This attack on US imperial aggression was celebrated throughout the world and within freedom fighter movements in the US. Cuba, as a nation, as a military, has not and will not be a threat to the US. Yet the idea of Cuba, as a sovereign nation in the US’s backyard, is. In response, the US government has done all it can to bring down the Castro regime. The US trade embargo against Cuba has economically strangled the island for close to 50 years, keeping basic necessities such as food and medicine from entering 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 Hemispheric Institute for Security Cooperation in 2000) aided the training of thousands of Central and Latin American soldiers in physiological and physical torture techniques. These soldiers then returned to their home countries and worked alongside US intelligence and interests in preventing further “communist” developments in Latin America. It is clear then, why people in the struggle against Ameriklan empire are quick to support the Castro regime and those who work in the name of it. This is why At 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 problems and it is certainly not without its prisons. We can guess that Obama’s win is not going to bring any significant changes to the ways the Ameriklan government imprisons people (or the motivations behind those the Empire imprisons). Castro has been teaching 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-industrial relationship there, too. And brown and black police in Cuba imprison brown and black Cuban citizens everywhere. What are we to do with that?

Puerto Rico solidarity against repression

April 3, 2009

Dating from November 19, 2008, the Table of Solidarity Against Repression warned people of the continuing tendency 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 nomination of FBI agent Figueroa Sancha to head the Police was necessary for the success of the comprehensive plan that the businessmen who run the government of Luis Fortuño had 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, FURA, SWAT, and others, supposedly to prepare them for possible social uprisings which the economic measures to be implemented by Fortuño would cause.

2. The difference between federal authorities and Puerto Rico authorities was erased, in a supposed effort to coordinate the Municipal Police, the Puerto Rico Police and the FBI, in which any of them could equally intervene together in any type of crime. That facilitates the FBI claiming credit for solving crimes and applying the death penalty 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 committed 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 a crime, but against some unions that tried to participate in hearings on the new budget at the beginning of March of 2009. The mobilization of these combined forces at the Capitol prevented the workers from entering into "public" hearings.

4. These coordinated forces perfectly coincide with announcements from federal agencies, such as the coast Guard, indicating an intent to persecute those who oppose, in any manner, 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. Weeks before, they also attacked those demonstrating against the gas pipeline.

7. A legislator submitted a resolution seeking a legislative 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 Exempt Employees, the Pro Independence Students Federation, and Mothers Against the War of having made a threatening telephone call to him.

8. The Attorney General issued instructions to the prosecutors throughout the country for each district to assign an additional duty attorney to be in charge of attending to complaints generated by demonstrations by "citizens affected" by the dismissal of government employees. We can see how they plan to deprive citizens of freedom of expression.

9. They have created a program called Quality of Life, which is based on Police and FBI intervention in poor communities and public housing. It requires that after the operations, in each intervened community, while the repressive forces remain there, various agencies will offer support. We have already seen on other occasions how this does not work while the political, social and economic conditions of the country continue unchanged.

It is not a coincidence that this increase in persecution of "subversives," as they identify dissidents, is taking place during times of economic crisis. The government-boss plans an unprecedented attack on the working class. The unemployment crisis will penetrate deeply into Puerto Rican society, and the government will identify the left as "agitators" in moments like these. Unions will be targets of repression with the implementation of Law #7, which eliminates the democratic rights of assembly and collective negotiation.

We had already warned that the Superintendent of Police, who is preceded by his repressive conduct as assistant director of the FBI in Puerto Rico, has said that he is going to establish a network of "intelligence" agents with which he will obtain information among others, of community groups, neighborhoods and churches. Undoubtedly, this is the true support referred to in the Quality of Life program. This so-called support to communities is an attempt to convert 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.

ers) did not break up regardless of the tear gas; they covered the ones in the frontlines with their size and determination. Equally moving was the support of the people who lived in the area. They provided us with food, lemons for the tear gas, water, medicines and moral support, and made us feel we were not alone. Similar worker solidarity was expressed throughout the days by the railway workers who provided with stones and iron bars from the railway...'

Don't blame the teachers for us not getting a chance to get political. And don't wait for the cops to kill someone for the people to rise spontaneous-like. (Because the cops keep killing people {but maybe just not the right ones?}) 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 cliché) 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 longer than the last how-many-ever summits that have taken place. And still our friends in black fight and fight. Even without help from without. 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 neighbors who stand beside them at the burning barricades.

But lets not fantasize. Fantasy is what's brought us to our current weakness. A politic of hope offers no hope at all. This revolt in Greece is high drama (remember that bit about the birthplace of democracy? It seems as obvious to point out the assumption that Greece is the birthplace of theater). Heroes and villains are enshrined within a history of class antagonisms. Our friends are well stocked. Because 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 how that practically helps is, that by running-out the last military dictatorship, 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 war. As catapults to fling war. As hospitals and sanctuaries to protect from war. You can find pictures in the media about journalists being expelled from these sites. Guards in black keep the perimeter and the going-on' within seem self-explanatory.

These places have been long used for war. When I toured the University of Athens, much of which is squatted, I saw

in the sectarian conflict between buildings, a readiness to take the struggle from the walls of cultural revolutionary murals – 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) have no fuckin idea 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 committee. It is collective in no way. It's alone in writing when it wants to be with others destroying the Greek embassy, brick by brick. But I don't know enough people to do something like that on the fly. And it's not something that can be organized. So it is written alone with half-hearted justifications to its isolation.

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. However, I am here to say that I am still fighting and that I will not end this fight. It has taken me a little longer to get adjusted than most 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 Hasan is one example of someone 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 Mumia and many others. We need to fight for 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: alikabdul@yahoo.com

The pitfalls of race consciousness

America's substitution of political reformation of finance capitalism for social empowerment of the poor

BY DHORUBA BIN-WAHAD

Barack Obama's ascendancy to the U.S. presidency has been consistently portrayed as the culmination of the African-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 enhanced the rights of all Americans, but those advancements seldom moved the majority of Africans in America out of economic and political doldrums. The brutal truth is this portrayal 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 President, 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 at the hip to white America. After all, with the exception of Tiger Woods (who tried inventing a race to match his background), how many Africans in America were raised in Hawaii 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, it is facetious to claim the majority of white voters consciously voted for an "African-American" descendant of the slaves their forebears terrorized and exploited 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 bull-whip days on the plantation and go buck-wild as Commander-in-Chief. White America's "guilt syndrome" is folded neatly into their notion of "American exceptionalism," hence the persistent media implication during the Presidential campaign that Obama was either an "undercover" Muslim or Black Nationalist revolutionary in disguise 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 neo-liberal white Republicans. 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 those same liberals and blacks wouldn't express similar disdain in an analysis of Franklin Delano Roosevelt's disability as an important subjective factor in his political career, nor perceive a critique of John F. Kennedy's relationship to his Quasi-Gangster father and clan Patriarch as inappropriate in ascertaining what influenced JFK's character. Yet when it comes to Obama, the personal is not political and the political is never personal.

Clearly Obama is an extraordinary individual. His success 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 others who don't feel so good about you from pursuing their nefarious ambitions. In this sense, the Presidency of Barack Obama is symbolically the ascendancy of a "political anti-christ" during the greatest and 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 formulation of U.S. foreign policy in no small part was due to the McCain camp's absolute lack of racist subtlety.

The racist and reactionary rightwing supporting McCain attacked Obama with excerpts from the sermons of his family Pastor Jeremiah Wright, an activist and Liberation 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 jerk racist apoplexy. Not a difficult task for a nation 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 history from the experiences of one's own people was a form of subversive moral blasphemy. Perhaps it is. Indeed, Michelle Obama (who does have 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 reference, Obama renounced all association with Rev. Wright and defined Wright's views as "divisive" rather than worthy 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 disillusionment, the FMLN, the main people's party of El Salvador, has set an example of how perseverance and conviction can achieve what it aims for.

On March 15, 2009 the Farabundo Marti 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 the people one step closer to the reality of social and economic justice.

During the 1980s, five insurgent groups united to form the FMLN coalition, which they named after the internationalist-minded Farabundo Marti, a Salvadorian 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 British military support. During an event known as 'La Matanza' (The Massacre), Farabundo Marti was executed and historians estimate that some 30,000 people were killed during four days. Since then, the people's movement in El Salvador took to the underground to organize themselves clandestinely to overcome repression. In response, the Salvadorian government began using death squads to kill the revolutionaries' social base. During those years of fierce repression, the people's movement was forced to take up armed struggle as a way to defend the poor from the violence imposed on them, enduring the hardships of a gruesome civil war that lasted from 1979 until 1992.

Although the people's movement was unable to seize power from the powerful Salvadorian 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 next 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 Nationalist Alliance) desperately tried to convince people through an intensive media bombardment that if FMLN were to be elected, El Salvador would become subordinate to Venezuela and "President Hugo Chavez's expansionist project", and that Salvadorians 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 Mauricio Funes, to which Funes responded by highlighting his party's proposals to overcome the devastating effects of the neoliberal capitalist policies implemented by ARENA since 1993. ARENA has a long track record of using tricks and foul play to maintain power, but this time 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, 2009 FMLN was still able to move their voters and supporters to the vote and defend their electoral rights against these 'tactricks' of ARENA.

However, change will only occur gradually in El Salvador, with the right still firmly entrenched in the bureaucracy, the judiciary, and with the FMLN lacking a majority of seats in the Parliament. At best, the FMLN's presence in the government will only be able to pave the ground for future rounds of struggle. For a start, it will begin by opening the books and taxing big business and recover the US\$2 billion lost every year on tax evasion.

This could allow them to increase wages and subsidies to basic social services, implement land reform and increase agricultural production, increase employment and scholarship opportunities and reduce gang violence in urban areas. Also, the FMLN's political presence will give them the opportunity to strengthen the social and political capacity of the mass movements, for example by strengthening community media. 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.

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 Earth Liberation Front acts some dating back over a decade. Her arrest was prompted by what we now know was her ex husband turning paid FBI informant, Frank "The Fink" Ambrose. She has since been remanded into custody pending sentencing which is scheduled for Feb. 5, 2009.

As a friend of Marie's and as part of her support Crew I was someone who was involved throughout her plea negotiations. I can honestly say Marie's only concern during her plea negotiations was that she maintain her integrity and not jeopardize another human being in her own interactions with the state. She repeatedly refused plea agreements that required her to provide info on others in exchange for lesser time.

In late summer the US attorney offered a plea that would name her informant ex husband by name only and would provide no new information that Frank had not already provided and Frank had already plead guilty to. 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 debriefings outside of what was normally required to account for one's own actions in a guilty plea. In the spirit of non cooperation Marie accounted only for her own actions and provided no information to assist the state in any ongoing investigation. Much to the frustration of the FBI and US attorney's office her non cooperation is mentioned numerous times in court documents.

After her arrest Marie consulted with many close friends within the environmental, anarchist, and political prisoner support movements and after lengthy discussion and debate we all agreed that facing life to defend a snitch who has already sold his soul and everyone he ever knew was ridiculous. As long as no new info or names other than her informant 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 terrorism 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 sensitive legal documents she was working on for sentencing. Under what we assume 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 trashing 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 an act that supposedly took place years ago for allegedly being in a car while Frank stopped to do an act of minor property destruction. Marie's son 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 supporters by threatening, following, and harassing members of her support group to no end. In the latest in a long line of harassment, Marie was transferred from Clinton County Jail to another County jail where she was told she would be going before 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 letter of support is one of the most important things you can do right now to support Marie. Marie appreciates 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 rays of hope while she is locked down. Do not attempt to discuss her case or the Green Scare in any way with her. Money for her mushrooming legal, commissary, family travel and collect 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 innate right to piss 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 a 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 tumbled into financial distress. Fannie and Freddie were on Viagra, and the pharmacy wasn't taking any more credit. Of course, this opportunistic view in itself is deprecating 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 have still lost, but he would have had a broader spectrum of undercover racist whites on his side, and conservative self-hating Negroes applauding his virtues. Indeed, up until the Democratic convention, disgruntled Hillary supporters were anti-Obama and mumbled 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 running 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 glaring 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 "Bogarted" 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 relieved white America of the lodestone of race -- "Obama is white America's Emancipation Proclamation."

I would suppose George Will envisions a different "Reconstruction" scenario from the one that took place at the end of the American Civil War.

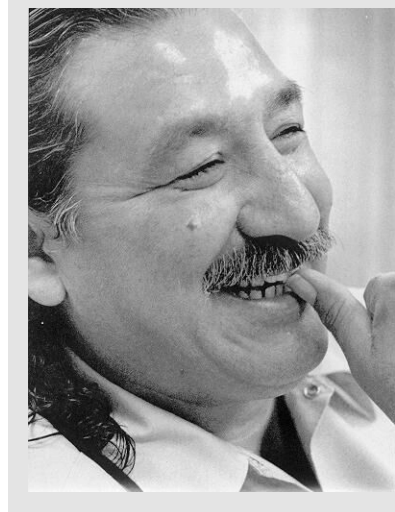
Dhoruba al-Mujahid bin Wahad (born Richard Moore, 1945) is an American writer and activist, who is a former prisoner, Black Panther Party leader, and co-founder of the Black Liberation Army.

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 Prisons (BOP) 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 three 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
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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 surprised by the lies, alibis and distortions that come 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 to exploit in capitalist elation void of 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 the retooling of America. They being obstructionist seeking to slow the rush in us to live better lives. Yet, those in the know know this is no time to repose when economic woes cascade like Niagara falls leaving the lower classes under black and white kaffiyeh shawls of socio-economic malnutrition. They starve 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 distinguish 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 protestors 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 embarrassment 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 other academic 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 purportedly subversive 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 ugly and now individuals were targeted for dirty tricks. One SDS leader had wealthy parents. The FBI sought 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 tract issued against the unaware student is contained in the PRA archive. The poison-pen mailing referred to the student as a 'fraud' and 'big jerk', a 'millionaire' and 'son of an imperialist'. The letter urges the student "go back to your palace" calling him an "imperialist racist" and a "bastard imperialist." 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 snooping 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 friction between the Black Panther Party-Boston and Republic of New Africa-Boston."

"The enclosed letter conforms with the style of memorandum prepared by [REDACTED] which is typewritten and unsigned. It will be posted from a mailbox in the vicinity of the Republic of New Africa office."

"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 service for the Black people when they arrested [REDACTED] of the Boston Black 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 become public knowledge, it would prove embarrassing to all Black movements."

In 1970, the Boston FBI office requested another anonymous 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, illegality 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 shootouts became the norm until the FBI initiated the Chicago 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 1, 1968 and discuss the status of infiltration at a number of schools. The Boston FBI office extended its reach to Dartmouth College in New Hampshire. A memo from the Boston FBI office to FBI headquarters in Washington, 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 number 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 Communist Party leader. Another SDS member was linked to the Boston Draft Resistance Group and had spoken at an anti-war 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 graduate philosophy student and 20 'sympathizers' confronted the university president and demanded he accept 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 moral 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 foretold that conspicuous consumption has closed. Common folks produce the wealth, but have no say in how it is shared, their lives in disrepair full of despair with foreclosures, pink slips and no way to spare a dime in this clime, 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 though 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 portion, that only a social revolution can dispense without suspense, 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 when 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 end 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 Gardens 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!

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For more of Jalil's poems logon to: www.freejalil.com

The current financial crisis: capitalism as usual

BY TROY COCHRANE

When the government and media discuss the recent economic 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 system? What happened to all the money that was 'lost'? Why is the government handing so much money over to the Big Banks? What did all of these financial 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 considers 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 made from 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 corporation is assessed. Its market capitalization is based on expected earnings divided by the perceived risk. If the value of a company is decreasing, it is because the expectations for its future profits are decreasing, or there is an increased perceived threat to those profits.

A large portion of the value of the Big Banks is based on expectations concerning the mortgages they hold, 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 rates it charges or c) decrease the perceived risk associated with default. The banks have done all three. Between 1997 and 2007 the ratio of mortgage debt to wages increased from 136.1% to 229%.

Although interest rates generally remained flat or slightly decreased the much maligned 'subprime mortgage' carries higher than usual interest rates and these mortgages have accounted for a disproportionate share of the growth in mortgage lending. In 2003, subprime mortgages 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 interest loans to people who had typically been excluded from home ownership, especially people of colour. These loans were considered riskier, which will be discussed in greater detail below. However, the banks managed to reduce the perception of risks through the creation of the infamous 'derivatives', which will also be discussed further on. The payoff for this expanded lending, particu-

larly of subprime mortgage with higher interest rates and a reduced perception of risk has been a growth rate of 11.6% per year for the 'Biggest Banks' between 2000 and 2007. This compares to 7.3% annual growth for the 500 biggest corporations in general. Lehman Brothers and Bear Stearns, two of the casualties of the financial crisis, had even greater growth rates: 20% and 17.5%, respectively.

'Subprime mortgages' have been identified as the primary culprits in the financial crisis. However, the mainstream coverage of the crisis rarely explains 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 when we think of 'prime' and 'subprime' as referring to the borrowers: prime borrowers get lower rates, 'subprime losers' [2] get higher rates. Subprime mortgages often had adjustable interest rates. The rate charged moves with changes in the prime rate. The alternative is a fixed rate loan that locks 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 the first two years of the loan, meaning even higher rates for the remainder. Sometimes 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 borrowers?

The interest rate of adjustable rate mortgages (ARMs) is ultimately tied to the Fed Fund rate set by the Federal Reserve Board. Beginning in 2000, the Fed Fund began to fall. 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 the extraordinarily low level of one percent. As a result, prime and subprime mortgage rates were very low, making mortgages attractive to potential buyers. Although home prices were rising borrowing money, even for subprime borrowers, was extremely cheap, allowing more people to enter the housing market, driving home prices even higher. It is unclear what proportion of the demand for houses was speculative.

The Federal Reserve began to increase 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 attract 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 its 'War on Terror' resulted in record deficits. Shortly before the Federal Reserve began to increase the Fed Fund, foreign demand for US Treasury bills began to fall. It is possible that the hike was necessary to re-open this important source of credit.

The combination of rising interest rates and the hybrid mort-

meet with international community friends, and key supporters of the Puerto Rican Independence movement, outside across the street at Das Hamasjold 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 then commenced a vigorous and non-permitted march from the UN to Madison 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 Afrika, was powerful! Folks came from Pittsburg, Providence, Portland, Philly, Ithaca, New Jersey, Canada. Folks were energized. 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 Nelson Mandela 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! Mutual 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 that was once the Harlem chapter of the Black Panther Party, would enthusiasm and voices grew louder. We reached the park with about 200 people and rallied with the messages and words of various speakers.

Speakers included Chief Billy Tayak of the Piscataway Nation, who prayed for us and gave us permission to raze revolution on his people's land. Mama Iyaluua and Baba Herman Ferguson, Elders of the Black Nation, Ashanti Alston & Kazi toure, co-chairs of the Jericho Movement also spoke. There were representatives from the International Center for Traditional Child Bearing, the New Black Panther Party, former political prisoners from the Puerto Rican Independence movement and other speakers. Folksinger activist Dave Lippman performed, and an impromptu and powerful rendition of Bob Marley's Redemption Song was done by Boriqen anarchist Not-4-Prophet of Ricanstruction appropriately towards the end.

Prisoner-of-war Jalil Muntaqim 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 Safiya & Jalil, and Bashir, 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 for all of our freedoms.

DO YOU GOT 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!

Jericho International meets with South African Unionists

On Sunday morning, October 26, 2008, representatives of the Jericho Amnesty Movement's international campaign met with Myrtle Witbooi, a founding member 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, Witbooi is also founder and Secretary General 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, Dhoruba bin Wahad, Ana Lopez, Sundiata Sadiq, Paulette D'Auteuil, Theresa Shoatz, and Matt Meyer discussed the cases of Leonard Peltier, Mumia Abu Jamal, the Puerto Rican political prisoners, and all political prisoners, in a frank encounter about getting information out to a wide South African audience.

Jericho International formed on 10/10/08, at a meeting at the United Nations on Jericho's tenth anniversary. Focused on bringing the case of U.S. political prisoners more widely to an international arena--both governmental and non-governmental--Jericho International took the opportunity of the special South African visit 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, Witbooi agreed to also get us in touch with an organization of former South African political prisoners, and with the 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 to work together--locally and internationally--and let our voices be heard."

Jericho 10/10 march

BY ASHANTI ALSTON
Co-chair, National Jericho Movement

Marpessa Kupendua said back on 1998:

“The Vision of Jericho '98 is derived from that old spiritual which said, ‘Joshua fought the battle of Jericho, 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 this country. We believe that a concerted and organized effort 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 Amnesty 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 winning the freedom of our imprisoned ones but we dam sure re-put POLITICAL PRISONERS & POWs back on the map with pure stubbornness. For that alone, let us feel good but unsatisfied, ‘cuz till all of them are free we gonna do this work. Stumblin’ but rumblin’, re-assessing and rebuilding.

2008 was the year of the 10th anniversary of the Jericho Amnesty Movement. For those who remember its founding march on Washington, DC in 1998 with an unexpected turn-out of 5,000 to possibly 8,000 people. Encouraging to say the least. In fact so encouraging that the enormous enthusiasm generated from that ready-to-take-on-the-government march resulted in chapters springing up in at least 10 cities. The next phase of serious FREE ALL POLITICAL PRISONERS & PRISONERS-OF-WAR work had begun. The vision of Jalil Muntaqim & other PPs had paid off. With veterans like Baba Herman Ferguson & Warrior-woman Safiya Bhukari at the helm, the JERICHO MOVEMENT was in full swing.

Indispensable organizations joined, like League of Indig-

enous Sovereign Nations, Pro-Libertad & Movimiento Liberacion Nacional (MLN/Puerto Rico), Malcolm X Commemoration Committee, MOVE and Friends & Family of Mumia Abu-Jamal, the Leonard Peltier Support Committee, Resistance in Brooklyn, People’s Video Network, Asians for Jericho, International Action Center, Malcolm X Grassroots Movement and more. Elders came in, as well as young bloods. There have been highs and lows. The presidential release of most of the Puerto Rican Independentistas due to a strong grassroots Island and mainland pressure mobilization. That provided motivations and lessons for all. We’ve given up esteemed comrades to the Ancestors, like Safiya, Meryl Afrika, Richard Williams, Standing Deer, Teddy Jah Heath, BPP & recently Bashir Hamid (a.k.a. Jimmy York) & Bob Robideau. But we have had join or ranks the work forces of the Anarchist Black Cross Federation in Philly and Brooklyn and well as veteran allies from the anti-imperialist movements who join us (and we join them) for particular campaigns.

The White anti-imperialists, the Basques, The Filipino Gabriella Network, the Island Boriquen independence movement of former political prisoners whom some of us were imprisoned with for years. Loyalty. Such loyalty. And our co-chair Kazi and Miriam brought us, via birth, twins to the movement! That’s how the forces work right?

For 10-10 2008, we decided, after torturous planning meetings (as real struggle meetings can go) on two days of activities. Because the site was New York City, and the targets were, of course, the United Nations. But added to that was the African Diasporic capital of Harlem! One towards the international community of oppressor & oppressed nations, the other within the “prison-house of nations” called Harlem. And yes, with all the planning and last minute preparations and negotiations, the two-day events went off much better than expected (Constructive criticisms came later).

On Day One in Manhattan, as a delegation of Former political prisoners and key supporters went inside the UN to

gages meant borrowers had to make substantially higher monthly payments. In late 2005, as the Fed Fund rate continued to rise, the mortgage defaults began to increase. By 2008 almost 20% of subprime borrowers’s accounts were ‘delinquent’ and just under 12% had been foreclosed upon. This means that the value of roughly one out of every eight subprime mortgages had dropped to almost zero[3]. Yet, the banks lost far more than one eighth of their value, and the losses happened sooner and faster than the rise in defaults. This is because of the derivatives the banks created and owned as a means of ‘managing risk.’

I noted above that the value of a mortgage for the bank is the expected earnings divided by the risk of default. A subprime mortgage has a higher perceived risk of default. In order to compensate banks charge higher interest rates to increase the expected earnings. The higher returns are supposed to be a reward to the lender for taking on the higher risk. With the use of derivatives the banks thought they had greatly reduced the risk associated with these loans, when really they had just masked it. The particular kind of derivatives that have been the focal point of the current crisis are the ‘mortgage backed securities’ (MBSs).

Imagine you have \$200,000 to invest. You decide to get into the mortgage lending game. That \$200,000 will likely only be enough for one mortgage. That means all of your money is riding on a single borrower. If it is a subprime borrower, there is a 6% chance of default[4]. If one hundred people did this, then six of them will lose their money. You are better off purchasing MBSs instead. The bank could group together these hundred mortgages and then sell off newly created assets to the 100 investors, with the interest from all the mortgages as the assets’s source of income.

This way the risk is shared among all the purchasers of the derived asset. Instead of six investors losing all of their investment, all one hundred would lose 6%.

This is a very simply example of a derivative and they can be much, much more complex. In fact, many financial insiders are now saying they did not entirely understand how some of these derivatives worked. Nevertheless, all of the troubled assets are backed by mortgages, especially subprime mortgages. Subprime derived mortgages were especially desirable because they had such high returns based on their high interest rates. Further, ARMs held out the promise of even greater returns as interest rates rose. Someone holding a derivative makes money from it two ways: 1) the aforementioned interest earnings and 2) if the price of the asset increases. It was the second phenomenon that sank the banks.

The market for mortgage backed securities exploded, especially for those backed by subprime mortgages, with their high returns. Much of the spike in demand was the perception that the risk associated with these mortgages had almost disappeared through the creation of derivatives. The rising value of these assets drove the banks to ever greater levels of lending in order to create more assets. The values of the banks skyrocketed as the values of their assets climbed. Citigroup, one of the survivors of the crisis, went from being the 78th largest US corporation in 1996 to the 2nd largest in 2006. Since then it has lost more than

90% of its value.

As mortgage defaults rose on rising interest rates it became clear that the risk associated with the assets backed by these mortgages had been greatly underestimated. Although expected earnings were falling because of the defaults, it was the perception of increased risk that most affected 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 operation. 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 value of their assets fell they could no longer get the loans they needed and were themselves at risk of default. Further, they shutdown their own lending. This is how manufacturers like GM got mixed up in the crisis. They also require new lines of credit to meet existing obligations, including wages and pensions. Without access to credit they are at risk of bankruptcy. This is why the government has stepped in. They are buying the risky ‘toxic assets’ from the banks and providing loans to the automobile industry to prevent it from collapsing.

Foreclosures have disproportionately hit the poor, immigrants, 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, unscrupulous lending and other finance industry misdeeds, the underlying accusation is that borrowers were irresponsible. However, the mortgages they were being offered were time bombs constructed by a finance industry desperate for profit. Homeowners became the collateral damage when the bombs exploded.

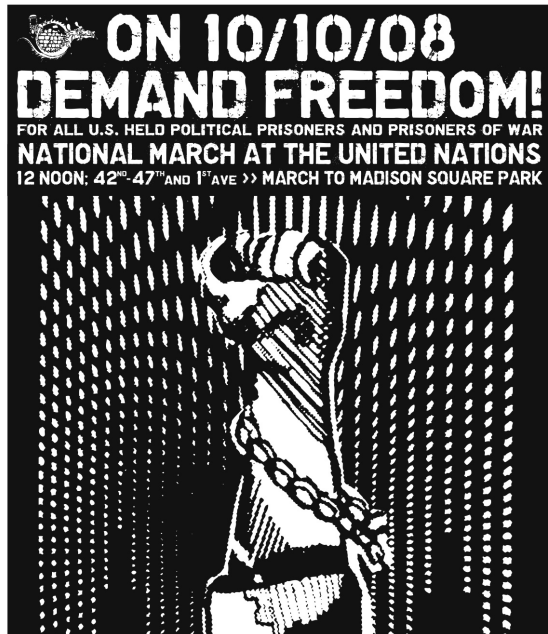
In testimony before Congress former Federal Reserve Chairman Alan Greenspan, as much an architect of the crisis as anyone, asserted, “I found a flaw in the model that I perceived as the critical functioning structure that defines how the world works.” But the crisis is really just capitalism as usual. 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 finance corporations included among the 500 largest corporations as measured by market value.

[2] This refers to a comment on CNBC by commentator Rick Santelli: “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’ mortgages.” In an interaction between Santelli 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. However, 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 crisis.



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

BY EWA JASIEWCZ, 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, noone wants 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 Jabaliya. Another strike has just hit a target, shaking the whole building again, down the street. Another 3 minutes later, again another strike, 'Kussif' - bombing, again and again. If we had windows here they'd be all over us by now.

I've been working with the Palestinian Red Crescent ambulance services in Jabaliya, 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 Jabaliya and Gaza City. Special Forces have occupied houses in the areas of Zeitoun, Atarturah, Zoumo and Salahdeen.

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 Jabaliya. Gnarled 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. Israel forbade ambulances from entering the camp, blowing up one with a tank shell and killing

Dr Khalil Sulleiman, 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 Jabaliya, 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 Jabaliya 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 Jabaliya.

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 Goa 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 Salahdeen 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 Moaskar Jabaliya to be 'safer'.

However, against a backdrop of deafening crashes and bangs of bombs falling close by, on Monday at 12.45pm, an Israeli surveillance plane 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 in front of the Hospital's clinic. Two rescue 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 Jabaliya 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 Moaskar Jabaliya 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, 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 I'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 coiled 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 administrates these United States because his malicious attacks, and greed is the cause of all hate.

Why can't we salute all the greats like Fredrick 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 broke, and spirit's they raped. I can't resent or forsake Abrham 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 unwise 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 exuberate emotion for a day that is tainted by the people who were unwillingly extradited 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/kingcironcastle

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 15.

Why protest Vancouver's 2010 Olympics?

BY GORD HILL

There are many reasons to protest the Olympic Games. It is a multi-billion dollar industry run by an elite clique who sell the five rings to the highest bidder, using sports as a commodity and a platform for corporate advertising. Their main goal is profit, in collaboration with their partners: government, local organizing committees, and corporations (construction, real estate, tourism, TV, and media, as well as sponsors).

The Olympics have a long history of association with fascists, colonialists, and authoritarian regimes (i.e., the 1936 Hitler Olympics, the 1968 Mexico City Olympic massacre, and the 2008 Beijing Summer Games). Since the 1980s, they have displaced over three million people and contributed to massive increases in homelessness (as we've seen in Vancouver).

Due to massive construction projects associated with the Olympics, from venues to infrastructure, there is both widespread environmental destruction, as well as huge public debts. As part of security operations, police, military, and intelligence agencies receive millions of dollars for new personnel, equipment, weapons, et cetera—strengthening the creeping police states we see around the world (and south of the border) and further eroding our alleged “freedoms” and civil liberties.

Some naysayers ask: Why protest since protests don't change anything, and the Games are gonna happen anyway? Their question is based on the apparent futility of protest.

To begin with, protests are but one tactic used by social movements. They help raise awareness and mobilize people. The U.S. black civil-rights movement started out as small protests and grew into a mass campaign of civil disobedience. This forced the government to enact reforms and to desegregate the South. Protests weren't the only activities carried out by the civil-rights movement. They also organized forums, held workshops on legal rights,



registered black voters, printed newsletters, et cetera.

Protests and civil disobedience were what made change both possible and necessary, because not only did they draw international attention to racism in the U.S., they also made it impossible for the apartheid system in the South to go on as it had before. By the 1970s and '80s there were black mayors, chiefs of police, et cetera. Today, there is a black president.

People who say protests don't change anything don't know history. And those who say the Olympics can't be fought don't even know their own local history.

Over the last three years, the anti-Olympic movement has forced Vanoc off the streets, to the point where it no longer holds large, public ceremonies (as it did in 2007). Anytime the organizing committee does have events, it requires a large policing operation to secure it. This is because we have successfully used direct action to disrupt Olympic events.

The effectiveness of direct action and protest can be seen in the struggle for social housing in Vancouver. This campaign increased in 2006 when the growing ranks of homeless began to become a major political issue, linked to Olympic-related construction, gentrification, and tourism.

By the fall of 2006, housing and anti-poverty groups were having large, noisy protests and began occupying empty hotels. Over two dozen people were arrested, many of them members of the Anti-Poverty Committee. These actions raised the profile of homelessness and dislocation.

Since 2007, various levels of government, along with Vanoc, have had to respond with measures to limit the loss of low-income housing units, and to appear as though they are addressing the issue. By 2008, the homelessness crisis, along with the Olympic Village fiasco, determined the outcome of the Vancouver civic election.

Homelessness became a public issue because people organized, educated, and agitated for change. Without the political pressure exerted by the protest groups, without community resistance, the situation for the poor and the homeless would be far worse than it is today.

Why protest 2010? Because as history shows us, the limits of tyrants are set by those whom they attempt to tyrannize.

Gord Hill is a member of the Olympic Resistance Network and maintains No2010.com. He is also an artist and carver. On February 12, 2007, he was arrested after storming the stage at the unveiling of the Olympic countdown clock.

www.No2010.com * www.warriorpublications.com

The deep ink dark makes it almost impossible to see clearly, shadows and faces lit up by swiveling red ambulance lights and arms pointing hurriedly as our guides for finding the injured. 'Lets get out of here, lets get out' say the guys, and we're leaving to go, empty handed, but straining to seeing what's ahead when a missile hits the ground in front of us. We see a lit up fountain of what could be nail darts explode in front of us. They fall in a spray like a thousand hissing critters, we cover our heads and run back to the ambulance. One of the volunteers inside, Mohammad, is shocked, 'Did you see? Did you see? How close it was?'

At approximately 4am, we hit the streets in response to an F16 war plane attack on the house of Abdullah Sayeed Mrad in the Block Two area of Jabaliya Camp in the Northern Gaza Strip. Mrad is said to be a high ranking Hamas official according to local sources. The attack leveled the house. Every house strike is like walking into a smoking grave, broken doll-like bodies of children to be found beneath layers and layers of white rubble and burning shrapnel.

We took Adam Mamoun Al Kurdi, aged 3 to Al Awda. He died of multiple shrapnel injuries to his skull and lower thighs. We sped back 5 minutes later - four teams in four Red Crescent ambulances, to fetch more casualties. Thankfully there were none.

Whilst waiting in the ambulance we suddenly heard a deafening bang and saw an orange flash before our ambulance was showered with shrapnel, glass and brick. The target of the attack was another house belonging to Sayeed Mrad. Medics say the strike was from an F16. The depth of damage caused was consistent with the force of an F16-fired bomb.

The house, reduced to rubble, was just two meters from our ambulance. Ambulance driver Majdi Shehadda, 48, sustained deep lacerations to his face and right ear and went into shock in the ambulance. He was treated with oxygen. Four rescue workers sustained minor injuries and had to be treated for smoke and dust inhalation. One, Saaber Mohammad Awad, 34, was preparing to exit his ambulance when the bomb hit. 'The door smashed against me and the windows smashed in because of the pressure. I expected to die. If we had been outside just a second later, we would have been killed. The ambulance saved our lives'.

The four ambulances, one with all of its' windows blown in and damage to medical stocks inside, the others with cracked windows, were trapped by rubble blocking our exit route.

We had to carry Majdi on a stretcher over the debris of the bombed house in total darkness whilst Israeli drones menaced the skies above us. I tripped up over twisted steel foundation poles at one point and dropped the oxygen tank,

the pipe detaching and hissing oxygen out over the rubble. We all evacuated the area after 15 minutes, along with a family, carrying their blankets, mattresses and belongings, as another property belonging to Sayeed Mrad also in the area was at risk of being bombed.

The ambulances would have been clearly visible to Israeli drones and special forces with their rooftop identification markings, bright flashing lights and solo movement in the deserted, pitch black streets of Jabaliya.

An aerial curfew

Everyone is terrified by surveillance plane strikes here. 'Zenane' they call them, because of the zzzzz sound they make. They have been firing explosive missiles into people - people walking, in cars, sitting in doorways drinking tea, standing on rooftops, praying together, sitting at home and watching television together.

In Naim Street Beit Hanoun, at 9.30pm on Sunday, Samieh Kaferna, 40, was hit by flying shrapnel to his head. Neighbours called him to come to their home. Fearing his home would be struck, he and a group of relatives began to move from one home to another, to be safer. The second missile struck them down directly. When we arrived one man, eyes gigantic, was being dragged into the pavement, half of his lower body shredded, his intestines slopping out. He was alive, his relatives were screaming, we managed to take four, whilst six others, charred and dismembered, were brought in on the back of an open cattle truck. Beit Hanoun Hospital was chaos, with screaming relatives and burning bodies. Three men died in the attack, 10 were injured, six from the same Abu Harbid family. Three had to have leg amputations, and one a double amputation.

Burning shrapnel in eyes is a common injury, shrapnel slices deep into to any soft fleshy parts of the body. We brought a boy from Beit Hanoun with a distorted heavily bandaged

Palestinian Prisoners Day

On April 17th, Palestinians mark Prisoners Day in honor the thousands of Palestinians held in Israeli detention centers. Palestinian prisoners from the Occupied Territories, many of whom are under the age of 18, are tried under military courts and sentenced by military judges, some of whom are settlers. Defendants are often convicted on secret evidence and serve disproportionately long sentences. In addition, the Army is allowed to arbitrarily arrest and detain Palestinian civilians for periods of six months. After this six month period has passed, the sentence can be extended without explanation. These types of loose guidelines allow for the Israeli army to exercise broad and unchecked powers against the Palestinian population.

head wrapped in bandages, to Al 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 freezing and full of shadows. Both the doctors and their have been patients blinded with Israeli-controlled power cuts that intensify the confusion, fear, and psychological darkness caving in on people here.

Burning shrapnel in eyes - like those of three year old She-dar Athman Khader Abid from Beit Hanoun, 'injured in the left eye, explosive injury, full thickness corneal wound, iris prologue and vitreous loss' according to her medical report. Her father approaches my friend, quietly, to ask if its possible for me to help her, to get her out to have eye surgery, 'This girl, she was like a moon, haram, three years old and her beauty is robbed from her'.

Extremely hot, shrapnel lodges in chests, legs, faces, hands, stomachs, and skulls. I've been taught, don't focus on stopping bleeding with shrapnel injuries, there is very 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

Last night four members of a family, were traveling back from the bakers in Beit Lahiya. Squeezed into a white skoda, their bag of bread still warm, they were struck by a surveillance plane missile at 6pm. Khaled Ismaeel Kahl-ood, 44, and his three sons Mohammad 15, Habib, 12, and Towfiq, 10, were cut into pieces by the attack which blew their car in two. Taxi driver Hassan Khalil, 20, was also martyred in the attack. The bodies brought into Kamal Odwan hospital were virtually unrecognizable.

A Union of Palestinian Medical Relief Committees ambulance was fired upon at approximately 8.30am on Sunday morning killing Paramedic and father of five, Arafat El Deyem, 35. He and another rescue worker had been evacuating casualties which had come under fire from an Israeli tank East of Jabaliya in the North of the Gaza Strip. Witnesses report that as the door of the ambulance was being closed a tank shell hit El Deyem. El Deyem died from a massive loss of blood following a major trauma to his chest. Paramedics I ride with cherish his memory, carrying his photo - a kind and strong looking, bearded man - on their mobile phones.

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 Abdel Deinm, 10, Mohammad Jamal Abdel Dein, 25, Maher Younis Abdel Dein, 30, and Said Jamal Said, 27, all died from head and internal explosive injuries. Witnesses 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, Bassem Naeem, and a colleague were killed in the Zeitoun area on Sunday



afternoon when a missile strike from an Israeli surveillance plane impacted on the home they had entered in order to retrieve casualties. Rescue workers Ihab el-Madhoun 35, and Mohammad Abu Hasira, 24, were struck by Israeli missiles when trying to collect casualties in the Jabal Al Rais area of Jabaliya last Tuesday. Witnesses said Ihab went to assist his colleague following a strike on the rescue workers. He too was then struck.

Abu Hasira was brought to the Kamal Ahdwan governmental hospital in Jabaliya and died at 7.30am according to hospital records. The cause of death was multiple trauma injuries. Ihab died from massive internal injuries following an operation on his chest and abdominal area five hours later.

Khalil Abu Shammalah, Director of Al Dhumeer Association based in Gaza City said: 'It is a breach of the fourth Geneva Convention to target emergency medical services under conditions of war and occupation. Battlefield casualties are also protected under the Geneva Conventions and cannot be targeted once injured. Israel is in breach of international law'.

The Israeli news agency Y-Net recently reported that Yuval 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 will join the list of civilian targets including homes, schools, universities, mosques, and shops hit in Israel's offensive so far.

Homes crushed

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

could leave a survivor with little to no support from those whom should be providing as much support as she or he needs.

What can anarchist organizations do in these situations? What do we do if one amongst us is sexually assaulted? What do we do if one amongst us has sexually assaulted someone else? What do we do when both parties are in our organization? I challenge all organizations to consider how to prevent sexual assault from occurring in the first place, how to deal with it if it does, and how to support survivors of sexual assault to the fullest extent possible.

Taking up Women's Struggle

The struggle against sexism is everyone's struggle. It affects everyone: men, women and transgendered peoples. It is especially important that anti-sexist men, who benefit from sexism, take up the struggle for women's liberation. Just as it is especially important for white people to dedicate themselves to anti-racist struggle and straight people to dedicate themselves to anti-homophobia/heterosexism work, men must dedicate an intense amount of time to anti-sexist work.

For anarchist men, the question is, are you involved with struggles spontaneously taken up by women, led and organized by women, and primarily aimed at other women? If not, why? I have heard the claim that many of the struggles are "too reformist." In some cases this is my critique as well but I do not see a revolutionary struggle in the United States that is able to aid women in the ways these movements do. The answer is not to ignore these movements but to build new movements within or without that which already exists. Are anarchists creating alternate structures for survivors of sexual assault? Are we able to aid abused women in a revolutionary fashion at this point in time?

Others brush anti-sexist struggle off as "women's work." Others do not see anti-sexist struggle as central to the struggle for liberation. Others believe we can wait to challenge sexism when revolutionary change occurs. These analyses must change. If we truly want an egalitarian society then we must begin creating a more equitable movement-along lines of race, class, gender, and sexuality. We must make the anarchist movement a women's movement. If we want an end to sexism, our work should have begun yesterday.

Forward Always, Backwards Never

Anarchists often have a good analysis of the way sexism is "a mesh of practices, institutions, and ideas which have an overall effect of giving more power to men than to women." Beginning with an institutional analysis is correct, however, we must also translate this into our own thoughts and actions. Only then can all anarchists work together most effectively (at least along gender lines but we must also deal with homophobia, racism and class is-

sues). To create an egalitarian 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 sexism among each other."

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

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 Minnesota, the state she adopted while living underground for 24 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 Azania. 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 #4969
Indiana State Prison
1 Park Row Street
Michigan City, Ind. 46360-6597

When examining women's involvement in political struggle, we have to examine the root causes. Women are socialized to look at politics as outside of our realm. When the politics are radical or revolutionary, the level of intimidation increases. Because of this reality, we have to exert a lot of time and energy into creating a more anti-sexist/pro-woman movement. We have to start by involving more women within our organizations and movements. This first involves putting sexism as one of the main points of organization alongside the other issues affecting women (and all humans): racism, heterosexism, ableism, colonialism, and class oppression. While we cannot place all of our energy 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 participating in women-centric struggles.

Once women are in our organizations, we must look at the level of participation of women within the organization. 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 and participate. I have had to overcome the intimidation I felt when I was working with men who I looked up to and respected. I had to overcome the mental chains that were holding me back.

A couple factors contributed to this change. A dear comrade helped me realize that I am fully capable of participating 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 would love to see more men take up this task. Then, my level of commitment, 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 one that I still struggle with to this day. This is something that we all have to battle within ourselves; men can help women get to this point by treating women equally and respectfully. We also must analyze our organizational behaviors. Are we consistently encouraging women to take up leadership positions? Is it mostly men or women who are taking up speaking engagements? Who talks at meetings? Who facilitates meetings? Who does the work of the organization, and then, who gets credit for it? We have to be very perceptive of men talking over women, invalidating and/or ignoring a woman's words and contributions.

We all must make an extra effort to look at the gender dynamics 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 sexism.

Anarchist Organizational Structures

One of the biggest challenges to the anarchist movement is creating viable anti-authoritarian structures for our organizations. We are struggling to create new ideas of organization from the examples we have had and through new ideas and innovations. Not only are we trying to organize 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 activity; it must result out of a highly organized society based on democratic, decentralized structures. I hope the anarchist movement realizes the need to work out new structural ideas for our organizations and a new society. I know many feel creating structure inherently runs counter to the ideas and principles of anarchism. I would argue that not sitting down and forming democratic structures is counter to the ideas and principles of anarchism.

Jo Freeman wrote in *The Tyranny of Structurelessness* that "The idea of structurelessness does not prevent the formation of informal structures, only formal ones. A 'laissez-faire' ideal for group structure becomes a smoke screen for the strong or the lucky to establish unquestioned hegemony over others. Thus structurelessness becomes a way of masking power. As long as the structure of the group is informal, the rules of how decisions are made are known only to the few, and awareness of power is limited to those who know the rules."

Structurelessness is often a means to perpetuate sexism, racism and class stratification. If men are socialized to be leaders and women are not, then it is not hard to imagine who would develop into leaders in a non-structured organization. A lack of structure provides no means of balancing those with certain privileges with those who are oppressed. We must create organizational structures that inherently guard against these forms of power imbalance.

In forming anarchist organizational structures, we must also form structures to specifically deal with sexism in our organizations. One very sensitive issue that we have to address is sexual assault (and domestic violence). I have heard of many situations where a politically active male has sexually assaulted a fellow activist. It would be impossible to plan out all of the steps of dealing with this type of situation—especially since the survivor of sexual assault should largely control what happens—but we need a skeleton of steps to help handle this type of situation. Members of any organization should all have political education on both rape and sexual assault and how to deal when you or someone you know has been raped. Organizations should have a framework so that they are not fumbling around when sexual assault happens. Not having a framework

or tank shells, one had been destroyed by an F16 bomb. 10 water wells and 200 dunums of land - orange groves and strawberry fields, have been bulldozed, and approximately 250 people have been made homeless.

Six members of the Kiferina family were crushed to death when their home was fired upon by Tanks on Sunday night. People were coming back to their homes for the first time. The Hamdan Family had three homes in a row destroyed. I asked one woman sitting amongst the ruins of her home where she would go now? She replied, 'Beit Hanoun UNRWA school'. 'But do you think that will be safe?' I ask her. 'No, but I have nowhere else to go' she replied.

The Al Naim Mosque was also completely destroyed, holy books still smouldering from the attacks. Approximately one in 10 of the some 100 mosques in the Jabaliya area have been destroyed in Israel's assault. 'We see them as personal centers for us, they're not Hamas, and we paid for them out of our own money, they belong to us, not anyone else', explained one Imam based in Jabaliya.

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 funeral for the 42 people, mostly children, massacred at the Fakhoura School, hundreds prayed on the ground that was turned into an early graveyard.

Forced out

On Sunday night, all Sikka Street residents were given five minutes to leave their homes, ordered out through loudhailers, unable to take any belongings with them, rounded up by Israeli occupation forces and taken to the Al Naim Mosque. Women, children and the elderly were put inside and men aged between 16-40 were kept in a field outside in the cold and interrogated. Six were taken to Erez, three were released a day later and were told by soldiers, according to a witness, that it was safe for them to make their own way home along Salahdeen Street. It was there that special forces allegedly shot 33 year-old Shaadi Hissam Yousef Hamad 33, in the head.

Torn schoolbooks lie amidst rubble, and Iman Mayer Hammad picks through the debris of her life, a hejab, shoes, pictures, she cries out, 'Its all gone, everything, they've taken everything, my children can't finish their exams, how will they finish their exams?'

Hundreds of children won't be finishing their exams in Gaza because they're dead.

Whether people stay in their homes or leave, they are being bombed. Majid Hamdan Wadeeya, 40, was hit in the leg and spine with shrapnel while he and his family were preparing to leave their home in Jaffa Street, Jabaliya. We arrived at his home on Tuesday afternoon to find the family's decrepit red car still running and the family minivan stuffed with mattresses, towels, blankets, and belongings, blasted open. They had been hit by a missile from either a drone of apache. 'We were going from the bombing, from the bombing', screamed his children, all terrified. We managed to take half of the family, the rest got in their red car and followed.



We were interviewing residents at the UNRWA elementary school in Jabaliya, close to the Fakhoura school, at exactly the same time of the massacre. The Sahaar family, which had walked from their home in Salahdeen Street to seek refuge in the school on the first day of invasion, were asking us, 'But do you think we are safe here? We feel that any time a missile could come down us? Are we safe here?' The 500 people, some 50 families living in classrooms, share just 14 toilets and rely on rations to survive. The nights are cold as the windows have been smashed out by Israeli bomb attacks. Noone can sleep at night because of the sounds of homes, mosques and people being bombed to the ground.

The fabric of life

Everyone here knows someone who has been killed in Israel's massacres. I can't keep up with the stories of missile struck cousins, nephews, brothers, the jailed, the humiliated, the shot, the unreachable, the homeless, the now even more vulnerable than ever, people, not pieces, piling up in morgues all over Gaza, not pieces, people. These people are struggling to live and breathe another day, to avoid the lethal use of F16s, F15s, Apache Helicopters, Cobra 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 the worst attack on them since the Nakba, Israel proceeds to cantonise the West Bank, under a project of roads and tunnels 'for Palestinians' which reinforce the existing illegal settlement system, apartheid wall, land and water theft and Palestinian bantustanisation. Under the banner of 'development', this network of new facts on the ground, 'for the Palestinians' 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-

panies and governments and internal authority complicity. Back at Kamall Odwan hospital, Dr Moayan, explains, 'Its not about just riding the streets of civilians, because, they are bombing us even when we 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 people that 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 these communities, that neighbours no longer neighbours, that families no longer living or alive together is being stretched to breaking point. People are being made refugees again, tents as homes awaiting 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 centres, charities, offices, clinics, youth centers.

How do you break a people that won't be broken? 'They will have to kill each and everyone of us' people tell me. From the first days here people were expecting 'the shoah' threatened upon them by Matan Villai, Israel's deputy defence 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. As Israel steps up its destruction of the Palestinian people, we need to step up our reconstruction of our resistance, our movements, of our communities in our own counties, where so many of us live in alienation and isolation. We need to be the third intifada - people here need more and say repeatedly that they need more than the demonstrations, because they are not stopping the killing here. Demonstrations alone, are not stopping the killing here.

The arms companies making the weapons that are targeting people here, the companies that are selling stolen goods from occupied land pillaging settlements, the companies building the apartheid wall, the prisons, the East Jerusalem Light Railway system. These companies, Carmel Agrexco, Caterpillar, Veolia, Raytheon, EDO, BAE Systems, they are complicit in the crimes against humanity being committed here. If the international community will not uphold international law, then a popular movement 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 politi-

cal relations must be reversed. The EU represents a core strategic market of legitimacy and political economic reinforcement 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 this April, will empower Israel further, bring it closer to the 'community of nations' of the EU, and give a green light for further terror and crimes against humanity be inflicted 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, strikes, occupations, direct actions. From the streets into the offices, factories and headquarters is where we need to take this fight, to the heart of decision-makers that are supposedly making decisions on our behalf and the companies 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

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 is busy owning up to its commitment to begin forming working alliances and collaborations with other front-line organizations that organize, address 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 Social Justice 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 in harm's way and have struggled valiantly for many of the freedoms and advancements presently experienced. Along with its commitment, the Social Justice Committee will bring all the resources that it can muster in supporting those efforts that already exist, as well as educating and organizing the Muslim communities across the nation to do the same.

Sexism in the anarchist movement

BY ANGELA BEALLOR (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 anarchist movement are criticisms of the greater society. There is a void where critical anarchist feminist/anti-sexist critiques should be which has led to a lack of dialogue and concrete action around sexism. This critique will be based upon many of the weaknesses within the anarchist movement, which are often compounded around issues of sexism (and other forms of oppression). There is a continuum of thought and concrete action which anarchists must address or take up in order to combat our own sexism 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 minute, then 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 struggle within myself not to use the language of gender oppression, to see the sexism inherent in every aspect of America, to challenge all injustices, not just those that are convenient for me."

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 create a rape culture, the way people 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 other men. Men must become examples to challenge the mainstream notions of masculinity and that takes more than a simple label.

Often complexities arise, however, when women challenge "anti-sexist" men. Men get defensive when women critique 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, as 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 listened to and, if the criticisms are valid, men should seek to change their thoughts and their actions.

Political Study

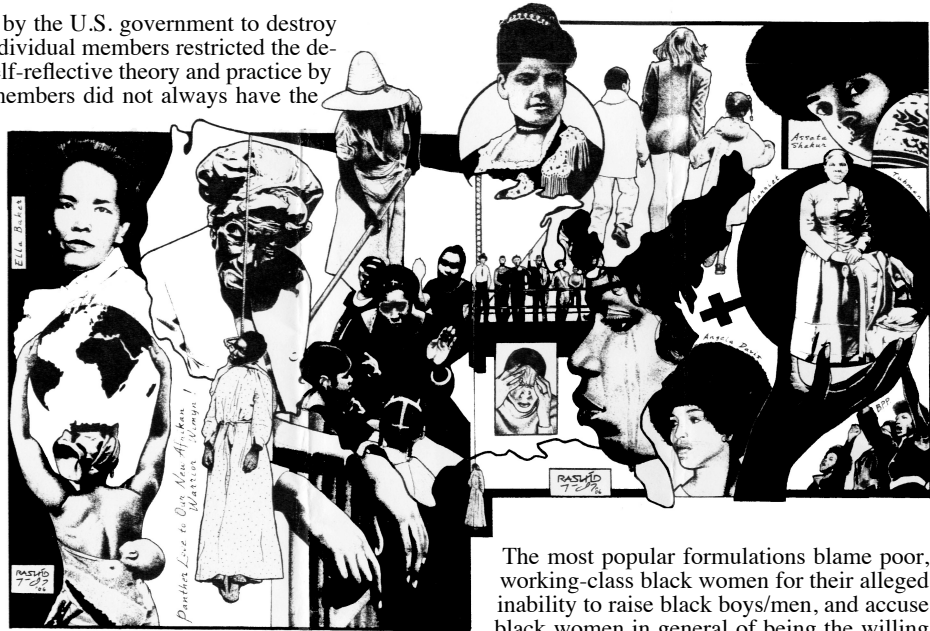
Understanding sexism is important to all within the anarchist movement. However, as a woman, it is not my duty to always answer questions and educate men on how sexism affects my life. Many anarchist groups already have a program in place that could be utilized to gain a better understanding of sexism without burdening women with the task of explaining our lives: the political study group. When was the last time you or 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 readings on capitalism or anarchism 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. These writings do not have to be specifically anarchist or even revolutionary to give us good insights. When was the last time you read something by Audre Lorde, bell hooks, Barbara Smith, Angela 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 was socialized 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 on any kind of front line of revolutionary 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.

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. Nonetheless, 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 same cultural critics 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 bodies with guns (105). Many of the intracommunal debates raised by the Black Panther Party have resurfaced once again in the context of a resurgent 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 talk 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 from 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 us all. Those who dare to assert our heterogeneity and identify oppressive practices within and between black communities are silenced and assailed 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 interrogation 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 for extended periods, denying visitations, issuing 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, Gilad Shalit, Haaretz said.

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 be 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 aggression.

All Palestinian detainees are prisoners of war as Israeli 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 of them 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 Hamdouna, 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.

Hamdouna 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 challenges of women in the struggle. In Issue 11 of 4struggle, we printed “Free the Wimyn,” in which Spider presented a strong argument that women’s liberation is nowhere near complete, and that women “not only ha[ve] 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 I’ve known for over a year - 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 communities,” Jaan wrote. “I guess I shouldn’t be, but I was kind of surprised and of course disappointed 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 backwards 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 replicate these patterns of repression in many cases. The common misconception that sexism in our movements is 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 these debates, but also reprinting important references to aid in education and dialogue. In the print edition of this section on women in the struggle, we are running two reflections 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 anarchist and radical activist groups. 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 “classroom” to include 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 place for this essential process of understanding that class struggle, anti-racist and anti-sexist work must be integrally united in any successful movement towards liberation. As Spider put it, “Not only do wimyn need revolution, but the revolution needs wimyn.”



Sandinista women: defending their land, their families, and themselves, ca. 1980s. Militia members in the Bluefields, on Atlantic Coast, Nicaragua.

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 bashed we must have provoked it and if we raise our voices we’re nagging bitches and if we enjoy sex we’re nymphos 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/or 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 weak females and if we want to get married we’re out to trap a man and if we don’t we’re unnatural 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 movement.

happening. 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 their car got towed in the morning because they overslept” (97)

After this episode, Cyril was expelled for sabotage. She later found out through research in the FBI’s Counter Intelligence Program (COINTELPRO) files 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 service programs in lending credibility and longevity to the BPP, which was precisely why the FBI made such diligent efforts to undermine them. It also gives a concrete example of the power relations embedded in sexual interactions in that Cyril was expelled at least once for refusing to participate in what some Party members referred to as “socialist fucking,” 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 national leadership with regard to sexual relationships and sexual self-determination directly and adversely affected the Panthers’ capacity to function as a viable political organization.

Conclusion

The ideological development of Party members was an ongoing process, ripe with contradiction, and shaped by the material and cultural conditions of the late 1960s and early 1970s. The increasing numbers of women in the Party as rank-and-file members and as leaders and the severity of state repression directed at all Panthers provided the pressure-cooker setting for testing our their new ideas about gender and revolution.

The members of the BPP were themselves products of the larger society. Thus the terrain on which intracommunal 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 American culture and politics. Panthers decried the class and gender biases of their contemporaries and the larger white society, but at the same time they reaffirmed many of those same shortcomings. A former female member of the Party’s Brooklyn branch recalled, “[W]e could talk about this stuff [gender and sexism]. We could talk about it just as we talked about capitalism and imperialism. 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 other in discussions about gender issues, yet basic contradictions remained between theory and practice. Most still 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 shortcomings arose from the lack of experience addressing such concerns in an explicitly political context. This was probably especially true for those who had no previous activist involvement. Their contradictions were part and parcel of the dialectic between hegemonic norms, which reinforced unequal gender roles and power relations between men and women, and intracommunal struggles, which attempted to redefine the terms of this discourse both internally and externally.

Despite their limitations (or perhaps because of them) and the generally dire circumstances in which they found themselves, the BPP was still ahead of most other black nationalist organizations and many white leftist and mainstream organizations in their progress towards addressing (at least rhetorically) “the woman question.” According to Assata Shakur, “The BPP was the most progressive organization at that time [and] had the most positive images in terms of...the position of women in the propaganda...I felt it was the most positive thing that I could do because many of the other organizations at the time were so sexist, I mean tot the extreme...There was a whole saturation of the whole climate with this quest for manhood...even though that might be oppressive to you as a human being... For me joining the BPP was one of the best options at the time” (101).

Thus, for Shakur and many other black women seeking involvement in the Black Power Movement and grassroots organizing, the Party presented a viable option. The programmatic focus of the Party after 1968 directly addressed the needs of poor black women, especially those who were primarily responsible for childrearing. BPP membership could also offer women and men a sense of control over their lives outside the Party. Many, probably for the first time in their lives, were able to contest directly the larger society’s representations and perceptions of them and to fight for better treatment from the state apparatus that imposed its policies on their lives and their communities. Through its ideology, rhetoric, imagery, and praxis, the BPP engaged the dominant culture in a debate about the parameters 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 respectable, fully human beings. They also engaged each other and the larger black community about what it meant to be a black woman, man, comrade, revolutionary – not in the abstract – but in the heat of political struggle.

roles, and the relative exercise of power they brought to bear on their relationships, were not merely personal dynamics, but also political interactions and choices made in the context of the movement. Although on a very practical level the dialogue on gender in the Party was affected by the presence of increasing numbers of women, it was, more importantly, the impact of these women's actions that demanded a certain level of respect and recognition from male members.

Female Panthers often tested and stretched the boundaries of the largely masculinized Party structure. Many of these women held low or no formal positions of rank. Yet their heroic actions thrust them into positions of prominence inside and outside of the Party. Women, such as Joan Bird, Afeni Shakur, and numerous other unnamed rank-and-file members, fought figuratively and literally for the revolutionary principles and platform of the Party. Many were involved in armed confrontation with police authorities alongside Panther men (92). By so doing, they challenged old Party notions of community defense being a man's job. The brutal treatment of these women by police authorities made it clear to them as well as the entire black community that they could expect no comfort or benefits from stereotypes of women as fragile and weak and needing to be protected. After all, this construction of womanhood historically had never been applied to black women by the larger society (even though some nationalists adapted their own variation). Nor could the idea (propagated by Moynihan and even some Panthers), that black women somehow received special treatment from government agencies or U.S. society in general remain intact. Once these black women, involved in militant organizing efforts, stepped outside the roles traditionally assigned to women or African Americans, their treatment more closely resembled the experiences of their black male comrades than those of white women. Racist and sexist government agencies and a racist and sexist mainstream polity responded to Black Panther women as black people who did not "know their place" with respect to their gender, race or class.

The above examples attest to the ability of some black women to carve out a space for their own empowerment within the context of a formally male-dominated organization, often in the face of extreme male chauvinism and harassment from within and without. In her recognition of women as strong leaders in the Party, Connie Matthews legitimizes women's contributions as crucial to the survival of the organization. In so doing, she not only pays respect to the leadership abilities of the well-known (and higher-ranking) women in the BPP like Ericka Huggins, Kathleen Cleaver, and Elaine Brown, but also to local female rank-and-file members.

Matthews' claim that women held key leadership roles is echoed in other accounts. Many former Panthers recall that women were responsible in terms of both leadership and personnel for key Party programs, such as the free break-

fast programs, liberation schools, and medical clinics; yet the media image of the Party is male-centered. The Party also recruited non-Panther "welfare mothers, grandmothers and guardians in the black community" to help staff breakfast programs in particular (93). As former Panther Malika Adams pointed out,

[W]omen ran the BPP pretty much. I don't know how it got to be a male's party or thought of as being a male's party. Because those things, when you really look at them in terms of society, those things are looked on as being woman things, you know, feeding children, taking care of the sick and uh, so. Yeah, we did that. We actually ran the BPP's programs (94).

Her assessment of the prominence of women not only provides us with the standard participatory history or "women were there too" analysis, but on an even more significant level, argues for new definitions of leadership and politics. As Adams indicates, the types of activities prescribed in these community survival programs often represented an extension of "traditional" roles for women in the family: nurturers, caretakers of children, transmitters of morals, etc. Yet Panther men as well as women staffed the programs, thus potentially challenging narrowly defined male gender roles. These types of movement jobs are often categorized by historians and activists alike as "support work" or "community service" as opposed to "real" political activism (95). These tasks were the lifeblood of the organization and as such should be understood more accurately as forms of political leadership. Given the context of state repression, these activities took on an explicitly political and public function and were often sites of intense struggle with the authorities. Thus, public speaking abilities and formal titles were not the sole markers of leadership abilities, a point not missed by the FBI. Panther survival programs were an ideological and practical counter to the misinformation and destruction campaign being waged against the BPP. In fact, many of the FBI's activities against the Party were designed to undermine the free breakfast for children operations and other community based "survival programs." An FBI memo from Director J. Edgar Hoover in 1969 described the free breakfast program as "the best and most influential activity going for the BPP and as such, is potentially the greatest threat to efforts by authorities... to neutralize the BPP and destroy what it stands for" (96)

The experiences of Brooklyn-branch member Janet Cyril further illuminate this point. As one of the founding members of that branch, she eventually became citywide coordinator of the free breakfast programs. In the meantime, she was expelled from the Party no less than four times. She argues that this was in part due to her generally anti-authoritarian attitude, which, in her assessment, was even less tolerable because she is a woman. One of her expulsions was for refusing to have sex with a very high-ranking of the Central Committee of the Party: "[He] thought he was gon' sleep in my bed with me. And uh, that was not

Chicana feminism

BY ANNA NIETOGOMEZ

From *Chicana Feminist Thought: The Basic Historical Writings*. Edited by Alma M. Garcia. Routledge, 1997.

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 a contradictory statement, a "Malinche" statement – if 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 – which is a bunch of bull. Why? Because when you say you're Chicana, you mean you come from a particular community, one that is subject to racism and the exploitation of centuries. When you say you are a feminist you mean you're a woman who opposes the oppression of not only the group in general, 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 listening to the issues. If somebody attacks you for being a Chicana feminist, he's diverting attention from some of the important issues at hand. What are these issues? The movement is one that supports social, economic and political issues in regard to the position of women – bettering the position of the Chicana. 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 community responsibility. Economically, the woman should have equal employment regardless of race – equal pay, equal training and an economic position which is not dependent on fathers, husbands and sons. As long as she is economically dependent she will have to allow male privilege, to compromise herself. She will always have to accept the secondary position. 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 feminism is not an Anglo idea. I resent the usual remark that if you're a feminist you have somehow become an Anglo or been influenced by Anglos. That's a sexist remark, whether it comes from hermanos or hermanas. Why? Because of what it is saying – that you, as a Chicana, a Chicana woman, don't have the mentality to think for yourself! Somehow we are only supposed to be repositories – everything we say is either his idea, or the white Anglo "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 listen to what we'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 a world-wide event since the beginning of oppression. 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: who addressed themselves to the needs of 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 of the Americas (which is incorrect, because there were many pre-Columbian feminists). Several of the North American Indian societies were matriarchal and advocated the non-oppression of women – the non-oppression of anybody. Sor Juana was a seventeenth century genius. She was a genius who happened to be a woman and who therefore had only two alternatives: to marry, or to join the convent and marry God. She chose the latter because 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's beauty, but if it covered an empty mind, it was nothing but a mask. She said that not until a woman's mind was equal in beauty to her long hair should she have her long hair, so in three months she would plan to read a certain amount, and if she hadn't she would cut off her hair. In three more months, if she hadn't achieved her goal of, say, three volumes, the hair was to go right back until the goal was reached. Sor Juana is famous for *respuesta*, a letter to the bishop addressing itself to a letter he sent her praising 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, as I recall, Jesus did not say that women should be silent and not heard. You forget that the temple was a place of learn-

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. Jesus came into the temple and addressed himself 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 God, but how can I understand theology" – 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 biology, geology, psychology? If the world's 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 beautiful powers." So she advocated that women have the right to education. But women did not have this right until after the Revolution. During the eighteenth century they did open some convents where women could go and get 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 known women recognized for their efforts in the labor movement are Tejanas. Louisa González was a Tejana 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 that women should support the issues of the union. You have Emma Tenayuca, who was a farmworker organizer, who at the age of 18 had to support the majority of farmworkers in the pecan-shellers strike of 1938. And in El Paso you have the strike against Farah (1972), which was primarily an issue of women. Most of the workers in the factory were women, and 85% of them were Chicanas. The women who went around the nation to ask people to strike Farah Pants for Chicanas did a fantastic thing – the quiet, non-obtrusive, submissive women were coming to say, "You'd better strike Farah Pants." – Because we are workers. Because we demand workers' rights. Because as women, we demand maternity leave, because we ask for free birth control (and not false birth control), and because we ask for better working conditions for everybody. All these things are part of the history of the Tejana, and they are things that Chicanas all over the nation admire and identify with.

Today, What is Chicana 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 political stance, 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 address itself to the double standard about male and female workers, and making it live up to its cry of *Carnalismo* and community responsibility. We're saying, "Prove it! Let's carry it out! Let's support child care. Children 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 is different from the Black movement. These questions indicate that you're still fighting for recognition of your own identity, and at times I just think, "Well, I'm not here to talk about the Anglo women's movement. 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 Marta 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 unified movement. There are at least three positions. There are the liberal feminists, who say, "I want access to power. I want access to whatever men have access to. I want women's oppression to end insofar as they do not have these things." Then there are radical feminists, who say that men have the power, and that men are responsible for the oppression of women. A third position is that of women's liberationists, which says that women's oppression is one of the many oppressions in the economic system of this country, that we must understand and support that system as well as correct it and unify people to end all oppression. Where does the Chicana women's movement stand in relation to these three positions? I do not have the authority to represent anyone in answering that, and the Chicana feminist is in the making from one place to another. but from my point of view, in my own private Los Angeles experience, the general feeling is that men do not have the power. Certainly Chicanos do not have the power, otherwise there would not be a Chicano movement. We recognize that obvious fact. At the same time, we recognize and criticize the fact that the Chicano seems to try to compensate for that lack of power with the use of "male privilege" – coming down with the double standard.

also his stance on the "woman question" that was equated with weakness and lack of appropriate "manhood credentials" (whatever those may have been). In the context of other extremely homophobic and heterosexist comments by some Party members, one could also reasonably raise the question of whether this challenging of Zayd's manhood may also have represented a pejorative commentary about his sexual orientation, whether metaphorical or literal. Recall that Eldridge Cleaver publicly articulated the category of "real men" as being the opposite of "faggots".

Yet even at the expense of being ridiculed, some men in the Party did challenge the predominant thinking and posturing of the times that equated black heterosexual manhood with male dominance. These Panther men often learned and taught others about alternate models of black manhood and female-male relations through the example of their relations with women in the BPP. Harlem branch member Jamal Joseph remembers, "[G]rowing up in the Black Panther Party... it's where I learned not to be a chauvinist, OK. I learned there was no such thing as man's work or woman's work." For Joseph, women like Afeni Shakur, Janet Cyril and Assata Shakur were some of his "most important teachers and friends" and had a profound and lasting impact on his ideas about gender and politics in general (86). Thus, while the popular image of the BPP, both then and now, is that of a male-dominate, macho cult, the reality of Party life deserves a more nuanced description. One must take into account the diverse individual experiences of Party members as well as examine the subtleties to be found in dissecting broad patterns.

Observation and Participation: Quotidian Gender Struggle in Ideology and Practice

Huey P. Newton was often quoted as saying that black people learned primarily through observation and participation, a point which supports the argument that the events of everyday life were important in shaping the consciousness and practice of Party members (87). It is critical, then, that we begin to explore the daily struggles over gender and definitions of black manhood and womanhood and not just moments of extraordinary rupture and conflict (although these, too, are important). I do not mean to suggest that the BPP was a hotbed of critical inquiry on gender issues in the academic sense. Instead, many of these dialogic interactions played themselves out in the daily acts of living and working together. In other words, the actions of Party members often represented their theory (88). A few examples 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 international chapter and Oakland headquarters, recounts that "[I]n theory, the Panther party was for equality of the sexes...on a day-to-day struggle with rank-and-file brothers, you 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 a lot of struggle and there 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 and were respected as such. it didn't mean it came automatically" (89).

Matthews acknowledges the existence of sexism in the Party, but at the same time highlights the existence of struggle on the part of women (and men) to grapple with the disparities between Party rhetoric and the concrete reality of daily working and living arrangements. She confirms an awareness of the influence of socialization on Party members' ideas and behavior. Yet her quote leaves some ambiguity as to whether she saw chauvinistic "attitudes and lifestyles" as being generated from within, or from outside of black communities, or both. She also hints at her opinion of the way in which class differences may have affected gender relations in her reference to the "rank-and-file" brothers as being particularly disrespectful.

Statements by Assata Shakur corroborate Matthews' acknowledgements of the daily struggles of women for respect in the Party. According to Shakur, "[A] lot of us [women] adopted that kind of macho type style 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." [I]n order to be listened to, you had to just say, "look mothafucka," you know. You had to develop this whole arrogant kind of macho style 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 assuming supposedly masculine styles of behavior and posturing. This approach to political organizing is more authoritarian than democratic and was criticized elsewhere by Shakur (91). However, black women's presumption of a style, actions, and words associated with male prerogative potentially undermined the notion of men's inherent aggressiveness or innate leadership abilities that were the basis of masculinist gender ideologies, including some of the BPP's earlier formulations. While this macho posturing by women may have reinforced the notion of black women as domineering, it also challenged the idea that only black men should lead and "protect" black women. That some women had to modify their public persona in order to be respected is indicative of the extent to which gendered power dynamics pervaded the lives of Party members.

Such intracommunal struggles, which Matthews and Shakur describe, directly affected the organization's culture 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 domineering matriarchs and was seemingly unaware (or unconvinced) of the revised Party rhetoric highlighting the significance of revolutionary comrade sisters to the movement. His article appeared without commentary or reply; thus it is unclear whether his views are representative of “official” Party ideology, represented significant numbers of male members, or were strictly his own. Thus, while there appeared to be a transition in the Party’s gender ideology, these changes did not always inform the actions or ideas of all members. At the very least, ideological formulations on gender roles were being constantly revised and were open to various interpretations.

Articles by rank-and-file Panther women were also included in early issues of *The Black Panther*. Beginning in late 1968, articles authored by women appeared more frequently and specifically addressed their roles in the movement. These types of articles represented a move by women in the Party, as well as formal Party leadership, to explicitly recognize women’s past contributions and to influence their future participation in Panther life and activity.

Two very telling examples of what may be called “prescriptive literature” by black women in the Panther Party appeared in the same issue, on the same page of *The Black Panther* in 1968. Each offers characterizations of “Black Revolutionary Women” that partially challenge Moynihan’s portrayal of black women as overbearing and domineering, and at the same time, reinforce traditional middle-class or bourgeois gender norms. Linda Green writes that that the “new phenomenon” of the revolutionary woman “is, and must be the Black Man’s everything. She is a worker. She is a mother. She is a companion, intellectual, spiritual, mental and physical. She is what her man, and what her people need her to be... She is the strength of the struggle... She is militant, revolutionary, committed, strong, and warm, feminine, loving, and kind. These qualities are not the antithesis of each other; they must all be her simultaneously” (80).

She goes on to discuss how women must support revolutionary black men, not distract them, and provide a haven at home for their rejuvenation.

The second article by Gloria Bartholomew, “A Black Woman’s Thoughts,” supplements Green’s piece by giving examples of how black women could change themselves to better aid in the struggle. She begins with the rhetorical question, “What is a black woman’s chief function, if it is not to live for her man?” Then, in what seems to be a direct reference to the predominantly white women’s liberation movement, she asserts that “black women must drop the white ways of trying to be equal with the black man. The woman’s place is to stand behind the Black man, so in the event he should start to fall she is there to hold him up with her strength.” According to her five-point inventory, black

women must “find out who you are... rid yourself of the inferiority complex about being black... stop playing the role of a man, and take your place beside your man... and smile when you pass a brother” (81).

Taken together, these two articles both contradict and complement each other. They should be seen as evidence that their own and the Party’s official position on the role of women was still evolving through a process of internal struggle. They may also be signs of openness, in that members engaged each other publicly and expressed diverse perspectives. Neither woman challenges traditionally defined roles for women in heterosexual nuclear family settings, such as nurturer, mother, spiritual family sustainer, and adjunct of men. Roles for men, such as breadwinner, protector, and head of the household, also remained fundamentally unchallenged and were in fact encouraged. At the same time, they present women as standing beside men and use character defining terms that were previously reserved for men, such as militant, intellectual, and committed revolutionary. The overarching themes of both articles define women only as they relate to and support the men in their lives. In sum, “[I]t is what the black woman can contribute to the black man that is important” (82). This position was consistent with many of the previously mentioned commentaries of the male Party leaders during this period. Their arguments for complementary roles closely mirrored the positions taken by Karenga and other cultural nationalists. Yet it should also be noted that within such traditionally gendered settings, these women were seeking to define as space for themselves in the movement that would value and enhance their political power as women committed to revolutionary change.

There were also competing views on the appropriate models of a revolutionary black manhood among rank-and-file members. In her autobiography, Assata Shakur recounts her relationship with Zayd, the Minister of Information in the Bronx. Of him she writes, “I also respected him because he refused to become part of the macho cult that was an official body of the BPP. He never voted on issues or took a position just to be one of the boys. When brothers made an unprincipled attack on sisters, Zayd refused to participate... Zayd always treated me and all the other sisters with respect. I enjoyed his friendship because he was one of those rare men completely capable of being friends with a woman without having designs on her” (83).

Shakur’s description of Zayd challenges the popular image of male Black Panther leaders. Zayd’s behavior and attitude also presented an alternative construction of male gender roles for other brothers in the Party. He gained the respect of women in the Party through his actions. Yet he also incurred the wrath of some men, according to Shakur, “because he was small and his masculinity was always in some way being challenged by some of the more backward, muscle-headed men in the party” (84). Shakur’s comments raise the question of whether or not it was Zayd’s size but

What is Male Privilege?

Here’s the double standard: “If I have a meeting, you stay at the house and take care of the kids. If you have a meeting, have it at the house and take care of the kids at the same time.” Male privilege is, “Let’s fight for equal pay for me, and maybe later on for you.” Male privilege sometimes makes the Chicano movement just like a male liberation movement. The implication is this: “Our problem is that women have to work because we are not given our economic position as men.” So once the men are paid what they’re due, have an economic base of workers, then women won’t have to be out in the public world. When liberation comes along, everything will be hunky-dory and the women can stay at home. That says to me, “Whose liberation are you fighting for, anyway? I’m fighting for people’s liberation.” If the answer is, “I am fighting for people’s liberation,” I say, “Okay, then if you are, it means there is no ‘proper place’ for the Chicana except the world as a whole. There is no place for the Chicana—just the world as a whole.”

Welfare Rights

We have other issues and here’s how they differ from the Anglo women’s movement and the Chicano movement as it stands now. When was the last time you heard about welfare rights at a meeting? When was the last time you heard Gloria Steinem or Betty Friedan talk about welfare rights? Do you know what welfare rights are? Why don’t you, if you don’t? We’re supposed to be poor people. One of the criticisms I have of Chicanas is that we don’t use the welfare rights system, therefore we don’t make it address our needs.

Race

For the last year there have been issues of race in which women have defended themselves. There were Third World women – for example, Inez Garcia, who suffered from rape and who retaliated. Who supported her? She was sent to jail. Where was the Chicano movement? There were people in the Chicano movement who said that Inez Garcia deserved it, that everybody knows that women really want to be raped, that she can enjoy it, and that rape doesn’t justify the taking of a human life. This is an example of the confusion in our community response to an important issue. Chai Lao is an Asian woman; she was arrested by a police officer. He told her, “I’ll tell you what. I won’t take you in if you submit to me.” She said no. He raped her; she killed him. Joanne Little is the most nationally publicized example of this. She was a woman, a prisoner. The guard said, “Do me a little favor, honey, and I might do one for you.” She said no. He raped her; he killed him. Rape is an act of violent aggression, and it’s something we have the right to defend ourselves against.

Child Care

Middle class women ask for more child care centers. In Los Angeles, child care costs about \$150. The figure should be about a third of the rent, but it’s equal to the rent. That is my rent. Chicanas ask for free child care. Chicanas ask for bilingual child care, bicultural child care.

Employment

In the middle class, the employment issue is social mobility, it’s promotion, it’s tenure. Women with PhDs don’t want to be secretaries. The issue for the Chicana is just employment. “Give me a job. Give me a good-paying job. Let me have access to training.” Again, pure class difference.

Raza Power Means an End to Colonization

These are some of the issues in Chicana feminism. We are saying something very positive. Raza power! Men, women and children. Everybody. When we say jobs, we mean jobs for all. But something I haven’t mentioned is that a lot of the things that are going to change are those things that maybe we revere and sanction and call a part of our culture. If something in our culture that is advocating oppression is unable to be criticized, evaluated and changed, this is wrong. In our culture we happen to say “la mujer buena” [the Good Woman] and “la mujer mala” [the bad woman]. And if you’re active in Raza Unida, you’re suspected of being “la mujer mala,” and in order to prove that you’re not, you have to live the life of a nun. Well, I say the life of a nun is oppressive. “La mujer buena” and “la mujer mala” are historical ideas that came from the colonization of the people of Mexico. In order to assimilate and acculturate the Indians, they used to control the women by setting up two models. First, they imported poor Spanish women to marry the Spaniards. Their oppressed role was that of the woman who stays home, and the only place she goes is the church or to visit her in-laws. That was the model of the Spanish woman. The model of the Indian woman was different, a very active one. She was the business person; she was the one who controlled the market place, did the crafts, worked in the fields, participated in child care. She was the priestess of religious functions. This was a total role. Don’t get me wrong, I’m not saying she wasn’t oppressed; I’m not saying that at all. I’m saying it was different, and comparatively speaking, it was a freer role. In order for the colonization to affect everybody, they put up these two roles. They used the concepts of the church, Marianismo on one hand, Mary Magdalene on the other. The Spanish woman and the Indian woman. La mujer buena and la mujer mala. Clear who’s on the top and who’s on the bottom! So we perpetuate those two roles and we perpetuate our own colonized situation. We have to recognize what change will bring to this colonization, which we have unintentionally continued.

“No one ever asks what a man’s role in the revolution is”: Gender politics and leadership in the Black Panther Party, 1966-71 (1)

BY TRACYE A. MATTHEWS. Excerpted from *Sisters in the Struggle: African American Women in the Civil Rights – Black Power Movement*. Edited by Bettye Collier-Thomson and V.P. Franklin. New York: NYU Press, 2001.

...The goal of this essay is to provide a perspective on an often-ignored 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 by organizational practice, was as critical to its daily functioning as was the Party’s analysis of race and class dynamics in black communities. Rather than the Party’s gender politics being secondary to the “larger” struggle against racism and capitalism, I instead posit that the politics of gender were played out in most aspects of party activity and affected its ability to function as an effective political organization.

My purpose here is to begin this process with an examination of the construction of gender ideology within the context of Panther Party politics from 1966 to 1971. Gender struggle affected the Party’s political ideology and positions taken on a variety of issues, relationships with the larger black and progressive political communities, daily working and living arrangements, and the organization’s ability to defend itself from state-sponsored disruption. The Party’s theory and praxis with regard to issues of gender and sexuality should be viewed as an ongoing, nonlinear process that was affected by factors both internal and external to the organization. This analysis of gender ideology offers insights into the internal politics of black communities, especially relations of power between and among men and women, and the myriad ways in which these dynamics influence political movements and popular perceptions of them.

Although much of the public rhetoric of the BPP and other Black Power organizations tended to center on issues usually defined (by themselves and by scholars) as race and/or class concerns, contestation around the politics of gender formed a significant component of the “hidden (and not so hidden) transcript” in the intracommunity discourse. Evelyn Brooks Higginbotham suggests that race functions as a metalanguage in Western culture and tends to subsume and obscure gender, class, and other social relations. In addition, she argues that scholarly works in women’s studies and African American history that are premised on the as-

sumption of racial, gender, and class homogeneity “preclude recognition and acknowledgment of intra-group social relations as relations of power,” and overlook crucial micropolitical struggles in black communities (8). In this essay, I wish to show how the imagery, rhetoric, and praxis of the BPP contain components of ongoing power struggles, overt and hidden, over gender identity and sexuality. These struggles in turn complicate and disrupt romanticized notions of “nation-building” and/or black unity, both historical and contemporary, that presume the existence of a monolithic black community and privilege male authority/dominance in the family, as well as in the political and cultural arenas.

In this analysis, gender is not to be understood as a discrete category unto itself, but one of several interacting factors, such as race, class, color, age, and sexual orientation, that together make up individual identities, as well as the social terrain upon which we experience our realities. To say that I am examining gender and the politics of the BPP does not mean that this work is solely about sexism in the Party, or women’s experiences. Instead, a gendered analysis also encompasses the experiences of men; definitions of manhood and womanhood; the interconnections 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 feminist, nationalist, or revolutionary credentials of the BPP. Each of these social theories and categories must be understood as being situationally and historically specific. What constitutes feminism or radicalism in one time period is not necessarily recognized as such in another. Nevertheless, it is useful to compare and contrast feminism and race-consciousness across historical periods, examining continuities and changes. In addition, it is possible to assess which theories and actions constitute a challenge to status quo relations of power in different eras, and thus to assess the merits of political organizations on their own terms and in their particular historical context.

Ideas about gender and gender roles were far from static within the BPP. As the Party spread numerically and geographically, class and gender diversity within its ranks increased. New members brought new (and old) ideas with them. Despite the initial self-conscious creation by the leadership of a masculine public identity for the Panthers, some women and men in the Party challenged the characterization of the struggle as one mainly for the redemption 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 monolithic party 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 [sic] leadership and emancipation of women... because we have come to realize that male chauvinism and all its manifestations are bourgeois and that’s one of the things we’re fighting against. We realize that in a proletarian revolution, the 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 subordinate to them because this is what bourgeois ideology has been trying to put into the black man and that’s part of the special oppression of black women.” Although they also mention, “Our men have been sort of castrated,” the solution they pose is “to be very sure that the roles are evenly divided,” so that men will not have the “fear of women dominating the whole political scene” (74). These Panther sisters corroborate the view that internal struggle around the BPP’s ideology and practice regarding gender issues was a dynamic, nonlinear process. They acknowledge intracommunal power relations as well as the influence of external factors. Their reference to the castration of black men and their concern that they, as women, do not “dominate” or take over political leadership are somewhat ambiguous. Perhaps this statement is both a way of distancing themselves from what they interpret to be the goals of the dominantly white women’s movement as well as a slight nod to the black matriarchy thesis. The national hierarchy of the BPP was always predominantly male until Elaine Brown was named chairman in 1974, yet there were always women in leadership positions, formally and informally, at the local level. Thus, this statement also can be interpreted as recognition of the prevalence of women numerically as well as the significance of their contributions to the life of the Party as leaders. It suggests the need for a redefinition of leadership to include those activities and people often thought of as providing support to officially and publicly credited leaders and a greater appreciation of the historical prominence of women in black freedom movements and organizations.

Old and New Ideas About Gender

“You might have been a revolutionary for six months, but you been a colonized slave for eighteen, nineteen, twenty-five years” (75).

It is important to stress that the above examples of changes in the BPP’s gender ideology are officially sanctioned public pronouncements. They are the Party’s revised self-representations, which stand in contrast to both their own earlier posturing and to racist and sexist mainstream media portrayals. In order to render a more complete view of the dialogic process of gender role/ideological construction,

one must consider the perspectives of rank-and-file members and examine the relationship between Party rhetoric and actual practice.

The experiences and ideas that individual members brought with them to the Party varied widely and affected how they functioned within the organization. Some had been involved previously in other political organizations, while many had not. Some had college training, especially those in leadership positions, while among the ranks there was a predominance of “lumpen” sisters and brothers. These are just a few examples of the diversity within the BPP.

Because of the heterogeneity of the Party, the articulation and understanding of Party ideology by the leadership and members varied widely and are not easily reduced to a single interpretation. Such complexity, in combination with periods of rapid growth when the Party structure (especially screening and political education mechanisms) could not keep pace with rising membership numbers, contributes to the difficulty in tracing gender ideology over time. 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 BPP newspaper of rank-and-file 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 competing ideologies about gender roles and related them to their own experiences. For example, one unnamed male writer of a 1969 article examines black women’s role in their families and in the revolution. He argues that black women as a group are primarily cultural nationalists who berate black men for engaging in armed self-defense. He sees Black men as inherently revolutionary – “consciously or unconsciously.” According to him, “Black women are for the most part selfish and subjective. In past times black men existed in a matriarchal society, where the women were the only members of the family 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 Panthers and other revolutionaries” (78).

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 Moynihan report that black families are matriarchal and thus pathological. 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

the example set by Huggins. He also argued for a standard of gender equality, not complementary, thus implicitly rejecting the notion that there are or should be specific roles assigned to women and men. Cleaver raises the issue of black women's liberation and the struggle against male chauvinism to the level of a serious political concern for the Party and the movement as a whole. According to this analysis, female/male relations and the status of women are not solely personal matters, but instead critical political issues that necessitate regulation by disciplinary rules and sanctions. The sense here is that concrete steps are being taken to spread this consciousness to all levels of the Party and to base future actions on this premise of gender equality. However, interviews with former Panthers regarding daily interactions, the leadership and work assignments, suggest that the process of changing gender ideology and praxis was full of contradictions and necessitated ongoing struggle. For example, it is not clear that within the Party there were shared definitions of women's liberation, equality, and male chauvinism. What is clear is that there was a variation in the level and pace of change on these issues across chapters and over time.

Elsewhere in Cleaver's statement, he mentions (twice) that

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 Attention" read "do not take liberties with women" (67). While this rule was limited in terms of clarity, detail and scope, Party members were required to memorize these "points of attention." 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 Alexander spoke on a panel of women in the struggle at the BPP-sponsored United Front Against Fascism (UFAF) Conference. In her speech, she confirms that there indeed is "a struggle going on right now" within the Panther Party and that people are "confused about the Black Panther Party on the woman question." She observes that "black women are oppressed as a class... They are oppressed 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." Alexander confirms the existence of dialogue and debate within the Party on the relationship between race, class, and gender in the black liberation movement. She presents an analysis of the multiple positions of black women, who simultaneously negotiate realities shared by their identities as women, African Americans, and exploited workers. In addition, like Eldridge Cleaver, she calls for a recognition that gender issues and the oppression of women are not solely (or even primarily) black women's personal problems, but are instead concerns to be addressed by the entire community/movement.

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." The text of the leaflet is an extensive interview with six anonymous women conducted at Party headquarters (71). In the interview, Panther women discuss changes that occurred in the Party during the year regarding its position to the role of women in the movement. They attribute these changes to several factors, including the example set for all Party members 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, "[T]here used to be a difference in the roles in the party 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 reassert the class-based analysis presented earlier at the UFAF. One sister adds that

attention to internal conflict as well as agreement, overt as well as covert manifestations of this dialogue, change over time, diversity of individual experiences, and internal as well as external influences. While it can justifiably be argued that the BPP at various points in its history was a male-centered, male-dominated organization, this point should not negate the important ideological and practical contributions of its female members or of the men who resisted chauvinistic and sexist tendencies. Indeed, the diversity, both in terms of geography and personnel, of an organization whose existence spanned from Oakland to Algiers and from 1966 to 1982, cannot be understood and appreciated through simplistic explanations or superficial head counts of official leadership roles. As will be shown, black women were critical players in the BPP, and the Party overall had a significant impact on the political life of an entire generation.

Historian Elsa Barkley Brown, in her essay "African-American Women's Quilting: A Framework for Conceptualizing and Teaching African-American Women's History," explores the polyrhythmic and nonlinear structures of African American material cultures, such as quilting, and their relationship to political and economic aesthetics. The structure of African American women's quilting is, according to Barkley Brown, "in fact illustrative of a particular way of seeing, of ordering the world," and thus, of studying and interpreting history. She shares a piece of wisdom passed on from her mother that is instructive in my effort to incorporate the complexities of everyday life into this narrative. Brown reminds us of what she calls the "essential lessons of the quilt: that people and actions do move in multiple directions at once" (9).

With the intention of recognizing the polyrhythms embedded in this stanza of African American history, I begin this chapter with an overview of the larger socio political context with regard to gender ideology in which the BPP functioned. I continue with my examination of some "official" representations of gender ideology by various BPP spokespersons; and then compare these with the "unofficial" renderings of rank-and-file members. Finally, I present some examples of BPP theory in action in an attempt to assess the day-to-day gender struggle and its implications for the lives of Party members and the life of the party.

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 did not happen in a vacuum. Thus, it will be helpful to first 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 op-

posed 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 the black matriarchy/tangle of pathology thesis (10). These three ideological discourses illustrate historian E. Frances White's contention that "counter discourse struggles against both dominant and competing oppositional discourses" (11). In other words, the oppositional rhetoric of the BPP challenged and was challenged by other "alternative" as well as mainstream perspectives. There were, of course, many other hegemonic and counterhegemonic theoretical constructs vying 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 Los Angeles-based US organization headed by Maulana Karenga. The US organization stressed the necessity for cultural awareness among blacks to be gained primarily through the revival of African traditions – real or invented – 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 scathingly 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, but it did not guarantee liberation, nor did black skin necessarily identify one as an automatic ally. The open conflict between the two organizations came to a head in January 1969 when two prominent Panthers, John (Jon) Huggins and Alprentice "Bunchy" Carter, were killed by US members in a shootout at a Black Student Union meeting on the UCLA campus (14). This incident sparked numerous articles and political cartoons in *The Black Panther* that criticized cultural nationalism in general and Karenga in particular. There were even charges leveled that Karenga himself was on the payroll of the FBI and/or various other police and government agencies (15).

One major component of US rhetoric called for women's submission to traditional male "authority," and promoted the notion of complementary gender roles. According to Karenga's teachings,

What makes a woman appealing is femininity and she can't be feminine without being submissive. A man has to be a leader and he has to be a man who bases his leadership on knowledge, wisdom and understanding. There is no virtue in independence. The only virtue is in interdependence...



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 reason. Equality is false; it's the devil's concept. Our concept is complementary. Complementary means you complete or make perfect that which is imperfect (16).

Karenga and other proponents of complementary gender roles for men and women rarely addressed the power imbalances between the respective roles prescribed. These theories also tended to rely heavily on biological determinism and notions of "natural order" in assessing and assigning separate roles for black women and men. In practice, complementary theory often led to ridiculous incidents between black women activists and members of US, such as when Panther Elaine Brown was told she had to wait to eat until after the male "warriors" had been fed, and, on another occasion, when Angela Davis was discouraged or prevented from taking on a leadership role because it was deemed 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 repressive in relation to the internal organization of the black community." As White points out, Karenga and other nationalists construct "collective political memories of African culture... that both counter racism... and construct utopian and repressive gender relations." In particular, she argues that in "building off conservatives' concepts of 'traditional' African gender relations before colonial rule, [Karenga] argues that the collective needs of black families depend on women's complementary and unequal roles" (18).

Although BPP members themselves invoked complementary theory early in the organization's development, the unapologetic male supremacist policies and practices of the US organization exacerbated the already tenuous relationship between the two organizations. Bobby Seale included the issue of male chauvinism in his public opposition to cultural nationalism in a 1970 interview. He stated that "[c]ultural nationalists like Karenga, are male chauvinists as well. What they do is oppress the black woman. Their black racism leads them to theories of male domination" (20). For Seale, the link between racism and sexism was that both were practices of domination that fed upon each other through some unspecified process. He presented the BPP as a viable alternative to US and cultural nationalism on the basis of the Panthers' ostensibly more progressive party line on "the gender question." The timing of Seale's statement reflected ongoing, internal Party struggles to reconcile 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 eventually played leadership roles 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 caucuses, continued throughout the decade and into the 1970s (23). Although early proponents of the WLM professed 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 dominated 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 domain 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 in the activities of black women, especially those in the 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



Women, Free Huey Rally, Oakland (1968).
Photo by Pirkle Jones

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 previous public statements did not help clarify this point. In fact, even this reflection fails to address the limitations of such a male-centered definition of politics and continues to discount 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 open topic of discussion. Expressions of sexuality were often described as directly related to the potential successes or failures of the movement and were integrated into the culture of the movement in both explicit and covert ways. During Eldridge Cleaver's 1968 presidential campaign, he promoted the idea of "pussy power," women's ability to withhold sex in order to compel men to political activism. 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 layin' 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 most relationships. However, it is one thing to engage in sexual power struggles in personal relationships (which in the context of a political organization/movement also has political implications), it is quite another thing for an influential leader to promote this as a preferred method of political praxis.

Also implied in the statement is an antigay or heterosexist component to Cleaver's and the BPP's construction of a black masculine ideal (60). "Real men" are identified not only by their political commitment to joining the BPP, but also by their participation in "appropriate" sexual practices with partner(s) of the "appropriate" gender. It is important to note that the above commentaries by Cleaver preceded Huey P. Newton's statement on "The Women's Liberation and Gay Liberation Movements," in which he declared that [t]he terms 'faggot' and 'punk' should be deleted from our vocabulary, and especially we should not attach names normally designated for homosexuals to men who are enemies of the people, such as Nixon... Homosexuals are not enemies of the people" (61). The impact of both Cleaver's pronouncement on pussy power and Newton's statement in support of lesbian/gay and women's liberation varied both in terms of acceptance and implementation at the local level (62).

It is somewhat ironic that Eldridge Cleaver's 1969 state-

ment from exile on the incarceration of Panther Ericka Huggins was one of the earliest and strongest formulations by a male Panther of a nonsexual, revolutionary role for black women. In 1969, Huggins and thirteen other Panthers were arrested by the FBI on charges of murder, kidnapping and conspiracy in New Haven, Connecticut. Of the five women imprisoned, three were pregnant and one, Frances Carter, gave birth while under armed guard (63).

Eldridge Cleaver's statement may seem somewhat uncharacteristic at this point, yet it was likely the product of ongoing 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 Huggins' predicament based on her condition and, possibly, a more intuitive empathy based on his own experiences of incarceration (64). Cleaver was a very articulate and shrewd political thinker, and thus his statement was as much a tactic to build support for Huggins' defense campaign as it was an edict to Party members. In any case, his comments on this matter merit extensive quotation, for 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 sister. But I know that she is now being subjected to a form of torture that is horrible... Let it be a lesson and an example to all of the sisters, particularly to all of the brothers, that we must understand that our women are suffering strongly and enthusiastically as we are participating in the struggle. The incarceration and the suffering of Sister Erica [sic] should be a stinging rebuke to all manifestations of male chauvinism within our ranks... That we must too recognize that a woman can be just as revolutionary as a man and that she has equal stature... That we have to recognize... 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 male chauvinism behavior.

Because the liberation of women is one of the most important issues facing the world today... I know from my own experiences that the... demand for liberation of women in Babylon is the issue that is going to explode, and if we're not careful it's going to destroy our ranks, destroy our organization, because women want to be liberated just as all oppressed people want to be liberated (65).

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 vanguard organization, then we've got to be... the vanguard also in the area of women's liberation, and set an example in that area... [S]isters 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

philosophy of Malcolm X, and the fact that he had 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 both illuminating and deeply disturbing. He claims he refined his technique for raping white women by “practicing” on black women. Although Cleaver repudiates his previous assessment of raping white women as an “insurrectionary act” 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, experiences, and preoccupations that he brought with him to the BPP and to his analysis of sexual/gender politics. *Soul on Ice* was a national best seller and thus was read by a large number of whites. It was also a key reading for BPP 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 castrated by white 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 “self-reliant Amazons.” In addition, 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 women in the role of collaborators in the oppression/castration syndrome of black men. According to Cleaver, the interactions among these various groups explain class and racial antagonisms in sexual terms, with the ultimate battle being between “the Omnipotent Administrator and the Supermasculine Menial for control of sexual sovereignty” (55). In fact, what Cleaver describes here is a racialized struggle for male supremacy between black and white men for sexual access to white women and control over the reproductive (labor as well as childbearing) capacities of black women. References to capitalism and the material basis of black oppression 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 often reiterated and expanded the thesis put forward by Cleaver. A vivid example of 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 American 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 mind... In the process the slave-master stripped himself of a body... This caused the slave-master to become very envious of the slave because he pictured the slave as being more of a man, being superior sexually, because the penis is part of the body... He attempted to bind the penis of the slave... he psychologically 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... [I]f he [the slave] can only recapture his mind, recapture his balls, then he will lose all fear and will be free to determine his destiny... The Black Panther Party along with all revolutionary Black groups have regained our mind and our manhood” (57). Here Newton reasserts the desirability of black male domination and black female acquiescence, while assuming that this pattern has been unduly interrupted. He uses 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 interferes 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 that a rehabilitated black manhood will be the key to Black liberation. In essence, black men must learn to be better patriarchs. Black women, too, will be reconstructed in this process by learning 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 all but defined out of an active or productive role in the 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 black women and children. These formulations reflect assertions in the majority culture that place men were indeed castrated and are thus less than real men, especially if they do not enforce patriarchy/male dominance in their sexual and family arrangements. At the same time, such assertions degrade and ignore the historical legacy of black women and men 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 the recognition that black women who organized on issues, such as police brutality, racism, poverty, imperialism, and black women’s liberation, had a significant impact on the development of gender consciousness during this time (25). In fact, their involvement and leadership in these arenas represented a challenge to the black community to view all of these issues as indeed black women’s issues, as well as concerns for the community as a whole. Their presence in black organizations eventually forced a recognition of the sexism in some of those organizations and of the racism and middle-class biases of many white women’s groups. Historian Deborah King reminds us that “black feminist concerns... have existed well over a century. In other words, black women did not just become feminists 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 predominantly white women’s liberating groups. 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 and 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, D.C. participated in the march and rally. Organized by the New Haven Chapter of the Black Panther party, and Women’s Liberation groups mostly from New York, the action exposed the blatantly fascist acts of the Connecticut pigs... 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, “The Women’s Liberation and Gay Liberation Movements” in August 1970, calling for the formation of working coalitions with the revolutionary factions of both movements (28). Prior to this pronouncement, individual Party members had a variety of critical perspectives. Some of the most thorough and thoughtful critiques of the WLM were forthcoming from Panther women. Panther women (and men) eventually came to the conclusion that the struggle for women’s liberation was a part of the struggle against capitalism and as such should be waged by men and women together. According to one former member, there was never a position that women’s liberation was not a part of black liberation struggle, but the Party felt the need to make more formal pronouncements on the issue 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 organizations don’t address themselves to the class struggle or to national liberation struggles they are not really furthering the women’s liberation movement, because in order for women to be truly emancipated in this country there’s going to have to be a socialist revolution. Their critique of various women’s lib organizations grew from this basic premise. In their opinion and experiences, the WLM viewed “the contradictions among men and women as one of the major contradictions in capitalist society... and develop[ed] it into an antagonistic contradiction, when actually it is a contradiction among people. It’s not a contradiction between enemies” (30). Panther women also acknowledged that black women’s relationship to black men was qualitatively different from gender relations between whites. In a 1971 interview, Kathleen Cleaver stated that “the problems of black women and the problems of white women are so completely diverse they cannot possibly be solved in the same type of organization nor met by the same type of activity... I can understand how a white woman cannot relate to a white 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 you can’t solve the problem apart from the problem. 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 of the women dismissed the usefulness of women’s caucuses and separatist groups outright, others agreed that they should be judged by their practice and reserved commentary until they could assess whether those types of 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, as revolutionary comrades, by their male counterparts. And some did engage with the WLM as well as the men (and other women) of the BPP on issues of gender and 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 black family. Daniel Patrick Moynihan’s *The Negro Family: A Case for National Action*, published in March 1965 under the auspices of the U.S. Department of Labor, became a cornerstone of intense 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 “tangle of pathology” in which black people found themselves. According to Moynihan, “the Negro community has been forced into a matriarchal structure which, because it is so out of line with 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 eventually made public. Responses to Moynihan came from all sectors of black communities, including academics, grassroots activists, politicians, service providers, artists, and independent intellectuals. While the implications of the Moynihan report on the internal debate in the black community were important, this should not be considered the beginning of such discussions 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 writings 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 [the black man] feels that he is something 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, viewed as quite worthless 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 dilemmas of black manhood in general, and black men’s seeming inability to live up to the patriarchal norms of the larger society in particular. In this instance, Newton failed to challenge the notion of men as sole providers for and protectors of black families while corroborating the opinion that black women devalued, disrespected and dominated black men, and were privileged with economic advantages at the expense of black manhood.

Discussions within the party regarding gender roles and relations responded 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 family,” which he described as “an imprisoning, enslaving and suffocating experience,” eventually led the Party to experiment with communal living and communal sexual relationships. Although this challenge to traditional nuclear family structures might be perceived as radical, an acceptance of male dominance within these alternative arrangements could diminish their revolutionary potential. This point serves to further illustrate E. Frances White’s analysis of the “interrelationship between dominant and counter discourse.” She points out that “as part of the same dialectic counter discourses operate on the same ground as dominant ideology” (37). While the BPP offered fundamental critiques of U.S. society, Party members were socialized and accepted many of its hegemonic norms.

Although cultural nationalism, feminism, and the black matriarchy thesis were not the only prominent ideological and popular discourses in the late 1960s and early 1970s, their impact was felt nationally (and internationally). Individual Panther chapters may or may not have had direct contact with organizations or individuals espousing any of these perspectives. Yet their ideas and activities were critical threads in the cultural fabric of this period. As such, they formed a part of the larger framework of competing gender ideologies in which the Party functioned, and their impact was represented in a variety of cultural forms, including fiction, movies, scholarly literature, media and poetry.

“We’ll Just Have to Get Guns and Be Men”: The Official Gendering of the Black Panther Party (39)

The creation of gendered space and gender ideology in the Black Panther Party was also the product of various internal dialogues in addition to the external ones cited above. The remaining parts of this essay identify some of these other factors and show interactions among them, as well as a process of change over time in ideology and practice. The ideological development of the BPP was necessarily linked to actual experiences and events; thus, the incorporation of themes of sexual and gender politics into the Party’s overall revolutionary nationalist ideology was an ongoing process affected by concrete material realities.

The increased presence of women, the shift from a paramilitary to a community service focus, the incarceration, assassination, and exile of key male leaders, and the increasing pressures of state-sponsored repression, all affected the internal dialogue about gender roles. With such in mind, it is helpful to recount a few significant events in the history of the BPP that contributed to changes in both the daily reality and public perception of Party life. For example, in early 1968, the BPP dropped “for Self-Defense” from their name in an effort to encourage their recognition as a political Party with a full platform that included, but was not limited to, self-defense and paramilitary activities.

Beginning in late 1968 and early 1969, community service programs, such as the free breakfast for children and free health clinic projects as well as liberation schools and community political education classes, were implemented nationally (with varying degrees of success) (41). Prior to initiating the official “survival” programs, Panther chapters had already been involved in local community struggles for decent housing, welfare rights, citizens’ police review panels, black history classes, and traffic lights on dangerous intersections in black neighborhoods (42). The development of an overt and public dialogue 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 linked 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 was a man’s job. In a 1968 speech, Bobby Seale went even further to provide an analysis of how the Party’s race-, gender- and class-specific imagery actually aided their recruitment efforts: “A lot of people ain’t gon know what’s happening. But the brothers on the block who the man’s been calling thugs and hoodlums for four hundred years, gon say, “Them some out of sight thugs and hoodlums up there!” ... Well, they’ve been calling us niggers, thugs and hoodlums for four hundred years, that ain’t gon hurt me, I’m going to check out what these brothers is doing” (47)!

Here, Seale continued to create a self-consciously masculine, “lumpen” public identity for the Party that served to mask the numerically greater participation of women by 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 formal (national) leadership structures, suggested a particular definition of black masculinity that assumed men had the skill, inclination, and obligation to be warriors, while conversely women (and children) did not. In many ways, this posture was an attempt to counter racist and anti-working class brutes, and irresponsible, incapable, and emasculated patriarchs. At the same time that the Party’s alternative self-representations of black manhood elicited responses of pride from sectors of black communities, they also mirrored the restrictive gender codes of the larger society that limit the options of both women and men. In addition, their public image was interpreted and exploited by mainstream media in ways that capitalized on white people’s fear of alleged black criminality 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 analysis of community concerns (49). Many early statements by Newton and Seale linked black oppression to black male castration and focused squarely on the sexual politics of white supremacy. Consequently, many of the Party’s public positions on questions of gender took on increasingly sexual overtones.

Perhaps the most extensive and most often reference presentation of this strain of sexual politics was given by Eldridge 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



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.