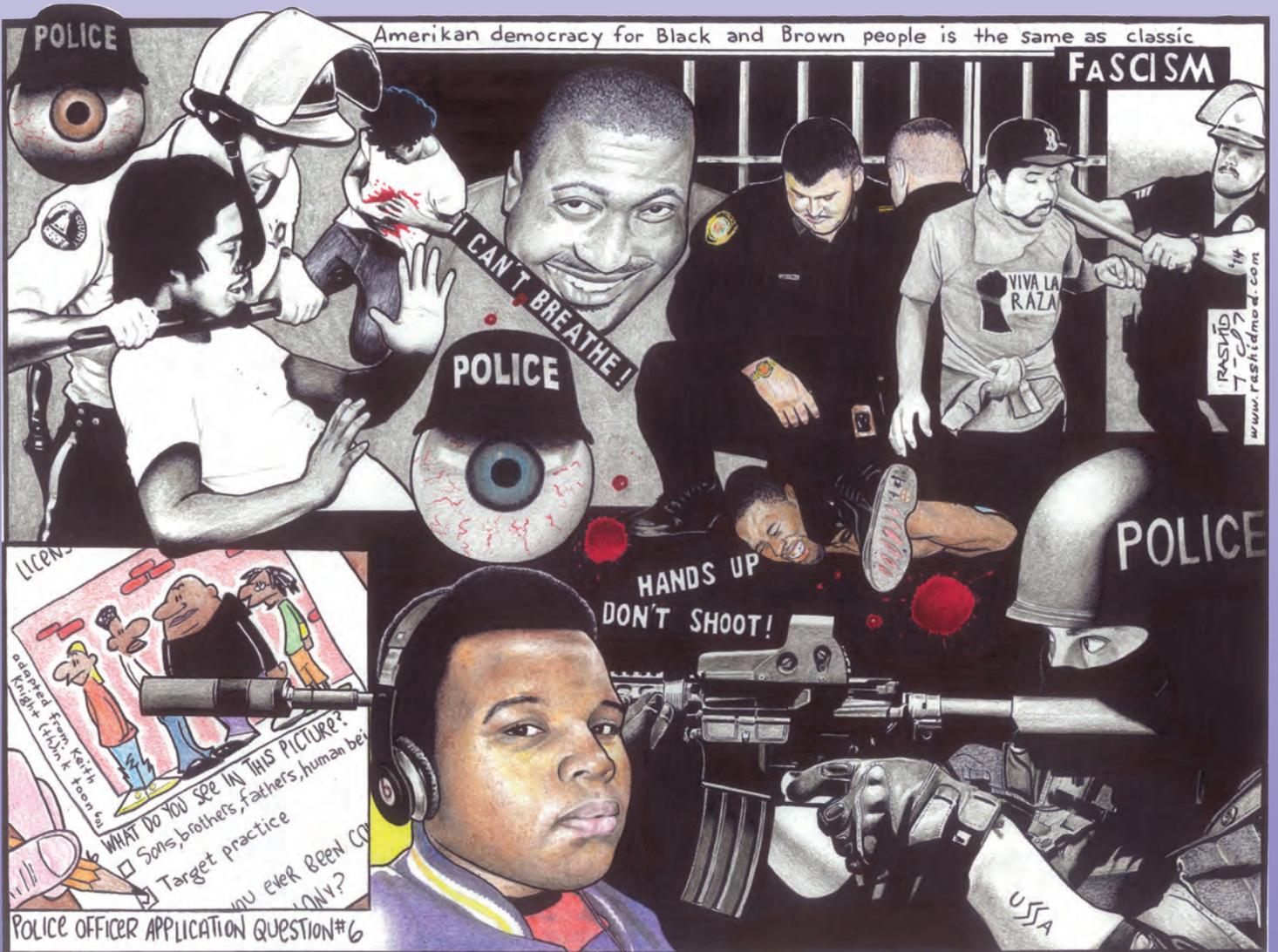


SocialistViewpoint

★ The philosophers have only *interpreted* the world in various ways; the point is to *change* it. —Karl Marx ★

JANUARY/FEBRUARY 2015 VOL. 15 NO. 1



Police, Armies, Courts and Laws - Page 2

Black People's Grand Jury - Page 3

Blood on the Tracks - Page 28

Dining Out in Dinkytown - Page 35

Why Speaking Out is Worth the Risk

AN INTERVIEW WITH CHELSEA MANNING BY AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL

Chelsea Manning is serving a 35-year prison sentence for leaking classified U.S. government documents to the website WikiLeaks. From her prison cell in Kansas, Chelsea tells us why speaking out against injustice can be a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity.

Why did you decide to leak documents about the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan?

These documents were important because they relate to two connected counter-insurgency conflicts in real-time from the ground. Humanity has never had this complete and detailed a record of what modern warfare actually looks like. Once you realize that the co-ordinates represent a real place where people live; that the dates happened in our recent history; that the numbers are actually human lives—with all the love, hope, dreams, hatred, fear, and nightmares that come with them—then it's difficult to ever forget how important these documents are.

What did you think the consequences might be for you personally?

In 2010, I was a lot younger. The consequences felt very vague. I expected the worst possible outcome, but I didn't have a strong sense of what that might entail. But I expected to be demonized and have every moment of

my life examined and analyzed for every single possible screw-up that I've ever made—every flaw and blemish—and to have them used against me in the court of public opinion. I was especially afraid that my gender identity would be used against me.

What was it like to feel the full force of the U.S. justice system and be presented as a traitor?

It was particularly interesting to see the logistics involved in the prosecution: the stacks of money spent; the gallons of fuel burned; the reams of paper printed; the lengthy rolls of security personnel, lawyers, and experts—it felt silly at times. It felt especially silly being presented as a traitor by the officers who prosecuted my case. I saw them out of court for at least 100 days before and during the trial and developed a very good sense of who they were as people. I'm fairly certain that they got a good sense of who I am as a person too. I remain convinced that even the advocates that presented the treason arguments did not believe their own words as they spoke them.

Many people think of you as a whistleblower. Why are whistleblowers important?

In an ideal world, governments, corporations, and other large institutions

would be transparent by default. Unfortunately, the world is not ideal. Many institutions begin a slow creep toward being opaque and we need people who recognize that. I think the term "whistleblowers" has an overwhelmingly negative connotation in government and business, akin to a "tattle-tale" or "snitch." This needs to be addressed somehow. Very often policies that supposedly protect such people are actually used to discredit them.

What would you say to somebody who is afraid to speak out against injustice?

First, I would point out that life is precious. In Iraq in 2009-10, life felt very cheap. It became overwhelming to see the sheer number of people suffering and dying, and the learned indifference to it by everybody around me, including the Iraqis themselves. That really changed my perspective on my life, and made me realize that speaking out about injustices is worth the risk. Second, in your life, you are rarely given the chance to really make a difference. Every now and then you do come across a significant choice. Do you really want to find yourself asking whether you could have done more, 10-20 years later? These are the kinds of questions I didn't want to haunt me.

Why did you choose this particular artwork to represent you?

It's the closest representation of what I might look like if I was allowed to present and express myself the way I see fit. Even after I came out as a trans woman in 2013, I have not been able to express myself as a woman in public. So I worked with Alicia Neal, an artist in California, to sketch a realistic portrait that more accurately represents who I am. Unfortunately, with the cur-

Continued on page inside back cover



SocialistViewpoint

January/February 2015 Vol. 15, No. 1

SOCIALIST VIEWPOINT

www.socialistviewpoint.org

email: info@socialistviewpoint.org

(415) 824-8730

CONTENTS

U.S. Politics and the Economy

Police, Armies, Courts and Laws.....	2
<i>By Bonnie Weinstein</i>	
Black People's Grand Jury.....	3
<i>By Glen Ford</i>	
The Grand Jury	4
<i>By Lynne Stewart</i>	
Immunity for Killer Cops	5
<i>By Glen Ford</i>	
Ferguson Struggle Alters Black Politics.....	6
<i>By Glen Ford</i>	
Cops Threaten Blue Coup in New York.....	7
<i>By Glen Ford</i>	
Bobby Hutton's Hands Were Up.....	9
<i>By Michelle Renee Matisons</i>	
Fighting Police Terror in Washington, DC.....	10
<i>By Dr. Marsha Coleman-Adebayo</i>	
Broken Countries Policing	13
<i>By Matt Peppe</i>	
Black Cops Fear Other Cops.....	16
<i>By Cliff Weathers</i>	
Oakland Protesters Blockade Police Department.....	17
<i>By Sarah Lazare</i>	
Ferguson is Baghdad is New York is Kabul.....	19
<i>By Sonali Kolhatkar</i>	
Hundreds of Police Killings Not Reported to FBI.....	21
<i>By Michael Walsh</i>	
Exploding Protest Movement	21
<i>By Steven Rosenfeld and Alyssa Figueroa</i>	
Homeless Children	23
<i>By Bruce A. Dixon</i>	
'Some Sort of Hell'	24
<i>By Evelyn Nieves</i>	
Justice for Michael Brown.....	26
<i>By The Labor Fightback Network</i>	
Blood on the Tracks	28
<i>By Guy Miller</i>	
Healthcare is a Human Right	30
<i>By Andy Coates</i>	
Obama's New Torture Plan	31
<i>By Nafeez Ahmed</i>	
Accuracy of U.S. Drones	34
<i>By Spencer Ackerman</i>	
Dining Out in Dinkytown.....	35
<i>By Bryan Palmer</i>	

Environment

Bowing to Monsanto	42
<i>By Sarah Lazare</i>	

International

U.S. and Cuba: A Change in Relationship?.....	43
<i>By Jorge Martin</i>	
Forty-Three Faces that Move the World	46
<i>Editorial By Frontera NorteSur, New Mexico State University News</i>	
End the Killing of Students Now	49
<i>Statement and Petition by the Campaign for Peace and Democracy</i>	
Ebola and the Profit-Driven Healthcare Industry.....	51
<i>By Lauren McCauley</i>	
Ebola in Africa	52
<i>By August H. Nimtz</i>	
US Attacks on Muslim Countries	53
<i>By Glenn Greenwald</i>	
Turning Gaza Into a Super-Max Prison.....	55
<i>By Jonathan Cook</i>	
Israel Deepens 'Collective Punishment' of Gaza	56
<i>By Sarah Lazare</i>	

Incarceration Nation

Why Speaking Out is Worth the Risk.	Inside Front Cover
No Matter What They Say or Do, We Die	Inside Back Cover
<i>By Kevin Cooper</i>	
The New Outlaws	57
<i>By Lorenzo Johnson</i>	
Immunity to Kill, Falsely Convict and Mass Incarcerate	58
<i>By Lorenzo Johnson</i>	
Free All Political Prisoners	58
<i>By Assata Shakur</i>	
Free Reverend Edward Pinkney.....	60
<i>By Abayomi Azikiwe</i>	
No Indictment of Killer Cop Wilson	62
<i>By Kevin "Rashid" Johnson</i>	
The Horror of Solitary.....	65
<i>By Kevin "Rashid" Johnson</i>	
How to Get Away with Cop Murder.....	67
<i>By Kerry "Shakaboona" Marshall</i>	
Death, For a Cigarette!.....	68
<i>By Mumia Abu-Jamal</i>	

Book Review

The Making of an Auto Worker Activist.....	69
<i>By Gregg Shotwell</i>	

Letters to the Editor.....

Nat Weinstein—An Oral History

Part VII	74
----------------	----

Socialist Viewpoint (ISSN 1535-5438) is published bi-monthly by the Socialist Viewpoint Publishing Association, 60 29th Street, #429, San Francisco, CA 94110. Rates: For one year (6 issues): Introductory rate in the U.S. \$20.00; Regular rate in the U.S. \$30.00; Bargain rate: \$35.00 for two years; All other countries \$50.00 (Money orders, checks, etc., should be in U.S. dollars.)

Periodicals Postage Paid at San Francisco, California.

POSTMASTER: Send address changes to Socialist Viewpoint, 60 29th Street, #429, San Francisco, CA 94110

Police, Armies, Courts and Laws

What they are actually designed to do

By BONNIE WEINSTEIN

The U.S. government, its police, armies, courts and laws are not designed to protect people or keep the peace, they are designed to protect the property and rule of the wealthy. They are tools to keep workers in our place or destroy us if they can't.

They protect and serve the capitalist system and its commanders. The commanders make the laws as they go along. What benefits them is legal, what doesn't, is illegal, criminal and worthy of their most extreme punishment—prison, torture or death—whatever they deem most effective in protecting their rule.

The effectiveness of the system itself is dependent upon its ability to fool most of the people most of the time and that's what their money buys in the mass media.

Their wars causing the deaths of millions are justified by lies fed to the mass media and force-fed to us. They are wars for profit and power—capitalist profit and capitalist power.

The job of the media is to convince us that “collateral damage” caused by U.S. bombs is not just unavoidable, but can be blamed on the dead for being in the vicinity of the bomb; that a man can be legally choked to death for selling cigarettes; that a boy can be shot to death for carrying a toy gun—a gun manufactured, advertised, promoted as “fun” by billion-dollar TV commercials; that a young man can be shot to death for walking in the street because, sometime after he was killed, a video was released by the police implying that that same young man might have stolen a box of cigars earlier that day. This rationalization by the police and the media is plainly intended to make the police shooting look justified.

This is the job of the capitalist media.

The first law of capitalism is profits over people

In another example of capitalist injustice, a December 29, 2014 *New York Times* article by Barry Meier and Hilary Stout titled, “Victims of G.M. Deadly Defect Fall Through the Legal Cracks,” tells about the refusal of a law firm to take a case against General Motors involving the death of a young girl because the “value of her life...was too small to justify the expense and risk of litigation.”

“The law firm was unequivocal. It refused to take the case against General Motors involving a car crash that killed 18-year-old Natasha Weigel, saying that the value of her life in a lawsuit was too small to justify the expense and risk of litigation....But when Ms. Weigel's family shared that report with a major plaintiff's law firm in Milwaukee, the firm responded with cold, hard math....The family of Amy Rademaker, the other teenager killed in the Wisconsin crash, was also unable to find a lawyer to take on G.M. unless they financed the case themselves...Lawyers said they were aware of six ignition-related lawsuits that the automaker had settled out of court, including some under arrangements that barred public disclosures about them....‘This is so frustrating to me,’ Mr. Rimer said. ‘If we had gone to litigation, this would have gone to the forefront. We could have saved lives.’

“Companies, lawyers and judges have long faced criticism for suppressing information contained in lawsuits about product dangers.”

And an earlier article in the *New York Times* dated November 5, 2014 by James Kanter titled, “Hundreds of Companies Seen Cutting Tax Bills by Sending Money Through

Luxembourg,” exposes the gross hypocrisy of the capitalist system of financial justice and law.

This article exposes how some of the biggest corporations get away with stealing hundreds-of-billions-of-dollars in taxes through offshore tax scams. And, in fact, how these legal tax scams are carefully drawn up by corporate law firms and made legal by the courts. According to the article:

“The list of multinational businesses accused of using European jurisdictions to cut their tax bills grew much longer...when a group of investigative reporters published findings accusing more than 300 companies, including PepsiCo, Ikea and FedEx, of benefiting from preferential deals with the government of Luxembourg...The findings, by the *International Consortium of Investigative Journalists*, are based on a trove of leaked documents that included 548 so-called comfort letters that the group said Luxembourg had provided to corporations seeking favorable tax treatment. ‘These companies appear to have channeled hundreds-of-billions of dollars through Luxembourg and saved billions of dollars in taxes....’ ...the European Commission expanded an investigation into how Luxembourg provided tax incentives, adding Amazon to the inquiry. The commission had already begun similar investigations this year into the tax arrangements of a unit of Fiat in Luxembourg, Apple in Ireland and Starbucks in the Netherlands.... Last month, in response to the start of the investigation concerning Amazon, the Luxembourg finance ministry said that reports of so-called state aid were unfounded and that ‘the investigation will allow the commission to conclude that no special tax treatment or benefits have been granted to Amazon.’

“The consortium said the documents it had obtained involved deals negotiated by Pricewaterhouse Coopers, an accounting firm, on behalf of hundreds of corporate clients.”

So, according to capitalist law, the selling of individual cigarettes on the street without a license is punishable by death; and walking down the street while Black is punishable by death; and a child carrying a toy gun is fair game for police, too.

But bombs and drone strikes that kill thousands is justified, and the stealing of hundreds-of-billions of tax dollars is OK, as long as the capitalists can profit from it, and still protect their rule.

The lesson of the capitalist chain of command: the masses are weak and the rulers are all powerful

The capitalist system only works if the masses are convinced that we are powerless and the capitalist are all-powerful. Their police, laws and legal system are set up to convince us of this myth. It takes money to navigate through the U.S. legal system—money workers don’t have. These capitalist laws are not for us, they are against us.

From cradle to grave we are told that we must trust in a power higher than us. We are taught that we would be living in chaos without yielding to the higher power of order and law, that is, capitalist order and capitalist law.

The truth is that capitalism’s order and law, that puts profits over people, is our prison.

Putting people over profits will throw open the prison gates and, once and for all, we will be free to practice the human compassion and community that will come naturally to us in a free, just and equal society.

Black People’s Grand Jury

Black people’s Grand Jury indicts cop for first-degree murder of Michael Brown

BY GLEN FORD

A Black People’s Grand Jury in St. Louis, Missouri, this weekend delivered a “true bill of indictment” for first-degree murder against former Ferguson police officer Darren Wilson in the death of Black teenager Michael Brown. Black people “can and must take matters into our own hands,” said Omali Yeshitela, one of four prosecutors that presented evidence, not only of Wilson’s personal guilt, but the institutional culpability of the entire regional criminal justice system in the murder and subsequent whitewash of the crime.

“Darren Wilson is a killer, and he’s out there, but he’s not out there by himself,” said Yeshitela. “He was doing what U.S. police have done historically and traditionally to African people in this country.” It wasn’t Wilson’s decision to leave Brown’s uncovered body on the asphalt roadway for nearly four-and-a-half hours in 100-degree heat—a collective insult and threat to the victim’s community that harkens back to the ritual public displays of mutilated and burned Black corpses in the time of lynch law. Wilson was later rewarded for his crime “with almost one million dollars” in contributions “by white people.”

The 12 jurors, all of them from greater St. Louis, spent January 3 and 4, 2015, reviewing some of the same evidence presented by county prosecutor Bob McCulloch to the mostly white grand jury that failed to indict Wilson, in November. McCulloch’s mission was to obfuscate the facts and confuse the jurors; to free the cop and convict the victim—as attested to by one of his own jurors, who maintains, in a suit asking permission to speak publicly, that McCulloch made the “insinuation that Brown, not Wilson, was the

wrongdoer.”

The Black People’s Grand Jury also heard testimony from local residents with personal knowledge of police behavior in the region, including Black former police officers—a method of truth-seeking grounded in the logic that the most “expert” witnesses on institutional racism are its victims, who have experienced the phenomenon in all its dimensions.

At root, the Black People’s Grand Jury is an exercise in self-determination, a collective response to a collective assault on a people that have been criminalized by the Mass Black Incarceration State. “We cannot trust our children, the future of our community, in the hands of this establishment that has proven to us over and over again its disregard for Black life,” said Yeshitela, whose International People’s Democratic Uhuru Movement teamed with local Black organizations to convene the proceedings.

Most importantly, the Black People’s Grand Jury model is easily replicable throughout the U.S., just as the Mass Black Incarceration State operates in near-uniform fashion in every precinct of the country. North, South, East and West, whether the Black population is relatively large or small, the State’s mission is to contain, control, terrorize and criminalize Black people, and to incarcerate them in enormous numbers. The St. Louis model, and longer-form variations on the theme, such as Black People’s Boards of Inquiry, can go far towards exposing and deconstructing the police/prison regime that over the past two generations has killed innumerable Michael Browns and spawned a gulag so huge and so disproportionately

Black that one out of every eight prison inmates on the planet is an African American.

The Mass Black Incarceration State, erected in response to the Black Liberation Movement of the Sixties, is the driving force and organizing principle of the U.S. criminal justice system. (Ironically, its predatory mechanisms have caused more white Americans to be imprisoned, as well—collateral damage inflicted by structures designed to ensnare masses of Blacks.) It is an inherently militarized system of counterinsurgency that begins with hyper-surveillance of Black communities and ultimately warps every aspect of Black internal and external social relations. Inevitably, the white supremacist, profoundly anti-democratic and ultimately lawless nature of the U.S. police-prison mission has facilitated the rise of the

national security state and the general degradation of bourgeois liberties for all Americans—a strong basis for building multi-racial alliances.

However, African American resistance to the Black Mass Incarceration State, in all its manifestations, must be rooted in the struggle for self-determination—freedom on our own terms, which is inseparable from demands for justice.

Black People's Grand Juries can be part of the process of building local self-determinationist institutions of resistance to the ruling order, particularly in bolstering demands for genuine community control of police. For these reasons, the model can help prevent Black people's righteous anger and energies from being dissipated by diversions concocted by the matrix of elected officials, their appointees and commissions, along with the Black

misleaders and accommodationists who act as agents of the Democratic Party and the rich.

The steady drumbeat of protest must be accompanied by institution-building projects aimed at dismantling the Mass Black Incarceration State—the transformational task of the current movement.

—*Black Agenda Report*, January 7, 2015

<http://www.blackagendareport.com/node/14607>



The Grand Jury

LYNNE STEWART SPEAKS OUT ON THE FIRST ANNIVERSARY OF HER RELEASE FROM PRISON

Something I've always said is that the "law" is what "they" want it to be at any given time. Witness the Dred Scott decision, the Japanese internment cases of World War II, and the Scottsboro and other legal lynching cases.

In 2014, stemming from the series (ongoing since 1619) of unprosecuted crimes against the African American population, we confront the lawlessness, now inherent, of an ancient legal institution, the Grand Jury. My history here may be fuzzy (due to my jail time of four-plus years and subsequently battling cancer)—but hey, there's always *Wikipedia*! Nonetheless, my own experiences as a practicing criminal defense lawyer for over 30 years will help in this short essay.

In New York State, people accused of serious crimes (felonies) can be brought before the court by a number of avenues. Most common is the pre-

sentation of the case, by the District Attorney, in a rudimentary way, to a Grand Jury, who will then vote on an indictment. (The famous or infamous statement that a Grand Jury will indict a ham sandwich being entirely true.)

As I recall, the Grand Jury was an outgrowth of the Magna Carta, a medieval document that was fought for by the nobles (male and white and born to privilege) in which they won the right to not be thrown and left forever in a dank and dark prison by the king. They now had the right (*habeas corpus*) to demand to be heard and judged by their "peers" (equals). Of course, we are not talking "fair" here, just the way it operated.

The functioning of the Grand Jury has not changed a great deal since those days. It is still possible for a defense attorney to present her client and allow him to tell his story (usually in a self-defense case), and there are

even those rare instances where the Grand Jury will vote no indictment. However, the abuse by the Grand Jury in cases such as Michael Brown and Eric Garner, where there is only prosecution testimony, and that is in total control of the District Attorney or prosecuting authorities, is obvious when there can be no presentation of an opposition scenario—they have killed the obvious witnesses.

And so, the Grand Jury does what it is best at, following the instructions and demands of the District Attorney—Missouri or Staten Island, N.Y. It is the ham sandwich approach, and there is no blame, no accountability. The police and prosecutors are a single entity, and they have an agenda.

The Grand Jury, in my not so humble view, should be abolished. It is an anachronism, and the miniscule num-

Continued on page 5

Immunity for Killer Cops

It's not the law, but prosecutors, that give immunity to killer cops

By GLEN FORD

Black Americans know all about “law and order:” the term, itself, is code for the state-wielded hammer that is relentlessly deployed against us. No people on earth are more conditioned to concentrated bludgeoning under “color of law” than African Americans, who account for one out of out eight of the world’s prison inmates. Black males are 21 times more likely than their white peers to be killed by U.S. lawmen, and make up a clear majority of young police shooting victims under the most draconian law and order regime on the planet. Of all the world’s peoples, none have been so unremittingly inculcated with the lessons of crime and punishment—especially punishment, whether merited or not.

For a people so acculturated, justice demands retribution—even for Pharaoh and his army. Thus, the simple and near-universal Black American demand that President Obama and Attorney General Eric Holder prosecute killer cops.

But, this they will not do.

The Obama administration has no intention of pursuing prosecution of

Darren Wilson, or Trayvon Martin’s vigilante killer George Zimmerman, or the whole crew of New York City homicidal and/or depravedly indifferent first-responders in the Eric Garner case. Obama and Holder have nothing worthwhile to say to the nine grieving Black mothers now visiting Washington demanding justice for their murdered loved ones, other than empty assurances that they feel the families’ pain.

The U.S. Justice Department, which marshals unlimited resources to pursue long and sometimes fruitless prosecutions of whistleblowers and other “national security” targets, claims it is helpless to confront police impunity in the murder of Black Americans. The law, Holder and his apologists claim, requires that federal criminal prosecutions under the civil rights statute must prove beyond a reasonable doubt that the officers “acted willfully” for the specific purpose of violating the victim’s 4th Amendment constitutional right to life. Making that case, they say, is near-impossible, requiring that prosecutors “get inside the officer’s head” to divine his intentions at the moment the trigger was pulled. Therefore, despite Holder and Obama’s public statements of concern, no good faith attempt is made to mount prosecutions.

The Michigan branch of the American Civil Liberties Union doesn’t buy that argument. In an article in this issue of *BAR*, ACLU lawyer Mark Fancher, a counsel in the case of the police “circular firing squad” killing of Milton Hall, in Saginaw, Michigan, contends that the law fully supports charges of “open defiance” or “reckless disregard” for the constitutional rights of the victims in such cases. Although prosecutions of police are more difficult than trying civilians, the ACLU cites U.S. Supreme Court and federal

appellate rulings from 1945, 1972, 1993 and 1997, that continue to sustain the vitality of the original, Reconstruction era federal statute forbidding deprivation of constitutional rights, including the right to life, “under cover of law”—that is, by police. “It is enough...if it can be proved—by circumstantial evidence or otherwise—that a defendant exhibited reckless disregard for a constitutional or federal right,” according to *U.S. v. Johnstone*, 1997.

That’s not nearly as high a bar to a good faith prosecution as federal officials contend, and an easy argument for any federal prosecutor to make before malleable grand juries. Whether an actual trial jury convicts the cop is a different story, but the prosecutor has an obligation to pursue justice to the full extent of the law. It is not “the law” that stands like a brick wall of impunity for police, but the interpretation of the law by attorneys general and their subordinates who view prosecutions of police as akin to unnatural acts that cannot be performed in public view.

As Attorney Fancher writes, it is “hard to imagine why charges cannot be brought when police officers fire dozens of bullets at a homeless man armed only with a pen knife; or when police use a choke hold to put a submissive man on the ground because he was alleged to be engaged in unauthorized cigarette sales. By almost anyone’s reckoning, such conduct should be regarded as ‘open defiance’ or ‘reckless disregard’ for the constitutional rights of the victims.”

In refusing to prosecute, Obama and Holder demonstrate their own profound disregard for the collective rights of Black Americans as a people. Police immunity from prosecution begins with the prosecutors. If the Obama regime were serious about establishing

Continued from page 4

ber that benefit from it are not worth the rubber stamp it has become, particularly in the murder of people of color by the police.

A far better solution (short of the revolution we all hope and dream of) is to make those suspected of those heinous crimes *stand trial*. Let 12 jurors decide their fate in an open and fully presented evidentiary case. It’s not a perfect solution but far, far better than the endless parade of murderers going free because their victims don’t matter.

— January 3, 2015

“trust” between Black America and the authorities, as they claim, they would begin with a campaign of police prosecutions for “reckless disregard” and “open defiance” of Black people’s constitutional rights. There is no lack of actionable cases. As *BAR* editor and senior columnist Margaret Kimberley writes: “There is no need for more task forces or advisory commissions. The police must stop killing black people with impunity and nothing will make that less likely to happen than the sight of Wilson and his partners in crime sitting in federal prisons.”

The penalty for “reckless disregard” of people’s constitutional rights, involving violence, is ten years in prison and a stiff fine.

Of course, the feds and their state and local counterparts will not break their pact with the police—not until a people in angry, righteous motion create condi-

tions of ungovernability in America’s cities that allows no other choice. Police impunity is the domestic counterpart of the legal immunity that U.S. military personnel enjoy overseas. The U.S. deploys troops in the majority of countries in the world, but does not station soldiers anywhere in the absence of Status of Forces Agreements (SOFA) granting them immunity from prosecution under the host country’s laws. Failure to secure an extension of the SOFA agreement with Iraq required the withdrawal of U.S. troops, in 2010. The United States claims it has not joined the International Criminal Court because, among other reasons, compliance with the treaty could lead to “foreign” prosecution of its military personnel.

Essentially, prosecutors in the United States maintain an informal kind of Status of Forces Agreement, immunizing the police from prosecu-

tion in the deaths of Black and brown “natives” in the areas they occupy. At home and abroad, the armed forces of the racist, imperial State are beyond the law. As such, their very presence is an affront to human dignity. That’s just as true in Ferguson and Oakland and New York City, as it is in Kabul and Ouagadougou and Bogota.

—*Black Agenda Report*, December 10, 2014

<http://blackagendareport.com/node/14565>



Ferguson Struggle Alters Black Politics

BY GLEN FORD

After Missouri Governor Jay Nixon notified the National Guard that he might be calling on their services any day now and declared a state of emergency in anticipation of massive demonstrations, he appointed a 16 member commission to study the underlying social and economic causes of Black discontent in Ferguson. At some other time and place, this development might have been highly newsworthy, and some might even think it a hopeful sign for race relations. The press would pour over the biographies of the nine Black and seven white appointees, and speculate about what the governor meant when he said the commission was “empowered.” Empowered to do what—change the economic and social conditions in Black America? But the governor’s commission is irrelevant because the people of Ferguson are organizing to empower themselves, and that

might be the beginning of the best news of the 21st century for Black America.

Whatever happens after the grand jury announces its decision on whether to indict the cop that killed Michael Brown, the people of Ferguson have

... the governor’s commission is irrelevant because the people of Ferguson are organizing to empower themselves, and that might be the beginning of the best news of the 21st century for Black America.

already altered the political landscape. They have rejected the counsel of the local and national Black Misleadership Class, who specializes in diverting and suppressing any movement that threatens their patrons among the rich and

powerful. They have seen through the con game run by the so-called Black power brokers, whose job is to head off any possibility of a rejuvenated Black mass movement. The fact that protests in a small town outside of St. Louis have put local, state and national security forces on high alert is testament to the failure of the Black Misleadership Class to contain the growing movement. And, if Al Sharpton and his local Missouri counterparts cannot keep the Black masses under control, then the appointees to Governor Nixon’s Ferguson study commission have been rendered redundant before they begin.

“Great leap forward”

The people now know that the power is in the streets—a lesson that many had all but forgotten over the past forty years, a period in which the underlying social and economic condi-

tions of Black life have scarcely improved in comparison with whites. This period saw the nation devolve into a Black Mass Incarceration State as methodically vicious and relentlessly racist as any regime in history. The Black Misleadership Class sought not only to divert Black people's attention away from the massive imprisonment of Black youth and the rapid militarization of the police, they actively abetted the Mass Black Incarceration State, funding it in Congress and collaborating in the arrest of millions on the streets of nominally Black-run cities.

The leadership of the new movement that will grow out of Ferguson is not yet known, because it must be born in struggle. But we do know that the accommodationist preachers, corporate lawyers and professional Democratic Party politicians that have neutralized Black politics for the past four decades no longer hold sway among the grassroots. And that, alone, is a great leap forward. We can say with certainty that Michael Brown did not die in vain. His legacy is growing by the day.

—*Black Agenda Report*, November 20, 2014

<http://www.blackagendareport.com/node/14524>



Cops Threaten Blue *Coup* in New York

BY GLEN FORD

When Police Benevolent Association (PBA) chief Patrick Lynch said New York Mayor Bill de Blasio has the blood of two dead cops on his hands, he was issuing a physical threat to both the person of the mayor and the civil authority to which the police are subordinate and sworn to protect. In a nation under the rule of law, such a statement by a representative of an armed and enflamed constabulary—35,000-strong, the equivalent of three light infantry divisions—would trigger an immediate defensive response from the State, to guard against mutiny. But, of course, no such thing happened.

When Lynch's PBA declared, in a prepared statement, that "we have, for the first time in a number of years, become a 'wartime' police department" and "will act accordingly," that constituted an instruction to union members to impose a martial law-type policing regime on the city—with no authorization other than the weapons they carry. Sounds very much like a *coup*.

On Internet message boards, police union activists instructed the rank and file to refuse to respond to incidents unless two units were dispatched to the scene, and to double-up even if given orders to the contrary. Under this "wartime" footing, the police would simply seize the power to deploy and assign themselves, as they liked—and to hell with the chain of command and civilian authorities.

To hell, especially, with Mayor de Blasio, who now travels nowhere except under the protective custody of police commissioner Bill Bratton, a "cop's cop" and architect of the "Broken Windows" policing strategy that begat stop-and-frisk. Bratton translates de Blasio's words into cop-speak, and has forged a tense truce between the uniformed legions and the

man who won 95 percent of the Black vote on the promise to put a leash on the gendarmes.

There is no doubt the cops feel betrayed—a rage that has been building in synch with the growth of a nationwide movement that challenges the legitimacy of the Mass Black Incarceration State, of which they are the frontline troops, the "heroes" in the war to criminalize and contain an entire people. The chants and placards are an insult and an indictment of THEM, and of their centrality to the racist project that has been an organizing principle of the nation for more than two generations. How is it that cops can be compelled to "protect and serve" marchers whose purpose is anathema to the American policing mission: to beat down, lock up, and extra-judicially execute dissident, disorderly, uppity or merely inconvenient Black people?

The cops understand the law, and that the law is conditional, based on place, race and wealth, and that in the end there is only force, the use of which is their sacred monopoly. It's what gives them a status that union paychecks cannot buy; what makes blue-collar guys and gals "somebody" in society. Most of all, they know who is nobody: the beatable, friskable, disposable, killable folks who would be prey on any other day, but have lately been allowed to repeatedly parade down the most protected streets of the richest island in the country, screaming defamations.

The cops are understandably angry and confused. As primary enforcers of the social order, they have an intimate knowledge of actual class and race relationships in America. Their perspectives are molded by the geographic and social boundaries they patrol; they are

shaped and informed by the inequalities of the system they protect on behalf of the powerful people they serve. (Yes, they really do “serve and protect” somebody.) The cop’s worldview is also firmly anchored in the history of the United States. He may not be aware of his profession’s antecedents in the slave patrols, or even that the U.S. Supreme Court once ruled that Black people have no rights that the white man is bound to respect, but cops are the reigning experts on the borders that delineate rights and privileges in their localities. They know that public housing residents have virtually no rights that cops—as agents of the rulers—are bound to respect. They know that whole sections of their cities, encompassing most of the Black and brown populations, are designated as drug zones where everyone is suspect and probable cause is a given, or as high-crime zones where every shooting is pre-qualified as a good one.

These are the Constitution-free zones, full of people who get and

deserve no protection by or from the police. The very existence of Constitution-free zones means that the Bill of Rights is not the law of the land, but a Potemkin *façade*, a con game, a chimera—and no one knows this better than the cops, whose job is to ensure, as best they can, that everyone stays within their designated space.

For about a million Black people, the assigned “space” is prison. The Mass Black Incarceration State is the edifice that defines the American system of justice, setting it apart from the rest of the world in size, racial selectivity, draconian sentencing and institutionalized torture (80,000 inmates in solitary confinement on any given day). The police are the drones that feed the infernal prison machine, and keep Black America in a state of rightlessness. As Shakespeare’s mercenary warrior Othello would put it: We “have done the state some service, and they know it.”

The cops threaten mutiny if the State does not stick up for the men and

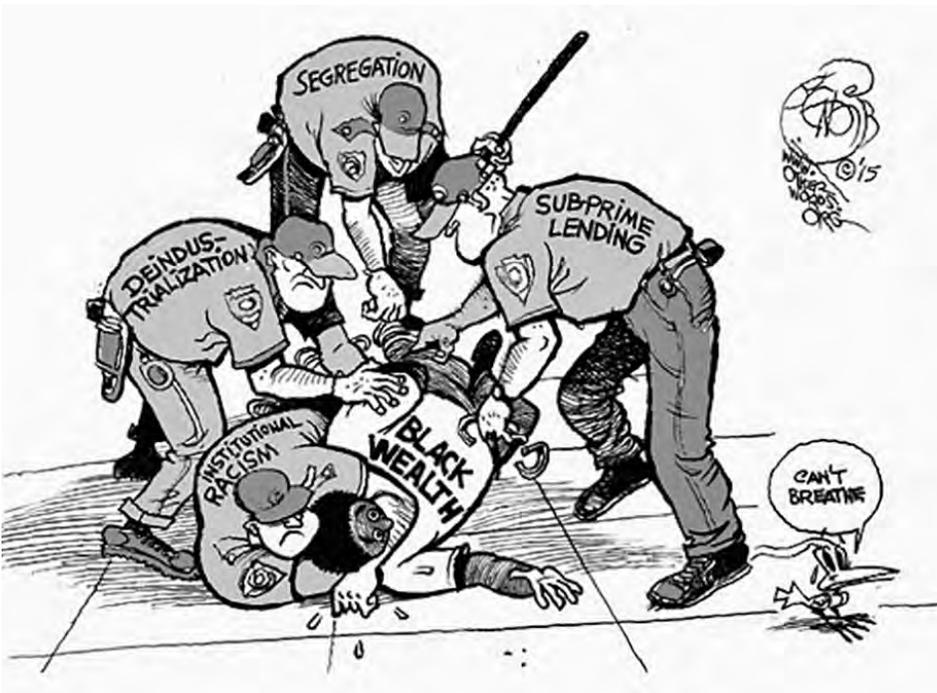
women who do its dirty work. PBA honcho Patrick Lynch denounced “those that incited violence on the street under the guise of protests that tried to tear down what New York City police officers did everyday. We tried to warn, ‘It must not go on. It cannot be tolerated.’”

To which the protesters answer: the police killings and the criminalization of a whole people must not go on and cannot be tolerated.

The movement has come to a critical juncture, a moment that would have arrived even if Ismaaiyl Brinsley had not made his own fatal decision. It was always inevitable that the cops would at some point demand that the State dispense with civil liberties pretenses and allow them to crush the nascent movement. New York City’s police force—by far the nation’s largest army of domestic occupation—is especially prone to mutiny and *coup*-plotting. Thousands of cops, many of them drunk, stormed City Hall in 1992 to express their utter contempt for Black mayor David Dinkins. But, the current crisis is far different, because it is the movement’s show, not the cops’. The people are exposing the most acute contradictions of American life through direct confrontation with the armed enforcers of the State. The cops are supposed to be upset. As Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. explained, “the purpose of direct action is to create a situation so crisis-packed that it will inevitably open the door to negotiation.” The crisis is here, and will grow deeper, but freedom is non-negotiable. The movement must win or be crushed.

—Black Agenda Report, December 24, 2015

<http://www.blackagendareport.com/node/14590>



Bobby Hutton's Hands Were Up

BY MICHELLE RENEE MATISONS

The death of Michael Brown in Ferguson, Missouri, has catalyzed intense U.S. anti-policing/ police demilitarization movement activity, with Ferguson serving as an urgent training ground and meeting point for anti-policing thinkers, writers, artists and activists. One important movement focus is memorializing past victims of police/or vigilante murder, as the t-shirt reads: “Emmet and Amadou and Sean and Oscar and Trayvon and Jordan and Eric and Mike and Ezell...” This listing of past victims isn’t intended as a mere respectful exercise for the dead; it educates about the violent racist continuum that marks the U.S.’s past and present. As for the future, the t-shirt’s informed ellipsis “...” suggests that the problem is so large it will no doubt continue until racist policing is abolished. (It didn’t take long after Brown’s murder for St. Louis to see its next murder-by-cop victim, 18-year-old Vonderrit Myers, Jr.) What complicates the inexhaustible list of those murdered by police is that with every new generation the evidence against policing mounts. As each generation resists racist police practices, this resistance incites police to further entirely unjustified—and now disturbingly “preemptive”—violence. We are witnessing this dynamic in the police/military build-up before the impending announcement of Ferguson officer Darren Wilson’s likely acquittal for Michael Brown’s murder. We have already seen the state’s severe repression/murders of past militant anti-racist organizers, especially the Black Panthers, including the Party’s first victim by cop, Bobby Hutton, Jr.—or “Lil’ Bobby.”

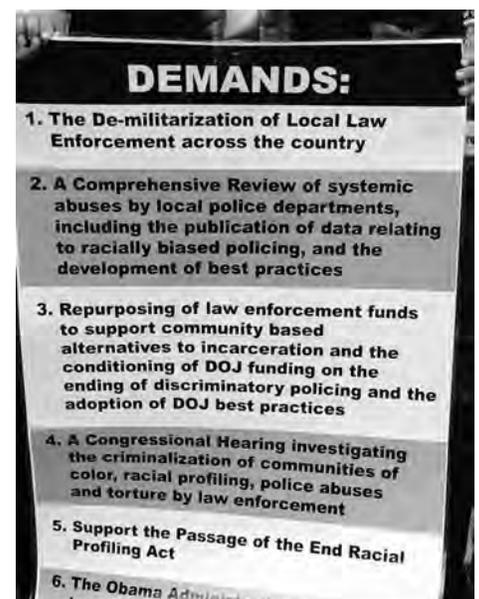
On July 1, 2005, in Sacramento, California, I was part of a small group who interviewed Eugene Jennings, one of only two Black police officers who

witnessed Hutton’s murder in Oakland, California on April 6, 1968. Many are already quite familiar, not only with Hutton’s story, but with the surveillance and violence used to repress the Panthers. In “Justice Undelivered: Open Letter to the Grand Jury,” we summarize the events leading up to Hutton’s execution based on Jennings’ description in our interview. At the time his deposition was suppressed, it never made it to the Grand Jury, and he was called a liar, harassed—even at gunpoint—by fellow officers. Here we describe Jennings’ version of events:

“On the night of April 6, 1968, police officer Eugene R. Jennings witnessed the murder of Bobby Hutton by Oakland and Emeryville police officers. Eldridge Cleaver and Bobby Hutton were engaged in a gun battle with the police. Jennings states in his deposition to the police department briefing that he arrived at the scene at 1218 28th Street in Oakland and took position across the street on top of a brick building (building is still standing). He did not see who was actually shooting, but saw “flashes coming from the basement” from the house across the street. From his observation the house had caught on fire. Jennings further states that Cleaver and Hutton had surrendered to the police and were surrounded. The police brutalized both Cleaver and Hutton. According to Jennings’ testimony, Hutton stumbled after being pushed from behind, not trying to escape. (During the deposition, the police investigation attempted to coerce Jennings to state that Hutton was trying to escape or run). At this point an officer stepped forward and shot Hutton in the head, and other officers followed suit. Jennings’ description of Hutton’s murder mirrors the version told by Eldridge Cleaver.” Michael Brown was shot in the head, and other parts of his

body, just like Bobby Hutton—and they both had their hands up. The fact that Hutton was a Panther in a shoot out with police before his execution should not exclude his name from the long list of murder-by-cop victims we memorialize at anti-policing demonstrations. In fact, one would hope to see more, not less, references to the lessons Hutton’s life (and death) teaches. The disgusting corporate media character assassinations that murder-by-cop victims have to endure (Trayvon Martin was a dope smoking, school skipping delinquent, and Michael Brown was a thief) has the movement on edge to prove these young men did not deserve to be murdered. It’s absurd to even have to say something like, “Even if Michael Brown did steal those cigars, his hands were up, he shouldn’t have been murdered.” If we have to utter these words today, this doesn’t bode well for those of us who say, “Bobby Hutton was surrendering, his hands were up, and he shouldn’t have been murdered.”

Sure, there is a world of difference in the events leading to Hutton’s and Brown’s deaths. But the racist policing apparatus perceives all Black and



brown lives the same: worthless. The establishment that supports the Black mass incarceration state and its counterinsurgency police militarization practices knows well the lesson of Bobby Hutton's life and death. Setting aside details about how Hutton came to be placed in harms way on the day of his murder, he was young, militant, and educating himself about his rights. He was fighting back. That is what all the police weaponry is about in Ferguson, Missouri right now. They are warning the next generation of Bobby Huttons to stay home and be afraid. But this warning has never worked and it never will. People can see with their own eyes the cold blooded murders of Black and brown people, the subsequent police/political cover-ups, the colluding media re-assassinations of the victims, their families, and supporters, and the intimidation and repression of those seeking justice for victims and their families.

My point here is not to catalyze a debate about controversial anti-police resistance tactics of the past. As Ferguson's daunting militarized police presence makes clear, we are in the preemptive strike era of police weaponry and tactics, so it has to be a new era for resistance strategy and tactics. This is simply to acknowledge that Lil' Bobby Hutton's name is on the same justice seeking continuum as Emmett and Amadou and Sean and Oscar and Trayvon and Jordan and Eric and Mike and Ezell... Justice for Michael Brown will be justice for Lil' Bobby Hutton too.

Michelle Renee Matisons, Ph.D. can be reached at michrenee@gmail.com.



Fighting Police Terror in Washington, DC

BY DR. MARSHA COLEMAN-ADEBAYO

During the recent Black is Back Rally and Teach-In in Washington, D.C. on November 7, 2014, I had the pleasure of interviewing Kenny Nero, one of the original organizers of the #DCFerguson movement. The group has organized marches with 300-700 participants that have shut down major economic thoroughfares in DC from Chinatown and H Street, to U Street and Georgetown. These demonstrations provided the impetus for DC Council member Tommy Wells to organize hearings on police brutality, harassment and terror in Washington DC.

Kenny Nero, Jr. is a librarian at the Howard University Health Sciences Library and a community organizer by night. He worked on the DC Jail Library Coalition initiative to make a library in DC's jail a reality. The initiative's successes include the mayor's allocating \$300K for the library to support: a full time librarian, to be hired in October 2014; a part time library technician, and job readiness and digital literacy programs.

Kenny provides insights into a broad array of issues, the philosophy and framework for the #DCFerguson Movement. I hope by sharing this information, other movements across the country can learn and benefit from #DCFerguson's mobilization experiences.

Dr. Marsha Coleman-Adebayo: What are the mission and goals of #DC Ferguson?

Kenny Nero: Our first march was in Chinatown, Washington DC at the end of August 2014. Our demands were strategically simple and broad as a means to mobilize the masses:

1. The demilitarization of the police force.
2. Arrest of Office Darren Wilson, the executioner of unarmed 18-year-old African-American student, Michael Brown.

3. The establishment of a legitimate citizen review board with indictment and firing powers.

Over time, we conducted teach-in/building sessions on the Sundays, following our Saturday marches. As a result, and to resonate with our immediate community, we added a fourth demand: An investigation into the 24-plus extrajudicial killings by the Metropolitan Police Department (DC's Finest) since 2004. We became aware of these significant extrajudicial killings in Washington through a Freedom Of Information Act (FOIA) request by AFRO newspaper journalist and DC Ferguson supporter, Valencia Muhammad. That FOIA report is incomplete in that they left out some victims' names that we are aware of. In mid-September, after our third demonstration, we decided to revise our initial list and #DCFerguson is now demanding the following:

1. A legitimate citizen review board with indictment and firing powers. Currently, the review board in DC can only make suggestions/recommendations.
2. Real community policing; a percentage of the police that patrol a community are to be required to live in that community.
3. Any officer who fires upon and causes the death of an unarmed civilian should be fired, arrested and convicted.

Our mission, coupled with our demands, is to seize the momentum of the time and revolutionize the police department by lifting our voices and mobilizing the people into action. We realize a Black man or boy is murdered every 28 hours by a policeman, security guard or vigilante like George Zimmerman. We're building a movement and not a moment. We will con-

tinue to fight until substantive changes are made.

Dr. Marsha Coleman-Adebayo: What is the political “end game” for DC Ferguson?

Kenny Nero: This answer depends on how one defines politics. If we are to define politics as most Americans do then we simply want our goals met. The local power structure in Washington, DC has been responding to our demands through city council hearings, including the testimony of the DC Chief of Police, Cathy Lanier. From that perspective, I think we are moving in the right direction. To see that direction to its end, we will need the Washington, DC power structure to implement policies addressing our demands. If we define politics as meeting the basic desires and needs of the people, then #DCFerguson has a much more difficult battle, because then we’re talking about revolution.

Dr. Marsha Coleman-Adebayo: What is your vision of a society based on justice?

Kenny Nero: A society based on justice is a civilized society. America isn’t civilized and it never has been. This means we will have to change America. George Bernard Shaw said America doesn’t know justice. It’s the only country to go from barbarism to decadence without going through civilization. The challenge of my generation is to revolutionize society in order to experience civilization.

Dr. Marsha Coleman-Adebayo: Why did you decide to get involved in DC Ferguson?

Kenny Nero: It was late August when Eugene Puryear, At-Large candidate for DC Council, Kymone Freeman, co-founder of *We Act Radio* and Salim Adofo, national vice chairperson of the National Black United Front and I decided—shortly after attending a march and rally in Washington, DC—that we had to respond to what was happening in Ferguson. We decided to

organize a long-term social movement to address injustice. For us, DC Ferguson is a movement and not a moment. We decided on the hashtag DCFerguson to underscore, as noted by the Malcolm X Grassroots Movement’s study *Operation Ghattostorm*, that a Michael Brown-type murder happens nationwide every 28 hours by the police, security or vigilante. We wanted to stand in solidarity

**...the system has traded
plantations for prisons
quite literally**

with the victims of violence in Ferguson while standing in solidarity with victims of police brutality, harassment, terror or other misconducts. I got involved because this is bigger than me; no matter how much relative peace I may be experiencing, my brothers and sisters at large are being murdered and locked up with impunity in our neo-liberal, so-called color blind, white supremacist world. As individuals, there’s little we can do. But when organized, the people have the power. #DCFerguson became a movement that inevitably built coalitions with many other local organizations currently expressing the power of the people.

Dr. Marsha Coleman-Adebayo: Have you been the victim of police violence, injustice? Provide examples.

Kenny Nero: I’ve experienced police injustices of the harassment variety. I’ve been stopped and pulled over at a rate much higher than my white peers. This only stopped when I sold my car. I didn’t own one for about five years.

Dr. Marsha Coleman-Adebayo: Have you known other Black men who have been the victim of police violence, injustice—provide examples.

Kenny Nero: I grew up in a predominantly Black and brown neigh-

borhood and as a consequence lots of my friends coming up experienced the dehumanizations of being subjected to sitting on a curb, hands cuffed behind their backs while reactionary police aggressively searched their vehicle.

Dr. Marsha Coleman-Adebayo: What is the strategy behind “taking over the city” to dramatize and call attention to police brutality?

Kenny Nero: Malcolm X once said: “The greatest mistake of the movement has been trying to organize a sleeping people around specific goals. You have to wake the people up first, then you’ll get action.” We sought to shut down major economic thoroughfares for precisely this reason—to educate the people, wake them up, mobilize and galvanize the masses into action. Washington, DC, along with the rest of the nation, is experiencing a revolution of the conscience.

Dr. Marsha Coleman-Adebayo: How long have you been an activist?

Kenny Nero: Although I’ve only seriously been putting work in since around November 2013, starting with the DC Jail Library initiative, being politically active runs in my family. My late cousin S.T. Nero was an activist who struggled for freedom with his community in Mississippi. He was acknowledged for his activism in *Akinyele Omowale Umoja’s*, *We Will Shoot Back*. Moreover, my father, a native Washingtonian of the Petworth community, drove his 1965 Pontiac to the 17th St. NW and U St. NW Black Panther Party chapter to deliver their newspapers. Struggling for the people is in the Nero genes.

Dr. Marsha Coleman-Adebayo: What triggered your passion to become an activist?

Kenny Nero: What triggered my passion was probably a strong desire to do something. While the DC Jail Library initiative was ultimately a success, it did not directly address the systemic racism and institutionalized privilege that feed

the prison industrial complex. I decided to link up with organizations involved in the long-term, protracted struggle against the system.

Dr. Marsha Coleman-Adebayo: What college or grad school did you attend? What was your major?

Kenny Nero: I took the scenic route after high school. I first went to University of Maryland, Baltimore County (UMBC) and removed myself due to poor grades and study habits and went to a local community college; Montgomery College. I majored in Criminal Justice thinking that I could do some good, which I now realize was an act of complete ignorance to the nuances of the systemic racism and institutionalized privilege inherent in the system. After that, I went to the University of Maryland (UMD) and received a Bachelor of Science in Psychology and eventually went to the University of Pittsburgh and obtained a Masters in Library and Information Science. I'm currently working as a Librarian at Howard University.

Dr. Marsha Coleman-Adebayo: Do you think the present system can meet the demands of the African-American community? If not, what is your vision of a society that is based on justice?

Kenny Nero: While I don't know for sure what a just society is, I do know what it isn't. I do not think the present,

capitalist system can meet the demands of our community. It has become more devious in modern times as it introduced the notion of a world of "color blindness" that has fooled the masses into thinking that anything outside of an overt racist statement or action is otherwise not racism. This system has tried to project racism as a thing of the past; conquered vestiges of the more turbulent times of yesteryear. In reality, the system has traded plantations for prisons quite literally as read in the so-called re-constructionist 13th Amendment, which abolished slavery and involuntary servitude except as punishment for a crime. Our imperialist nation has traded colonialism for neo-colonialism and seeks to extract resources from every corner of the planet at the expense of human life, liberty and pursuit of happiness, all in the name of profit. This capitalist system cannot know justice, as mentioned earlier, because it has never known civilization. A just society is an egalitarian society. A just society will be one where mass incarceration of Black people is fiction. These are just a few examples of what I think a society based on justice is and isn't and the only way to achieve it is through revolution.

Dr. Marsha Coleman-Adebayo: Why did you decide to organize and participate in a protest demonstration

at the September 24, 2014 Congressional Black Caucus Foundation Legislative Weekend?

Kenny Nero: The purpose of this rally was to draw national and international attention to the Congressional Black Caucus, a bourgeois entity that continues to betray the interest of the people they claim to represent.

Here is what they support:

1. Continued U.S. funding to Israel and its slaughter of the people of Gaza/Palestine
2. Its vote against net neutrality, and
3. Continued funding to militarize the police in African-American communities.

The CBC does not represent the interests of African/black people.¹

Dr. Marsha Coleman-Adebayo is the author of No FEAR: A Whistleblowers Triumph over Corruption and Retaliation at the EPA is available through amazon.com. Dr. Coleman-Adebayo worked at the EPA for 18 years and blew the whistle on a US multinational corporation that endangered vanadium mine workers. Marsha's successful lawsuit led to the introduction and passage of the first civil rights and whistleblower law of the 21st Century: The Notification of Federal Employees Anti-discrimination and Retaliation Act of 2002 (NoFEAR Act.) She is Director of Transparency and Accountability for the Green Shadow Cabinet, serves on the Advisory Board of ExposeFacts.com and Coordinator of the DC-based, Hands-Up Coalition and No FEAR Coalition. www.marshacoleman-adebayo.com



¹ See link to video of the CBC demonstration: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=85SKYavgBPAA&index=5&list=UU-IXMK9KR_FvddtCvs-v5p3w #DC Ferguson demonstration:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EZNI8Ch9V1Y>

Broken Countries Policing

Impossible to preach respect for the rule of law

BY MATT PEPPE

Despite being disproven as a strategy for reducing crime, the broken windows policing theory is still utilized in New York and throughout in the United States to crack down on disorder and nonviolent crime. To think that harsh enforcement of this type of “crime” would prevent serious crime like homicide and assault is patently absurd on its face. If you want to rid society of the most serious crimes, you should be enforcing the most serious crimes, like aggressive war. Call it broken countries policing.

In the United States in 2014, you may be arrested for selling loose cigarettes, jumping turnstiles, dancing on the subways, and having small amounts of marijuana, but not for assassination, torture, anal rape, illegal surveillance, or invading, occupying and bombing sovereign countries.

The “broken windows” theory that you can nip violent crime in the bud by punishing minor “quality of life” violations like smoking and drinking in the street or sleeping on the subway is so transparently nonsensical it is hard to believe anyone could even consider it seriously.

It is equivalent to a diet to prevent obesity that consists of forgoing vegetables and grains because foods with the least calories are a gateway to fatty, fried foods with no nutritional value. Corn seeds are not Twinkies, and sleeping on a subway train is not murder.

Basic common sense and years of empirical data demonstrate that broken windows theory has no effect on preventing serious crime. When you understand this, it is easy to see that the broken windows theory put into practice is about something entirely different than its professed aims.

There is a strong correlation between race and socioeconomic status in the

U.S. Racial minorities suffer disproportionately lower socioeconomic status compared to whites, creating a racial caste system. With the drastic decline in recent decades of agriculture, manufacturing and other forms of manual labor, populations previously depended on for cheap labor have become disposable in the modern economy.

The state has undertaken a system of social control to prevent any solidarity and political opposition that would recognize and oppose unjust racial castes. Not coincidentally, broken windows policing has been carried out predominantly against African American and Latino citizens.

“The public is constantly getting out of control,” Noam Chomsky says. “You have to carry out measures to insure that they remain passive and apathetic and obedient, and don’t interfere with privilege or power. It’s a major theme of modern democracy. As the mechanisms of democracy expand, like enfranchisement and growth, the need to control people by other means increases.

“This is accomplished by employing a police force that operates like an occupying army in poor neighborhoods of color under the guise of crime prevention. It would be impossible to admit publicly that the police mission in these communities is repression and subjugation. The idea of broken windows as a deterrent to violent crime provides cover to justify what is in reality a racist, punitive, paramilitary occupation.”

As Henry Giroux wrote in a *Truthout* article on December 5, 2014 titled, “State Terrorism and Racist Violence in the Age of Disposability: From Emmett Till to Eric Garner,” we are living in “an age of disposability” which has seen “the rise of the punishing state as a way to govern all of social life.”

“Under assault are those individuals and populations considered excess such as poor youth of color and immigrants” who are controlled by “fear of punishment, of being killed, tortured, or reduced to the mere level of survival,” Giroux writes.

Raven Rokia describes in a *Truthout* article on November 20, 2014 titled, “Subways Are an NYPD Hotspot in de Blasio’s New York,” how low-level infractions have been disproportionately enforced against people of color, sweeping thousands into the criminal justice system and further marginalizing people already struggling economically.

“Arbitrary rules such as ‘no sleeping on a subway car in a way that is hazardous or interferes with others’ have turned into the NYPD brutally arresting a man on his way home from work in an almost empty subway car. He was later charged with resisting arrest, obstructing governmental administration and violating local law (the MTA rules),” Rokia writes.

Repressive policing has long been used to maintain political and economic domination over minority groups in the United States. After African Americans were nominally liberated from slavery following the Civil War, southern states manipulated the legal system to replicate their control over freed slaves.

In his Pulitzer-prize-winning book *Slavery By Another Name: The Re-Enslavement of Black Americans From the Civil War to World War II*, Douglas Blackmon describes how southern states criminalized Black life, using the legal system to punish Black and then lease them to corporations to work in coal mines, steel furnaces, farms, quarries and factories. This served the dual purposes of marginal-

izing Blacks politically and supplying cheap labor to capitalist commercial interests.

“The original records of county jails indicated thousands of arrests for inconsequential charges or for violations of laws specifically written to intimidate Blacks—changing employers without permission, vagrancy, riding freight cars without a ticket, engaging in sexual activity—or loud talk—with white women,” Blackmon writes.

The criminalization of Black life has continued since the Reconstruction era, morphing into a new form. Whereas once there was convict leasing, now there is mass incarceration. People are warehoused in prisons at the highest rate in the entire world. Public prisons create jobs for construction workers and corrections officers in rural, mainly white communities, while private prisons turn prisoners into profit centers for corporations and their investors.

One hundred years ago, African Americans were persecuted through the criminal justice system *en masse*. Today the system is remarkably similar. Besides exploitation for profit, criminalization of African Americans enables many of the same types of discrimination as previously existed under Jim Crow.

Michelle Alexander notes in her book, *The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness* that discrimination against African Americans today is arguably even more pernicious than under Jim Crow because it is carried out under a nominally colorblind legal system. However, the mind-blowing numbers of imprisoned ethnic minorities who are imprisoned mostly for nonviolent crime make the racial aspect of the system indisputable. The result is eerily similar to post-Civil War discrimination against Blacks.

“The ‘whites only’ signs may be gone, but new signs have gone up—notices

placed in job applications, rental agreements, loan applications, forms for welfare benefits, school applications, and petitions for licenses, informing the general public that ‘felons’ are not wanted here. A criminal record today authorizes precisely the forms of discrimination we supposedly left behind—discrimination in employment, housing, education, public benefits, and jury service,” Alexander writes.

If we pretend for a minute that the criminal justice system was meant as a deterrent to prevent the most serious violent crimes then we could imagine the most severe punishment for such crimes. The worst crimes are those of violence—murder, rape, torture, assault, *etc.*—and white-collar crimes like fraud that rob people of their financial security.

While individuals can commit atrocious crimes on their own, states and corporations, by virtue of their size, money and influence, can magnify the size of serious crimes exponentially. International crimes are committed on a scale much larger than retail crime committed by individuals or local criminal organizations. The Holocaust is six million times worse than a single homicide in New York City.

As the enforcer of domestic law, the state has the obligation to lead by example and follow international law if it expects its citizens respect its law enforcement at home. It is not possible to break the law abroad while claiming moral authority inside the country’s borders. Why should anyone listen to someone who says: “Do as I say, not as I do?”

Martin Luther King, Jr. articulated a damning indictment of the U.S. government—which at the time was engaged in a murderous war in Southeast Asia that killed three million Vietnamese—in his speech at Riverside Church in 1967 when he pointed out that one cannot oppose crimes of individuals while ignoring much larger crimes of the state:

“As I have walked among the desperate, rejected and angry young men I have told them that Molotov cocktails and rifles would not solve their problems. I have tried to offer them my deepest compassion while maintaining my conviction that social change comes most meaningfully through nonviolent action. But they asked—and rightly so—what about Vietnam? They asked if our own nation wasn’t using massive doses of violence to solve its problems, to bring about the changes it wanted. Their questions hit home, and I knew that I could never again raise my voice against the violence of the oppressed in the ghettos without having first spoken clearly to the greatest purveyor of violence in the world today—my own government. For the sake of those boys, for the sake of this government, for the sake of hundreds-of-thousands trembling under our violence, I cannot be silent.”

King notes the dissimilarity of one person throwing a Molotov cocktail with the U.S. state using 30-billion-ton tons of munitions in Indochina—including napalm, Agent Orange, cluster bombs, “pineapple” bomblets, daisy-cutter bombs, artillery shells, rockets, grenades and countless other weapons of mass destruction.

Aggressive war was deliberately defined by the Nuremberg Trials as the “supreme” crime “differing only from other crimes in that it contains within itself the accumulated evil of the whole.”

The U.S. government has been guilty of aggression multiple times since World War II, in Korea, Vietnam, Cambodia, Laos, Grenada, Panama, Iraq and Afghanistan.

The President himself maintains a “kill list” that he uses in his extrajudicial drone assassination program that has killed thousands of people since the start of his Presidency. Among the victims have been at least two American citizens who were never convicted or

even faced a single charge in any court of law.

Why should any U.S. citizen show indignation against a common street criminal who kills someone, but not against the President of the country who has executed people many times over? Since when did the President of what is supposed to be a democracy, where no one is above the law, gain the powers of judge, jury and executioner?

Earlier in December, the Senate released the Executive Summary of its “Torture Report” (while the remaining 6,300 pages remain classified. The details of the summary are so horrific, they make the crimes of a Japanese general hanged for torture after World War II seem mild.

In addition to the many well-known cases of waterboarding, the Senate Report details instances of “rectal feeding and rectal hydration” which consisted of a detainee’s lunch “consisting of hummus, pasta with sauce, nuts, and raisins, [being] ‘pureed’ and rectally infused. Additional sessions of rectal feeding and hydration followed.”

These heinous, savage acts are anal rape. Never was the detainee tried or convicted of anything in a court of law. What makes this any different than a man who forces himself on a woman in a dark alley?

There is no one alive that would claim a rapist who violates a woman walking home from the subway would deserve to be let free because we need to “look forward as opposed to looking backwards,” yet that is exactly what President Obama said about rapists and other torturers after taking office in 2009.

If there could possibly be any doubt morally about the actions described in the Senate Torture Report, legally there is not. The Convention against Torture makes indisputably clear that “No exceptional circumstances whatsoever, whether a state of war or a threat of war, internal political instability or any

other public emergency, may be invoked as a justification of torture.” Furthermore, the state where torture takes place is obligated to “submit the case to its competent authorities for the purpose of prosecution.”

There is no room under the law for someone’s opinion—a person on the street or in the White House—whether we should look forwards, backwards, or sideways. The law and the obligations of each party to the treaty could not be more clear: torture is never justifiable, and must always be punished.

As Tom Engelhardt explains in his book *Shadow Government: Surveillance, Secret Wars, and a Global Security State in a Single-Superpower World*: “Today, in the wake of the rampant extra-legality of the Global War on Terror—including the setting up of a secret, extrajudicial global prison system of ‘Black sites’ where rampant torture and abuse were carried to the point of death, illegal kidnappings of terror suspects and their rendition to the prisons of torture regimes, and the assassination by drone of American citizens backed by Justice Department legalisms—it’s clear that national security state officials feel they have near total impunity when it comes to whatever they want to do. They know that nothing they do, however egregious, will be brought before an open court of law and prosecuted.”

S i n c e President George W. Bush took office, the countries of Afghanistan, Iraq and Libya lie in complete ruins. In Iraq alone, estimates run as high as one million dead as a result of U.S. military intervention. Many

millions more have been wounded, displaced, widowed and orphaned. That is in Iraq alone. The situations in Afghanistan and Libya are equally as serious. Syria and Ukraine have been destroyed by destabilization and proxy wars encouraged every step of the way by the U.S. government. Millions cannot farm their fields in Pakistan, Yemen and Somalia without fear of being incinerated by U.S. drones.

Until the criminals who cause untold death and destruction abroad are held accountable, it is impossible to preach respect for the rule of law at home. The imperialist wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, and the rash of unpunished police killings of unarmed Black men like Michael Brown and Eric Garner, have made clear that the criminal justice system is not an impartial arbiter serving the nation to uphold justice but a weapon for those who control it, alternately enabling their own criminal actions and punishing others for actions that pale by comparison.

—Counterpunch, December 29, 2014

<http://www.counterpunch.org/2014/12/29/broken-countries-policing/>



Black Cops Fear Other Cops

Two-dozen Black NYPD cops tell *Reuters* that they've been treated similarly to Eric Garner.

By CLIFF WEATHERS

Black New York City Police officers often think that they are being racially profiled by their white colleagues, according to a shocking new report by *Reuters*.

The wire service interviewed 25 Black male officers, ten current cops and 15 retired. With just one exception, they said that they have been victims of racial profiling by police, both when wearing the uniform and while off duty. For its article, *Reuters* identified racial profiling as “using race or ethnicity as grounds for suspecting someone of having committed a crime.”

In the article, *Reuters* equates what they experience as the same type of racial profiling that cost Eric Garner his life after he was swarmed by police officers and one applied a choke hold to him.

The Black police officers said their experiences included being pulled over by police for no reason (multiple times for most), being stopped and frisked, thrown into prison vans, and being physically assaulted and threatened. Black cops say that they've had their



heads slammed against vehicles and guns brandished in their faces.

“The Black officers interviewed said they had been racially profiled by white officers exclusively, and about one third said they made some form of complaint to a supervisor.”

“All but one said their supervisors either dismissed the complaints or retaliated against them by denying them overtime, choice assignments, or promotions. The remaining officers who made no complaints said they refrained from doing so either because they feared retribution or because they saw racial profiling as part of the system.”

Reuters joined a group of Black officers at a casual outing, where they discussed the Eric Garner incident and unanimously agreed that his death was avoidable. According to *Reuters*, the cops that met at a Williamsburg tavern said the methods used against Garner were inadvisable and other options, like talking him down or spraying him with mace could have been employed by their colleagues instead of a choke hold.

The NYPD and the Patrolmen's Benevolent Association both declined to speak with *Reuters*. The NYPD also failed to respond to a data request from *Reuters* showing the racial breakdown of harassment complaints by its officers to its Internal Affairs Bureau.

Cliff Weathers is a senior editor at AlterNet, covering environmental and consumer issues. He is a former deputy editor at Consumer Reports. His work has also appeared in Salon, Car and Driver, Playboy, Raw Story and Detroit Monthly among other publications. Follow him on Twitter @cliffweathers and on Facebook.

—AlterNet, December 23, 2014

http://www.alternet.org/Black-nypd-cops-say-theyre-profiled-and-threatened-white-cops?akid=12608.229473.RBf_YO&rd=1&src=newsletter1029174&t=2



Oakland Protesters Blockade Police Department

Black-led direct action disrupts business-as-usual to demand an end to the war on Black people

By SARAH LAZARE

Bearing a banner declaring “Black and Breathing,” protesters surrounded and temporarily blockaded the Oakland Police Department headquarters on Monday morning, December 15, 2014, while shutting down a nearby freeway entrance to demand “an immediate end to the war on Black people.”

“We fight for justice for every single Black life that has passed at the hands of police, but we must also stand up and shut down for the Black and breathing who are at risk of the same fate,” said Deirdre Smith, one of the organizers of the action, which was led by the all-Black organizations the BlackOut Collective, #BlackBrunch and #BlackLivesMatter.

Chaining themselves together, demonstrators blocked four sets of doors to the Oakland Police Department while approximately 30 Black protesters held the space in front of the station. Meanwhile, others shut down a major intersection leading to a freeway close by, causing significant traffic disruption.

At one point, a demonstrator scaled a pole to replace an OPD flag with one memorializing Oscar Grant, Eric Garner, Alex Nieto, Renisha McBride, and Michael Brown—all people of color, almost all of them Black, killed by police or vigilante violence. A group of people locked together at the base of the pole to prevent the alternate flag from being taken down.

At the time of publication, organizers announced that they had reached their goal of maintaining the blockade for four hours and 28 minutes. “The four hours honor the memory of Michael Brown, whose body lay in the streets of Ferguson for more than four hours after he was killed by a police

officer,” explains a joint statement. “The 28 minutes highlight the startling fact that every 28 hours a Black person is killed by police, security or vigilantes in this country.”

Protesters say that now is the moment to take a stand against this deadly *status quo*.

“This action is part of a larger, sustained effort to disrupt business as usual in the tradition of the Montgomery Bus Boycott and the Woolworth counter sit-ins,” said Jeralynn Blueford, the mother of Alan Blueford who was killed by an Oakland police officer in 2012.

“We didn’t get an equal seat on the bus or at the lunch counter because we said ‘please,’” Blueford continued. “We got our seats because of our highly organized and effectively sustained protests and boycotts, disrupting business as usual. We hold this space today

as a demonstration of Black peoples’ right to exist and to thrive, just like anyone else.”

Common Dreams spoke over the phone with Alex Tom, a protester with the Asian solidarity group #Asians4BlackLives, which, along with the white ally group Bay Area Solidarity Action Team, helped organize Monday’s action under the leadership of Black organizations. “This was a really important action because it was bringing all communities together to show that fighting for Black lives should not just be the job of Black people,” Tom declared. “It is important for us as Asians to put our bodies on the line and shut down institutions like the OPD that perpetrate the war on Black people.”

Felicia Gustin of the Bay Area Solidarity Action Team told *Common Dreams*, “We are part of a national movement to say Black lives matter. As





“There is a war on Black people in America and police are the militarized force leading it,” said Wazi Maret David, an Oakland resident and violence prevention educator. “We are here today to bring our demands to OPD’s front door, to stake claim on their space, and to bring an end to state-sanctioned violence against all Black people.”¹

—Common Dreams, December 15, 2014

<http://www.commondreams.org/news/2014/12/15/demanding-end-war-Black-people-oakland-protesters-blockade-police-department>

white activists, we want to stress that white silence means violence. We as white people have to join with Black communities to end violence against Black communities in this country, making sure to do that under their leadership with accountability to them.”

At least 27 people were arrested at the action, and participants are urging support for those detained.

Monday’s protest comes on the heels of massive demonstrations in New York City, Washington, D.C., and across the country over the weekend amid a groundswell of anger and mobilization in response to institutionalized racism in the U.S. and police killings of unarmed Black people and other communities of color—including in Oakland.

According to data obtained by the Anti-Eviction Mapping Project, the Oakland Police Department, California Highway Patrol, and BART police have killed at least 78 people since 1970. Of those 74 percent were Black and 99 percent were people of color.

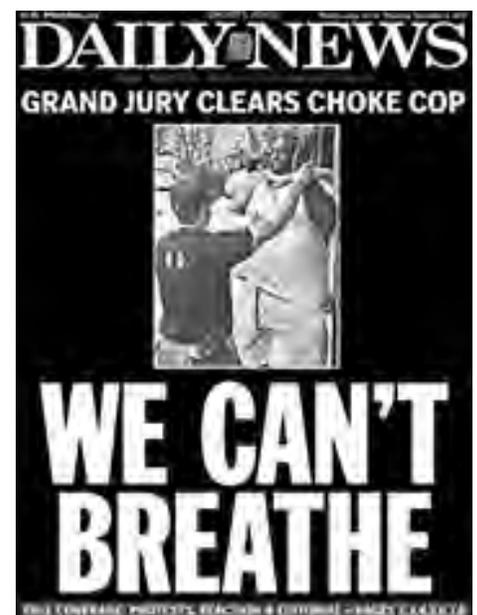
The organizers of Monday’s action have been in close touch with protesters across the country, including in New York and Ferguson, and have explicitly endorsed a series of demands

which emerged from the organization Ferguson Action, including: “an end to all forms of discrimination and the full

“We didn’t get an equal seat on the bus or at the lunch counter because we said ‘please,’” Blueford continued. “We got our seats because of our highly organized and effectively sustained protests and boycotts, disrupting business as usual. We hold this space today as a demonstration of Black peoples’ right to exist and to thrive, just like anyone else.”

recognition of our human rights” and “an immediate end to police brutality and the murder of Black, brown and all oppressed people.”

¹ A video of the action is available at: <http://www.commondreams.org/news/2014/12/15/demanding-end-war-Black-people-oakland-protesters-blockade-police-department>



Ferguson is Baghdad is New York is Kabul

Our wars abroad are mirror images of the war at home

By SONALI KOLHATKAR

There is a pattern emerging in my Facebook feed this week. One group of friends has been posting stories of police brutality and protests accompanied by personal statements of outrage. Another group has been remarking on the disgusting revelations from the Senate Intelligence Committee's CIA torture report and the need for accountability. There is little overlap between the two groups, and yet the common threads between the U.S.' foreign and domestic policies are disturbingly uncanny.

Whether on the streets of Baghdad or Ferguson, soldiers and militarized police forces have historically enforced control, not law. Behind the prison walls of Guantanamo and Texas, some authorities have tortured and brutalized rather than interrogated. They have not protected nor served; they have attacked and killed. They have not gathered intelligence; they have violated people's humanity.

I am an immigrant to the United States. The names of those killed and tortured in Iraq and Afghanistan invoke in my imagination people who look like me, people I could have known, who could be my family. In the faces of those killed and tortured in Ferguson and Los Angeles, I see my neighbors and friends, people I know and love and think of as family. These are not separate and distinct. The pain I feel while reading the CIA report is as strong as the grief that comes from perusing the images of unarmed people of color who have been killed by U.S. police. The U.S. tortures and imprisons people of color both at home and abroad.

Mass incarceration disproportionately impacts people of color, in particular Black men in the U.S., while

detainees from the "war on terror" in Guantanamo, Bagram, Abu Ghraib and elsewhere, have been almost entirely brown, Muslim men. Just as people of color, in particular Black men, are disproportionately more likely to be killed domestically by police officers, U.S. soldiers have been deployed in poor countries such as Iraq and Afghanistan, where the non-white populations of Muslim men, women and children are victimized through shootings and raids.

Among the revelations in the report on CIA tactics is the story of an Afghan man named Gul Rahman who literally froze to death while in U.S. custody. Rahman was chained with only a single piece of clothing covering the top half of his body and "died of hypothermia." In 2012, at least ten inmates in the Texas prison system died of heat stroke. An unnamed corrections officer told *The New York Times* that he worried about "boiling [inmates] in their cells."

Also revealed in grisly detail in the report on CIA practices is the barbarism of waterboarding detainees such as Abu Zubaydah and Khalid Sheikh Mohammad. But water torture is an

age-old American tradition, historically practiced domestically, as professor Anne-Marie Cusac discussed in her 2009 book *Cruel and Unusual: The Culture of Punishment in America*. Inmates in CIA custody were also subjected to a horrific practice called "rectal feedings," which resulted in serious injuries. But similar techniques have been used on U.S. inmates domestically, as this report on torture in American prisons reveals. Inmates in federal and state prisons describe being sodomized by flashlights and even having chemical fire extinguishers sprayed inside them.

The brutality of CIA interrogators as revealed in the Senate committee report was part of the project of war that includes the open aggression of U.S. troops on the streets of Baghdad and Kabul in the post 9/11 years. Similarly, the savagery inside U.S. prisons goes hand in hand with the killings of Michael Brown, Eric Garner, Tamir Rice and the countless slayings of unarmed Black men in the U.S. Our wars abroad are mirror images of the war at home.

Simply comparing photographs of police in Ferguson to U.S. troops on



the battlefield is instructive. We have turned cities into war zones and those cities could be either here in the U.S. or in Iraq or Afghanistan. It is not the case that U.S. police are simply hoping to emulate the military. In fact, the Pentagon has literally outfitted domestic law enforcement with the weapons of war.

Often used to justify the trigger-happy behavior of U.S. police is an assertion that policing is a dangerous and “thankless” job and that, in facing off with potential criminals at every turn, “it’s either you or them.” Similarly, U.S. soldiers in the battlefield have fired at civilians, claiming they were under attack. This siege mentality is a convenient cover by armed men using the authority of their badge or uniform to condone their killings.

Just as police officers such as Darren Wilson and Daniel Pantaleo are almost never convicted for killing people, it is similarly rare for U.S. soldiers to face justice despite overwhelming evidence of their wrongdoing. For example, Amnesty International maintains that of the 1,800 Afghans killed by U.S. troops



in the five year period 2009-2013, only six cases actually went to trial.

None of this should surprise us. After all, presidents have explicitly declared wars on both domestic and foreign fronts. After Nixon pronounced a “war on drugs” in 1971 during the late stages of the Vietnam War, that domestic war has been extended by every president since. Criminalizing drug use and sales has driven much of the U.S.’ domestic incarceration. And with the advent of the post 9/11 war on terror, our imprisonment of “terror suspects” and foreign fighters has increased dramatically. The two wars have occurred in parallel with each

other. Armed men have been perpetrators, protected by elites, while poor people of color have been the primary targets and victims.

Not enough progressive Americans make the connection between these wars we wage simultaneously. Whether it is our federal or state officials that are responsible for killings and torture at home or abroad, ultimately we fund it all through our tax dollars and sanction it all through our silence. Too many liberal activists fixate on the effects of U.S. foreign policy while ignoring what is happening on our doorstep. And too many of us who work for justice domestically overlook what is done to our brothers and sisters abroad. If we are to transform the U.S.’ approach to violence we need to draw links between right here and far away. Ferguson is Baghdad is New York is Kabul.

Sonali Kolhatkar is the host and executive producer of “Uprising,” a daily radio program at KPFK Pacifica Radio, soon to be on Free Speech TV. She is also the Director of the Afghan Women’s Mission, a U.S.-based non-profit that supports women’s rights activists in Afghanistan and co-author of Bleeding Afghanistan: Washington, Warlords, and the Propaganda of Silence.

—Common Dreams, December 12, 2014

<http://www.commondreams.org/views/2014/12/12/ferguson-baghdad-new-york-kabul>



Hundreds of Police Killings Not Reported to FBI

By MICHAEL WALSH

Hundreds of police killings are not included in the Federal Bureau of Investigation's records on the matter, according to a new report.

More than 550 homicides by police officers between 2007 and 2012 were missing from the federal statistics or not attributed to the law enforcement agency involved, the *Wall Street Journal* reported.

This makes it nearly impossible to figure out how many people cops kill—justifiably or not—every year.

The analysis comes at a time of heightened pressure for transparency from authorities, especially after the shooting death of 18-year-old Michael Brown in Ferguson, MO, in August.

To compile the report, the *Journal* looked at the internal figures of killings by police from 105 of the nation's 110

largest police departments. Apparently, five declined its request for access.

The internal records show at least 1,800 deaths during the aforementioned timeframe. That is about 45 percent higher than the FBI's tally of 1,242, according to the broadsheet.

Why don't the FBI records contain these additional deaths?

Clearly, some law enforcement agencies are not reporting all the police killings that happen on their watch.

Many activists have been speaking out against what they consider unfair treatment for people of color by law enforcement and the justice system.

A wave of protests spread through New York Wednesday after a grand jury decided not to indict a white officer in the killing of an unarmed black man

named Eric Garner on Staten Island.

Furthermore, recent studies have revealed that the racial divide in U.S. arrest rates is staggering.

Last month, *USA Today* reported that at least 1,581 police departments in the United States arrest African-Americans at a higher rate than the Ferguson Police Department.

And Black people in Ferguson are arrested nearly three times more than other races, according to the study, which compared arrests reported to the FBI in 2010 and 2011.

—*Reader Supported News*,
December 5, 2014

<http://readersupportednews.org/news-section2/318-66/27334-hundreds-of-killings-by-cops-are-not-reported-to-fbi>

Exploding Protest Movement

People are demanding an end to brutal and racist policing

By STEVEN ROSENFELD AND ALYSSA FIGUEROA

December 8, 2014—Late Saturday, hours into a protest march over police brutality in Berkeley, California, police were looking to make arrests and spotted Kyle McCoy. The young Black man, a well-known racial justice activist and University of California-Berkeley alum was arrested on suspicion for felony assault with a deadly weapon. He was taken away and booked, but by Sunday morning he was free on bail. On Monday afternoon, when he was scheduled to be arraigned in court, a bailiff announced the criminal charge had been dropped.

That kind of routine police harassment is partly why protests over police brutality and institutional racism continue nationwide. It is not just because ongoing deaths of unarmed Black men

and youths at the hands of police have struck a deep chord across America. The more you talk to protesters the more it becomes clear that this movement's goals are crystalized by racist policing but do not stop there.

"Everyone out there is saying they can't breathe for a lot of reasons," said one protester who came to the courthouse to support McCoy, referring to Eric Garner's last words before dying from a chokehold during his arrest in New York City. "I know a lot of people who are out there [protesting]. It's a lot of issues."

In the Bay Area, today's protesters are a mix of newcomers and veterans. There have been massive protests in recent years over other police killings of Black men, notably Oscar Grant. There has been the Oakland-centered

Occupy movement, protests over urban gentrification, rising higher education costs, and other issues with racial and economic justice underpinnings. But Cynthia Morse, an older white woman and longtime protester who came to the court to support those arrested this weekend, said police brutality was unlike other issues, especially if your family has been victimized.

"This whole issue has got to be a Black people's movement. It's theirs. They want it. They don't need direction from us. They need our support and that's what most of us are really trying to do," Morse said. "The institutional racism, the overt racism, the police brutality against young Black men has been very real to us because we are part of Oakland and they have

been so many of us [seeking justice] who are Black, and mothers with children who have been killed, and friends—it's really personal. This is a life and death issue."

Morse said she was sickened by the outsiders who used the protests to vandalize local stores. "It's such a disgusting lack of respect for the people who have died," Morse said. "It is just the most incredible disrespect to them and their families."

Protesters demands

Across the country, the core demands of protesters following the deaths of Michael Brown in Ferguson, Missouri and Eric Garner in Staten Island, New York, have been to end the institutionalized racism in policing. This means ending racial profiling, changing the police practices and grand jury process that allow officers who use excessive force to evade accountability. It means taking a range of militarized weapons out of police hands in non-emergency contexts, such as at protests.

But as demonstrations continue, there also are related concerns. In Berkeley, some leaders of the weekend marches said their demands included ending the "new Jim Crow," the lack of educational and economic opportunities. They want to restore affirmative action on UC campuses and double non-white enrollment, said Yvette Felarca, a leader of the Coalition to Defend Affirmative Action, Integration, and Immigrant Rights and Fight for Equality By Any Means Necessary (BAMN).

In Detroit, Michigan, Jose Alvarenga, another BAMN organizer, said their top agenda is to "connect the fight against police brutality to what's going on in Detroit...We have been having marches on every Saturday in the east side of Detroit against police brutality. They definitely have been bigger now after the two [grand jury] decisions."

"It comes down to the same line of growing inequality across the country," he said. "In some instances, like

with K-12 education and universities, it's very clear who has more opportunities and resources. You have bitterness and anger in the communities that don't have those opportunities. If you include violent police brutality and repression, then you will have the responses that Ferguson has had and now Berkeley, rightly so, is having."

Coast-to-coast activism

In New York City, protesters have staged a mass die-in at Grand Central Terminal on Sunday. They also disrupted shoppers in Macy's and H&M, tweeting "no justice, no shopping." They swarmed Toys 'R' Us and held up toy guns in memory of Tamir Rice, a 12-year-old who was shot and killed by a rookie officer in Cleveland. Some protesters went to Penn Station to sing "justice carols." On Monday, protesters blocked traffic on the Verrazano Bridge during morning rush hour.

In Philadelphia, about 200 protesters held a die-in outside the Philadelphia Eagles' stadium blocking cars from leaving following the game. Some pro-athletes held their own form of protest by writing "I can't breathe" on their clothing. NBA player Derrick Rose and NFL players Reggie Bush and Johnson Bademosi wore the message on their warm-up shirts. NFL player David Joseph wrote it on his cleats. LeBron James is expected to wear one during Monday's game in Brooklyn.

The District of Columbia has also seen protesters rising up. On Saturday, dozens staged a die-in at Washington's Union Station and blocked a bridge in nearby Arlington, Virginia. Elsewhere in the south, more than 200 demonstrators staged a die-in in North Carolina at a holiday event. In Miami, protesters blocked a major freeway and sustained protests for three days. Protesters sang, "We who believe in freedom cannot rest, until it comes."

In Chicago, religious leaders from about 100 churches led a rally on Sunday. "The enemy might choke the

breath out of our bodies but they cannot choke the breath out of our spirit," said Reverend Michael Pflieger during a morning service.

In Los Angeles on Saturday, protesters held a "Blackout Hollywood" in which hundreds staged a die-in, shutting down a popular intersection where an allegedly armed Black man was recently killed by police on Friday. Protests also unfolded in Anchorage, Alaska, and in Phoenix where police killed Romain Brisbon, an unarmed Black man, last week.

The international community also held actions this weekend, with protests in Tokyo, Paris, Melbourne, and Hannover, Germany.

Meanwhile, back in the San Francisco Bay Area, protests spread outward from Berkeley. In Oakland, protesters entered a popular restaurant on Sunday and sang the old pro-labor song, "Which side are you on, friends? Which side are you on?" They then read a list of names of Black people killed by police officers, saying, "Justice for Mike Brown is justice for us all. I will fight for freedom until justice is won."

The caption on a video of their action reads, "We interrupt your regularly scheduled brunch to bring you #Blackbrunch...No business as usual. Shutitdownbecause#Blacklivesmatter."

Steven Rosenfeld covers national political issues for AlterNet, including America's retirement crisis, democracy and voting rights, and campaigns and elections. He is the author of Count My Vote: A Citizen's Guide to Voting (AlterNet Books, 2008).

Alyssa Figueroa is an associate editor at AlterNet.

—Alternet.org, December 8, 2014

http://www.alternet.org/activism/exploding-protest-movement-has-gone-national-people-are-demanding-end-era-brutal-and-racist?akid=12555.229473.DHvpOf&rd=1&src=newsletter1028372&t=3&paging=off¤t_page=1#bookmark

Homeless Children

If “the economy is recovering” why is there a surge in homeless children?

By BRUCE A. DIXON

For the last three elections now, 2010, 2012 and 2015, corporate media and corporate politicians have ceaselessly assured us that “the economy” whatever that is, is “back on track,” wherever that is.

Despite what corporate media and politicians tell us, the positive indicators of soaring stock market valuations, rising real estate prices and the rigged unemployment figures that don't count the jailed, the recently released from jails and prisons, and those who've given up on finding work or those working part time who desperately want full time hours, real life for most real people hasn't got any better since 2008 or 2009.

Last week an extraordinary and shameful study emerged from the National Center on Family Homelessness confirmed it by demonstrating that almost 2.5 million children in the U.S. were homeless at some point during 2013. That's one child in every thirty, in what we're accustomed to thinking of as the richest nation on earth. In the most recent months for which statistics exist, the rate of homelessness among children is spiking, increased eight percent nationally from 2012 to 2013, and by ten percent or more in 13 states and the District of Columbia. In 2006 one in 50 children were homeless. In 2010 it was one in 45. Now, in the age of Obama, the 2013 number is 1 in 30.

The causes of homelessness among children are not your comforting stereotypes of drug use and mental illness. These are “comforting” because they encourage us to blame the drug-addicted, and pity the mentally ill, and our comfort keeps us from questioning the capitalist system which declares that we must have poverty in the midst of plenty, or won-

dering why we ourselves are no more than a month or two from homelessness.

America's shameful surge in homeless children is caused by the fact that wages are NOT rising, low-income housing is NOT being built, and the stock of available housing is being demolished or cannibalized by gentrify-

**In 2006 one in 50
children were homeless.
In 2010 it was one in 45.
Now, in the age of
Obama, the 2013
number is 1 in 30.**

ing speculators. Speculators can't make money off stable neighborhoods, so the poorest have to leave wherever they are to make room for something else.

In California, the nation's most populous state, 34 percent of households are paying more than half their annual income for rent, and while the state's minimum wage is \$8-an-hour, a two-bedroom apartment at a third of annual income would require tripling the minimum wage to \$25.78-an-hour. The issue then, is poverty.

Millions of children are not suffering because their parents have suddenly become addicted, or neglectful or lazy or stupid. Their parents, many of whom are working as hard as they can, are simply not able to afford a roof over their heads. This is just capitalism. It may be a scandal, but it's no surprise.

This happens to be just the way that “the economy” works when it's “back on track.” It's time to tear up those tracks.

—*Black Agenda Report*, November 20, 2014

<http://www.blackagendareport.com/node/14527>



'Some Sort of Hell'

San Jose, California, one of the wealthiest cities in America, refuses to provide affordable housing, yet won't tolerate people living outdoors.

BY EVELYN NIEVES

When San Jose dismantled the "Jungle," the nation's largest homeless encampment, many of its residents with nowhere to go scattered. They found hiding places in the scores of small, less visible encampments within the city, where more than 5,000 people sleep unsheltered on a given night.

But one group of about three-dozen evictees gathered what they could salvage in backpacks and trash bags, and crossed a bridge to a spot about a mile away. They found a clean patch of grass near Coyote Creek, the same creek that the Jungle abutted. There, they pitched tents donated by some concerned citizens, assigned themselves chores and hoped for the best.

Instead, they got marching orders. After weathering the hardest rains to fall in these parts in a decade, the campers found 72-hour eviction notices on their tents. Once again, a little more than a week after their forced flight from the Jungle, they had no idea where they might live.

"This is some sort of hell," said Raul, 57 (who didn't want his last name used), a life-long resident of San Jose who had lived in the Jungle for nearly eight years. He had nothing left of the home he had created, just a knapsack, his Chihuahua, Pepe, and a new pup tent. He was so depressed; he could barely lift his head.

To an outside observer, the eviction was predictable. The state's threat to sue Santa Clara County over the pollution in Coyote Creek caused by camping spurred the closing of the Jungle, a winding, 68-acre shantytown under an overpass with upwards of 300 people. With the state's environmental agencies—and the public—watching, San Jose could not allow another Jungle to spring up.

But the city could offer no viable alternative to the people it was expelling for the second time in a week. San Jose, the self-described capital of Silicon Valley, the largest wealth generator in the United States, lacked the resources.

The Jungle had become a symbol of the growing divide between the nation's rich and poor. But its December 4, 2014 dismantling—a spectacle of crying residents struggling with shopping carts, Hazmat-suited cleanup crews tossing furniture into dump trucks and hordes of police and reporters standing watch—only underscored the problem, since so many Jungle residents were literally left out in the cold.

San Jose is the nation's 10th largest city (with one million residents) but the San Jose/Santa Clara County area, home to 34 billionaires, has the nation's fifth largest homeless population

Residents of the neighborhood in Central San Jose that abutted the Jungle were glad to see the encampment go. But dismantling the Jungle is already creating new problems. Just days after the Jungle was torn apart, San Jose police and other city departments began fielding calls from people in different neighborhoods complaining of former Jungle residents setting up camps near them. Some ended up in a Walmart parking lot before being booted. Others were congregating near

the airport, also under threat of eviction. At least one hospital reported an upsurge of emergency room visits from former residents of the Jungle, sick from weathering the elements, having misplaced medications in the eviction.

"What the city is saying is that it refuses to provide affordable housing, but it does not tolerate people living outside," said Sandy Perry, an organizer at the Affordable Housing Network of Santa Clara County, who has worked with San Jose's homeless population since 1991. "This is a willful, wholesale violation of human rights."

San Jose, by all accounts, is experiencing a crisis in homelessness. Even with dedicated non-profits working to stem the tide, the city's homeless problem, like that of other booming cities—New York, Los Angeles and San Francisco, to name a few—has grown markedly worse in recent years. San Jose is the nation's 10th largest city (with one million residents) but the San Jose/Santa Clara County area, home to 34 billionaires, has the nation's fifth largest homeless population, after New York, Los Angeles, Seattle and San Diego.

San Jose/Santa Clara County also has the nation's highest percentage of homeless people living on the streets. More than 75 percent, upwards of 7,600, are unsheltered, according to the 2014 Annual Homeless Assessment Report to Congress, compared to five percent of the homeless people in New York City.

Ray Bramson, San Jose's homeless response team manager, said the city did all it could for the Jungle. It earmarked \$4 million and spent 18 months, with contracted non-profit organizations, to find housing for 144 Jungle residents, using housing vouch-

ers that expire in two years. But another 60 residents, vouchers in hand, could not find apartments, even with social workers working on their behalf. By the end, just weeks before the dismantling, the population of the Jungle was still between 200 and 300 people, according to housing advocates and volunteers who worked with jungle residents. That's because every time a resident of the Jungle moved out, another person, or more, took their place.

Critics of the way the city dismantled the Jungle, both professional advocates for the homeless and citizens registering their opinions on social media, have decried the city for creating a two-year voucher program that inadequately served the population.

"When a city decides to build a park, it doesn't build until it has the funding to finish it," said Anthony King, a volunteer outreach worker who was homeless for more than ten years. "So why did the city decide to undergo a program that addressed the needs of only some of the people in the Jungle?"

The city said it was forced to close the camp for its environmental risks and hazardous conditions. But Bramson himself has said that there are many other homeless camps along the waterways. In fact, the Jungle was part of a string of 247 tent cities along Santa Clara County's waterways that contain 1,230 people, according to a recent county census.

Chris Herring, a Ph.D. candidate in sociology at the University of California at Berkeley who has extensively researched homeless encampments on the west coast, said the eviction "will not mitigate the ongoing environmental damage to Coyote Creek by homeless habitation—only move it around."

In an essay in *Beyond Chron.org*, Herring also said the eviction "will exacerbate rather than improve unsanitary conditions faced by the evicted, pushing them further from clean water, recycling centers and toilets."

Residents of the Jungle, well aware of the growing trash and sanitary problems caused by so many incoming residents, had appealed to the city for help. In November, they waged a protest for better sanitary services. The city had provided three port-a-potties, eight hours a day, for the Jungle's 300 residents, and handed out portable sanitary bags for them to use the rest of the time—bags of human waste that competed with all the other trash in the Jungle for a spot in the few trash bins on site.

In the few days that former residents of the Jungle spent in their second location before receiving eviction notices, they began organizing.

"We're creating a community," one woman said. People were assigned to clean up trash, run errands and the like. The group wanted to stay together, monitor activities so the site could stay clean and not generate complaints.

"I just know that if we keep a place clean, have the bags for the trash, and stay away from the public, they won't bother us," said Raul, the former Jungle resident. Living in the Jungle was a hard life, he said, but it was stable. He had his shack, he knew everyone, had friends and support. Like most homeless people, Raul said he preferred to be with other people he knew, rather than fend for himself.

His sister, who had a housing voucher but couldn't find an apartment, was staying with her three dogs in a tent next to Raul's. Almost everyone at the encampment had at least one small dog, often several.

The city came at the crack of dawn the day the new camp was evicted. Workers began taking their possessions before residents had even woken up, according to a report by *ABC7 news*. It quoted Bramson, who did not return requests for an interview for this story, saying, "There are services available. There is support available."

But the only support was a limited number of shelter beds the residents could try to get into—if they gave up their dogs.

A day after their expulsion, most of the group had moved *en masse* to a new location, far from the public eye. But it was still near Coyote Creek. It wouldn't take long, they said, for the city to find them again.

Evelyn Nieves is a senior contributing writer and editor at AlterNet, living in San Francisco. She has been a reporter for both the New York Times and the Washington Post.

—AlterNet, December 25, 2014

http://www.alternet.org/some-sort-hell-how-one-wealthiest-cities-america-treats-its-homeless?akid=12616.229473.INozli&rd=1&src=newsletter1029300&t=2&paginng=off¤t_page=1#bookmark



Justice for Michael Brown

Call for March on Washington to demand justice for Michael Brown and other victims of police killings of Black men and women

BY THE LABOR FIGHTBACK NETWORK

With demonstrations sweeping the country to protest the grand jury's exoneration of Darren Wilson and to demand justice for Michael Brown, the need for deep and massive involvement of labor's ranks in the streets and in the public discourse could not be clearer.

To provide a needed national focus and to sustain the momentum, we urge the civil rights and labor movements to join forces and organize a March on Washington. This would give impetus to the demand that the federal government indict Darren Wilson for the murder of Michael Brown.

The Black Freedom Movement urgently needs allies in this struggle.

The same is true of the labor movement, which also faces a critical fight for its survival against the corporate onslaught.

Labor acutely needs the support of its allies in its fight against such repressive anti-labor legislation as the misnamed "right to work." But trade unionists should support the struggles

of these allies if we expect them to support our struggles. It has to be a two-way street.

Police killings of unarmed Blacks are becoming virtually a daily occurrence. [Note: Police officers, security guards, or self-appointed vigilantes extra-judicially killed at least 313 African-Americans in 2012, according to a recent study. This means that a Black person was killed by a security officer every 28 hours. The report notes that it's possible that the real number could be much higher.^{1]}

One of the most flagrant and egregious examples was the shooting of 12-year-old Tamir Rice on November 22, 2014 by a Cleveland police officer after a 911 caller said that someone was waving around a gun, which the caller said was "probably fake," and added "I don't know if it's real or not." (The dispatcher failed to convey this to police.) Within two seconds after their arrival, one of the two officers on the scene shot Rice in the stomach from

ten feet away (which was captured on video and shown to the public at the Rice family's insistence). The boy had never pointed the toy gun at the police or made any threats. It was not until four minutes after the shooting that Tamir received medical assistance when another man was seen bent down next to him. Young Rice died the next day.

The killing of Michael Brown was followed by the deaths of two more Black men at the hands of police in the St. Louis Area. The litany of names grows nationally: Ezel Ford in Los Angeles, Eric Garner in Staten Island, John Crawford in Ohio, and many others. Tanesha Anderson, a mentally ill Black woman, was killed in front of her family in Cleveland. And just recently Akai Gurley was gunned down in New York. Meanwhile, George Zimmerman, the vigilante executioner of Trayvon Martin, remains unpunished.

So this epidemic of unjustified police killings constitutes a national crisis. And Black people—especially the youth—feel their lives are in peril as police continue to kill them with impunity.

What is to be done?

Starting with that day in August when Michael Brown was gunned down, the Labor Fightback Network (LFN) has called for the immediate arrest of his killer. We said convening a grand jury was unnecessary, but if it was to be convened an independent prosecutor should be appointed and that Darren Wilson should be put behind bars in preparation for a public trial. Instead, prosecutor Robert McCulloch remained in place and proceeded to manipulate the grand jury into refusing to indict Wilson, who spent four hours testifying before it, with no cross examination.



But this is not the end of the fight to win justice for Michael Brown and his family. It is just the first round.

Remember what happened in 1992 when Rodney King was viciously beaten by police and his assailants were acquitted in a state court. Under pressure—and following the riots that took place in Los Angeles after the verdict was announced—the Justice Department tried the police under federal civil rights laws and won convictions of two of them, who were sent to prison.

The LFN fully supports continuing demonstrations in cities and towns across the country protesting not only Brown's murder but also the killing of other victims wherever they take place. Such actions are also demanding an end to police brutality and racial profiling, along with other demands being put forward by the Black Freedom Movement.

We urge a united front of the civil rights and labor movements, along with progressive anti-racist community organizations, to demand Wilson's indictment under the federal Civil Rights Act, and to make that demand a central focus of a march on Washington!

Some would-be academic scholars have expressed skepticism that federal charges against Wilson could result in his conviction because the required element of "willfulness" in killing Brown could not be proved. But these scholars are looking at this struggle from a narrow legalistic prism. The key to winning it is mass action in the streets to force the federal government to act and at last provide a forum where Wilson could be cross examined. And it is high time for the identity of those who allegedly supported his claims in the state court to be revealed so that their versions could be subjected to the kind of scrutiny that was lacking in the state proceedings.

As for "willfulness," a *New York Times* article titled "Experts Weigh Officer's Decisions Leading to Fatal Shooting" (November 27, 2014) cites a

number of different courses Wilson could have taken, even if credence is given to his account as to the actual sequence of events, (and a number of publicly identified witnesses have shown by their statements that there is no basis whatever to give such credence! For example, two workers cutting nearby trees at the time have agreed that Brown appeared to be surrendering when he was shot dead and several other witnesses said the same thing.)

What about a Taser instead of deadly force? No, said Wilson, it's too heavy to carry around. But why not put it in the back seat of the car?

What about pepper gas? No, said Wilson, it could blowback on him. But don't police carry shields to protect themselves against blowback?

What about staying in his car while calling for police reinforcements and tailing Brown until they arrived? Wilson obviously preferred to go it alone in pursuing Brown.

The fatal flaw in Wilson's desperate attempt to avoid responsibility for his actions is the undisputed fact that he shot Brown twice in the head instead of some other part of his body, like his leg. That's what makes this a cold-blooded murder. That's what provides the "willfulness."

In any event, these are issues for a jury to decide in a public trial, not dismissed, in effect, by a prosecutor in a

secret grand jury proceeding.

Enough is enough!

"ENOUGH IS ENOUGH!" That is the demand vocalized especially by the youth in Ferguson. Their anger is deep and pervasive. Millions around the country share it. A march on Washington, in the tradition of those called by Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr., has the potential to draw huge numbers into the streets and build a new movement, the likes of which we have not seen for decades. Labor should use the occasion to mobilize its forces, cement alliances, revitalize our ranks, and help turn back the reactionary, racist tide that threatens to engulf all progressive social movements.

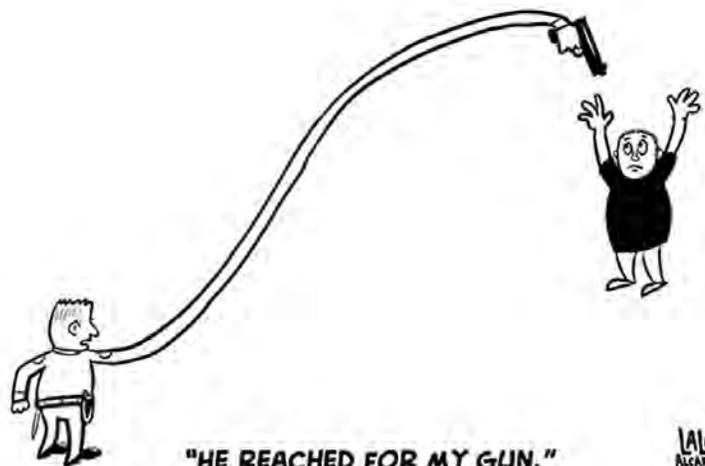
Issued by the Labor Fightback Network.²

¹ <http://www.occupy.com/article/black-man-killed-us-every-28-hours-police#sthash.AJ9AbmvO.dpuf>

² For more information, please call 973-944-8975 or email conference@laborfightback.org or write Labor Fightback Network, P.O. Box 187, Flanders, NJ 07836 or visit our website at laborfightback.org. Facebook link:

<https://www.facebook.com/laborfightback>

Donations to help fund the Labor Fightback Network based on its program of solidarity and labor-community unity are necessary for our work to continue and will be much appreciated. Please make checks payable to Labor Fightback Network and mail to the above P.O. Box or you can make a contribution online. Thanks!



LAL
ALCARAZ
©2014
DISTRIBUIDO EN
INGLES Y ESPAÑOL

Blood on the Tracks

Saying no to Warren Buffett

BY GUY MILLER

The City of New Orleans by Steve Goodman¹ is a loving tribute to an era gone-by. Steve mourned what he perceived to be “the disappearing railroad blues.” He takes a nostalgic look back at an America that looks better through the sepia tones of memory than it actually was. Steve Goodman was unquestionably a great songwriter, but for all that, he was a lousy economist. America’s railroads are anything but disappearing. Rather than a relic from another time, they are at the forefront of American capital’s plan for the 21st century. If you don’t live along the major corridors of rail traffic, it is easy to miss this vital aspect of the U.S. economy.

For people that live in, or near, one of the cities that stretch from Boston to Washington, when they think about railroads at all, they generally think first about Amtrak. Everyone who uses Amtrak has a horror story to tell. Even the premium Acela train is seen as not measuring up to the trains of Europe or China. The primary reason high speed passenger trains aren’t a priority in the U.S. is simple: freight traffic makes too damn much money. Wherever in the world there are fast and efficient passenger trains, freight traffic is secondary, or non-existent. There was a time in the United States when freight traffic was shunted to the side to make room for passenger trains. To the major railroads that was a waste of time and money.

If high-speed passenger service were to be successful two essential things would be needed: 1. Government subsidies (or better yet total nationalization) and, 2. A huge upgrade in infrastructure. File the first requirement under the category of “come the revolution,” and the second under “unlikely.” The infrastructure is just fine for what the major carriers

want to accomplish. They do not want, or need tracks, or roadbeds, that can safely move 15,000 tons of freight at 100-miles-per-hour, sixty MPH will do nicely, thank you. Building and maintaining the right-of-way is an expensive and labor-intensive proposition. Even with cost-cutting machinery it is viewed by railroads as something to be kept to a minimum.

In the decade before the crash of 2008 railroad freight traffic exploded. From 1996 to 2006 railroad and truck traffic both grew, but railroad traffic grew faster. Using the metric of ton miles, the industry’s standard measurement, that decade saw rail traffic grow 25.1 percent and truck traffic grow 21.8 percent. This boom is still being fueled by the growth of “unit trains.” Unit trains, as opposed to manifest trains, are a one trick pony. For example a train consisting solely of crude oil, or grain or coal are of unit trains. Such trains go from point A to point B with no stops in between. No setting out a cut of cars in Podunk, Iowa or picking up cars of lumber in Rochester, Minnesota. Much of America has become not only flyover country, but also roll-by country as well. This contrasts with the once more common manifest train. Such trains required switching at various points along the route. This change brought with it the loss of thousands of switching jobs; those jobs did indeed go the way of Steve Goodman’s disappearing railroad.

After years of consolidations, American railroads evolved into five large carriers. With the aid of this monopoly the railroads were on track for bigger and bigger payoffs. My old boss, the Union Pacific has over 32,000 miles of tracks resulting from mergers and takeovers. In the second quarter of 2014 the Union Pacific saw its profits

jump 17 percent—this in the midst of an economy that is, at best, sputtering along.

No unit train has been more important in reviving the fortunes of America’s railroads than double stack container trains. The humble container is as central to globalization as is the Internet. Containers stack like bricks. Containers make a seamless transition from ship to train to truck. A ship docks in Long Beach, cranes move the containers directly onto double stack rail cars and two-hundred containers are on there way to Chicago. No muss. No fuss. No longshoremen. These trains are the king of the road as far as the five major railroads are concerned. They are as time-sensitive as any passenger train, and huge moneymakers to boot.

Warren Buffett has a nose for money and a nose for exploitation. In 2009 Berkshire Hathaway forked over a cool \$26 billion to buy the Burlington Northern Santa Fe. You can be sure that sentimentality had nothing to do with this move. During the same period, while the amount of ton-miles rose, the size of the crews that move the tons across those miles has steadily declined. Traditionally, road crews consisted of five people: An engineer, a fireman, a conductor, and two helpers, or brakemen. The fireman was the first to go in the early 1960s. The title still exists for apprentice engineers, but the craft itself was a victim of the change from steam to diesel. Next, one of the two helpers was gradually phased out in the 1970s. With the departure of the cabooses, and the rear of the train protection that went with it, it wasn’t much longer until the second helper was gone. That is where we stand today: one engineer; one conductor per-train.

It seemed at the time that this last reduction to the two-person crew would be the end of job cuts. After all, trains were getting longer, the freight was becoming more dangerous and profits were going through the roof. The idea of “engineer only” was unthinkable to any experienced railroader, and anathema to anyone who knows the potential dangers involved. Ask yourself how safe would you feel boarding a 737 with only a pilot in the cockpit? Ask the people at **Lac-Mégantic, Quebec**² how having only an engineer in the cab of the locomotive worked out for them. For forty-seven of the town’s citizens it is too late to ask. The train involved in this disaster was the “engineer only” nightmare advocated by the BNSF (Burlington Northern Santa Fe). At the end of his run the engineer got off the engine and performed what is normally conductor’s work. With no one to help, and with no one to discuss the safest course of action, he tied on seven handbrakes on the seventy-two-car train. Often the rulebook calls for “sufficient handbrakes,” a weasel formulation that places the onus squarely on the crew.

Due to faulty equipment repairs, the seven handbrakes were not sufficient. The train’s air brakes failed as a result of a fire, and the cars ran full speed into Lac Magnetic, demolishing a large section of the town and killing forty-seven people. Almost before the smoke cleared the engineer became the villain. What followed was yet another classic replay of the Mai Lai syndrome. The Mai Lai syndrome is when blame is passed down the chain of command, and doesn’t stop until it reaches the lowest possible level. The last link in the chain was the engineer, who now faces forty-seven counts of criminal neglect and life in prison. Meanwhile management and government walk away with a stern warning. Wendy Taros, of the Canadian Transportation Safety Board delivered what amounts

to a tsk, tsk: “Who then was in a position to check on this company, to make sure safety standards were being met? Who was the guardian of Public Safety?” Note the absence of the word “greed” in her questions.

Life for railroad operating personnel is controlled by the extra-board. Here is one relic of the 19th century that the carriers are happy to keep. The extra-board consists of being on call 24 hours, 365 days a year. Ten hours off and get ready. You get the call. You’re out the door. Usually with two hours to get to your assignment. Baby up all night? Too bad. Construction down the block? Too bad. Car alarm went off after two hours of sleep? Too bad. Day after day, month after month you are a prisoner of the telephone. After awhile you find yourself in a perpetual state of half-asleep and half-awake.

Now climb aboard four huge engines with enough horsepower to move a mile long train, a train often with enough hazardous materials to wipe out a mid-size town. Be prepared to be alone in the cab of the engine for the next ten to twelve hours. You’re given a stack of track bulletins, each one with specific, complicated instructions. Each one of these bulletins can be a question of life and death. In the course of your run you are constantly interacting with dispatchers, train masters, yardmasters, track foremen, control operators, other trains and emergency personnel. Many of these radio conversations require exact wording, and a long ritualized formula: “Engineer on UP7215 East calling foreman Brown in charge of track bulletin 624 issued on September 24, between mile post 281.6 to mile post 285.7, over.” And so on back and forth the exchanges go over and over, with every word repeated exactly. No one to help interpret the sometimes-ambiguous instructions; add to this a bad radio and a hard to understand track foreman and you get the picture. All this is

done at sixty miles an hour, while monitoring speed, air pressure, track conditions, amperage and signals. In short a prescription for catastrophe.

Knowing all this the union negotiators of the engineers and the brakemen wanted to sign a sweetheart deal with the BNSF allowing the travesty of a one-person crew in the next contract. More concerned with which craft would get the remaining position than the safety and well being of their membership, much less the general public, these union misleaders were ready to go along to get along. But the membership had other ideas, and they had the final say. (I am proud to say I was part of a movement in the early 1970s that fought and won the right to vote on contracts by the membership in the United Transportation Union). The rank and file defied the union leadership and voted down the engineer only proposal. They said no to the BNSF. No to Berkshire Hathaway. And no to the union bureaucrats. I have never been prouder of my brothers and sisters.

Guy Miller worked thirty-eight years on first the Chicago Northwestern, and later the Union Pacific as a trainman. He is a retired member of Local 577 of the United Transportation Union and lives in Chicago. He can be reached at: guycarlos@msn.com

—Counterpunch, Weekend Edition
September 26-28, 2014

<http://www.counterpunch.org/2014/09/26/blood-on-the-tracks-2/>

¹ “City of New Orleans” is a folk song written by Steve Goodman (and first recorded for Goodman’s self-titled 1971 album), describing a train ride from Chicago to New Orleans on the Illinois Central Railroad’s City of New Orleans in bittersweet and nostalgic terms.

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/City_of_New_Orleans_%28song%29

Healthcare is a Human Right

Vermont's governor sadly has it wrong. Now is the time for single-payer everywhere.

BY ANDY COATES

On Wednesday, December 17, 2014, Vermont's governor, after campaigning for single payer for years, announced that he would not work to pass single-payer legislation in Vermont this year.

“Single payer” is shorthand for a reform that will replace the present wasteful and chaotic system of private health insurance, Medicare, Medicaid and out-of-pocket cash payments with a single public finance system that will redirect resources in order to guarantee access to all necessary care for everyone, which would include many essentials not covered by any present plan.

Governor Peter Shumlin, in his press conference, stated that “now is not the right time” for single payer.

I disagree.

The time for a single-payer system is now. Our patients in every state urgently need it.

Indeed, the people of Vermont, including the state's physicians, nurses and other caregiving professionals, have repeatedly affirmed their support for single-payer reform.

Vermonters throughout the state understand that an equitable healthcare system must be truly universal and must remove all financial barriers to medically necessary care. They recognize that a public single payer is an essential incremental step toward these goals.

The people of Vermont have said healthcare should be regarded as a public good, much like fire protection, and not as a commodity you buy on the market. Governor Shumlin was elected to office in considerable part because of his championing of this view.

Single-payer activists in Vermont have pointed out that by eliminating the unnecessary and wasteful role of private insurance companies—middle-

men who put their profits above the interests of our patients—resources will be liberated to improve the health of all.

Dr. William Hsiao, the Harvard health economist who Governor Shumlin recruited to study the impact of single payer in Vermont, estimated that a single-payer-like reform (not a true single payer, since there would still be multiple plans, including private plans) would achieve an overall savings of over 25 percent on healthcare spending (ten percent delivery system savings, 8.5 percent overhead savings, five percent reduction in fraud and two percent saved through lower malpractice costs.)

Governor Shumlin stated that the costs of his proposed reform would be too great, saying, “The taxes required to replace healthcare premiums with a publicly financed plan that would best serve Vermont are, in a word, enormous.” (The governor's finance proposal would have instituted an 11.5 payroll tax on employers and a progressive income tax of zero to 9.5 percent, depending on income.) The governor did not dwell upon the fact that the taxes he cited would be less, on average, than the exorbitant and burdensome premiums and out-of-pocket costs that presently weigh heavily upon households as well as employers.

Governor Shumlin also invoked “risk of economic shock” as a reason to turn away from single payer—the idea that the transition to a Vermont without private health insurance, a Vermont without profiteers lining up to make a buck off the suffering of the sick, would prove too threatening to the social order.

Governor Shumlin has made many speeches about the need to liberate Vermont, and indeed the United States, from the corrupting and corrosive influence of profit-seeking in health-

care. Yet from its inception, the enabling legislation for reform in Vermont—Act 48—allowed a continuing role for private insurers alongside public payers. Lawmakers therefore dropped the term “single payer” from its text.

The continued presence of multiple payers in the proposed Vermont reform necessarily canceled out many of the administrative savings that would be attained by a true single-payer system and opened the door to multi-tiered care along the lines of what the Affordable Care Act currently represents.

It's important to note that the Affordable Care Act has increased the influence of the big insurers and other private interests in our healthcare system. Strengthening these forces has hurt our patients and the profession of medicine in all states, including Vermont.

The announcement by Governor Shumlin, a leading light in the Democratic Party, thus shows the difficulty that individual states face in trying to disentangle themselves from these private corporate interests. It shows why physicians and Americans as a whole need to step up the demand for a deep-going, national reform—an improved Medicare for all.

It is time to put the interests of patients first, ahead of political expedience. Now IS the time for single payer in Vermont and in the nation. It is the only reform that will cover everyone, save lives, and save money. Mr. Shumlin, of all our nations' governors, knows this well.

We pledge to redouble our efforts to press for national legislation—such as H.R. 676, the Expanded and Improved Medicare for All Act—to achieve the goal of universal access to high-quality, afford-

Continued on page 31

Obama's New Torture Plan

Senate report being used to whitewash Obama's rehabilitation of torture

BY NAFEEZ AHMED

The grizzly details of CIA torture have, finally, been at least partly aired through the release this Tuesday, December 9, 2014, of the executive summary to a landmark Senate intelligence committee report. The extent of the torture has been covered extensively across the media, and is horrifying—unless you're a *FOX News* pundit. But much of the media coverage of this issue is missing the crucial bigger picture: the deliberate rehabilitation of torture under the Obama administration, and its systematic use to manufacture false intelligence to justify endless war.

Torture victims, who had been detained by the U.S. national security apparatus entirely outside any sort of

Continued from page 30

able care. We invite Governor Shumlin to rededicate himself to the cause of a public national health program.

As Hillel, the great ancient sage, famously asked, "If I am not for myself, who will be for me? And, if I am only for myself alone, then what am I? And, if not now, when?"

Now is the time to press forward, not retreat. Our patients do not deserve to wait.

Dr. Andy Coates is president of Physicians for a National Health Program. Dr. Coates is chief of hospital medicine at Samaritan Hospital in Troy, New York, and an assistant professor of medicine and psychiatry at Albany Medical College.

—*Common Dreams*, December 18, 2014

<http://www.commondreams.org/views/2014/12/18/vermonts-governor-sadly-has-it-wrong-now-time-single-payer-everywhere>

recognizable functioning system of due process, endured a litany of extreme abuses normally associated with foreign dictatorships: 180 hour sleep deprivation, forced "rectal feeding," rectal "examinations" using "excessive force," standing for dozens of hours on broken limbs, water-boarding, being submerged in iced baths, and on and on and on.

Yet for the most part, it has been assumed that the CIA's "enhanced interrogation program," originated under the Bush administration after 9/11, was a major "aberration" from normal CIA practice—as one U.S. former military prosecutor put it in *The Guardian*.

On *BBC Newsnight*, December 10, 2014, presenter Emily Maitlis asked former National Security Adviser under Carter, Zbigniew Brzezinski, about the problem of "rogue elements in the CIA," and whether this was inevitable due to the need for secrecy in intelligence.

High-level sanction

Media coverage of the Senate report has largely whitewashed the extent to which torture has always been an integral and systematic intelligence practice since the Second World War, continuing even today under the careful recalibration of Obama and his senior military intelligence officials. The key function of torture, largely overlooked by the pundits, is its role in manufacturing nebulous threats that legitimize the existence and expansion of the national security apparatus.

The CIA's post-9/11 torture program was formally approved at the highest levels of the civilian administration. We have known for years that torture was officially sanctioned by at least President

Bush, Vice President Cheney, former National Security Advisor Condoleezza Rice, Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld and Secretary of State Colin Powell, CIA directors George Tenet and Michael Hayden, and Attorney General John Ashcroft.

Yet the focus on the Bush administration serves a useful purpose. While the UN has called for prosecutions of Bush officials, Obama himself is excused on the pretext that he banned domestic torture in 2009, and reiterated the ban abroad this November.

Even Dan Froomkin of *The Intercept* congratulated the November move as a "win" for the "good guys." Indeed, with the release of the Senate report, Obama's declaration that he has ended "the CIA's detention and interrogation program" has been largely uncritically reported by both mainstream and progressive media, reinforcing this narrative.

Rehabilitating the torture regime

Yet Obama did not ban torture in 2009, and has not rescinded it now. He, instead, rehabilitated torture with a carefully crafted Executive Order that has received little scrutiny. He demanded, for instance, that interrogation techniques be made to fit the U.S. Army Field Manual, which complies with the Geneva Convention and has prohibited torture since 1956.

But in 2006, revisions were made to the Army Field Manual, in particular through "Appendix M," which contained interrogation techniques that went far beyond the original Geneva-inspired restrictions of the original version of the manual. This includes 19 methods of interrogation and the practice of extraordinary rendition. As pointed out by U.S. psychologist Jeff

Kaye who has worked extensively with torture victims, a new UN Committee Against Torture (UNCAT) review of the manual shows that a wide-range of torture techniques continue to be deployed by the U.S. government, including isolation, sensory deprivation, stress positions, chemically-induced psychosis, adjustments of environmental and dietary rules, among others.

Indeed, the revelations contained in the Senate report are a mere fraction of the totality of torture techniques deployed by the CIA and other agencies. Murat Kurnaz, a Turkish citizen born and raised in Germany who was detained in Guantánamo for five years, has for instance charged that he had been subjected to prolonged solitary confinement, repeated beatings, water-dunking, electric shock treatment, and suspension by his arms, by U.S. forces.

On January 22nd, 2009, retired Admiral Dennis Blair, then Obama's director of national intelligence, told the Senate intelligence committee that the Army Field Manual would be amended to allow new forms of harsh interrogation, but that these changes would remain classified:

"We have large amounts of unclassified doctrine for our troops to use, but we don't put anything in there that our enemies can use against us. And we'll figure it out for this manual...there will be some sort of document that's widely available in an unclassified form, but the specific techniques that can provide training value to adversaries, we will handle much more carefully."

Obama's supposed banning of the CIA's secret rendition programs was also a misnomer. While White House officials insisted that from now on, detainees would not be rendered to "any country that engages in torture," rendered detainees were already being sent to countries in the EU that purportedly do not sanction torture—where they were then tortured by the CIA.

Obama did not really ban the CIA's use of secret prisons either, permitting indefinite detention of people without due process "on a short-term transitory basis."

Half a century of torture as a system

What we are seeing now is not the Obama administration putting an end to torture, but rather putting an end to the open acknowledgement of the use of torture as a routine intelligence practice.

But the ways of old illustrate that we should not be shocked by the latest revelations. Declassified CIA training manuals from the 1960s, '70s, '80s, and '90s, prove that the CIA has consistently practiced torture long before the Bush administration attempted to legitimize the practice publicly.

In his seminal study of the subject, *A Question of Torture*, U.S. historian Professor Alfred W. McCoy of the University of Wisconsin-Madison proves using official documents and interviews with intelligence sources that the use of torture has been a systematic practice of U.S. and British intelligence agencies, sanctioned at the highest levels, over "the past half century." Since the Second World War, he writes, a "distinctive U.S. covert-warfare doctrine...in which psychological torture has emerged as a central if clandestine facet of American foreign policy."

The psychological paradigm deployed by the CIA fused two methods in particular, "sensory disorientation" and so-called "self-inflicted pain." These methods were based on intensive "behavioral research that made psychological torture NATO's secret weapon against communism and cognitive science the handmaiden of state security."

"From 1950 to 1962," found McCoy, "the CIA became involved in torture through a massive mind-control effort, with psychological warfare and secret research into human consciousness that reached a cost of a billion dollars annually."

The pinnacle of this effort was the CIA's Kubark Counterintelligence Interrogation handbook finalized in 1963, which determined the agency's interrogation methods around the world. In the ensuing decade, the agency trained over a million police officers across 47 countries in torture. A later incarnation of the CIA torture training doctrine emerged under Freedom of Information in the form of the 1983 Human Resources Training Exploitation Manual.

Power...and propaganda

One of the critical findings of the Senate report is that torture simply doesn't work, and consistently fails to produce meaningful intelligence. So why insist on its use? For McCoy, the addiction to torture itself is a symptom of a deep-seated psychological disorder, rather than a rational imperative: "In sum, the powerful often turn to torture in times of crisis, not because it works but because it salves their fears and insecurities with the psychic balm of empowerment."

He is right, but in the post-9/11 era, there is more to the national security apparatus' chronic torture addiction than this.

It is not a mere accident that torture generates vacuous intelligence, but nevertheless continues to be used and justified for intelligence purposes. For instance, the CIA claimed that its torture of alleged 9/11 mastermind Khalid Sheikh Mohammed (KSM) led to the discovery and thwarting of a plot to hijack civilian planes at Heathrow and crash them into the airport and buildings in Canary Wharf. The entire plot, however, was an invention provoked by torture that included waterboarding, "facial and abdominal slaps, the facial grab, stress positions, standing sleep deprivation" and "rectal rehydration."

As one former senior CIA official who had read all KSM's interrogation reports told *Vanity Fair*, "90 percent of it was total fucking bullshit." Another ex-Penta-

gon analyst said that torturing KSM had produced “no actionable intelligence.”

Torture also played a key role in the much-hyped London ricin plot. Algerian security services alerted British intelligence in January 2003 to the so-called plot after interrogating and torturing a “terrorist suspect,” former British resident Mohammed Meguerba. We now know there was no plot. Four of the defendants were acquitted of terrorism and four others had the cases against them abandoned. Only Kamal Bourgass was convicted after he murdered Special Branch Detective Constable Stephen Oake during a raid. Former British ambassador to Uzbekistan, Craig Murray, has also blown the whistle on how the CIA would render “terror suspects” to the country to be tortured by Uzbek secret police, including being boiled alive. The confessions generated would be sent to the CIA and MI6 to be fed into “intelligence” reports. Murray described the reports as “bollocks,” replete with false information not worth the “blood-stained paper” they are written on.

Many are unaware that the 9/11 Commission report is exactly such a document. Nearly a third of the report’s footnotes reference information obtained from detainees subject to “enhanced” interrogation by the CIA. In 2004, the commission demanded that the CIA conduct “new rounds of interrogations” to get answers to its questions. As investigative reporter Philip Shannon pointed out in *Newsweek*, this has “troubling implications for the credibility of the commission’s final report” and “its account of the 9/11 plot and al-Qaeda’s history.” Which is why lawyers for the chief 9/11 mastermind suspects now say after the release of the Senate report that the case for prosecution may well unravel. Not surprising if a third of the report is merely “bollocks.”

That torture generates false information has long been known to the intelligence community. Much of the CIA’s techniques are derived from reverse engineering Survival Evasion Resistance and Escape (SERE) training, where U.S. troops are briefly exposed in controlled settings to abusive interrogation techniques used by enemy forces, so that they can better resist treatment they might face if they are captured. SERE training, however, adopted tactics used by Chinese Communists against American soldiers during the Korean War for the purpose of eliciting false confessions for propaganda purposes, according to a Senate Armed Services Committee report in 2009.

Torture: core mechanism to legitimize threat projection

By deploying the same techniques against “terror suspects,” the intelligence community was not seeking to identify real threats: it was seeking to manufacture threats for the purpose of justifying war. As David Rose found after interviewing “numerous counter-terrorist officials from agencies on both sides of the Atlantic,” their unanimous verdict was that “coercive methods” had squandered massive resources to manufacture “false leads, chimerical plots, and unnecessary safety alerts.” Far from exposing any deadly plots, torture led only to “more torture of supposed accomplices of ‘terror suspects’ while also providing some misleading ‘information’ that boosted the administration’s argument for invading Iraq.” But the Iraq War was not about responding to terrorism. According to declassified British Foreign Office files, it was about securing control over Persian Gulf oil and gas resources, and opening them up to global markets to avert a portended energy crisis.

In other words, torture plays a pivotal role in the Pentagon’s posture of

permanent global war: generating spurious overblown “intelligence” that can be fed into official security narratives of imminent terrorist threats everywhere, in turn requiring evermore empowerment of the security agencies, and legitimizing military expansionism in strategic regions.

The Obama administration is now exploiting the new Senate report to convince the world that the intelligence community’s systematic embroilment in torture was merely a Bush-era aberration that is now safely in the past.

Do not be fooled. Obama has rehabilitated and recalibrated the covert torture apparatus, and is attempting to leverage the torture report’s damning findings to claim moral high ground his administration doesn’t have. The torture regime is alive and well—but it has been put back in the box of classified secrecy to continue without public scrutiny.

Dr. Nafeez Ahmed is an investigative journalist, bestselling author and international security scholar. Formerly of The Guardian, he writes the “System Shift” column for VICE’s Motherboard, and is the winner of a 2015 Project Censored Award for Outstanding Investigative Journalism for his Guardian work. He is the author of A User’s Guide to the Crisis of Civilization: And How to Save It (2010), and the sci-fi thriller novel ZERO POINT, among other books. His work on the root causes and covert operations linked to international terrorism officially contributed to the 9/11 Commission and the 7/7 Coroner’s Inquest. If you found this article useful, you can support Nafeez’s journalism via his upcoming project, Insurge.

—*The Cutting Edge*, December 11, 2014

<http://www.nafeezahmed.com/2014/12/cia-torture-addiction-is-about.html>

Accuracy of U.S. Drones

41 men targeted but 1,147 people killed

BY SPENCER ACKERMAN

The drones came for Ayman Zawahiri on January 13, 2006, hovering over a village in Pakistan called Damadola. Ten months later, they came again for the man who would become al-Qaida's leader, this time in Bajaur.

Eight years later, Zawahiri is still alive. Seventy-six children and 29 adults, according to reports after the two strikes, are not.

However many Americans know who Zawahiri is, far fewer are familiar with Qari Hussain. Hussain was a deputy commander of the Pakistani Taliban, a militant group aligned with al-Qaida that trained the would-be Times Square bomber, Faisal Shahzad, before his unsuccessful 2010 attack. The drones first came for Hussain years before, on January 29, 2008. Then they came on June 23, 2009, January 15, 2010, October 2, 2010 and October 7, 2010.

Finally, on October 15, 2010, Hellfire missiles fired from a Predator or Reaper drone killed Hussain, the Pakistani Taliban later confirmed. For the death of a man whom practically no American can name, the U.S. killed 128 people, 13 of them children, none of whom it meant to harm.

A new analysis of the data available to the public about drone strikes, conducted by the human-rights group *Reprieve*, indicates that even when operators target specific individuals—the most focused effort of what Barack Obama calls “targeted killing”—they kill vastly more people than their targets, often needing to strike multiple times. Attempts to kill 41 men resulted in the deaths of an estimated 1,147 people, as of November 24.

Reprieve, sifting through reports compiled by the Bureau of Investigative Journalism, examined cases in which specific people were targeted by drones

multiple times. Their data, shared with the *Guardian*, raises questions about the accuracy of U.S. intelligence guiding strikes that U.S. officials describe using words like “clinical” and “precise.”

The analysis is a partial estimate of the damage wrought by Obama's favored weapon of war, a tool he and his administration describe as far more precise than more familiar instruments of land or air power.

“Drone strikes have been sold to the American public on the claim that they're ‘precise.’ But they are only as precise as the intelligence that feeds them. There is nothing precise about intelligence that results in the deaths of 28 unknown people, including women and children, for every ‘bad guy’ the U.S. goes after,” said *Reprieve's* Jennifer Gibson, who spearheaded the group's study.

Some 24 men specifically targeted in Pakistan resulted in the death of 874 people. All were reported in the press as “killed” on multiple occasions, meaning that numerous strikes were aimed at each of them. The vast majority of those strikes were unsuccessful. An estimated 142 children were killed in the course of pursuing those 24 men; only six of whom died in the course of drone strikes that killed their intended targets.

In Yemen, 17 named men were targeted multiple times. Strikes on them killed 273 people, at least seven of them children. At least four of the targets are still alive.

Available data for the 41 men targeted for drone strikes across both countries indicate that each of them was reported killed multiple times. Seven of them are believed to still be alive. The status of another, Haji Omar, is unknown. Abu Ubaidah al-Masri, whom drones targeted three times,

later died from natural causes, believed to be hepatitis.

The data cohort is only a fraction of those killed by U.S. drones overall. *Reprieve* did not focus on named targets struck only once. Neither *Reprieve* nor the *Guardian* examined the subset of drone strikes that do not target specific people: the so-called “signature strikes” that attack people based on a pattern of behavior considered suspicious, rather than intelligence tying their targets to terrorist activity. An analytically conservative Council on Foreign Relations tally assesses that 500 drone strikes outside of Iraq and Afghanistan have killed 3,674 people.

As well, the data is agnostic on the validity of the named targets struck on multiple occasions being marked for death in the first place.

Like all weapons, drones will inevitably miss their targets given enough chances. But the secrecy surrounding them obscures how often misses occur and the reasons for them. Even for the 33 named targets whom the drones eventually killed—successes, by the logic of the drone strikes—another 947 people died in the process.

There are myriad problems with analyzing data from U.S. drone strikes. Those strikes occur under a blanket of official secrecy, which means analysts must rely on local media reporting about their aftermath, with all the attendant problems besetting journalism in dangerous or denied places. Anonymous leaks to media organizations, typically citing an unnamed American, Yemeni or Pakistani official, are the only acknowledgements that the strikes actually occur, or target a particular individual.

Without the CIA and the Joint Special Operations Command declas-

sifying more information on the strikes, unofficial and imprecise information is all that is available, complicating efforts to independently verify or refute administration assurances about the impact of the drones.

What little U.S. officials say about the strikes typically boils down to assurances that they apply “targeted, surgical pressure to the groups that threaten us,” as John Brennan, now the CIA director, said in a 2011 speech.

“The only people that we fire a drone at [sic] are confirmed terrorist targets at the highest level after a great deal of vetting that takes a long period of time. We don’t just fire a drone at somebody and think they’re a terrorist,” the secretary of state, John Kerry, said at a *BBC* forum in 2013.

A *Reprive* team investigating on the ground in Pakistan turned up what it believes to be a confirmed case of mistaken identity. Someone with the same name as a terror suspect on the Obama administration’s “kill list” was killed on the third attempt by U.S. drones. His brother was captured, interrogated and encouraged to “tell the Americans what they want to hear:” that they had in fact killed the right person. *Reprive* has withheld identifying details of the family in question, making the story impossible to independently verify.

“President Obama needs to be straight with the American people about the human cost of this program. If even his government doesn’t know who is filling the body bags every time a strike goes wrong, his claims that this is a precise program look like nonsense, and the risk that it is in fact making us less safe looks all too real,” Gibson said.

—*The Guardian*, November 24, 2014

<http://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2014/nov/24/-sp-us-drone-strikes-kill-1147>

Dining Out in Dinkytown

Remembering the Minneapolis Truckers’ Strikes of 1934

BY BRYAN PALMER

Dinkytown’s best breakfast

If you are in Minneapolis, after a hard day’s night, the place to go for a morning pick-me-up is Al’s Breakfast. Or so I was informed. Being in the Twin Cities in mid-July, I made my way to the legendary A.M. eatery, located in the heart of Dinkytown, the neighborhood adjacent to the University of Minnesota where Al’s is located.

Mind you, no one had told me anything about the place. My heart sank as I rounded the 14th Avenue corner and took in the line that had formed outside of an establishment half way down the block. As I shuffled into place at the end of the queue and glanced inside my spirits nose-dived even further.

The place wasn’t so much a restaurant as a refurbished alleyway. Indeed, its origins, I later ascertained, were just that. The space was once a converted corridor separating two stores, first used to stockpile sheet metal and plumbing parts by a hardware outlet. It was “made-over” into a restaurant in 1950. At ten feet wide, with a mere fourteen stools, its mid-century clientele consisted largely of railroad workers.

Over the years Al’s has become renowned for its waffles, blueberry pancakes, and ingenious egg concoctions, its quick-paced pack-’em-in bravado, and the banter of its wait staff and cooks. No time is wasted on the pseudo-niceties of sycophantic service. Placards on the wall set the tone: “Not Responsible for Alienated Affections;” “Beware of Waitress With An Attitude.” But the place wins national awards, attracts the cognoscenti, and clearly has strong advocates.

Not much of this was evident as I waited outside behind fifteen or so hungry patrons. Another dozen stood inside Al’s, leaning against the wall and

looming over the shoulders of the fortunately-seated customers. I wondered if I would eat before noon.

The four guys in front of me must have sensed my unease, appreciating that I was a first timer. “Don’t worry,” they assured me, “the line moves quickly.” “Where are you from?”

Introductions made, the conversation turned to why I was in Minneapolis. My new-found friends were astounded that I had flown from Toronto to be part of a series of events commemorating the 1934 Teamsters’ strikes.

These class struggles were momentous battles. Workers and their “special deputy” opponents died in picket line confrontations. The conflict raged over collective bargaining rights for coal heavers, market produce haulers, and truck drivers. When I told the group lining up for breakfast that the top wage demanded by this motley crew was less than 50 cents an hour, it was all news to them.

As I explained that the three strikes waged between February and August in 1934 were part of a nation-wide class upheaval that brought workers out of the doldrums of the Great Depression and into new forms of unionism that organized the unorganized and defeated die-hard anti-labor employers, they were surprised. “In Minneapolis,” they seemed to shrug, “who knew?”

Elaborating on all of this, I recounted how the Teamsters had grown locally from a union with no more than 175 members in 1933 to a vibrant presence in Minneapolis, 7,000 strong. Once an employer-dominated “open shop town,” Minneapolis was transformed. It became a “union city.” I explained how this breakthrough then exploded into an eleven-state over-the-road teamster organizing drive that qua-

drupled the national membership of the International Brotherhood, pushing it past the 500,000 mark by 1940.

The Hoffa hangover

Jimmy Hoffa, before he was gangstered-up, learned how to organize truckers in this late 1930s mobilization, spearheaded out of the Minnesota metropole. “Minneapolis Teamsters,” my morning conversationalists replied in wonder. “Really! They did this?” To them, teamsters were a stereotype, a muscle-shirt wearing contingent of independent-contract drivers, under the tutelage of a racketeering officialdom.

And this clearly has had its local story-line.

As late as 2012, Local 120 of the International Brotherhood of Teamsters (IBT), serving Minneapolis and adjacent centers and the direct descendant of the union that waged the strikes of 1934, was rocked with a corruption scandal. A report undertaken by a Teamster union review board revealed that a father-son Secretary-Treasurer/President duo had diverted hundreds-of-thousands of dollars of membership funds into a variety of construction, enterprise, sporting ticket, and other schemes that resulted in the local being put under trusteeship by IBT union boss, James Hoffa, Jr., not to be confused with this father Jimmy.

Hoffa Sr., after presiding over the IBT from the late 1950s, was convicted on jury tampering, attempted bribery, and fraud charges in the early 1960s. Sentenced to 13 years in prison, Hoffa delayed the inevitable with appeal after appeal. Eventually he went to jail. Incarcerated for less than one-third of his time, Hoffa was pardoned by Richard Nixon in 1971. He then disappeared in 1975, widely thought to have been murdered by the mob in Detroit.

Jimmy Hoffa, then, consolidated a view of the Teamsters as corrupt that was, in places like Minneapolis, confirmed by modern developments. One

Local 120 critic voiced disgust at the 2012 revelations, claiming that the union had become little more than “a good-old-boys club.” He reported that it was impossible to get rid of those embezzling union funds and engaging in all manner of fraudulent schemes, including a union-run, money-losing bar in Fargo, North Dakota. That venture managed to see \$200,000 worth of liquor and beer go missing.

Fargo, I thought when I became aware of this sordid bit of recent Minneapolis Teamster history—Joel and Ethan Coen clearly miscast the players in their dark comedy about murder, used car dealerships, and development schemes. They should have set the stage with Local 120 characters and their tavern-tampering ways.

A revolutionary leadership and its day in (bourgeois/kangaroo) court

The leaders of these 1934 Minneapolis strikes were an entirely different breed. They adhered to the views of Leon Trotsky, and were organized in a group known as the Communist League of America (CLA) that would later develop into the Socialist Workers Party (SWP). Barely half-a-dozen of these revolutionary Trotskyists had been agitating in the coal yards and among truckers since the late 1920s, and their patient efforts led to the victory of the 1934 strikes.

So successful were these teamster leaders that the state, the employers, the IBT bureaucracy (with Jimmy Hoffa as its head thug), and even the Communist Party colluded in World War II to displace and defeat them. The low point of this vendetta: two show trials of the early 1940s that saw the Minneapolis revolutionary teamsters and other genuine workers’ leaders convicted on trumped-up treason charges. Twenty-nine individuals were hauled into court, 18 of them railroaded to jail.

The real crime of the Trotskyists and teamster leaders was that they cre-

ated strikingly effective ways of confronting employers and built new and democratic forms of mass unionism that challenged the *status quo* on all kinds of levels. They battled the trucking bosses with *panache*.

Organizing workers to win

New strike tactics such as the flying pickets that roved Minneapolis streets in 1934, chasing down scab trucks, were devised and implemented. Teamster leaders developed an extensive “intelligence network,” and were well informed by secretaries working for various enterprises of what the trucking magnates were preparing to do next. To get its message out to thousands of members, scattered throughout Minneapolis, the union took to the skies and the streets, enlisting an airplane and a squad of teenaged motorcyclists.

Strikes were planned down to the last detail. A massive union headquarters was staffed with dispatchers, a commissary was outfitted, and a make-shift hospital to care for the wounded was put in place. Refusing to be hoodwinked by the tired leadership of the IBT, these workers’ leaders instead involved the rank-and-file in strike committees 100-strong, drew the unemployed to work with the union, and organized a women’s auxiliary that attracted wives and daughters, mothers and aunts, to the necessity of building unionism.

Winning truckers and others in the transportation industry to militant activism, these leaders championed open discussions in regularly-convened mass meetings, favoring public votes of all union members rather than secret ballots. When they actually secured paid union positions after their 1934 strike victories, the revolutionary Trotskyists guiding the teamsters’ insurgency instituted salary scales for themselves insuring that union officials were paid no more than those working in the industry.

These revolutionaries also gained the confidence and respect of laboring men and women by helping their working-class confreres in time of need. They also suffered firings, beatings, and jailings. Encouraging workers to think independently, in the midst of the strikes of 1934 they put out a daily newspaper, *The Organizer*. This strike bulletin used innovative means, among them satire and humor, to convince laborers that it was necessary to fight for their rights.

Class war warriors and the red scare

In the late 1930s, fascists threatened to organize in Minneapolis, realizing that the victories achieved in the 1934 strikes needed to be turned back if their reactionary cause was to succeed. Known as the Silver Shirts, these reactionaries talked of infiltrating the unions, making them nurseries of recruitment to right-wing thought, cultivating opposition to class-based understandings of the social order. They propagated a pernicious racism and anti-Semitism.

Trotskyists immediately saw the danger this posed. They formed an armed contingent of workers known as the Union Defense Guard. Its “commander” was Ray Rainbolt, a Sioux Nation trucker and SWP member. He drilled the rifle-bearing workers and railed against the Silver Shirts and their project. Preparedness was the watchword among these revolutionaries. But workers arming themselves didn’t curry favor with the Justice Department and the Federal Bureau of Investigation, both of which were involved in the later legal onslaught against the Minneapolis teamsters.

Nor did the affront of labor effectively standing up against its class adversaries win the Minneapolis teamsters acclaim locally, at least as far as conventional authority was concerned. The General Drivers Union, known as Local 574, and its Trotskyist leadership

were vilified in the mainstream newspapers. Anti-communism blanketed Minneapolis in 1934 like a dense fog; you could cut it with a dull bourgeois blade. Demanding 42-and-a-half-cents-an-hour for the drivers and insisting on the right of those handling crates of vegetables in the market to join the union were the thin edge of a wedge ostensibly opening the door to a Soviet Minneapolis. Or so the Citizen’s Alliance, the employers’ voice in the strikes, claimed.

Winning truckers and others in the transportation industry to militant activism, these leaders championed open discussions in regularly-convened mass meetings, favoring public votes of all union members rather than secret ballots. When they actually secured paid union positions after their 1934 strike victories, the revolutionary Trotskyists guiding the teamsters’ insurgency instituted salary scales for themselves insuring that union officials were paid no more than those working in the industry.

The Organizer countered, “They accuse us in this local of being un-American but how’s this for some real American Members: Happy Holstein,

Chippewa; Ray Rainbolt, Sioux; Doc Tollotson, Chippewa; Bill Bolt, Chippewa; Bill Rogers, Chippewa; Joe Belanger, Chippewa.” The Red Scare was no doubt driven by the employers and their political and socio-cultural allies, but conservative laborites also contributed. One Native American wrote as “A member of 574, not a Communist, but a Chippewa Indian and a real American.” He protested the ways in which the ossified trade union tops occupying the plush office seats at the headquarters of the International Brotherhood of Teamsters redbaited the Minneapolis strike leadership. These underhanded attacks did the bosses’ bidding, adding “fuel to the fire” of the employer association’s anti-communism.

Unions as history

As it turns out, my breakfast partners to be were educators in the public school system. They did not much like their teachers’ federations. “Hadn’t unions become too big and powerful and reactionary?” asked my chatty mates. “Hadn’t labor organizations outlived their usefulness?” Trade unions, in the vernacular of these educational workers, “were history.”

This is not an unusual view. And it contains a small grain of truth. Many workers will indeed speak of their union as a distant and ossified structure. But I argued with these teachers that if unions did often function in bureaucratic ways, they were hardly unduly powerful in their dealings with the employers and the state. On the contrary, they were weakened bodies, and had long been on the skids. They needed to be rebuilt, and in this rejuvenation their democratic promise and potential was necessarily going to be integral to the labor movement’s revitalization.

Evidence of union decline is unambiguous. The percentage of the workforce organized in United States unions was roughly 33 percent in 1945, had declined to 24 percent by the end of the

1970s, and now stands at little more than ten percent. Moreover, this union density is regionally skewed. Fully 4.4 million of the total 14.5 million union members in the United States live in two states, California and New York, a whopping 21 percent. Try cracking a union in North Carolina or Arkansas. If we factor out public sector workers such as teachers and government employees, whose high union densities of 35 percent are a product of 1960s organizational breakthroughs in these areas, the health of the trade union movement looks even worse. The precipitous decline of unions in the private sector—where the mass production labor gains of the 1930s and 1940s were registered—is astounding. Today, less than seven percent of American workers who toil in these traditional blue-collar occupations are union members. Trade unionism is not exactly trending in the right direction.

“What will the United States look like without unions?” I asked Al’s customers. I reminded them of what the labor movement had historically accomplished. Unions were vital forces in securing working people the basic entitlements that now mean so much to ordinary Americans: the eight-hour day; the weekend; a living wage; paid holiday time; some essential protection from arbitrary dismissal or humiliating denigration. As jaundiced as they had come to be about unions as they are in our times, the men I talked to outside of and then inside of Al’s Breakfast knew this. They agreed that a United States without unions would be a country in which working people were acutely disadvantaged. Our dialogue seemed to move them out of their present discontents and uncovered more in the way of positive appreciations of the value of labor organization. These men knew, intuitively, that without the protections of trade unionism they and countless others were going to suffer.

What they did not know is the history of the Teamster insurgency in

Minneapolis in 1934, arguably a key struggle that made so much of trade unionism’s mid-century advance possible, not only in one city in one particularly difficult time, the years of the Great Depression, but in wider national circles. What happened in Minneapolis in 1934 helped galvanize workers to fight back.

It influenced national figures like United Mine Workers leader, John L. Lewis, to see that the moribund unionism of the American Federation of Labor (AFL), in which leaders like IBT strongman Daniel Tobin were ensconced, needed to be revitalized in what would come to be known as the Congress of Industrial Organizations (CIO). The CIO mass production unionism that repudiated the narrow, craft-organized, business unionism of the AFL, threatened, for a brief time, to become a social mass production unionism that connected up with other fights for civil rights, women’s rights, and various other social justice causes. Born of “red” leaderships like those active in Minneapolis and elsewhere, and driven by rank-and-file militancy, this reinvigorated mass unionism put the movement back in labor’s mobilizations.

Too often this process is seen as somehow a product of Lewis himself, and his ostensibly far-seeing vision of a new unionism. In fact, Lewis looked to Minneapolis. As one of his early biographers, Saul Alinsky, wrote in 1947, when “Blood ran in [the streets of] Minneapolis,” it got the burly, idiosyncratic head of the miners’ union to sit up and take notice.

Commemorating workers’ struggle: remember 1934

I was in Minneapolis in mid-July because I had recently authored a book on these local strikes and their Trotskyist leadership: *Revolutionary Teamsters: The Minneapolis Truckers’ Strikes of 1934*. Minneapolis has a dedicated crew of individuals who, on particular anniversaries, hold high the

banner of these exemplary strikes. They call themselves the Remember 1934 committee. One of their current tasks is to raise funds for a plaque to be placed in the old Warehouse District where two workers, Teamster rank-and-file member Henry Ness and unemployed worker John Bellor, died in a viciously one-sided, strike-related battle with police on “Bloody Friday,” July 20, 1934. This being the 80th anniversary of the strikes, the 1934 committee and a number of Minneapolis unions organized an impressive series of events.

I was honored to participate in the proceedings, which included a public lecture on my book at the Central Library; a film night featuring video and newsreel clips from a number of 1934 strikes, including those of Minneapolis, sponsored by American Federation of State, County, and Municipal Employees Local 3800; a Teamsters Local 120 picnic and rally, with speakers like Minnesota’s populist Senator, Al Franken; a march to where many of the pitched street battles of the 1934 conflict took place; the laying of a union wreath where an unarmed Henry Ness was viciously murdered by police; a six-hour street festival, involving hip-hop artists, street art exhibits, Aztec dancers, union and other speakers; a Sunday picnic paying tribute to the descendants of the strikers, many of whom remain committed unionists, activists, and socialists; and a book launch and talk at a local institution of the left, MayDay Books, focusing on Revolutionary Teamsters.

These events heralded suggestions of fresh beginnings amidst recollections of old commitments.

In the past, for instance, few descendants seemed to come forward and participate in efforts to Remember 1934. At this year’s 80th anniversary celebrations, however, more relatives of the strikers came out. They recalled, often quite movingly, the ways their kinfolk’s lives were forever altered by

the experience of fighting to build unionism in Minneapolis.

Within Local 120, which has in the past eschewed a direct involvement in the Remember 1934 events, this is the first time that the official Teamsters union, as opposed to a reform current within it, Teamsters for a Democratic Union, has participated in the commemorations with unambiguous enthusiasm. In effect, 2014 marked a change in the IBT's willingness to "own" its history. There was even mention of "Trotskyist communist" leadership in one of the speeches at the Local 120 picnic.

Too much cannot be made of such developments. They may nonetheless suggest, as do a host of other happenings, from the Occupy movement to the protests in Wisconsin against state attacks on trade unionism to the victories around the \$15 minimum wage in Seattle and elsewhere, to the impressive recent fight of Chicago's teachers, that the anti-union tide that has threatened to engulf American labor is now meeting resistance.

Dialectics of possibility

The Teamsters' strikes of 1934 matter today because they remind us that, however bad the situation and whatever the power of those opposing change, victories can indeed be won.

One of the tangible hurdles that must be overcome if unions are to once again be remade as fighting agencies of the popular will is precisely the inertia and defeatism that suggests that they cannot, in the current climate, realize the potential that has always animated the labor movement. After all, unionism originated in and has long been inspired by the slogan, "An injury to one, is an injury to all." That brief admonition broadens understandings of what struggles can and should be about.

What is needed within unions and other social movements in our times is the kind of leadership that can, in the

spirit of 1934, demand, as was often said in periods of upheaval like 1968, the seemingly impossible. But this must be done in ways that understand what can be accomplished in a particular context. A balance must be struck between what might realistically be squeezed out of the actualities of the moment, without capitulating to the sorry ideological denials of possibility characteristic of any particular time.

This capacity to maximize what could be secured through struggle in 1934, rather than succumbing to the defeatism all around them, was what distinguished the revolutionary Trotskyists in the Minneapolis trucking industry from the IBT bureaucratic union officialdom.

If we compare the circumstances that a handful of these radicals faced in the coal yards of Minneapolis in the early 1930s, with what we confront today, it is impossible not to conclude that things looked worse, not better, in those Great Depression years. The working class of Minneapolis won in 1934 because it had a leadership to guide it and a militant willingness to fight. This can happen again, not only in Minneapolis, but throughout the capitalist economies of our time, which are overripe for popular insurgencies.

Unionism today and the denial of possibility

Three claims are often currently made denying the possibility of union revival. It is instructive to look at these assertions and compare them to the situation Minneapolis militants faced in 1934:

- When the economy is in terrible shape, as it is now, the times prohibit overt class struggles and demand concessions and a holding back on demands.
- In the past, workers were able to build solidarity and collective ways of resisting because their circumstances were different than those prevailing today. Class may

well have been a potent force for social change in earlier periods, but this is not the case now. People see their circumstances from the vantage point of individual rather than collective concerns. Mobilizations like that of Minneapolis in 1934 are now impossible.

- Unions are outmoded institutions. They are top-heavy with bureaucracy and are removed from their dues-paying memberships. Labor organizations thus have no relevance in progressive, contemporary social struggles.

A lot of this was on order at Al's Breakfast. But Trotskyists in Minneapolis answered these denials of possibility.

Their economic prospects, in 1933-1934, looked no better and probably a lot worse, than anything recent generations of workers have faced.

To be sure, the claims that workers today are less likely to struggle in class and collective ways than their counterparts in the past may seem self-evident. No doubt the fragmentation of working-class community life has increased over time, and the lure of consumer capitalism is more powerful now than it was decades ago. There are state institutions, like the National Labor Relations Board (NLRB), that exercise a decisive and detrimental sway over laboring men and women in ways that were only weakly established in the 1930s. There is no doubt that the legalistic snare in which unions now seemed trapped is an impediment to class struggle mobilization.

Yet as the Minneapolis teamster leaders showed in their opposition to Franklin D. Roosevelt's original NLRB, the corps of mediators sent to defuse the volatile situation in Minneapolis, and the smooth talking Farmer-Labor Party state governor, Floyd Olson, it is possible to beat back the state's hegemonic hold over the working class. The claims of conventional wisdoms suffo-

cating popular insurgency's potent potential can be refused; the barriers erected against the active agency of workers by contemporary labor relations and their institutions of industrial legality can be transcended.

So, too, can the seemingly insuperable divisions of working-class life in the modern era. While racism and all manner of chauvinisms have existed throughout history and while they exercise their divisiveness within today's working class, it is nevertheless the case that civil rights struggles, feminism, LGBTQ mobilizations, and other social movements, including trade unionism, have set the stage for a wider sense of human solidarity than has ever before been imaginable. Finally, precisely because capitalism has been in a state of crisis management since the mid-1970s, its capacity to lure the oppressed and exploited into its ideological lair has weakened considerably in recent times. Many people aren't "buying" it anymore. For all of the problems inherent in the Occupy Movement, its slogan of "Down with the 1%, Up with the 99%," articulated an undeniable and growing repudiation of capitalism's fundamental inequalities, highlighting the salience of class solidarity.

Finally, to those arguing that unions are bureaucratic beasts whose time has passed, the Minneapolis teamsters strikes of 1934 show precisely how an ossified officialdom can be swept aside in a moment of class upheaval. In the process, trade unionism can be revived.

The left today and the denial of possibility

There is also a second set of denials that also inhibit active change. They relate to the revolutionary left.

The primary lesson of Minneapolis is that the leadership that achieved the victory of 1934 came from this revolutionary left. There would have been no victories in Minneapolis in the mid-1930s if there had not been a

Communist League of America leadership, established in New York, with a trade union fraction working diligently on the ground in a distant Minnesota city.

What these revolutionaries brought to trade unionism from outside of its experiences was decisively important. So, too, was the fact that these revolutionaries were embedded within the trucking industry and were well-known, and respected, among the workers of Minneapolis. The particularities of place mattered, but so too did general principles learned in various schools of hard knocks, and consolidated over the course of years of revolutionary thought and practice. When the situation exploded in all-out class war, the local leadership could rely on the advice, guidance, and skills of their "party-like" formation and its comrades, as well as the support, resolve, energy, and militancy of rank-and-file workers in Minneapolis, both in the trucking sector and outside of it.

If we are to witness events the like of Minneapolis 1934 again, we obviously need, not only new unions, but a new, and revived, revolutionary left.

Yet the ideological commonsense of our current times proclaims the revolutionary left dead and buried. It does so in ways that are, again, usefully compared to the 1934 Minneapolis struggles:

- With the fall of the Soviet Union in 1989, capitalist commentators proclaimed "the end of history." This grandiose posture was premised on the view that with the implosion of actually existing socialism in its Stalinist variant, capitalism was triumphant, ending a contest pitting the free-world colossus (headed by the U.S. in the West) against the so-called totalitarian planned economies.
- Equating the entirety of the socialist project with Soviet Stalinism and its modern off-

shoots, from China to Cuba, this view of the 1945-1990 world concluded that a revolutionary challenge to capitalism had, finally, been vanquished. Capitalism's contest with socialism was declared decisively over.

- With the revolutionary left forever dispensed with, the politics of our times are confined to a new, and lesser, opposition. The only political contest involves progressive reform within capitalism, of the social democratic or liberal kind, versus the maintenance of a civil society prostrate before the hegemony of the market, or neoliberalism.

The Minneapolis truckers' insurgency and its leadership made it abundantly clear that Stalinism need not encompass the entirety of the revolutionary left. The Trotskyists who guided the 1934 teamster upheaval understood how the Communist Party of this era had abandoned its revolutionary origins and was on a slow, but inevitable, road to the implosion of 1989. They offered workers and their allies an alternative.

That alternative, moreover, kept the promise of revolutionary socialism alive precisely because it refused to collapse all struggle into the small, complacent, container of progressive, liberal, reform. A politics of the left that became nothing more than the attempt to insure that the lesser of many evils triumphed, necessitating the embrace of many pernicious illusions, was anathema to the revolutionary leadership of the Teamster rebellion. They would no more have regarded Minnesota's Farmer-Labor Governor Olson as an ally than should today's left look to someone far less radical, Barrack Obama, as anything approximating an answer to the untold grievances of the dispossessed.

If the Trotskyist teamsters were not fighting directly for Revolution in 1934,

and they were not, their militant refusal to succumb to the many temptations on offer by those whose purpose it was to limit unionism to nothing more than an appendage to capitalism, built important bridges to revolutionary possibility. And that is exactly why that revolutionary leadership and those bridges had to be attacked by bourgeois power and its props within the working class, under the guise of World War II-fomented treason charges.

What the Minneapolis Trotskyists tell us is that principle and a vision of what can be achieved by militant actions and resolve, whatever the circumstances, do matter. They did not barter away their critical senses in a cat-and-mouse game of setting their sights on one main enemy and toying with ways of making their struggle more palatable to others, with whom they had fundamental disagreements. They fought employers and IBT bureaucrats; Stalinist slander and social democratic carrots of enticement; labor boards, courts, and mediators; the pulpit, police and provocateurs. This audacity goes a long way toward explaining just how they won, when so many other working-class struggles came up short.

Victories can be achieved, then, even in the worst of times. Even in our times. They will not, however, be secured by drinking the hemlock of conciliation, compromising everything in order to achieve a small, and always vulnerable, corner of what is needed. Reality must be faced squarely; capitulation can never be countenanced. We need to remember 1934 because, 80 years later, it still lives for us as a pathway to possibility.

Dining out as it has been and as it might be

Al's Breakfast has a long row of yellow ticket books. They are thrown into rectangular alphabetically-ordered bins that run much of the length of the narrow service area in which cooks and

servers scurry back and forth. Each booklet has a name boldly marked on its outside.

I asked the waitress what they were. "Prepaid breakfasts," she replied, barely stopping to answer as she walked off briskly to pick-up and drop off another order. Apparently the practice began in the 1950s: railroad workers, paid once a month, would deposit a portion of their wages with Al so they would be assured of eating at the end of the month when their cash reserves would likely be low. Not quite "From each according to their abilities, to each according to their needs." But something.

In 1934, when they were on strike, teamsters dined at their massive union hall. This was a place that proclaimed the collective power of the working class. More than a building, it was an edifice that represented a way of life. Workers' meals were not prepaid, at least not in terms of the cash that oils the wheels of the marketplace. Rather, it was the collective being of class mobilization that literally put food on the workers' communal tables in 1934, and that ordered concerns of health and well-being. Sustenance in the midst of struggle was provided by the General Drivers' Union. Local 574's commissary was staffed by women's auxiliary members; its hospital was run

by volunteer doctors and nurses.

Discussions took place about how to maximize nutrition in the meals served, which were prepared by strike supporters, many of the ingredients provided by local farmers who sided with the workers in their battles.

After a full day of picket duty, a striking worker might well have sat down to a plate of roast chicken, mashed potatoes, and fresh vegetables. This was likely to be followed by conversation and discussion with fellow unionists, perhaps even an address by one of the strike leaders or a report from the Strike Committee of 100. To cap off the evening, this worker likely took time to do a reading of the day's issue of *The Organizer*. Food for thought.

Bryan D. Palmer is the author of Revolutionary Teamsters: The Minneapolis Truckers' Strikes of 1934 (Chicago: Haymarket, 2014) and a past editor of the Canadian journal, Labour/Le Travail. He is the Canada Research Chair, Canadian Studies Department, Trent University, Peterborough, Ontario.

—*Labor and Working-Class History Association*, November 7, 2014

<http://lawcha.org/wordpress/2014/11/07/dining-dinkytown-remembering-minneapolis-truckers-strikes-1934-bryan-d-palmer/>



Bowing to Monsanto

USDA approves new GMO soy and cotton crops

By SARAH LAZARE

The United States Department of Agriculture on Thursday approved Monsanto's controversial herbicide-resistant genetically modified strains of soybean and cotton, in a move that critics say is a bow to the powerful biotechnology industry, at the expense of human and environmental health.

The green-light is "simply the latest example of USDA's allegiance to the biotechnology industry and dependence upon chemical solutions," Food and Water Watch Executive Director Wenonah Hauter declared in a press statement. "This continues the disturbing trend of more herbicide-tolerant crop approvals taking place under President Obama's watch."

Dr. Marcia Ishii-Eiteman of the Pesticide Action Network echoed Hauter's concerns, calling the new

genetically modified crops "the latest in a slew of bad ideas" and a sign of the USDA's "allegiance to the largest pesticide corporations."

The U.S. Department of Agriculture's Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) on Thursday, January 15, 2015, granted "nonregulated status for Monsanto Company's (Monsanto) soybeans and cotton that are resistant to certain herbicides, including one known as dicamba." The biotechnology giant still awaits the Environmental Protection Agency's approval of the new herbicide, which contains both dicamba and glyphosate, designed to accompany the resistant strain.

But food and environmental safety advocates warn that the corresponding increase in herbicide use is dangerous

to the ecosystem. As the Center for Food Safety points out, dicamba has been linked in epidemiology studies to "increased rates of cancer in farmers and birth defects in their male offspring." First approved in 1967, dicamba seeps through the environment, causing damage to crops and flowering plants and polluting waterways.

Furthermore, herbicides give rise to resistant weeds, leading to the development of new herbicides, accompanied by resistant genetically engineered crop strains. Critics charge that, rather than embark on an endless cycle of pumping chemicals and genetically modified crops into the environment, fostering a "pesticide treadmill," regulators should take the long-term well-being of the ecosystem into account and change the *status quo*.

The USDA's green-light follows the Environmental Protection Agency's approval in October of Dow AgroSciences' herbicide Enlist Duo, which farmers and scientists warn threatens human and environmental health.

"Monsanto's genetically-engineered dicamba-resistant crops are yet another example of how pesticide firms are taking agriculture back to the dark days of heavy, indiscriminate use of hazardous pesticides, seriously endangering human health and the environment," said Andrew Kimbrell, executive director of Center for Food Safety.

—Common Dreams, January 16, 2015

<http://www.commondreams.org/news/2015/01/16/bowing-monsanto-usda-approves-new-gmo-soy-and-cotton-crops>



U.S. and Cuba: A Change in Relationship?

U.S. admits failure and re-establishes diplomatic relations with Cuba—a change of tactics to achieve the same aim

By JORGE MARTIN

On Wednesday, December 17, 2014, the United States admitted that its attempt to bully Cuba into submission had failed. This should be seen as a victory for the Cuban Revolution and its resilience against the relentless onslaught of the most powerful imperialist power on earth only 90 miles away from its shores. However, U.S. imperialism has not given up on its aims: the restoration of the rule of private property and the destruction of the gains of the revolution. It has just changed the means to achieve the same result.

The announcement of the reestablishment of diplomatic relations between the two countries came after many months of secret negotiations and was finally confirmed in a phone conversation between Raúl Castro and Barack Obama on Monday, December 15, 2014. As part of the agreement, Cuba released U.S. spy Alan Grossman, on humanitarian grounds, as well as another unnamed U.S. spy, and the U.S. released the remaining three of the Cuban 5, jailed in the U.S. for the crime of having told the FBI of terrorist actions being planned from U.S. soil by Cuban reactionary émigrés.

The statement from the White House announcing the change of policy starts with a clear admission of bankruptcy: “A Failed Approach. Decades of U.S. isolation of Cuba have failed to accomplish our objective of empowering Cubans to build an open and democratic country.” Of course, where it says an “open and democratic country” what they really mean is a capitalist country, where “democracy” is just a fig leaf for the rule of big corporations.

And the statement continues by making clear their aims for nearly 55

years and how they failed: “Though this policy has been rooted in the best of intentions, it has had little effect—today, as in 1961, Cuba is governed by the Castros and the Communist party.”

This cannot be underestimated. Washington has pursued a criminal policy against the Cuban revolution ever since it overthrew the U.S. sponsored dictatorship of Batista. This assault included sponsoring invasions, a commercial, economic, and financial embargo, terrorism, assassination attempts, financing of “dissidents,” a constant barrage of propaganda, destabilization attempts, *etc.* The cost of these policies of imperialist aggression has been huge. According to the Cuban government, the embargo costs the small island \$685 million in U.S. dollars every year.

Even as recently as September this year several European banks were fined hundreds-of-thousands of U.S. dollars for violating the U.S. embargo on Cuba. German bank Commerzbank was fined over one billion U.S. dollars in two separate decisions and the French bank BNP Paribas another nine billion (though the fine also included violating sanctions on Sudan and Iran).

Diplomatic relations between the two countries were broken by the United States in January 1961 after the Cubans demanded the scaling back of the U.S. diplomatic mission, which was involved in terrorist activities against the new revolutionary government. The embargo, which has not yet been removed, as Raúl Castro pointed out, had already started in 1960 in response to the revolution’s expropriation of U.S. property. Before the revolution, U.S. companies controlled 70

percent of the land and three-quarters of primary industry.

For three decades, the combination of the enormous advances of the revolution in the fields of healthcare, housing, education and others, alongside very favorable trade links with the Soviet Union allowed the revolution to survive this assault. It has to be added that the relationship also meant a bureaucratization of the Cuban revolution.

After the collapse of the Soviet Union however, the small island was left to its own devices. The Special Period (1991-94) witnessed an economic collapse without precedent as Cuba was left at the mercy of the world market. The fact that despite all the difficulties the revolution did not collapse and capitalism was not restored was a clear indication that the Cuban revolution was still alive and had enormous reserves of support amongst the masses. There was a generation, which remembered how life was before the revolution, under the jackboot of U.S. puppet dictators, and what had been won through the abolition of private property. The resistance was not only economic but also political against the massive propaganda campaign of the ruling class internationally to say that socialism had died and there was no alternative to capitalism.



The coming to power of the Bolivarian revolution in 1998 threw a new lifeline to Cuba. On the one hand, it meant the exchange of Venezuelan oil for Cuban medical services on very favorable terms. On the other, it broke the isolation of the Cuban revolution and provided the hope that it could spread even further.

The collapse of the Soviet Union also brought sharply to the fore the fundamental problem facing the Cuban revolution: its isolation. The Cuban economy, despite the limitations imposed by the embargo, is inserted in the world market on very unfavorable terms. It acquires hard currency by selling nickel and medical services, through tourism and remittances, which then it has to use to buy at full market price almost everything (from heavy machinery to food). As with any other underdeveloped economy, with low productivity of labor and outdated machinery in most sectors, the terms of trade extract a heavy toll.

It is in this context that significant sections of the leadership in Cuba have started to toy with the idea that the “Chinese way” (that is, introducing market relations in certain aspects of the economy, while maintaining an overall control on the part of the state) was the way forward. At the end of the day, wasn’t China the fastest growing economy in the world? The problem with this plan is that in China, market mechanisms in certain sectors progressively led to the full restoration of capitalism in the country and the destruction of many of the conquests of the revolution. Cuba, a small island with limited resources, is in a much weaker position than China was when it went back into the world market.

U.S. ruling class changes tactics against the Cuban Revolution

For many years, a section of the ruling class in the U.S. had pointed out the failure of Washington’s approach to attempt to overthrow the Cuban

revolution by brute force. They also realized that as Cuba opened certain sectors to foreign investment, U.S. companies were losing out on potentially profitable business opportunities against Canadian and European capitalists. Above all, they argued, U.S. aims (the restoration of capitalism in Cuba) would be best served by a change in tactics, which is what this announcement really means.

The statement from the White House makes this clear: “We know from hard-learned experience that it is better to encourage and support reform than to impose policies that will render a country a failed state... Today, the President announced additional measures to end our outdated approach, and to promote more effectively change in Cuba that is consistent with U.S. support for the Cuban people and in line with U.S. national security interests.”

What this means is that the United States government still considers it has the right to decide the future of Cuba “in line with U.S. national security interests.” Clearly, the “change” that the U.S. ruling class wants to see in Cuba is, on the one hand, the full restoration of private property over the means of production (and with it the destruction of the gains of the revolution) and the establishment of a bourgeois “democracy” that they can control.

If one looks at the detail of the measures adopted by Obama, it is clear that they are aimed at promoting, encouraging and aiding the development of a private capitalist class. Amongst other things, Obama’s statement explains: “The policy changes make it easier for Americans to provide business training for private Cuban businesses and small farmers and provide other support for the growth of Cuba’s nascent private sector. Additional options for promoting the growth of entrepreneurship and the private sector in Cuba will be explored.” The new policy also includes allowing for larger remittances

(increasing the limit from \$500 to \$2000) and the fact that “support for the development of private businesses in Cuba will no longer require a specific license.” This is accompanied by a series of other measures aimed at easing the embargo (allowing the use of U.S. credit cards on the island; allowing U.S. banks to open accounts in Cuba; lifting some of the import/export restrictions; *etc.*)

This is precisely the policy advocated for a long time by a section of the U.S. ruling class: defeat the revolution through the “heavy artillery of cheap commodity prices” that Marx talked about. Just to give an example, ten years ago, one of the directors of the conservative capitalist think tank Cato Institute argued for an end to the embargo and a series of measures which are, almost to the word, the ones announced by Obama yesterday. The article concluded by saying: “The most powerful force for change in Cuba will not be more sanctions, but more daily interaction with free people bearing dollars and new ideas.” (“Four Decades of Failure: The U.S. Embargo against Cuba.”)

Capitalist public opinion was prepared for the announcement by an editorial article dated December 14, 2014 in the *New York Times* titled, “Cuba’s Economy at a Crossroads,” which is interesting because it reveals what the thinking is behind these measures. The article points out that there is a split in the Cuban leadership between those it describes as “the Old Guard leaders” who “warn that a liberalized market economy could turn Cuba into a less egalitarian society and provide an opening for the United States to destabilize the government through a flood of private investment” on the one hand, and “reformists, including some of the country’s leading economists, say the current state of the economy is untenable.” The advice of the *New York Times*? “Washington could empower the reformist camp by making it easier for Cuban entrepre-

neurs to get external financing and business training.”

Modernizing socialism, or moving towards a market economy?

This division of opinion in the Cuban leadership is not just a figment of the imagination of *New York Times* editorial writers, not wishful thinking on the part of the U.S. ruling class. We have warned before that there is a strong current of opinion amongst leading economists who propose as a way forward a series of wide ranging market reforms like the ones which started the process of capitalist restoration in China. Some of these have already been implemented¹.

One of the most outspoken of these economists is Omar Everleny of the official Centre for the Study of Cuban Economy (CEEC). In an interview with *Havana Times* on the new foreign investment law, he summed up his approach: “No country can survive on its own resources alone in today’s globalized world—one way or another, they need foreign resources to achieve development. China and Vietnam have demonstrated that one can make massive use of foreign investment and achieve good economic results without losing political control at home.”

Two other prominent CEEC economists, Juan Triana Cordoví and Ricardo Torres Pérez, in, analyzing the challenges of “policies for economic growth,” reach the conclusion that, “although certain terms are not used, it seems clear that Cuba is heading towards a model more similar to that of a market economy, even though the final aim does not seem to be the transition to a typical capitalist country.” And they list the measures taken to back up that assertion: “This can be seen in a series of spheres such as the growing weight of the non-state sector (private and cooperative), greater decentralization in decision making for the economic agents as a whole... greater role of the pricing system in the

allocation of productive resources, growing role of direct taxation (on the results of productive activity) in state funding, amongst others.”

The problem, as we have argued before, is that these kinds of measures acquire a dynamic of their own and, as shown in China, lead directly to the restoration of capitalism. This restoration would destroy the gains of the revolution, particularly in the fields of healthcare, education and housing.

U.S. imperialism has not given up on its aims: the restoration of the rule of private property and the destruction of the gains of the revolution.

U.S. imperialist meddling will continue

As well as the battery of economic measures announced by Washington, there is also a promise to remove Cuba from the list of countries, which “sponsor terrorism.” Cuba’s presence on the list is particularly scandalous as in fact it has been the U.S., which has helped, protected and funded terrorists acting against the Cuban revolution.

However, the U.S. says openly that it will continue meddling in the internal affairs of Cuba, all in the name of “human rights” and “democracy.” This is what the statement says: “A critical focus of our increased engagement will include continued strong support by the United States for improved human rights conditions and democratic reforms in Cuba. The promotion of democracy supports universal human rights by empowering civil society and a person’s right to speak freely, peacefully assemble, and associate, and by supporting the ability of people to free-

ly determine their future. Our efforts are aimed at promoting the independence of the Cuban people so they do not need to rely on the Cuban state.”

What stinking hypocrisy! The government which is involved in mass spying on its own citizens, torture, the killing of unarmed civilians by its police, repression of its own citizens, invading any country which does not follow its dictates is now talking about democratic rights and independence!

The changes which have taken place amongst the Cuban community in Florida are also a factor in Obama’s calculations. The generation of those who emigrated in the 1960s fleeing the revolution has now been largely replaced by their offspring, who, although fundamentally opposed to the revolution, are more open to the proposed change in tactics. There has also been an influx of a new layer of economic migrants from Cuba, who would like to see restrictions on travel and on remittances lifted. For the first time, public opinion in Florida is now for the lifting of the embargo and the Democrats are ahead of the Republicans. Still, Obama will have a hard time passing measures lifting the embargo through Congress, where the Republicans have a majority. For this reason so far he has relied on his own executive powers.

How can the Cuban revolution face the new challenges?

The current world situation, with an intractable economic crisis of capitalism and the resulting growing questioning of the system, plays in favor of the Cuban revolution. The situation on the island however, is one which does not leave much room for maneuver. The economic problems resulting from its unequal insertion in the world market are compounded by mismanagement and bureaucracy. The *status quo* cannot be maintained.

This situation shows that the main danger facing the Cuban revolution

comes from the fact that the revolution is still isolated in a small island surrounded by the world capitalist market. This is an unavoidable fact. The whole history of the relationship between Cuba and the Soviet Union, and later with Venezuela, underlines the point that the Cuban revolution, if it is to survive, it cannot remain isolated. Its fate, ultimately, will be decided in the arena of the world class struggle.

That in turn will have a dialectical relationship with the balance of forces inside the island, between those who argue that the way forward is on the road to the market and those who argue that the defense of the gains of the revolution is linked to the defense of the nationalized property forms which made them possible.

Defend the Cuban revolution!

No imperialist intervention!

No capitalist restoration!

—*In Defense of Marxism*, December 18, 2014

<http://www.marxist.com/us-admits-failure-and-re-establishes-diplomatic-relations-with-cuba-a-change-of-tactics-to-achieve-the-same-aim.htm>

¹ <http://www.marxist.com/where-is-cuba-going-capitalism-or-socialism.htm>



43 Faces

Forty-Three Faces that Move the World

EDITORIAL BY *FRONTERA NORTESUR*, NEW MEXICO STATE UNIVERSITY NEWS

Editor's Note: The latest installment of Frontera NorteSur's special coverage on the crisis in Mexico.

On a frigid November night, candles illuminated the photos of 43 missing young men laid out on the patio of the Mexican Consulate in Albuquerque, New Mexico. A man crouched on the ground, reading out the names of the disappeared: “Leonel Castro Abarca (18), Mauricio Ortega Valerio (18), Felipe Arnulfo Rosa (20)...”

“Presente!” roared back a crowd of about 100 people as each name was read off. Mixed in ethnicity and age but with a heavy representation of young people, the demonstrators sang, chanted and spoke out about the murdered and forcibly disappeared students of the Ayotzinapa rural teachers’ college in the southern Mexican state of Guerrero.

“Justice! When do we want it? Now!” demanded the protesters. The November 13 Duke City demonstration was among numerous actions that swept the globe in recent days as outrage swelled over the police/cartel killings and forced disappearances of 49 students and civilians in Iguala, Guerrero, last September 26 and 27.

For Cipriana Jurado, the atrocities of Iguala are far from new. A longtime labor and human rights activist from Ciudad Juarez who participated in the Consulate protest, Jurado was granted U.S. political asylum following threats and the killings of her friends from the Reyes Salazar family in the Juarez Valley during 2010 and 2011.

“We’ve suffered other massacres like those in Juarez and Tamaulipas, but Ayotzinapa is the straw that broke the camel’s back,” Jurado told *FNS*.

Inside and outside Mexico, demands for justice for Ayotzinapa resound like

a trumpet call bouncing off mountain peaks, gliding into river valleys and crossing oceans. In various ways, the United Nations, Inter-American Commission on Human Rights and European Parliament are involved in the issue.

Pope Francisco recently conveyed his “closeness in a painful moment” to the Mexican people.

Last week, 35 members of the UK Parliament signed a motion demanding that London pressure Mexico on the human rights front. In Chile, the Chamber of Deputies approved a resolution calling on President Michele Bachelet to recall Chile’s ambassador in Mexico for consultations. On a visit to Guerrero, German lawmaker Heike Hansel, who represents the left fraction in her country’s parliament, met with Ayotzinapa parents, human rights activists and an official from the federal attorney general’s office.

Hansel told the local press that German arms illegally exported to Mexico were used in a 2011 police attack against protesting Ayotzinapa students that left two young men dead; civil society organizations are campaigning against a new security agreement between Mexico and Germany, the parliamentarian said.

In Amsterdam, meanwhile, dozens of members of Mexico’s vast *diaspora* staged a demonstration inside a soccer stadium where the Mexican and Dutch national teams were competing. A participant in the protest, Nela Avila, later said her group waved white handkerchiefs and shouted “43! 43! 43!” when the clock struck the 43rd minute of the match.

The shadows of Ayotzinapa followed Mexican President Enrique Pena Nieto to Australia for a meeting of the G-20 nations. A group of Mexican *emigres* and Australians, Australia in

Action for Ayotzinapa, issued a statement while organizing protests in Brisbane, Adelaide, Canberra, Melbourne and Sydney.

“Young people in Mexico are in constant risk and double victims,” the group declared. “On the one hand, they are victims of harassment, violence and murder perpetrated by state-criminal collusion; and on the other, (youth) are coopted by organized crime that takes advantage of the lack of educational and employment opportunities.”

In Mexico, protests electrified the country. Most were peaceful but some were not. Students from public and private universities led a march of 2,000 people in the state capital of Aguascalientes, while the National Coordinator of Education Workers shut down schools and occupied 113 city halls in the state of Michoacan.

Filmmakers Alonso Cuarón and Guillermo del Toro became the latest in a parade of celebrities to sharply condemn the violence against the Ayotzinapa students, joining the voices of soccer star Chicharito, pop singer Thalía, Mana’s Fher, and the norteño combo Los Tigres del Norte, among many others. At a Mexico City concert, 43 candles decorated the stage for a performance of the popular rock group Café Tacuba.

“This is a grave situation in which we live,” lead singer Rubén Albarrán told the crowd of about 10,000 fans. “Let’s not confuse ourselves. This is a state crime.”

Across Mexico, protesters seized highway tollbooths, occupied commercial plazas and snarled traffic. On Friday, November 14, Mexico City traffic was paralyzed by multiple blockades inside the capital city and around three access highways. The police shooting and wounding of a young man on the Autonomous National University of Mexico campus November 15 further inflamed the situation, prompting clashes with local police and more protests.

As the week drew to a close, three caravans headed by parents of the Ayotzinapa students left Guerrero for different states of the Mexican republic, where meetings were held with a cross-section of Mexican society ranging from small farmers in Chihuahua to indigenous Zapatistas in Chiapas. The caravan plans to converge on Mexico City for a national protest on November 20—the holiday anniversary of the 1910 Mexican Revolution.

“The flame of civil insurgency is lit,” declared parents’ spokesperson Felipe de la Cruz.

In the northern border region, about 100 students of the Autonomous University of Ciudad Juárez occupied the rector’s office the evening of November 13, demanding that the university support the November 20 national day of protest.

The students also called on the university to take a stronger stance on the issue of women’s murders, or *femicides*. After an all-night occupation, university officials issued a statement declaring support for the protest and inviting the community to attend relevant activities at the school’s University Cultural Center on November 20.

“Because they were taken alive, we want them back alive,” read an official university statement. “We are all Ayotzinapa.”

A student survivor of September’s government carnage in Iguala who was present in Juárez said “he was really joyful to see all the support of all the students from Juárez,” according to Gio Acosta, member of the newly-formed El Paso-Juárez group Ayotzinapa Sin Fronteras.

In a phone interview with *FNS*, Acosta said the student movement was growing in Juárez, with the political discussion expanding to include issues such as *femicide* and the high cost of higher education.

“Students have been joining in. It’s hard to keep track of them, but the

movement is becoming very plural in Juárez,” Acosta added.

At the same time, what might be termed the “Ayotzinapa Effect” rolled across the nation, surfacing in Tres Marias outside Mexico City, where residents blockaded the highway to protest another politically and criminally tainted kidnapping.

A November 16 march of 5,000 people in Ecatepec, Mexico state, protested growing insecurity in the city while expressing support for the Ayotzinapa students.

In a similar vein, teachers in Acapulco shut down about 100 schools in the city November 13-14. Despite previous strikes over the same safety grievances, and federal and state intervention in Acapulco’s law enforcement, teachers claimed 19 fellow educators had been murdered in 2014 alone.

“The repudiation of the kidnapping of 43 student-teachers has a new focal point in Veracruz, where the 22nd Central American and Caribbean Games are underway,” wrote *Proceso*’s Noé Zavaleta. “In this encounter of international projection, students, politicians and activists have undertaken an effort to give visibility to one of the most brutal cases of government criminality in recent years.”

At the November 14 kick-off of the games, thousands of people reportedly booed Veracruz Governor Javier Duarte and Interior Minister Miguel Ángel Osorio Chong. Soldiers and police have militarized the zone around the games and even outnumber the 5,000-plus athletes, according to some media accounts.

To say the situation in Guerrero is explosive would be a monumental understatement.

If a soundtrack were to accompany some episodes in Acapulco and the state capital of Chilpancingo, the old Rolling Stones’ song “Street Fighting Man” would be an apt addition, as

pitched battles between police and groups of protesters have involved rocks, clubs and bottle rockets; almost systematically, brigades of hooded men have trashed and set fire to government buildings and the offices of political parties.

A November 15 shootout in the rural section of Acapulco between gravel company employees and members of the Cecop, a landowners' coalition that is opposed to a proposed dam and supportive of the Ayotzinapa students, left four people dead and five others wounded. Conversely, a silent march of more than 250 people proceeded without incident through Chilpancingo to draw attention to the "forgotten victims" of the September 26 Iguala violence, in addition to the Ayotzinapa 43.

Relatives of bus driver Victor Manuel Lugo Cortes and 15-year-old soccer player David Josue Evangelista Garza, who were both killed when police fired on a bus carrying Los Avispones soccer club members, participated in the march for justice. The families were joined by other "forgotten victims"—survivors of last year's Tropical Storm Manuel who contend they have gone more than a year without adequate government assistance.

With the passage of each day, the possibility of more repression grows. Upon returning from his trip to China and Australia this past weekend, President Pena Nieto immediately gave a press conference in which he condemned violent protests and insisted the government was "privileging dialogue" with different groups.

"I aspire to and hope it is not the case that the government must arrive to the extreme of using public force," Pena Nieto said. "We want to convoke order and peace."

North of the border, Ayotzinapa-themed vigils, protests outside Mexican consulates, press conferences and university roundtables have been recently

held in Los Angeles, Albuquerque, Las Cruces and El Paso, among other places.

Convened by social media, the November 13 Albuquerque vigil was a very spirited event. Mexican Consul Mauricio Ibarra walked up to the large candle-lit circle and thanked the attendees for their concern about Mexico and events that "should not happen."

But Ibarra was soon fielding shouts for President Pena Nieto to resign and recriminations over the controversial statement by Mexican Attorney General Jesus Murrillo Karam that the 43 missing students had been murdered and incinerated at a garbage dump. Ibarra assured *FNS* that the Mexican government is awaiting the results of an investigation by the University of Innsbruck in Austria to determine if ashes recovered in northern Guerrero belonged to any of the students.

"We are treating the case as a disappearance until there are other indications," Ibarra said. Asked about the Mexican government's view of the worldwide protests sparked by Ayotzinapa, Ibarra said it was striking to see "the solidarity people are showing to the people of Mexico."

Addressing the crowd, speakers talked about the role of U.S. arms in fomenting violence in Mexico, the influence of Mexican media giants *Televisa* and *TV Azteca* and generalized insecurity south of the border.

Gemma Olvera, who moved to Albuquerque less than one year ago from the northern Mexican border state of Tamaulipas, told *FNS* that conditions back home had not improved during the Pena Nieto presidency.

Olvera said the public safety climate took a sharp dive about six years ago, recalling a shootout in front of an elementary school in her town during regular school hours that forced the children to duck and cover. Nowadays, criminals freely roam private universities demanding pay-offs, extort small businesses and leave bodies on public

highways, the young woman said.

"There are shootouts and deaths in Tamaulipas every day," Olvera said. "Everybody is afraid to speak out in Mexico. Ayotzinapa is the tip of the iceberg of everything that is happening in Mexico."

Political exile Cipriana Jurado agreed that Ayotzinapa could also be a watershed moment. "It's very important," she said. "Now Mexicans all over the world are tired of the situation in Mexico—massacres, impunity, the murders of women. The line between government and organized crime is erased—it's the same."

The Albuquerque Consulate protest ended with shouts of "Long Live Zapata!" and a performance by two young musicians singing Molotov's "Give me the Power," the classic broadside against the socio-economic order and Mexican political class. Local activists plan another demonstration for the Ayotzinapa students at the Consulate on the evening of November 20.¹

—*New Mexico State University News*, November 17, 2014

<http://fnsnews.nmsu.edu/>

1 Additional Sources: *El Sur*, November 15 and 16, 2014. Articles by Anarsis Pacheco Polito, Lourdes Chavez and Carlos Moreno A. *Nortedigital.mx*, November 13 and 15, 2014. *El Diario de Chihuahua*, November 15, 2014. *La Jornada* (Guerrero edition), November 15, 2014. Article by Hector Briseno. *La Jornada* (Aguascalientes edition), November 14, 2014. Article by Alejandra Huerta. *El Diario de El Paso*, November 13, 2014. Article by Diego Murcia.

La Jornada, November 12, 13, 13, 15, 16, 2014. Articles by Rubicela Morelos, Josefina Quintero, Sergio Ocampo, Ernesto Martinez, Jorge A. Perez Alonso, Diana Manzo, Elio Enriquez, Rosa Elvira Vargas, Silvia Chavez Gonzalez, Hector Briseno, Javier Salinas, the *Associated Press*, *AFP*, *DPA*, and editorial staff. *Proceso/Apro*, November 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 2014. Articles by Beatriz Pereyra, Noe Zavaleta and editorial staff.

End the Killing of Students Now

Peace, justice, and democracy for Mexico

STATEMENT AND PETITION BY THE CAMPAIGN FOR PEACE AND DEMOCRACY

We send our solidarity to the parents of the dead and missing students, to the millions of student protesters, and to the Mexican people!

We condemn the murders and human rights violations by the Mexican government and the drug cartels. And we condemn the U.S. and Canadian governments for their support of the Mexican state.

We feel pain, anger and outrage at the kidnapping, torture, and executions of rural students from the teachers' college of Ayotzinapa, Guerrero, Mexico on September 26, 2014, at the hands of police in collusion with groups linked to drug trafficking. This was a crime against humanity. The 43 missing and three of the six whose murders have been confirmed are young students, mostly children of poor rural families. For decades, especially for the past six years, the school where they were studying, the Rural Normal "Raúl Isidro Burgos," a school specializing in training teachers to serve the rural and indigenous poor, as well as rural teachers' colleges as a whole, have been subjected to an intense political attack by the state and powerful business groups.

It was the state

These crimes against humanity, sadly, are the rule not the exception in Mexico. And they are often carried out—or tolerated—by different levels of the Mexican government and/or in collusion with the drug gangs. As the protesters in Mexico have repeatedly declared, "Fue el Estado" (It was the state). The federal government is responsible for the safety of people travelling on federal roads, as the stu-

dents were doing. The federal army has a strong presence in Iguala, the site of the massacre, and was nearby at the time and aware of the attacks. It did nothing. The federal army itself carried out another mass execution of 22 young people in the same region, in the town of Tlatlaya, in the neighboring state of Mexico in June 2014. The army and the federal government then attempted to cover up these executions in Tlatlaya, a cover-up that included harassing and threatening witnesses. The investigation that followed the September 2014 massacre of the students from the Ayotzinapa college has been deliberately incompetent and staged as an effort to deflect blame to the local level, to cool out protest without attempting to find the disappeared or to get to the roots of the crime.

The depth of the Mexican crisis, the state and drug cartel violence, and the perception that the electoral route is closed because of widespread fraud, manipulation and corruption, means that Mexican popular movements have to work in the middle of a boiling cauldron of repression and violence. The United States is deeply involved in this cauldron through military agreements with the Mexican armed forces in carrying out this repression in Mexico under the cover of the drug war. And Canadian mining companies are also deeply involved as they seize and despoil the waters and lands of Mexican peasants and carry out brutal repression through private armies aided by various levels of the Mexican government against many Mexican communities. The giant oil corporations welcomed in by the privatization of Mexican oil will be protected from popular protests by the Mexican armed forces with the ongoing massive military assistance from the United States. U.S. and Canadian companies and

their governments are involved in direct and indirect ways alongside the Mexican state in the repression of the Mexican people and the despoliation of their society.

The drug war, a battle between rival drug gangs, generally linked to different groups of the local, state, and federal authorities, has provided a cover for the renewal of the dirty war of the 1970s, when the Mexican government carried out large numbers of assassinations and forced disappearances in an attempt to stop rising protests and guerrilla movements. State-executed assassinations and disappearances continued at a reduced level in the following decades but have sharply escalated since 2006 and even more so since Enrique Peña Nieto became president in 2012.

The growing repression is only partially linked to the drug wars. It is intimately linked to attempts to eliminate resistance to the ongoing neoliberal offensive in Mexico, an offensive being promoted by business interests and governments of Mexico, Canada and the United States. The harsh human consequences of the neoliberal offensive in Mexico—a sharp increase in poverty and inequality, the downgrading of the labor market, and the dispossession of large numbers of rural Mexicans from their lands—have been generating resistance, as have the depredations on communities being carried out by the drug gangs, the police, private security forces of mining companies, and the armed forces. For example, many community militias have been formed in the state of Guerrero and the neighboring state of Michoacán to defend their communities against these aggressions. But the state and national governments have arrested the leaders of the community militias and sought to disband them as

they continue to tolerate the attacks by the drug gangs and by the local and state government.

The recent changes to the Mexican Constitution promise to speed up the dispossession of rural communities as they allow for the privatization of oil and other natural resources and permit the government to remove local communities for the sake of resource development—communities that are already being dispossessed informally by gangs working for business interests, or by the despoiling of their land by mining development. As resistance has increased, so has repression.

We express our solidarity with the bereaved but courageous parents of the dead and disappeared students of Ayotzinapa and with the millions of Mexican students and citizens demanding justice and a different Mexico, a Mexico of peace, democracy, social well-being and justice. We support their demand for an independent international inquiry not only into the events of Iguala and Tlatlaya but also into the thousands of disappearances, killings and human rights abuses that have been carried out under the

umbrella of the drug war. We also call for an end to the role of the United States in facilitating these horrific abuses through the military aid provided in

The investigation that followed the September 2014 massacre of the students from the Ayotzinapa college has been deliberately incompetent and staged as an effort to deflect blame to the local level, to cool out protest without attempting to find the disappeared or to get to the roots of the crime.

the Mérida Plan and military training, as well as the systematic human rights violations being carried out to protect Canadian and U.S. companies.

We are heartened by the massive size and national scope of the protests. Thousands of protesters, including family members of the missing students, blocked the Acapulco, Guerrero international airport for three hours interrupting flights on November 10. Twenty-two of the 81 municipalities of the state of Guerrero have been taken over by protesters. Nearly four million students staged a national strike on November 5, 2014 and the inter-university committee that organized this third national action within the last month continues to plan new protests. The scale of the protests has grown and the demands have become more radical. The righteous indignation of the Mexican people has not succumbed to fatalism or cynicism nor have they been fooled by the various maneuvers of the federal government attempting to demobilize the protests. The more the mobilizations grow and radicalize, the more likely are attempts to end them by force. We must raise awareness of the ongoing struggles and violations of human rights in Mexico. Their struggle is our struggle. We are all Ayotzinapa!

Partial list of signers:

Ralph Armbruster-Sandoval, Ed Asner, Medea Benjamin, Noam Chomsky, Ariel Dorfman, Barbara Ehrenreich, Daniel Ellsberg, Mike Farrell, Bill Fletcher, Jr., Barbara Garson, Sam Gindin, Greg Grandin, Robin D.G. Kelley, Kathy Kelly, Enrique C. Ochoa, Leo Panitch, William I. Robinson, Marta F. Sánchez Soler, and Lynn Marie Stephen.

Sign the petition at:

Campaign for Peace and Democracy,
November 13, 2014

http://www.cpdweb.org/stmts/1024/stmt.shtml?utm_source=MailerMailer&utm_medium=email&utm_content=English&utm_campaign=Statement+sent+to+Mexican+protesters+%2B+Mexican%2C+U.S.+and+Canadian+officials+



Ebola and the Profit-Driven Healthcare Industry

By LAUREN McCAULEY

Speaking before a gathering of African health ministers on Monday, November 3, 2014, the leader of the World Health Organization (WHO) said that the blame for the Ebola crisis lies largely on the “profit-driven” pharmaceutical industry, which does not invest in cures “for markets that cannot pay.”

WHO director-general Dr. Margaret Chan made the comments while speaking before the Regional Committee for Africa, made up of representatives from the 47 African nations, which is meeting this week in Cotonou, Republic of Benin.

During her address, Chan said that despite Africa’s recent economic and social gains, the Ebola outbreak bolsters two arguments that WHO has long made “that have fallen on deaf ears for decades [and] are now out there with consequences that all the world can see, every day, on prime-time TV news.”

One, she said, is the failure to put basic public health infrastructures in place. The second argument, Chan said, is the reason that clinicians are “still empty-handed, with no vaccines and no cure,” despite Ebola having emerged nearly four decades ago: “Because Ebola has historically been confined to poor African nations. The research and development incentive is virtually non-existent. A profit-driven industry does not invest in products for markets that cannot pay.”

Speaking before the group, Chan argued that this crisis should provide the assembled ministers with an incentive to seize their new health agenda on their own terms. The Committee is meeting to set new policies to guide WHO’s work in the region, including a strategic plan for immunization.

Africa, she continued, has “suffered from some bad development advice.”

“As you all know, much of Africa’s growth has been concentrated in sectors, such as mining and petroleum, that favor the elite but do little to improve living conditions and health status in the rural areas where most of the poor and sick reside,” said Chan. She added that previously, Africa has deferred to priorities and strategies defined by global initiatives and not its own population’s needs.

A profit-driven industry does not invest in products for markets that cannot pay.

In April, African health ministers vowed to work towards continent-wide universal health coverage. Citing that pledge, Chan added: “This is what I mean by leadership.”

According to WHO’s latest numbers, there have been 13,567 reported Ebola cases in eight affected countries since the outbreak began, with 4,951 reported deaths. Further, UNICEF estimates that five million children are currently affected by the epidemic and

some 4,000 have become orphaned.

Intense transmission continues in Guinea, Liberia and Sierra Leone, where there are reports of a new “transmission surge.” The *Sunday Times*, quoting numbers from Tony Blair’s Africa Governance Initiative, reported this week that in Sierra Leone transmission rates are now nine times higher than they were two months ago. Other affected countries include Nigeria, Senegal, the U.S. and Spain. Mali also confirmed its first case last week.

Chan said that the Ebola outbreak, which continues to ravage parts of West Africa, “is the most severe acute public health emergency seen in modern times.”

Chan concluded: “Without fundamental public health infrastructures in place, no country is stable. No society is secure. No resilience exists to withstand the shocks that our 21st century societies are delivering with ever-greater frequency and force, whether from a changing climate or a runaway killer virus.”

—Common Dreams, November 4, 2014

<http://www.commondreams.org/news/2014/11/04/world-health-chief-rips-profit-driven-healthcare-industry-ebola-fail>



Ebola in Africa

A product of history, not a natural phenomenon

BY AUGUST H. NIMTZ

There is nothing inevitable about the Ebola epidemic now devastating parts of Africa. Like other disasters, it too is the product of history, of the decisions that governments have made in the past as well as the present.

Modern African history teaches, often tragically, the need to distinguish between what might be called natural phenomena from those that are essentially socio-economic-political. The droughts that ravaged many parts of the continent in the early 1970s were an example of the former. (I leave aside the issue of human actions and global warming.) As drought-stricken California presently shows, the famines and the tens-of-thousands of lives lost that came in their wake were not, however, inevitable. That horrific outcome was largely the product of the policies put in place by colonial governments and dutifully and sadly reproduced by post-colonial regimes.

The same lesson is being taught, again, tragically, by the continent's latest scourge. Human pathogens have existed in Africa ever since our species began to evolve there and they too evolve, sometimes resulting in viruses like Ebola. But there's nothing inevitable about the Ebola epidemic that's still unfolding. Like famines, it too is the product of history, the decisions that governments have made in the past as well as the present. The relevant question is whose interests are prioritized in those choices? How a society responds to that most natural of processes, the evolution of human pathogens, testifies to the answers it gives to that question.

Colonial regimes, in place from about the last quarter of the nineteenth century to a decade or so after the Second World War, were, above all else, designed to extract Africa's natu-

ral resources in the most lucrative way. Social services that might have benefited the colonial subjects, such as health-care and education, were, to save costs, kept to a minimum—if that. This explains the profoundly undemocratic

In the case of Liberia, a semi-colony of the U.S.—nominally independent since 1847—its elite (the descendants of repatriated slaves from America) ensured that Firestone Rubber would reap enormous profits from its operations there. Thus, the outrageously ironic situation today where, in one of the world's leading rubber producers, there are not enough rubber gloves to protect its citizens from the scourge.

character of those regimes. The last thing the extractors wanted is for the subjects to have some say-so about how they were governed and, hence, how their natural resources should be utilized. These were the arrangements that post-colonial elites not only inherited and readily embraced but deepened to advance their own narrow class interests. In the case of Liberia, a semi-colony of the U.S.—nominally inde-

pendent since 1847—its elite (the descendants of repatriated slaves from America) ensured that Firestone Rubber would reap enormous profits from its operations there. Thus, the outrageously ironic situation today where, in one of the world's leading rubber producers, there are not enough rubber gloves to protect its citizens from the scourge.

In recent decades, in the name of fighting wasteful government spending and corruption, international lending agencies such as the International Monetary Fund have demanded, as a condition for getting new funding, African governments must reduce their spending. African elites have willingly agreed to do so with resulting cuts in healthcare and education—helping to create the perfect storm for the Ebola virus.

Lest it be assumed that only poor or underdeveloped countries are afflicted with Ebola in Africa with such tragic outcomes—a product of history, not a natural phenomenon—consider what happened in the richest country in the world in 2005. In the wake of a natural phenomenon, Hurricane Katrina—global warming again notwithstanding—more than 1,600 people (and still counting for those of us intimately familiar with what happened) lost their lives in New Orleans and environs. Yet two months earlier a hurricane of greater intensity, Dennis, struck Cuba twice and only 15 of its citizens perished. Neither outcome was inevitable. The difference, rather, evidenced the deep going structural transformations in Cuban society after 1959—its revolution. For the first time in Cuba's history, its toilers had a government that prioritized their interests and not those of a tiny elite. Their life chances, as measured by, for example, infant mor-

tality rates, life expectancy, levels of education, dramatically improved, despite the fact that Cuba is still poor and underdeveloped. The starkly different aftermaths of the two hurricanes in both societies spoke volumes about what Cuba's toilers had achieved and what their apparently better-off counterparts 400 miles to the north had not.

Neither is it a coincidence that Cuba has stepped forward, unlike any other country, to commit healthcare personnel to fight the Ebola scourge. Four hundred and sixty-one Cubans are either on their way or already in the affected areas. They were selected from 15,000 of their 11 million citizens who volunteered to go. That's tellingly in contrast to, as of this week, the 2,700 U.S. citizens, out of a population of 316 million, who, according to the U.S. Agency for International Development, have volunteered to do the same. For Cubans there is nothing unusual about what they are doing since four thousand of their healthcare workers already serve in 38 African countries and about 45,000 in 28 countries elsewhere. Thus, the political choices a society makes have consequences not only for the life chances of its own citizens but also for those of other countries. And therein is the most important lesson. Until the toilers, not only in Africa but elsewhere, have governments that serve their interests they risk being once again needless victims of natural phenomena.

August H. Nimtz is a professor of political science and African American and African Studies at the University of Minnesota. (Note: This article previously appeared in Pambazuka News.)

—*Black Agenda Report*, November 5, 2014

<http://blackagendareport.com/node/14495>

US Attacks on Muslim Countries

How many Muslim countries has the U.S. bombed or occupied since 1980?

BY GLENN GREENWALD

Barack Obama, in his post-election press conference yesterday, November 6, 2014, announced that he would seek an Authorization for Use of Military Force (AUMF) from the new Congress, one that would authorize Obama's bombing campaign in Iraq and Syria—the one he began three months ago. If one were being generous, one could say that seeking congressional authorization for a war that commenced months ago is at least better than fighting a war even after Congress explicitly rejected its authorization, as Obama lawlessly did in the now-collapsed country of Libya.

That is, Syria has become at least the 14th country in the Islamic world that U.S. forces have invaded or occupied or bombed, and in which American soldiers have killed or been killed. And that's just since 1980.

When Obama began bombing targets inside Syria in September, I noted that it was the seventh predominantly Muslim country that had been bombed by the U.S. during his presidency (that did not count Obama's bombing of the Muslim minority in the Philippines). I also previously noted that this new bombing campaign meant that Obama had become the fourth consecutive U.S. President to order bombs dropped on Iraq. Standing alone, those are

both amazingly revealing facts. American violence is so ongoing and continuous that we barely notice it any more. Just this week, a U.S. drone launched a missile that killed ten people in Yemen, and the dead were promptly labeled "suspected militants" (which actually just means they are "military-age males"); those killings received almost no discussion.

To get a full scope of American violence in the world, it is worth asking a broader question: how many countries in the Islamic world has the U.S. bombed or occupied since 1980? That answer was provided in a recent *Washington Post* op-ed by the military historian and former U.S. Army Colonel Andrew Bacevich:

As America's efforts to "degrade and ultimately destroy" Islamic State militants extent into Syria, Iraq War III has seamlessly morphed into Greater Middle East Battlefield XIV. That is, Syria has become at least the 14th country in the Islamic world that U.S. forces have invaded or occupied or bombed, and in which American soldiers have killed or been killed. And that's just since 1980.

Let's tick them off: Iran (1980, 1987-1988), Libya (1981, 1986, 1989, 2011), Lebanon (1983), Kuwait (1991), Iraq (1991-2011, 2014-), Somalia (1992-1993, 2007-), Bosnia (1995), Saudi Arabia (1991, 1996), Afghanistan (1998, 2001-), Sudan (1998), Kosovo (1999), Yemen (2000, 2002-), Pakistan (2004-) and now Syria. Whew.

Bacevich's count excludes the bombing and occupation of still other predominantly Muslim countries by key U.S. allies such as Israel and Saudi Arabia, carried out with crucial American support. It excludes *coups* against democratically elected govern-



HOLT LABOR LIBRARY

4444 Geary Blvd., Suite 207
San Francisco, CA 94118
phone: 415-387-5700
email: holtlabor@holtlaborlibrary.org

Labor Studies & Radical History

- Over 6,000 labor & socialist books and pamphlets
- 90 current subscriptions to labor & left periodicals
- 300 labor & radical movies and documentaries
- Trotskyist bulletins, documents, and papers
- Scrapbooks & ephemera from the Anti-Vietnam War movement and Fairplay for Cuba
- Audiotapes of classes by Tom Kerry & Larry Trainor

Monday through Friday
7:00 am - 3:00 pm
Appointment suggested

Visit us on the web: <http://www.holtlaborlibrary.org>

ments, torture, and imprisonment of people with no charges. It also, of course, excludes all the other bombing and invading and occupying that the U.S. has carried out during this time period in other parts of the world, including in Central America and the Caribbean, as well as various proxy wars in Africa.

There is an awful lot to be said about the factions in the west which devote huge amounts of their time and attention to preaching against the supreme primitiveness and violence of Muslims. There are no gay bars in Gaza, the obsessively anti-Islam polemicists proclaim—as though that (rather than levels of violence and aggression unleashed against the world) is the most important metric for judging a society. Reflecting their single-minded obsession with demonizing Muslims (at exactly the same time, coincidentally, their governments wage a never-ending war on Muslim countries and their societies marginalize Muslims), they notably neglect to note

thriving gay communities in places like Beirut and Istanbul, or the lack of them in Christian Uganda. Employing the defining tactic of bigotry, they love to highlight the worst behavior of individual Muslims as a means of attributing it to the group as a whole, while ignoring (often expressly) the worst behavior of individual Jews and/or their own groups (they similarly cite the most extreme precepts of Islam while ignoring similarly extreme ones from Judaism). That's because, as Rula Jebreal told Bill Maher last week, if these oh-so-brave rationality warriors said about Jews what they say about Muslims, they'd be fired.

But of all the various points to make about this group, this is always the most astounding: those same people, who love to denounce the violence of Islam as some sort of ultimate threat, live in countries whose governments unleash far more violence, bombing, invasions, and occupations than anyone else by far. That is just a fact.

Those who sit around in the U.S. or the U.K. endlessly inveighing against the evil of Islam, depicting it as the root of violence and evil (the “mother lode of bad ideas”), while spending very little time on their own societies' addictions to violence and aggression, or their own religious and nationalistic drives, have reached the peak of self-blinding tribalism. They really are akin to having a neighbor down the street who constantly murders, steals and pillages, and then spends his spare time flamboyantly denouncing people who live thousands of miles away for their bad acts. Such a person would be regarded as pathologically self-deluded, a term that also describes those political and intellectual factions which replicate that behavior.

The sheer casualness with which Obama yesterday called for a new AUMF is reflective of how central, how commonplace, violence and militarism are in the U.S.'s imperial management of the world. That some citizens of that same country devote themselves primarily if not exclusively to denouncing the violence and savagery of others is a testament to how powerful and self-blinding tribalism is as a human drive.

—*The Intercept*, November 6, 2014

<https://firstlook.org/theintercept/2014/11/06/many-countries-islamic-world-u-s-bombed-occupied-since-1980/>



Turning Gaza Into a Super-Max Prison

BY JONATHAN COOK

It is astonishing that the reconstruction of Gaza, bombed into the Stone Age according to the explicit goals of an Israeli military doctrine known as “Dahiya,” has tentatively only just begun two months after the end of the fighting.

According to the United Nations, 100,000 homes have been destroyed or damaged; leaving 600,000 Palestinians—nearly one in three of Gaza’s population—homeless or in urgent need of humanitarian help.

Roads, schools and the electricity plant to power water and sewerage systems are in ruins. The cold and wet of winter are approaching. Aid agency Oxfam warns that at the current rate of progress it may take 50 years to rebuild Gaza.

Where else in the world apart from the Palestinian territories would the international community stand by idly as so many people suffer—and not from a random act of God but willed by fellow humans?

The reason for the hold-up is, as ever, Israel’s “security needs.” Gaza can be rebuilt but only to the precise specifications laid down by Israeli officials.

We have been here before. Twelve years ago, Israeli bulldozers rolled into Jenin camp in the West Bank in the midst of the second intifada. Israel had just lost its largest number of soldiers in a single battle as the army struggled through a warren of narrow alleys. In scenes that shocked the world, Israel turned hundreds of homes to rubble.

With residents living in tents, Israel insisted on the terms of Jenin camp’s rehabilitation. The alleys that assisted the Palestinian resistance in its ambushes had to go. In their place, streets were built wide enough for Israeli tanks to patrol.

In short, both the Palestinians’ humanitarian needs and their right, in

international law, to resist their oppressor were sacrificed to satisfy Israel’s desire to make the enforcement of its occupation more efficient.

It is hard not to view the agreement reached in Cairo October 12, 2014 for Gaza’s reconstruction in similar terms.

Donors pledged \$5.4 billion—though, based on past experience, much of it won’t materialize. In addition, half will be immediately redirected to the distant West Bank to pay off the Palestinian Authority’s mounting debts. No one in the international community appears to have suggested that Israel, which has asset-stripped both the West Bank and Gaza in different ways, foot the bill.

The Cairo agreement has been widely welcomed, though the terms on which Gaza will be rebuilt have been only vaguely publicized. Leaks from worried insiders, however, have fleshed out the details.

One Israeli analyst has compared the proposed solution to transforming a third-world prison into a modern U.S. super-max incarceration facility. The more civilized exterior will simply obscure its real purpose: not to make life better for the Palestinian inmates, but to offer greater security to the Israeli guards.

Humanitarian concern is being harnessed to allow Israel to streamline an eight-year blockade that has barred many essential items, including those needed to rebuild Gaza after previous assaults.

The agreement passes nominal control over Gaza’s borders and the transfer of reconstruction materials to the PA and UN in order to bypass and weaken Hamas. But the overseers—and true decision-makers—will be Israel. For example, it will get a veto over who supplies the massive quanti-

ties of cement needed. That means much of the donors’ money will end up in the pockets of Israeli cement-makers and middlemen.

But the problem runs deeper than that. The system must satisfy Israel’s desire to know where every bag of cement or steel rod ends up, to prevent Hamas rebuilding its homemade rockets and network of tunnels.

The tunnels, and element of surprise they offered, were the reason Israel lost so many soldiers. Without them, Israel will have a freer hand next time it wants to “mow the grass,” as its commanders call Gaza’s repeated destruction.

Last week Israel’s defense minister Moshe Yaalon warned that rebuilding Gaza would be conditioned on Hamas’s good behavior. Israel wanted to be sure “the funds and equipment are not used for terrorism, therefore we are closely monitoring all of the developments.”

The PA and UN will have to submit to a database reviewed by Israel the details of every home that needs rebuilding. Indications are that Israeli drones will watch every move on the ground.

Israel will be able to veto anyone it considers a militant—which means anyone with a connection to Hamas or Islamic Jihad. Presumably, Israel hopes this will dissuade most Palestinians from associating with the resistance movements.

Further, it is hard not to assume that the supervision system will provide Israel with the GPS co-ordinates of every home in Gaza, and the details of every family, consolidating its control when it next decides to attack. And Israel can hold the whole process to ransom, pulling the plug at any moment.

Sadly, the UN—desperate to see relief for Gaza’s families—has agreed to conspire in this new version of the

blockade, despite its violating international law and Palestinians' rights.

Washington and its allies, it seems, are only too happy to see Hamas and Islamic Jihad deprived of the materials needed to resist Israel's next onslaught.

The *New York Times* summed up the concern: "What is the point of raising and spending many millions of dollars ... to rebuild the Gaza Strip just so it can be destroyed in the next war?"

For some donors exasperated by years of sinking money into a bottomless hole, upgrading Gaza to a super-max prison looks like a better return on their investment.

Jonathan Cook won the Martha Gellhorn Special Prize for Journalism. His latest books are Israel and the Clash of Civilisations: Iraq, Iran and the Plan to Remake the Middle East and Disappearing Palestine: Israel's Experiments in Human Despair.

—AlterNet.org, November 6, 2014

http://www.alternet.org/world/how-israel-turning-gaza-super-max-prison?akid=12455.229473.sEOUB0&rd=1&src=newsletter1026589&t=18&pa ging=off¤t_page=1#bookmark



Israel Deepens 'Collective Punishment' of Gaza

BY SARAH LAZARE

Despite widespread calls for increased humanitarian aid and economic activity, the approximately 1.8 million people living in the Gaza Strip have been further isolated from the outside world following Israel's closure Sunday, November 2, 2014, and Egypt's closure last week, of border crossings into the Palestinian territory.

The Israeli Defense Ministry stated Sunday it has closed its Erez and Kerem Shalom crossings to Gaza in response to a single rocket fire from Gaza, which resulted in no injuries, deaths, or damages. Gisha, a legal center that advocates for Palestinian freedom of movement, reported Monday that both passages remained closed for a second day, save for extremely limited transport of fuel in and medical patients.

The U.S.-backed Egyptian government last week shut the Rafah crossing into Gaza and commenced destroying Egyptian nearby homes to create a so-called "buffer zone" along the border.

Palestinian rights campaigners warn that the closures are especially dangerous as traumatized and displaced Gaza residents struggle to rebuild from Israel's recent seven-week military assault in which 2,000 Palestinians—at least 75 percent of them civilians—were killed.

"As winter approaches, and in the wake of the recent military operation, civilians in Gaza are increasingly vulnerable. Israel, like dozens of donor countries, has recognized the obligation to allow Gaza's urgent reconstruction," the statement from Gisha continued. "Unfortunately, this latest act of closure as a response to rocket or mortar fire can be interpreted as collective punishment and represents a disturbing and dangerous regression to a policy that has harmed hundreds-of-thousands of civilians and also proven ineffective."

The United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA) reports that 18 of the school buildings they administer in the Gaza Strip are currently serving approximately 32,419 internally displaced Palestinians. "The critical immediate priority in Gaza remains the reconstruction of people's homes," writes the agency.

Meanwhile, Defense for Children International-Palestine reports that Gaza residents are scrambling to assemble classrooms following the mid-September start to the school year. At least 26 schools were destroyed in the offensive, 228 were damaged, and another 31 schools continue to serve as shelters for displaced people.

"I think it's shameful that Israel continues to its now seven-year siege on the people of Gaza, following the deadly war and all the destruction created through the war—of houses, factories, and schools," Ramah Kudaimi of the U.S. Campaign to End the Israeli Occupation told *Common Dreams*. "This is an additional amount of suffering placed on people in Gaza."

"This means they are not able to get materials to rebuild homes, and they are having to deal with shortages in food, medicine, electricity, and clean water," Kudaimi continued. "In the past seven years, Israel has conducted a massive bombing campaign against Gaza at least three times. People are not being given the opportunity to rebuild their lives."

—*Common Dreams*, November 3, 2014

<http://www.commondreams.org/news/2014/11/03/gaza-cut-all-sides-collective-punishment-deepens>

The New Outlaws

Are corrupt criminal prosecutors the new outlaws?

By LORENZO JOHNSON

While operating with total disregard for precedent case law that defines our constitution, prosecutors are prosecuting cases daily with a reckless abandonment of human life and the judicial system they took an oath to serve to the best of their ability. It's not about law and protecting the innocent. These same prosecutors operate under full immunity. Some have aspirations to be judges with no fear of criminal sanctions for their corrupt ways and actions. What reason do they have to stop? There are multiple innocence organizations in every state. Now there are Integrity Units popping up all over the place. If Integrity Units are over-seeing cases that have been called into question, that totally affirms that something has gone afoul in the prosecutors' offices nationwide.

Tools that are most frequently used to assist corrupt prosecutors vary. To name a few—false convictions, witnesses, evidence, and motives, withholding of DNA and non-DNA evidence that can show a prisoner's innocence. One of the biggest tools is strict procedures that have been put in place by our own judicial system, such as the Anti-terrorism and Effective Death Penalty Act of 1996 (AEDPA). In a recent essay written by Law Professor Judith L. Ritter titled: "After the Hurricane: The Legacy of the Rubin Carter case," Professor Ritter stated: "In this essay I argue that it is the perfect time to reformulate *habeas* law. Because of AEDPA, there is a grave risk that individuals wrongfully convicted in State Courts—the Rubin Carters of today—have little hope for meaningful

review by a Federal Court." Professor Ritter went on to say: "Many aspects of *habeas corpus* law changed when the AEDPA was signed into law by President Clinton in 1996. One of, if not the most significant change, was the elimination of *de novo* review. Today, federal courts must give a measure of deference to the state court's resolution of federal issues. Fearing the difficulties of retrials which often occur many years after a crime was committed, states' rights champions in congress pushed AEDPA through partly due to concerns that federal judges were too eager to upset a state court's judgment."

As an innocent prisoner, I suffered from AEDPA. I spent sixteen-and-a-half years on a natural life sentence before the Federal Third Circuit Court of Appeals vacated my sentence on the grounds of insufficient evidence, which is equivalent to a Not Guilty verdict barring a retrial. Six months after my release, the U.S. Supreme Court reinstated my conviction because the Federal Court did not give deference to the Jury. I was ordered to return to a life sentence for a crime I'm innocent of. Now I'm at my 19-year mark and I've discovered that my trial prosecutor withheld evidence of my innocence for my whole 19 years of incarceration! Is it safe to say that I was prosecuted by a criminal?

—December 18, 2014

Write to:

Lorenzo Johnson #DF1036
 SCI Mahanoy
 301 Morea Drive
 Frackville, PA 17932

LorenzoJohnson17932@gmail.com
www.FreeLorenzoJohnson.org
www.facebook.com/LorenzoJohnson
 JPay.com code: Lorenzo Johnson DF 1036 PA

DOC



Immunity to Kill, Falsely Convict and Mass Incarcerate

By LORENZO JOHNSON

It's not a coincidence that minorities are killed by police at an alarming rate, with simply no regard for human rights. Not having safeguards in place when an unarmed person is killed, gives the police the okay to continue to kill. The first thing society is told is: "The Grand Jury is reviewing evidence to see if a crime occurred." This is all a smoke screen. Just look at the murders of Michael Brown and Eric Garner, to name just two. Mr. Garner's death was recorded by a phone showing his assassination, still no police were indicted for using a banned choke-hold on Mr. Garner. Until the police are fully held accountable, minorities will continue to be targeted and unfortunately, killed.

There have been over five hundred exonerations of innocent prisoners that we know about. The average

amount of time an innocent prisoner spends in prison is between thirteen-and-a-half and fifteen years. And that's only if they get the necessary representation needed. In some cases, innocent prisoners die in prison before their innocence comes out. Prosecutors continue to fight tooth and nail to maintain their false convictions. They hide favorable material that can show a prisoner's innocence. They let false testimony stand just to secure a conviction. Out of all exonerations of innocent men and women, not even one percent of the prosecutors were held accountable for their malicious prosecutions. One fact that can't be disputed: Minorities make up 90 percent of wrongful convictions! Until prosecutors are stripped of their immunity and held fully accountable, this will unfortunately continue to happen.

Mass Incarceration has been going on for decades under a lot of different umbrellas. The biggest one was and is the War On Drugs. Once again the minorities are the target. I keep hearing politicians saying: "Our judicial system is off balance. We must trust and strengthen it." As an innocent prisoner, the last time I checked, the judicial system has been our worst nightmare. Our Judicial System is no longer about justice. It's about politics and votes for politicians. When there are special laws that target the inner cities that differ from suburbia, the message is loud and clear. Thanks to social media the world is finally seeing what's been taking place in our communities.

—December 7, 2014

Free All Political Prisoners

An open letter to the media

By ASSATA SHAKUR

My name is Assata Shakur, and I am a 20th century escaped slave. Because of government persecution, I was left with no other choice than to flee from the political repression, racism and violence that dominate the U.S. government's policy towards people of color. I am an ex-political prisoner, and I have been living in exile in Cuba since 1984.

I have been a political activist most of my life, and although the U.S. government has done everything in its power to criminalize me, I am not a criminal, nor have I ever been one. In the 1960s, I participated in various struggles: the Black liberation movement, the student rights movement, and the movement to end the war in Vietnam. I joined the Black Panther

Party. By 1969 the Black Panther Party had become the number one organization targeted by the FBI's COINTELPRO¹ program. Because the Black Panther Party demanded the total liberation of Black people, J. Edgar Hoover called it "greatest threat to the internal security of the country" and vowed to destroy it and its leaders and activists.

In 1978, my case was one of many cases bought before the United Nations Organization in a petition filed by the National Conference of Black Lawyers, the National Alliance Against Racist and Political Repression, and the United Church of Christ Commission for Racial Justice, exposing the existence of political prisoners in the United States, their political persecu-

tion, and the cruel and inhuman treatment they receive in U.S. prisons. According to the report:

"The FBI and the New York Police Department in particular, charged and accused Assata Shakur of participating in attacks on law enforcement personnel and widely circulated such charges and accusations among police agencies and units. The FBI and the NYPD further charged her as being a leader of the Black Liberation Army, which the government and its respective agencies described as an organization engaged in the shooting of police officers.

"This description of the Black Liberation Army and the accusation of Assata Shakur's relationship to it was widely circulated by govern-

ment agents among police agencies and units. As a result of these activities by the government, Ms. Shakur became a hunted person; posters in police precincts and banks described her as being involved in serious criminal activities; she was highlighted on the FBI's most wanted list; and to police at all levels she became a 'shoot-to-kill' target."

I was falsely accused in six different "criminal cases" and in all six of these cases I was eventually acquitted or the charges were dismissed. The fact that I was acquitted or that the charges were dismissed, did not mean that I received justice in the court—that was certainly not the case. It only meant that the "evidence" presented against me was so flimsy and false that my innocence became evident. This political persecution was part and parcel of the government's policy of eliminating political opponents by charging them with crimes and arresting them with no regard to the factual basis of such charges.

On May 2, 1973 I, along with Zayd Malik Shakur and Sundiata Acoli were stopped on the New Jersey Turnpike, supposedly for a "faulty tail light." Sundiata Acoli got out of the car to determine why we were stopped. Zayd and I remained in the car. State trooper Harper then came to the car, opened the door and began to question us. Because we were Black, and riding in a car with Vermont license plates, he claimed he became "suspicious." He then drew his gun, pointed it at us, and told us to put our hands up in the air, in front of us, where he could see them. I complied and in a split second, there was a sound that came from outside the car, there was a sudden movement, and I was shot once with my arms held up in the air, and then once again from the back.

Zayd Malik Shakur was later killed, trooper Werner Foerster was killed, and even though trooper Harper admitted that he shot and killed Zayd

Malik Shakur, under the New Jersey felony murder law, I was charged with killing both Zayd Malik Shakur, who was my closest friend and comrade, and charged in the death of trooper Foerster. Never in my life have I felt such grief. Zayd had vowed to protect me, and to help me to get to a safe place, and it was clear that he had lost his life, trying to protect both me and Sundiata. Although he was also unarmed, and the gun that killed trooper Foerster was found under Zayd's leg, Sundiata Acoli, who was captured later, was also charged with both deaths. Neither Sundiata Acoli nor I ever received a fair trial We were both convicted in the news media way before our trials. No news media was ever permitted to interview us, although the New Jersey police and the FBI fed stories to the press on a daily basis. In 1977, I was convicted by an all-white jury and sentenced to life plus 33 years in prison.

In 1979, fearing that I would be murdered in prison, and knowing that I would never receive any justice, I was liberated from prison, aided by committed comrades who understood the depths of the injustices in my case, and who were also extremely fearful for my life.

The U.S. Senate's 1976 Church Commission report on intelligence operations inside the USA revealed that, "The FBI has attempted covertly to influence the public's perception of persons and organizations by disseminating derogatory information to the press, either anonymously or through 'friendly' news contacts." This same policy is evidently still very much in effect today.

On December 24, 1997, The New Jersey State called a press conference to announce that New Jersey State Police had written a letter to Pope John Paul II asking him to intervene on their behalf and to aid in having me extradited back to New Jersey prisons. The New Jersey State Police refused to make

their letter public. Knowing that they had probably totally distorted the facts, and attempted to get the Pope to do the devil's work in the name of religion, I decided to write the Pope² to inform him about the reality of "justice" for Black people in the State of New Jersey and in the United States.

In January of 1998, during the pope's visit to Cuba, I agreed to do an interview with *NBC* journalist Ralph Penza around my letter to the Pope, about my experiences in New Jersey court system, and about the changes I saw in the United States and its treatment of Black people in the last 25 years. I agreed to do this interview because I saw this secret letter to the Pope as a vicious, vulgar, publicity maneuver on the part of the New Jersey State Police, and as a cynical attempt to manipulate Pope John Paul II. I have lived in Cuba for many years, and was completely out of touch with the sensationalist, dishonest, nature of the establishment media today. It is worse today than it was 30 years ago.

After years of being victimized by the "establishment" media it was naive of me to hope that I might finally get the opportunity to tell "my side of the story." Instead of an interview with me, what took place was a "staged media event" in three parts, full of distortions, inaccuracies and outright lies. *NBC* purposely misrepresented the facts. Not only did *NBC* spend thousands of dollars promoting this "exclusive interview series" on *NBC*, they also spent a great deal of money advertising this "exclusive interview" on Black radio stations and also placed notices in local newspapers.

Like most poor and oppressed people in the United States, I do not have a voice. Black people, poor people in the U.S. have no real freedom of speech, no real freedom of expression and very little freedom of the press. The Black press and the progressive media has historically played an essential role in

the struggle for social justice. We need to continue and to expand that tradition. We need to create media outlets that help to educate our people and our children, and not annihilate their minds. I am only one woman.

I own no TV stations, or Radio Stations or Newspapers. But I feel that people need to be educated as to what is going on, and to understand the connection between the news media and the instruments of repression in Amerika. All I have is my voice, my spirit and the will to tell the truth. But I sincerely ask, those of you in the Black media, those of you in the progressive media, those of you who believe in true freedom, to publish this statement and to let people know what is happening. We have no voice, so you must be the voice of the voiceless.

Free all political prisoners, I send you love and revolutionary greetings from Cuba, One of the Largest, Most Resistant and Most Courageous Palenques (Maroon Camps)³ that has ever existed on the face of this planet.

Assata Shakur lives in Havana, Cuba.

—*Counterpunch*, December 30, 2014

<http://www.counterpunch.org/2014/12/30/an-open-letter-to-the-media/>

1 **COINTELPRO** (an acronym for COUNTERINTELLIGENCE PROGRAM) was a series of covert, and at times illegal, projects conducted by the United States Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) aimed at surveying, infiltrating, discrediting, and disrupting domestic political organizations.

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/COINTELPRO>

2 “Open Letter to Pope John Paul II,” by Assata Shakur

<http://genius.com/4597722/Assata-shakur-open-letter-to-pope-john-paul-ii/Cointelpro>

3 Camps where African refugees escaped slavery in the Americas and formed independent settlements.

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Maroon_%28people%29

Free Reverend Edward Pinkney

National defense campaign building

BY ABAYOMI AZIKIWE

Michigan political prisoner Reverend Edward Pinkney is now being held in Jackson state prison. He remains in good spirits despite the racist injustice that has landed him in detention over manufactured claims that he changed the dates on five signature entries on a recall petition designed to remove Benton Harbor Mayor James Hightower.

During the course of the trial there was no material or circumstantial evidence presented that would implicate Pinkney in the purported five felonies. Many believe that the Berrien County activist and leader of the Black Autonomy Network Community Organization (BANCO) is being punished by the local authorities for opposing the corporate program of Whirlpool Corporation, which is headquartered in Benton Harbor.

In 2012, Pinkney and BANCO led an “Occupy the PGA” demonstration against the world-renowned golf tournament that was held at the newly-created Jack Nicklaus Signature Golf Course on Lake Michigan. The course was carved out of Jean Klock Park, which had been donated to the City of Benton Harbor decades ago.

Berrien County officials were determined to defeat a recall campaign against Mayor Hightower of Benton Harbor, who opposed a program to tax local corporations in an effort to create jobs and improve conditions in the majority African American municipality. Benton Harbor, like other Michigan cities, has been devastated by widespread poverty and unemployment.

Statements of support pour in

This is not the first time that Pinkney has been imprisoned for his political activities. In 2007 he was convicted in a second trial, with the first ending in a

hung jury, for “mishandling” absentee ballots during a recall election involving two Benton Harbor city commissioners. The results of the elections removing the officials were overturned after criminal charges were filed against the BANCO leader.

Pinkney was sentenced to one year under house arrest and four more years of probation. Later in 2007, he was charged with violating the terms of his sentence for allegedly threatening a judge in Berrien County.

The threat charge stemmed from an article he wrote in the *People’s Tribune* newspaper based in Chicago where he quoted scriptures from the Old Testament. He was ordered imprisoned for three to ten years.

The charges were overturned in late 2008 by the Michigan Appeals Court after the activist received widespread support from the civil liberties, ecumenical and academic communities across the country. He was released at the end of 2008 and successfully completed his probation, returning to full-time activism in Berrien County.

Pinkney in 2008 from his prison cell ran for United States Congress on the Green Party ticket in Michigan. He received 3,500 votes in a challenge to Fred Upton, a Republican congressman and heir to the Whirlpool corporate dynasty.

A statement issued December 17 by Green Party Watch says: “The overt targeting of an African-American activist for a politically motivated prosecution is reminiscent of recent episodes involving Chuck Turner and Elston McCowan, both Greens who challenged the power structures in their communities. In a system where police officers regularly kill unarmed African-American men without facing trial, it is especially gall-

ing that the same system sentences an African-American activist to up to ten years imprisonment on trumped-up, politically motivated charges.”

Black Agenda Report, a well-known media outlet opposing the corporate influence over African American politics in the U.S., wrote in a December 17 editorial: “This may seem like an Old Jim Crow story, about a preacher from a small, mostly Black town who wanted only to help his people through the voting process, but is set upon by backward whites determined to maintain their monopoly on political power. And, it is true; Old Man Jim Crow is alive and well on the banks of Lake Michigan.”

This same editorial goes on, saying: “But it is the New Jim Crow, the Mass Black Incarceration State, that has snatched 66-year-old Reverend Pinkney away to what could become life in prison. The judge and prosecutor said that Pinkney’s 12 past and present felony convictions make him a career criminal, even though each count stems

from an elections process. The Old Jim Crow would have unapologetically sent Pinkney to the chain gang for being an uppity Black man, but the New Jim Crow simply piled on a bunch of felonies to put him away as a serial criminal, allowing the system to claim that race had nothing to do with it.”

A national conference call was held on Thursday, December 18, designed to build a defense campaign. Former Vermont State Senator Ben-Zion Ptashnik initiated the call through the People Demanding Action (PDA) organization.

The conference call included activist members of the clergy, electoral reform organizers, former Green Party candidates, progressive Democrats, the *People’s Tribune* newspaper, Moratorium NOW! Coalition and others. The call provided an update on the case and plans to publicize the plight of Reverend Pinkney and the people of Berrien County, recruit a legal team and organize a fundraising drive to proceed with an appeal.

Ptashnik and Victoria Collier wrote in *Truth-out.org* on December 16, 2014: “Concerned activists and clergy associated with People Demanding Action, a national social justice organization, are circulating a petition to ministers and various organizations. The petition is to be forwarded to the U.S. Justice Department and Attorney General Eric Holder, asking for an investigation into the circumstances of Pinkney’s trial and sentencing.”

To sign the petition in support of Reverend Edward Pinkney log on to:

http://salsa.wiredforchange.com/o/6405/c/10113/p/dia/action3/common/public/?action_KEY=10735

Contributions for the defense of Reverend Pinkney can be sent to BANCO at 1940 Union St., Benton Harbor, Michigan 49022.

Messages of support for Reverend Pinkney and concern for his welfare should be sent to Warden Randall Haas, G. Robert Cotton Correctional Facility, 3500 North Elm Road, Jackson MI 49201, phone: 517-780-5600. Encourage the media to ask the warden to arrange an interview with Reverend Pinkney.

Send some love and light to Reverend Pinkney, who is said to be locked down 23 hours a day: Reverend Edward Pinkney, 294671, G. Robert Cotton Correctional Facility, 3855 Cooper St., Jackson MI 49201.

Abayomi Azikiwe, editor of Pan-African News Wire. Pan-African News Wire is the world’s only international daily pan-African news source, is designed to foster intelligent discussion on the affairs of African people throughout the continent and the world.

—*San Francisco Bay View*, December 23, 2014

<http://sfbayview.com/2014/12/national-defense-campaign-building-for-rev-edward-pinkney/>



No Indictment of Killer Cop Wilson

Why no indictment was issued against the cop who killed Michael Brown: the problem and answer

BY KEVIN “RASHID” JOHNSON

“No indictment”—I already knew

It’s easy to say, after the fact, that I knew there would be no grand jury indictment against Darren Wilson, the white Missouri cop who killed New African/Black teenager Michael Brown in cold blood on August 9, 2014. But, truth be told, I did know it. And you’ll recognize how obvious the game was too, once I explain.

I recognized the game not just because the Amerikan criminal (in) justice and (selective) law enforcement systems work hand-in-hand against (not in favor of) people of color and the poor, but because of two major deviations from established grand jury procedure that were made by the St. Louis prosecuting attorney, Robert McCulloch, who was supposedly seeking the indictment against Wilson.

The red flags were the massive amount of “evidence” presented to the grand jury, but more specifically, that Wilson was allowed to testify before the grand jury. This never happens.

And I speak with the experience of a member of a class of people who have more than just a little experience with indictments, namely, U.S. prisoners. Most all of the criminal proceedings that landed each of us in prison were based on grand jury indictments, but, unlike Wilson, we were never allowed to testify before those grand juries. Why? Cuz that’s not how grand jury proceedings work. And I should know since over the years I’ve fought and beat some 16 indicted crimes representing myself. So I have a legal understanding of the process as well. But don’t just take my word for it, ask any attorney with experience in criminal law. S/he might do a bit of hemming and hawing and trying to rationalize what was done, but in the end they’ll

admit it’s almost unheard of for a prosecutor to call the subject of a grand jury proceeding to testify before the jury.

The prosecutor’s game

Unlike a trial, a grand jury proceeding is not adversarial. Meaning it doesn’t function to have the jury consider both sides of a case. It is a summary proceeding that exists solely to hear a sample of what evidence the prosecution has collected which tends to show a crime occurred, without any consideration of the potential defendant’s side of the story, and thereupon determine if the prosecutor has enough evidence to show probable cause to believe the subject committed a potential crime. That’s it. The prosecutor presents only the most basic incriminatory evidence and never puts the potential defendant on, because unless the prosecutor is in effect using the potential defendant as her/his own witness (which is exactly what McCulloch did with Wilson), to do so would transform the grand jury proceeding into an actual trial which would compel a wide range of procedures and rights of the potential defendant to come into play.¹

This is why McCulloch dispensed with another common procedure in such cases, namely, he never had Wilson charged and arrested on a warrant prior to supposedly seeking an indictment. Because, the moment Wilson was arrested, McCulloch would become his adversary (and could not advocate for him as he did in calling Wilson as his own witness to give his side of the story to make it conform to other evidence in a way that would exonerate Wilson). As Wilson’s adversary, McCulloch could only present such “evidence” as would paint

Wilson’s actions in a criminal light to the grand jury. And if he were to call Wilson as a witness under these circumstances, Wilson would have to have his own attorney present to ensure he didn’t say or do anything to incriminate himself or sabotage his own defense. So he most likely would have been instructed by his attorney to say nothing by invoking his 5th Amendment privilege against self-incrimination.

So McCulloch took very deliberate tactical steps to ensure that he could advocate for Wilson rather than function as his adversary to the end of ensuring that no indictment would be issued.

And these major departures from established grand jury practice were made by a white prosecutor whose own father was not only himself a cop, but a cop who was allegedly killed by a Black man. So he had not just a professional bias in Wilson’s favor, but a personal one as well. So, when I heard on the news a few days before the verdict not to indict was announced, that Wilson had been allowed to testify before the grand jury, I knew, just like with the trial of George Zimmerman for the murder of Trayvon Martin, that the prosecutor was deliberately sabotaging the proceeding to ensure an outcome in favor of the cop (or cop wanna-be, as in Zimmerman’s case).

And you can bet every legal “expert” in Amerika recognized it too, including past Harvard law professor, Barack “uncle scam in Blackface” Obama, who implored everyone to accept the verdict cuz the rule of law had prevailed and the grand jury rendered a decision that it was its duty to make. Sadly, many of us oppressed people of color can’t get past our skin worship of Obama and recognize him for the

imperialist running dog (a wolf in black sheep's clothing) that he really is.

As for the grand jury's duty, these bodies are actually the tools of prosecuting attorneys, who have almost absolute control over both the conduct of grand jury proceedings and over influencing these juries. This is why New York State Judge Sol Wachtler once admitted, "it's so easy to get a grand jury to indict, they'd indict a ham sandwich if that's what the prosecutor wanted."

Then there's the fact that grand jury proceedings lasted from August 20th to November 24th. As noted, prosecutors typically put only a small bit of evidence before grand juries, and only that which incriminates the potential defendant. Even University of Missouri Law Professor, Ben Trachtenberg, admits that McCulloch, "put on a much greater amount of evidence than we're used to," producing 24 volumes of evidence which included 5,000 pages of testimony from 60 witnesses (100 pages of which was Wilson's testimony). In the "normal" proceeding, Trachtenberg said, "the grand jury can see evidence in a few minutes and take a vote." As various legal experts concede, McCulloch's method was to inundate the grand jury with so much information that it was overwhelmed and confused.² I too recognized this, since, in a grand jury proceeding the jury is not guided by adversarial attorneys to pay attention to certain evidence and the implications of it as would occur in a trial.

So that now, Wilson's testimony, which was not subject to cross examination to expose obvious lies and inconsistencies (such as his claim the he used his gun because he had no non-lethal options, which he obviously did—such as use of mace—which McCulloch never brought up), now stands as the official version of what happened when he killed Michael Brown. As the late Johnny Cochran

pointed out and most criminal defendants know, cops almost instinctively lie in court. They do it because they feel compelled to validate their arrests and actions, and make them fit with the law to support the desired outcome. And they're "comfortable lying in a courtroom because the system always tolerated [their] lying; judges look the other way and jurors [are] supposed to accept it."³ And jurors do accept it, because the typical overwhelmingly white jury just doesn't believe cops do bad things and are in almost visceral denial of prevailing institutionalized racism in Amerika, even as they entertain racist stereotypes, fears and caricatures of people of color. White Amerika has a very different experience with cops than people of color. Blacks and Browns especially. Indeed, Black parents across Amerika must take special pains to teach their sons to show special deference and passive body language when confronted by cops to avoid being beaten or killed, just as Blacks had to be trained to act when in company of whites during chattel slavery and open Jim Crow, also to avoid beatings and lynching.

In essence, the entire grand jury proceeding was staged to produce the very outcome that resulted, and in a society racially divided by policy, practice and design of those in power.

Towards a real solution

How absurd is it anyway to look for a savior in the very courts that we know and see everyday railroading people of color into prison at such astronomical rates, that they are recognized to be a continuation of both slavery and Jim Crow?⁴

Yet this is exactly what our frustrated youth are being misled to do (while being left in the crosshairs) by an old guard aspiring bourgeois civil rights misleadership, who can do nothing more than continue engaging in empty moralizing and playing bargaining-games with the very forces that are

murdering our youth and bent on our suffering and destruction.

Indeed, every time I hear of these civil-rightists raising a hue and cry against yet another government outrage, I'm reminded of the words of Anthony Asadullah Samad, criticizing the ineffective civil rights advocacy tactics in the *Black Commentator* some years back:

"Whether it's protest, negotiation, boycott or voter revolt (the latter two of which we rarely, if ever, use), watching Black advocacy is like watching re-runs of Sanford and Son; you know what's about to come next—and what the line is going to be when Redd Foxx grabs his chest....Okay, this is where they march in. Now, they're about to holler and scream, and give long speeches, watch'em. Here is where they put the community mothers up to cry, sigh, ain't it sad? Now this is the part where they march out singing 'we shall overcome,' then they'll go home and be quiet until the next time we get caught violating them or their interests. But the response will be the same."

And we should remember that while these old tactics proved effective in dismantling the old Jim Crow laws of the rural South, they failed miserably in changing the oppressed conditions, including police murders and brutality in the urban communities of color. Indeed, these stark failures led to the demise and discrediting of the civil rights movement in the urban areas, which gave rise to youth-based, Black and Brown liberation movements, and struggles for socialism in Amerika in the 1960s-70s.

It was the ineffectiveness and failures of the civil rights movement to address urban suffering that resulted in the mass urban uprisings of 1964-1968. And each of those uprisings was triggered by police murders or beatings of urban Blacks, exactly as continues to occur today in the face of these fruitless civil rights tactics.

It was in response to just such conditions that the Black Panther Party took root and won broad support as a community-based revolutionary organization that brought real solutions to the oppressed communities and real challenge to the murderous police. It was actually in their response to a police killing of a Black male, Denzil Dowell on April 1, 1967 (a murder not very different from Michael Brown's), that the Panthers brought an effective model of leadership and resistance to urban people. And one that also pointed out the futility of spontaneous mass uprisings. As Panther co-founder and Defense Minister Huey Newton pointed out:

"We are continuing to function in petty, futile ways, divided, confused, fighting among ourselves, we are still in the elementary stage of throwing rocks, sticks, empty wine bottle and beer cans at racist cops who lie in wait to murder unarmed Black people. The racist cops have to murder unarmed Black people. The racist cops have worked out a system for suppressing these spontaneous rebellions that flare up from the anger, frustration and desperation of the masses of Black People. We can no longer afford the dubious

luxury of the terrible casualties wantonly inflicted upon us by the cops during these spontaneous rebellions....There is a world of difference between 30 million unarmed, submissive Black people and 30 million Black people armed with freedom and defense-guns and the strategic methods of liberation."⁵

The Panthers instantly struck fear in the hearts of the murderous police and the centers of capitalist power in the U.S., and won allies across all exploited sectors of U.S. society: poor white hillbillies and working class whites and students, Mexicans/Chicanos, Puerto Ricans, Natives, antiwar activists, youth gangs, *etc.* But as an inexperienced youth organization, they were ill equipped to contend with or even recognize the dirty counter-intelligence tactics of the police, led and organized by the Federal government, which had coopted and infiltrated the civil rights movement. The government's anti-Panther crusade applied devious no-holds-barred methods developed and refined from use in war and peacetimes against foreign "enemies" and political movements.

As a result, the BPP ended up internally split along antagonistic lines and

critically wounded. But it gave us, by far, the best example and lessons of organized tactical resistance to the oppressive U.S. system, which we can continue to learn from and build on, and this is the basis of the work of the New African Black Panther Party—Prison chapter.

The same mass ferment and anger of our youth is evident and cries out for real solutions as it was during the old Panther era. And without a genuine revolutionary organization and leadership it will be coopted and converted into a tool of the old conformist collaborationist civil rights agenda, that has us looking to our oppressors to be our savior instead of ourselves, or it will explode into destructive spontaneous uprisings which the pigs actually want, because it polarizes New Afrikan/Black and white society instead of allying us, and gives them grounds to justify their murderous and militaristic practices that we are rising against.

Dare to Struggle Dare to Win!

All Power to the People!

1 Now, if the prosecutor knows or believes no crime was committed, then there exists no basis at all to present a case to a grand jury. To do so would be an illegal misuse of the grand jury process and to convert the process into something other than its intended purpose.

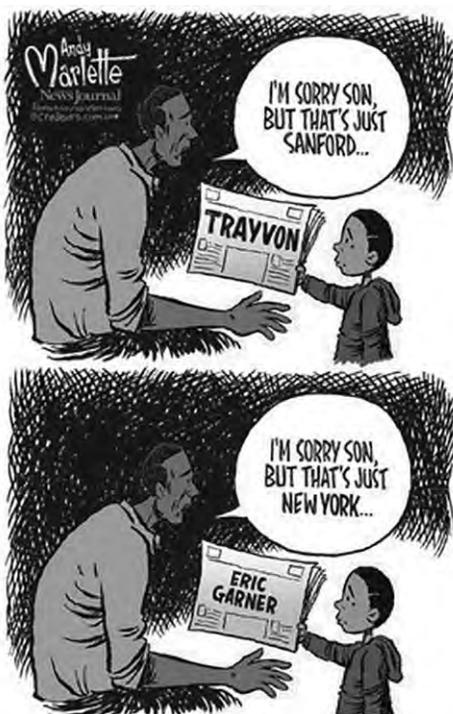
2 See Marisol Bello *et al.*, "Grand Jury Charges Easy, Except Against Police: Prosecutor Piled on Members An Extreme Amount of Info," *USA Today*, p. 3A, November 26, 2014.

3 Johnny Cochran, *A Lawyer's Life*, p. 111.

4 See Michelle Alexander, *The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness*, (The New Press, NY, 2010/2013).

5 Huey P. Newton, "In Defense of Self Defense," *Black Panther*, June 20, 1967, pp.n3-4.

Most all of the criminal proceedings that landed each of us in prison were based on grand jury indictments, but, unlike Wilson, we were never allowed to testify before those grand juries.



The Horror of Solitary

What would compel a man to try to cut his own face off?

By KEVIN “RASHID” JOHNSON



Kevin “Rashid” Johnson

I recently witnessed a man try to cut his own face off. For me this wasn't anything out of the ordinary, but as it played out, I imagined the reactions and questions that might arise in the mind of someone in society if they'd observed the same.

They would probably wonder in shock, “What sort of conditions could be so unbearable that they'd drive a person to suffer cutting through the skin, nerves, muscles and arteries of his own face, at the risk of permanent disfigurement, disability or even death?”

I, of course, knew the answer: torture. More specifically, the torture by official design of living in one of the many solitary confinement units in Amerika's vast prison system, which is why seeing this sort of thing isn't uncommon for me—I've lived in solitary for nearly two decades.

And, yes, Amerika inflicts such extreme torture on prisoners that they routinely commit such acts as could never be expected of a sane and stable mind. And this is the point—solitary confinement drives people into insanity.

Let's talk about torture

There are two types of torture. The physical and the psychological. Mental

health and torture experts unanimously agree that psychological torture is the worst and most damaging of the two.

We all recognize that pain alerts and protects us against injury and possible death. Aversion to pain is therefore an instinct wired into most healthy living things. Torturers deliberately render one powerless to avert pain, which is what makes torture an effective method of crushing a person's will and driving them to shameless desperation. Pushed hard enough and it will also drive one insane, which is why psychological torture is the worst sort.

Sensory deprivation—or cutting one off from the sensory stimulation of normal social environments—is the worst type of psychological torture. Experts also agree on this. It's like isolating a wildflower and starving it of natural sunlight. It will become feeble, wither and die.

Sensory deprivation is the exact form of torture inflicted by design and without relief in the multitudes of U.S. solitary confinement units. Even the United Nations has denounced the practice.

So, one can imagine that these units are places of the greatest tragedies. And life in them is never uneventful. Like witnessing a man try to cut his face off and prison officials' indifference to such tragedies. Here's what happened.

Todd Hines strikes (himself) again

On October 20, 2014 I observed two guards, here at Clements unit prison in Amarillo, Texas, move a white prisoner into the cell across from me (cell #H231). A few minutes after the new occupant moved in, he got my attention and asked if I had an extra used razor he could have to shave with. I did not. “How about a shot of coffee?” he asked. I did, so I sent him some. He

thanked me and we both retreated to the backs of our cells in our own worlds. We never exchanged names.

After a bit of writing, I nodded off to sleep. I was awakened some time later by the explosive echoes of someone nearby repeatedly kicking his cell door. Each kick sounds off and reverberates like a gun blast inside an echo chamber. Kicking cell doors is a common occurrence in solitary, most often done by one or more prisoners in protest against some guard abuse, or in an attempt to get them to respond to a serious situation. So I got up to see what the matter was and lend my support to the prisoner, if necessary.

Upon reaching my cell door, I immediately observed it was the new occupant of H231 kicking, that his face was covered with blood, and blood was streaming down his torso like a scene from a slasher movie.

Several prisoners, also seeing him, began yelling to the guard working the pod, Jesus Cruz, that the man in H231 was bleeding badly and to come check on him and call medical staff. Cruz replied, “I don't give a fuck! Fuck him!” The din got louder as I and others joined in the demand to get attention to the situation.

After several minutes of our yelling and banging wearing at him, Cruz finally got up from the desk, however not to go to cell H231, but instead to stage making a security round in the pod. Guards are required to make security rounds at least hourly, walking around the pod looking into each cell to ensure the prisoners' safety. However, rounds are typically made several hours apart if at all by the guards, who would rather sit at their desk nodding off, reading magazines stolen from prisoners or talking on the telephone.

Cruz began his round downstairs at cell H101. Cell H231 is upstairs at the very opposite end of the pod. Walking with exaggerated slowness, Cruz completed the downstairs round, being cursed by a number of outraged prisoners as he passed their cells. He then slowly climbed the stairs to stage a round on the top tier, again beginning at the opposite end from H231.

When finally he made it to the bleeding man's cell, Cruz peered in and asked nonchalantly, "What's the problem?" The blood-covered occupant was sitting silently on his bed leaning foreword with blood running onto the floor from his face. Cruz stood looking at him for a moment then ordered him to, "Kick the razor blade under the cell door," which he did, then returned to sit on the bed.

Cruz at that point took out his portable canister of OC gas (oleoresin capsicum, also known as pepper spray,) opened the hatch on the cell door and emptied the can of gas into the cell spraying the cell floor, bed and occupant at length. When the canister was completely empty, he closed the slot and called over his walkie-talkie, again nonplussed that a prisoner had cut himself and a supervisor and medical staff needed to report to the pod.

Gradually, other guards trickled in. Among the first was Desmond Finney, a guard well known for his loud mouth and going out of his way to impress his colleagues with bragging compulsively and assaulting prisoners upon the slightest pretext, typically when they are in handcuffs or locked inside a cell.

Upon reaching and peering to cell H231, Finney let loose a litany of curses and insults directed at the prisoner. "What type of dumb motherfucker tries to cut his face off?" he bellowed. "You stupid asshole, you shoulda cut your throat!" Other guards also came to the cell and joined in the insults. A few were visibly shaken.

In came a lieutenant Narciso Sanchez and two sergeants, Candace

Martinez and Dustin Anderson (Sanchez and Anderson also joined in the insults and name calling, and threatened to gas the bleeding prisoner from a large canister, "just for being stupid!") and finally a nurse and portable audio-video camera. When the camera was activated the verbal abuses abruptly stopped and all the guards instantly put on "professional" airs and gas masks or their own protection against the large amount of Cruz's OC gas that was now circulating outside the cell and throughout the pod contaminating everyone.

Finney, ever eager to play HNIC (Head Negro In Charge,) positioned himself to be the one to order the bleeding prisoner around, beginning with compelling him to perform a lengthy strip search, as he bled profusely from the face. Finney ordered him first to hand out his bloody boxers, then open his mouth, move his tongue around, run his index finger between his lips and gums, permit view into his nostrils, manipulate his genitals, show the bottom of each foot and wiggle his toes, bend at the waist and spread his buttocks; he was then given back his boxers to put on. He was warned if he'd faltered, the entire search process would be repeated until he got it right, his medical state notwithstanding.

The search completed, he was ordered to put his hands out the slot backwards to be handcuffed. He was then made to kneel and, when the cell door was opened, ordered to crawl out backwards on his knees. Shackles were placed on his ankles and he was made to stand. There were large pools of blood all over the cell floor and more gathering where he kneeled and stood outside the cell.

The nurse came over to examine his face, wiping blood away to see the cuts. Long, deep gashes ran down both sides of his face and across his forehead, with one or both temple arteries possibly cut. He was made to walk out of the pod.

The incident began at 2:40 P.M. and took until 2:53 P.M. for Cruz to reach his cell. It wasn't until 3:12 P.M. that he was finally brought out. Obviously, all involved staff were content to see him bleed to death. Their concern, as noted, extended only to insults and indifference. All else was just a perfunctory performance and with deliberate malicious slowness.

The next day Finney worked the pod and marveled loudly to anyone who'd listen that the prisoner required 95 stitches to his face.

As disturbing as the overall situation was *per se*, it was no less disturbing to discover who the prisoner was. His name was Todd Hines, #588382. The very same Todd Hines I'd just written an article about, who'd attempted suicide by cutting his throat and temples on September 4, 2014 and guards and a nurse deliberately tried to allow to bleed out.¹ Although the October 20th incident had a distinct feel of *deja vu*, I didn't recognize Todd initially because, ironically, the last and only time I'd seen and taken notice of him before then, was on September 4th when his face was also covered with blood.

Apparently, when he was moved into H231 he'd just returned to Clements unit from a temporary transfer to a mental health prison, which routinely follows serious suicide attempts. So he was brought right back to solitary and interestingly placed in the cell directly in front of me And only a few hours back at the unit he'd cut himself up again.

A land of laws?

As my prior article noted, Todd is a mentally ill prisoner who by law has no business in administrative segregation, like over half the prisoners housed in this prison's segregation unit, which for every responsible official is a criminal act.² Worse still, the federal courts recognized that Texas' segregation units inflict psychological pain that causes both the mentally ill

and the mentally healthy psychological damage.³

What does such brazen official lawlessness say of a country that promotes itself as being a land governed by the rule of law and an example of democratic freedoms to be emulated by the world, that imprisons and criminalizes more people than any other country in the world—past and present—and furthermore proclaims itself the rightful overseer and policeman of the world? The answer is: it is a country ruled by hypocrites, liars and dictators—indeed by fascists no less heinous than those it is so good at self-righteously vilifying. Only such people could subject their own subjects and anyone else to such tortuous conditions as would lead a man to try and cut his own face off.

1 Kevin “Rashid” Johnson, “Prison Assisted Suicide—The Texas Way,” available at *rashid-mod.com* and at *Socialist Viewpoint*, Vol. 14, No. 6, http://www.socialistviewpoint.org/novdec_14/novdec_14_28.html

2 Texas federal courts long ago recognized and condemned the Texas prison system, holding that, “administrative segregation is being utilized unconstitutionally to house mentally ill inmates whose illness can only be exacerbated by the depravity of their confinement.” *Ruiz v. Estelle*, 37 F. supp. 2d 855, 915 (S.D. Tex 1999). The violation of any person’s constitutional civil rights is a federal crime. See, 18 United States Code, Section 242.

3 The court stated: “Texas’ administrative segregation units are virtual incubators of psychoses—seeding illness in otherwise health inmates and exacerbating illness in those already suffering from mental infirmities.” *Id.* at 907.

How to Get Away with Cop Murder

BY KERRY “SHAKABOONA” MARSHALL

There is a disturbing pattern of cops getting away with murdering unarmed, mostly Black and Latino males in America. This pattern of cops murdering unarmed Black males can be seen in the cases of Oscar Grant, Trayvon Martin, Michael Brown, and Eric Garner. From the patterns of those cases, one can discern the blueprint for *How to Get Away With Cop Murder*.

Step one: Join any police department in America to become a cop. Now you have a license to kill anyone you don’t like.

Step Two: Identify a person to kill from America’s undesirable poor class and its historically racist, boogieman, preferably a big Black nigger! Because the lives of the poor and people of color don’t matter in America.

Step Three: Wait for a situation to arise, or create a confrontational situation with a scary Black guy, then shoot him to death.

Step Four: Stick to your claim of justifiable homicide while the systems of institutional racism circle their wagons to protect you. Just remain firm and consistent in your cover story of: You stopped a suspect, he became angry and violent, he was a big Black guy, you feared for your life, so you shot him to death, although he was unarmed and hadn’t committed a crime.

Don’t be concerned about news stations placing the national spotlight on you, because although they will put on a good show of objective reporting, *CNN*, *FOX News*, and *HLN* are actually on the government’s and cops’ side and have your back. They are going to put before cameras their team of talking heads of ex-cops, ex-prosecutors, criminal justice experts, politicians, government-appointed Black stooge leaders,

and Uncle Tom Black apologists for white supremacy to come up with every excuse imaginable to justify murder of an innocent, unarmed Black male.

Step Five: Have a secret Grand Jury or a criminal trial by jury. No matter the judicial process, the deck is stacked in your favor to win, so don’t sweat it, you’ll be just fine.

Step Six: discredit the murder victim and all witnesses to the crime because the dead victim can’t tell his side of the story and witnesses can be contradictory. Besides, who are the public going to believe, a seemingly honest cop or these animals in the streets?

Step Seven: Blame the cause of murder on the deceased victim himself by stating the suspect attacked you, appeared menacing, reached for your gun, was a giant man, was like a demon, or he resisted arrest. Any of these justifications will suffice to place the blame on the victim.

Step Eight: overwhelm the jury with so much evidence and frivolous information about the evidence, that it obscures the issue, allowing the jury to reach a favorable decision that will get you off the hook.

The judicial outcome is predictable—no criminal indictment, or a verdict of not guilty of any crime. Now your mission is complete. You have just gotten away with committing cop murder.

Kerry “Shakaboona” Marshall is co-founder and editor of The Movement human rights magazine, Prison Radio correspondent, and child lifer prisoner.

Write to:

Kerry “Shakaboona” Marshall, #BE7826
SCI-Rockview, Box-A
Bellefonte, PA 16823

Death, For a Cigarette!

By MUMIA ABU-JAMAL



Mumia Abu-Jamal

The name Eric Garner is now enshrined in the grim annals of history.

It joins Mike Brown, Ramarley Graham, Alan Blueford, Dontre Hamilton, Tamir Rice, and thousands of others, who were murdered by those their taxes have helped pay: cops.

In many ways, Garner's case is even more egregious than Brown's, for it was videotaped, and one sees his take-down, his incessant choking, his

unconsciousness—and shortly thereafter—his death.

Now, the words “I can't breathe” have become joined with the cry “Hands Up!”—reminders of the Garner and Brown killings at the hands of police.

Both cases are also noted for the behavior of grand juries, which now appear reckless beyond belief, in their inability to return indictments against cops.

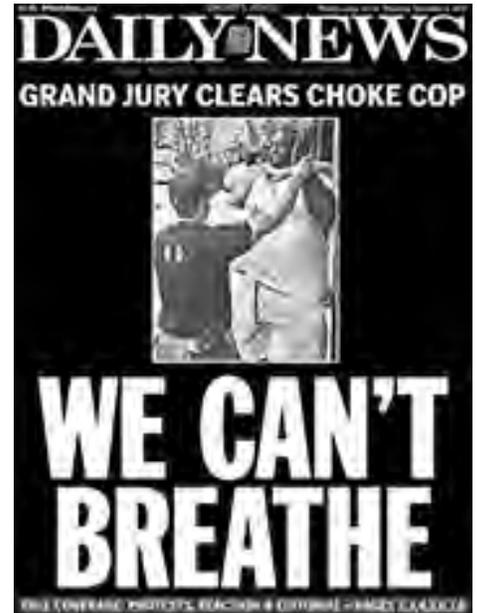
The grand jury emigrated here from England, where, as it was then called, “grand assizes,” a body of about a dozen knights, under the direction of a baron (or some other noble), would investigate cases and charge people.

Later, they became tools of the king.

Today, they are instruments of the prosecutors, and used, just as under kings, to target whom they wish—and to clear whom they wish.

Outrage stems from the long history of its use to protect cops—yes—even killer cops.

This, while the nation is awash in mass incarceration, the majority of



whom have never had a grand jury indictment, unlike the average cop.

The System is constructed to protect their minions (the cops), no matter how outrageous their behavior. That's just a fact.

And as the nation now celebrates historic events from the civil rights movement of a half-century ago, the grim and ugly present of Black life—and Black Death—in America, makes that glowing history feel hollow indeed.

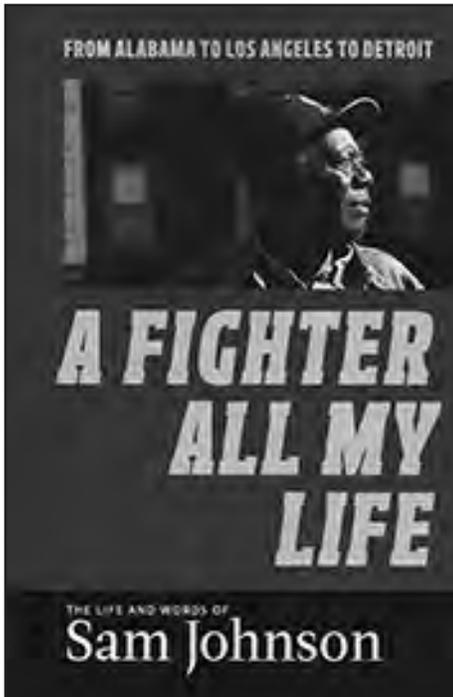
—*PrisonRadio.org*, December 4, 2014

Write to Mumia at:
Mumia Abu-Jamal AM-8335
SCI-Mahanoy
301 Morea Road
Frackville, PA 17932



The Making of an Auto Worker Activist

BY GREGG SHOTWELL



A Fighter All My Life, by Sam Johnson
Abecedarian Books, 2014.

A Fighter All My Life is the memoir of Sam Johnson, a Black man from the South who became a Detroit auto-worker and dissident union activist.

Johnson was born and raised on the front lines of class conflict in America. His everyday life was fraught with danger. In the tradition of the memoirs of Hosea Hudson, Malcolm X, and Big Bill Haywood, the book traces how he came to full consciousness of the roots of our oppression.

He was always a fighter—but in the United Auto Workers (UAW) he found his true calling, militant unionist, and the right target for his righteous anger, capitalism.

The book begins with anecdotes of Johnson's childhood in Alabama, coming of age under Jim Crow, and being sent in 1959 to Los Angeles, where his

mother felt he would be safe from the KKK and Southern police.

What a different place America was then. On a road trip back to Alabama to visit family, Johnson and his friends ran into Little Richard on a Texas highway. "Don't you guys know me? I used to perform all around through Alabama," the rock-and-roll legend said. Little Richard took them out to eat and picked up the tab.

In Los Angeles, Johnson worked various jobs, got some job training, cavorted with "a fast crowd," and had a few run-ins with the police.

"I couldn't hang with where Martin Luther King and them were coming from," he writes. "I saw these guys lying on the ground, letting the racists beat on them. Unh-uh. Nah. I wasn't ready for that. I was for fighting back, turn it around."

Getting the bigger picture

At age 29, Johnson moved to Detroit—just in time for the riots of 1967. New to the city, he was an observer. Afterwards he said, "So that makes you get the bigger picture. That's why I say, if there are enough of us together, they can't deal with us."

Sure enough, the auto companies started hiring Black workers. "The corporations were thinking they had too many Blacks in the street. They didn't want another riot—better give them jobs." He also describes how heroin became prevalent in Detroit and in the auto plants in the late sixties and how tolerated it was by authorities and police: "Those drugs coming in helped break the militancy."

Eventually Johnson got a job at Dodge Main, where he started reading the *Spark*, a militant leftist newsletter.

"By reading the *Spark* and talking to people around it, I began to get a bigger picture of the U.S. system..." he says. "Added to what I already understood from how I grew up, I began to see that as long as the capitalists control everything, it's going to keep getting worse for the majority of people."

The street fighter acquired focus. Johnson kicked heroin and became an elected union committeeman, and in his own words,

"...a revolutionary militant in the working class, trying to get other workers to see and understand what needs to be done, trying to bring workers to stand together to use the force they have.

"And I always tried to give them the bigger picture, where we fit in, to get them to understand how things could change if working people stood together, what we could do to defend ourselves and to build a different society."

Wildcats and bats

The international UAW broke up a 1973 wildcat strike at Chrysler supplier Mack Stamping, Johnson reports, "with sticks and bats and other things."

Rather than support workers and address the safety issues, which led to the strike, the union threatened striking workers and told them they would be fired.

Johnson witnessed this and reported back to his co-workers, warning them to get ready. "If you know what's good for you," a UAW official told him, "you'll keep that Mack shit out of your mouth."

"If you're making that a threat, if you're thinking about having your boys jump me, they better do a good

job,” Johnson fired back. “If they don’t, I’ll be coming looking for you!” And he distributed a flyer about the Mack strike and the lies of the international.

Johnson took labor classes at Wayne State University. He got elected steward, organizing lunchtime meetings and rank-and-file direct actions to deal with grievances.

For example, when Chrysler deprived workers of overtime payments, Johnson led 30 workers into a supervisor’s office and let them do the

talking. The next day workers got their checks.

When the UAW eliminated his district and he was put out of elected office, Johnson continued to organize and educate. He stood up against sexual harassment, too:

“When you come to understand the system and if you want to change the system, you have to understand that it’s a problem, the attitudes a lot of men have toward women. I had to set an example to some of the militant guys in the plant who acted

this way. These guys understood that I knew how to fight. I had got into some fights and they knew it. I had to let them know they were wrong how they acted toward women.”

Over and over, Johnson was fired and laid off. “Any time you are a problem for the company, they definitely try to figure out a way to get rid of you,” he says, “but especially if you are trying to organize the workers to stand together. And that’s where I was coming from.” On or off the job, he kept organizing.

Johnson retired from Chrysler in 1999, but he never retired from militant life. This year he ran as an independent candidate for Congress in Michigan’s 13th district.

Like an old friend

The book was transcribed and edited from a collection of tapes recorded over several years.

Written language is judged by different standards than spoken language. There are vocal and facial expressions, which can’t be elicited from a transcript. Stories collected over a long period are redundant, chronologically confusing, and sometimes conflicting.

It’s a painstaking process. An editor may be tempted to impose his or her own words in an attempt to clarify. She may wish to clean up the account. But such well-intentioned and protective editing can intervene between the author and the reader, and diminish authenticity.

I must commend the editor, Judith Carpenter. I never saw her shadow or felt her scalpel. *A Fighter All My Life* was like listening to an old friend.

Gregg Shotwell is a retired UAW-GM member and author of Autoworkers Under the Gun.

—Labor Notes, November 06, 2014

<http://labornotes.org/blogs/2014/11/review-making-auto-worker-activist>

The United National Antiwar Coalition
invites you to

**A National Antiwar & Social Justice Conference:
Stop the Wars at Home & Abroad!**

End U.S. Wars Abroad!
Self-Determination for All Oppressed Peoples!
Stop Police Abuse at Home!
End All U.S. Support for Israel!
Stop Pentagon Climate Pollution!
Good Jobs, Quality Education, Affordable Health Care!
Civil & Democratic Rights for All!

The world is being ravaged by endless U.S. wars, both open and secret; life-threatening global warming and environmental destruction; devastating poverty and disease. Here at home we face unprecedented attacks on labor, immigrants, the poor and oppressed; a massive and racist prison-industrial complex; the increasing militarization of the police and an epidemic of police abuse as in Ferguson, Mo.; widespread domestic spying and an expanding "national security state"; trillions of dollars spent on the military to police the world and bail out the corporate 1 percent while we face severe attacks on the basic necessities of life.

It's Time for a Massive, United & Independent Response!

UNAC, a broad antiwar coalition formed in 2010, invites you to a national conference for activists fighting injustice at home and abroad:
Educational Talks • Workshops • Discussions • Debates • International Speakers • Action Proposals • & Democratic Decision-Making.

Fri., May 8 - Sun., May 10, 2015
Empire Meadows (Clarion) Hotel in Secaucus, New Jersey (30 minutes from New York City)

For details contact:
United National Antiwar Coalition (UNAC)
www.UNACpeace.org UNACpeace@gmail.com Ph: 518-227-6947

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

We have new snow here in Wisconsin for the New Year. Closing my eyes, I can remember back eighty years and I see the red blood on the new white snow. That image of the past will never go away; but I now see that there will be red blood on new white snow in the near future.

In 1934, the police were driven from the streets of Minneapolis, Minnesota by coal-drivers on strike. All the drivers wanted were a few pennies more and a union, and they were willing to strike and fight for a living wage. The police tried to stop them, but they were defeated and driven from the streets of Minneapolis by the strikers.

Minneapolis was a medium size, Midwestern city, and New York is the financial capital of the United States and the empire city of the world.

Yet on December 5, 2014 the people of New York, crying out for justice, were able to take back the streets from the police. It was for just a few hours, but still a major defeat for the police of New York City.

New York has, according to its past mayor, Bloomberg, the seventh largest army in the world in its police. An army equipped with airplanes, heavy machine guns, *etc.*—a police army, given billions by the Defense Department and constantly being improved in military equipment.

They are organized like an army with a ladder of authority. The ranks march and obey the ones above. Their organization is clearly patterned after the Roman Legion.

Josephus¹, the Jewish historian, gave reasons why the Roman Legions were able to win against larger armies. He pointed out that the Roman soldiers were trained in obedience, were in the army for life, did not go home to plant in the spring and fought and died for The Empire, which was their religion;

not for money.

Bloomberg was wrong. His police are paid mercenaries because they cost much more than an army and they do much less. They are extremely subject to corruption, both the lower rung ranks and the higher officers, including the very highest. They are a destructive force that costs billions, and when the people rebel and fight back the cost of the police doubles and redoubles.

As long as the people are divided, have faith and trust in the government and corruption is not too deep in the police, they can do their “job” of occupying and controlling the city. But when the people become united they blow the police away. The police must have back up now of a real army!

This winter we will see changes made in the police throughout the United States. First there will be a short period when the police will shoot to kill and try to break the people by killing and terror.

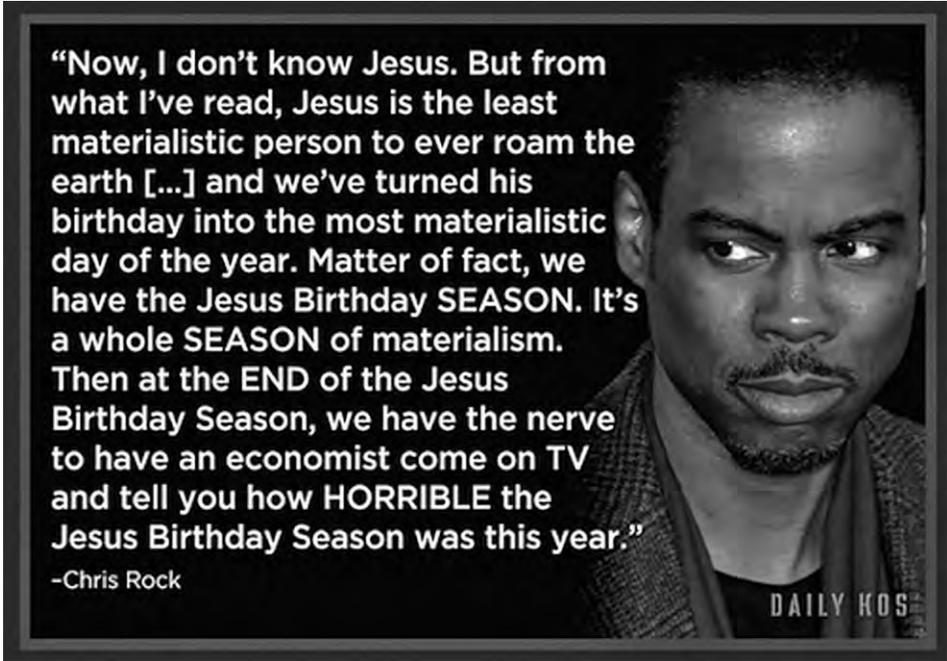
If the people do not break, the police will. The police are not an army and they have no staying power. Even now, the police are quietly quitting;

getting jobs with businesses as private guards, some for more money, some for less, but all with greater security and less chance of being killed.

If you look closely you can see the changing nature of the U.S. police force. It is becoming more and more like the Mexican police force—corrupt, degenerated, decadent, dishonest and weak. The higher police officers with political connections are even now carving out territory for themselves. This was the situation in Ferguson, Missouri and is now the situation in Detroit, Michigan. When this happens the ruling class cannot depend on their police force to do their bidding of occupying the cities.

As of now the capitalists do not understand how weak the police are. They are to some extent captives of their own propaganda. At this time they feel that a few “reforms” will be able to both take some pressure off the police and strengthen them.

The Democratic Party section of the capitalist class will be called on to do the job, for that is what they’re good at. They will have the help of the Black



“Now, I don’t know Jesus. But from what I’ve read, Jesus is the least materialistic person to ever roam the earth [...] and we’ve turned his birthday into the most materialistic day of the year. Matter of fact, we have the Jesus Birthday SEASON. It’s a whole SEASON of materialism. Then at the END of the Jesus Birthday Season, we have the nerve to have an economist come on TV and tell you how HORRIBLE the Jesus Birthday Season was this year.”

—Chris Rock

DAILY KOS

leaders in the Democratic Party, plus the academic liberals. Some of them will have some understanding, but it will be difficult for them to help the capitalists, as they want to. Events are moving too swiftly for them to educate their supporters.

So what is to be done? The police need to be completely defeated, politically and militarily. This can only be done if we are united and consciously do the job of defeating them. We need to understand how corrupt and disjointed they are, that they are over centralized, with people in the Military ultimately in control.

Depending on the federal government or the court system will not defeat the police—they can only be defeated by our own organizations.

We must remain in the streets actively fighting the police, but we need to also be developing our own organizations of deliberation and plan-

ning—our peoples assemblies, town meetings, *etc.* These must be our own working-class organizations, independent of the Democrat or Republican parties, or any parties representing the capitalist class—they are uninvited.

But all groups fighting the police and government are invited. The corruption and weakness of capitalism that is becoming apparent in the police is but a reflection of the corruption and weakness of capitalism as a whole.

I am confident we will win. And if we fight in a unified and organized way, there will be less blood on the snow!

With warm comradely greetings,

Joe Johnson

1 Josephus recorded Jewish history, with special emphasis on the first century AD and the First Jewish–Roman War, including the Siege of Masada. His most important works were *The Jewish War* (c. 75) and *Antiquities of*

the Jews (c. 94). *The Jewish War* recounts the Jewish revolt against Roman occupation (66–70). *Antiquities of the Jews* recounts the history of the world from a Jewish perspective for an ostensibly Roman audience. <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Josephus>

Dear Editors,

A popular song in the 1950s by the Andrew Sisters was, “Drinking Rum and Coca Cola—Both Mother and Daughter Working for the Yankee Dollar.” At that time it described the situation in Cuba; for the women of Cuba. The men were mostly unemployed except when cutting sugarcane.

The women of Cuba didn’t get much for their Yankee Dollar. At the time, Cuba had one of the highest infant mortality rates in the world and almost no education for the children who did live.

Living in a shack with no running water, plumbing, *etc.*, a shack that would be blown over come the next hurricane. They got little for their work except a sip of Rum and Coca Cola.

Now, after the revolution, they are not working for the Yankee Dollar but, in large numbers, are in the Cuban parliament and are leaders in the nation.

Currently Cuba’s infant mortality rate is one of the lowest in the world, lower than in the U.S. The Cuban population—including the women—is extremely literate. They have free education including university. It is not likely they will want to go back to working for the Yankee Dollar and a sip of Rum and Coca Cola!

Rather, with more travel to Cuba, the women of the U.S. will want to have what the Cuban women have.

I was talking to a young nurse who said she was thinking of going to Cuba. She said she was having a hard time paying for her daughter’s education—she also wants to become a nurse. In



Cuba, it would be quite possible for her daughter to get her education, and as good a one, if not better, than here in the U.S.

It's very likely that Cuba will influence people in the U.S. very positively.

With warmest comradely greetings in the spirit of Crazy Horse,

Joe Johnson, Chippewa Falls, WI

Dear Editors,

On Friday evening, December 5, 2014, I attended a vigil in Fountain Square in the center of my community of Chestertown, Maryland. The meeting, to "pay respect and raise awareness of the recent events in Ferguson, Missouri," was organized by the local Diversity Dialog Group.

I have to admit I went more out of curiosity than actual conviction. Even so, there were nearly a hundred people at the beginning which slowly whittled down to a hard core of about seventy, who stood outside in the cool, damp darkness for almost an hour—lighting candles, listening to prayers, motions of solidarity, and calls for justice and dialog between the races.

For a December evening spotting with rain and nothing special on the television I guess it wasn't a bad turnout for a town of little more than 5,000. The usual suspects were there—about a quarter were Black, another quarter looked like students from the local college, and the rest were like me—geriatric former hippies, lefties, Pinkos, *etc.*, with a scattering of the religious. Many were leftovers from a bygone age when conviction meant something more than being determined to get a bargain on Cyber Monday.

Don't get me wrong, I think it's wonderful that even this small group turned up but the reality is that dialog is actually only part of the process. As someone who lived in South Africa

under the brutal apartheid state in the early 1970's I know this for a fact. Nelson Mandela didn't later negotiate the dismantling of this oppressive system in a vacuum. A lot of people who went before him and protested whilst he was in jail had to get their hands dirty, not to say even bloody, in order for him to ultimately succeed.

People who think that the normal default reaction to a crisis will work as usual, by keeping their heads down and hoping the problem goes away, are deluding themselves. We have reached a tipping point.

There are calls to blame the police and retrain them. Considering the police are entirely recruited from the wider population, which they must naturally reflect, means such panaceas are somewhat *naïve* and unlikely to succeed.

Racism and the killing of young Black men and youth by the police is only the tip of the criminal justice iceberg which has been deliberately ignored by our useless "lamestream media," President, Congress, and other so-called national leaders who have betrayed their constituents for a quiet life under their true paymasters—corporate America.

The criminal justice system is an oxymoron, much like the United States of America—it isn't and we aren't! The USA now has more people its prison system than Stalin had at the zenith of the Soviet Gulags. We only have about five percent of the planet's population but hold about 25 percent of the earth's prisoners and a disproportionate number of those are non-white.

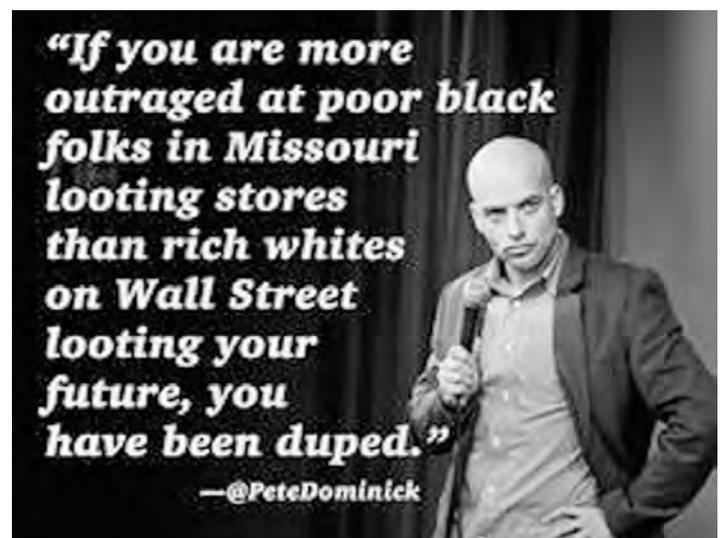
This either means Americans are the most criminally minded of all nations or there is something terribly wrong with our criminal justice system.

We all know the answer to this question and it doesn't matter where you stand on the political spectrum. Where is the justice when a youth's life can be destroyed and sent to jail for years for dealing in a little dope, or lose their homes through foreclosures, but a bankster can loot the economy for billions, make millions, destroy companies, and gamble with workers' life savings and yet only receive a slap on the wrist and a fine—all preceded by a tax-payer funded bailout? A nation where corporations can pollute the environment, destroy habitats, and poison water but only get fined money which they are then allowed to write off against their taxes?

This isn't justice—it's a corporate criminal racket perpetuated by an economic system that sees the planet as a huge refuse dump and prisoners as a cash crop to be farmed—all for the benefit of a small minority.

Police killings and racism are not the cause of our problems they are only symptoms of a dysfunctional and unsustainable economic system.

—Ted Newcomen, Chestertown, MD



Nat Weinstein—An Oral History

Part VII: Expulsion from the Socialist Workers Party

EDITED BY SOPHIE HAGEN, BASED ON AN INTERVIEW WITH NAT WEINSTEIN IN NOVEMBER 2007 BY CONOR CASEY

Jack Barnes, SWP National Leader

The SWP branch in San Francisco was a good branch, considering the quality of the party membership. I rubbed Jack Barnes, national secretary of the SWP, the wrong way and he rubbed me the wrong way from the beginning. It put me on guard against him and at the same time I recognized his talent. He was a very talented guy, and I saw him in action at one of the first big antiwar conferences in Washington, DC—in 1965, I believe. The leaders of the dominant group were Stalinists: young Stalinist kids, red diaper babies like my kids. Two were sons of the lawyer from the International Longshore and Warehouse Union here in San Francisco, Vincent Hallinan. One of them is district attorney in San Francisco. He was one of the leaders of the Stalinist faction that nominated the antiwar convention. We opposed it. Barnes organized the party's intervention. He was a smartass son of a bitch and he knew how to do it. I played a key role at one point, because they had gone off from the central positions that we were advancing (for mass, independent, non-exclusive, street demonstrations not aligned with the Democratic or any bourgeois Party) and they got into secondary and tertiary questions of organizational things where the political thing was central.

I said, "You're missing out. The way to win over these people is on the politics, not on various organizational maneuvers. That's the way to win them over. Hit them hard on politics! They don't agree with us and we'll be very unpopular at first, but we can win them over."

Barnes agreed. He supported it. He said, "Okay, talk to these kids and tell them how to approach the subject." They followed my advice on how to deal with it. They heard what I said in discussion. Of course, Barnes was a tactician; first class. A stellar tactician. Good tacticians, often, are also what we used to call "operators." You have to be an operator to be a good tactician. I'm not a good tactician because I'm not an operator. I'm good when it comes to the politics, the tactics, but in dealing with opponents, I'm not as good as he was.

For example, during the antiwar movement, I sat in on all the planning of the leadership caucus of our intervention in the demonstration. I saw Barnes in action: He was a very talented guy. I was impressed. He did things that I considered to reflect his methodology, which I didn't agree with, which led to what he did later to us.

Permanent revolution

The question of permanent revolution came up in debate in the SWP over Nicaragua. The party leadership maintained that the Nicaraguan government was a workers' and farmers' government. We rejected that notion because they included bourgeois figures in their government. They were minor figures, but I gave the example in Trotsky's writings on the Spanish Revolution, when there were only two bourgeois, relatively unknown bourgeois lawyers who were part of the popular front. Trotsky said, "You say they're unimportant, they're two relatively unknown figures, it's mostly workers or farmers that are in this Popular Front. Well, then, why do you have these two figures? The only reason you have them is telling the ruling class that this is a democratic revolution against fascism and the question of

socialist revolution will not come up."

The ruling class understands what the politics of communists and socialists are. It's not as if they don't understand it! They understand it better than some socialists! They know what is dangerous and what isn't.

So, anyway, I gave that example as one of the examples. He may be a priest and he's not a prominent figure, but he's a defender of capitalism. That's why they have him. He could be a supporter, but why in government? He doesn't play any governmental role, but the Sandinistas had control. And of course, they were for land to the peasants until they took power, and the day they took power, they abandoned the slogan of "land to the peasants." That was my argument.

A member of the SWP majority was a very talented intellectual kid by the name of Steve Clark. He wrote several polemics against me (and I against the position of the SWP majority). I think the title of his response to me was "Why Nat Weinstein Doesn't Understand Permanent Revolution." He was "defending" permanent revolution against me.

This took place in a pre-convention discussion, which was three months long. The convention was at Oberlin, and that's where they trashed permanent revolution, rejected it. Two days after the convention, they had an expanded political committee meeting. I was on the national committee and was invited to that meeting, but I had to return; there was a plane strike, so we went home by car. We wouldn't cross the picket line, even though it was an emergency. We couldn't do it, especially in a convention.

That was the majority's way of breaking from Trotskyism. But they can't break because they own the prop-

erty rights! By capturing the SWP, they captured the heritage of the SWP, which was all the Trotsky publications that we had a copyright to. My copyright became theirs. Well, that's democratic centralism. You can't say anything about that except to point out that they're in a contradiction, a political contradiction. They never said Trotsky was a criminal, that he was counterrevolutionary. They just said his theory of permanent revolution was wrong, was proven wrong, and they gave the example of Cuba to prove it. You know, I don't think they ever even tried to prove it, come to think of it. Just before they had rejected permanent revolution they made a big thing about the "Three Giants"—Nicaragua, Grenada, and Cuba. They weren't three giants. Grenada went down and so did Nicaragua. They gave up: no more socialism, even now.

Factions and tendencies forming

You have a right to form factions in the SWP, tendencies and factions. A tendency is a group that has a difference over a theoretical question. It could have a difference over the permanent revolution, for example, and not form a faction. That is, it's just an ideological difference that they wanted to discuss and discuss it in an organized way with the party at the appropriate times. You could discuss any question if you're on a committee—a national committee, or a political committee.

You have to be on the national committee to be on the political committee. You could discuss any question there, including party positions, but you can't have an organized discussion in between conventions except during the three-month period prior to a convention. Conventions are every two years. They could be earlier; you can have special conventions. We had a convention from the beginning every two years. Sometimes we were a little earlier, sometimes a little later.

They postponed the convention in 1983. They rejected permanent revolution at the one in late 1981, so the only time we could debate them was in the 1983 convention, which they postponed by a year—not a month, not two months—one year. Now, that was an indication that something was afoot. Why are they postponing the convention? Maybe we're not going to be around in 1984—and we weren't, as it turned out. We were expelled. So, on what basis did they do this?

Well, we raised the question. We formed a bloc, the two tendencies. Ours was called the Trotskyist Tendency. The other was called the Fourth Internationalist Tendency (FIT). That tendency broke strictly around the question of permanent revolution—they defended permanent revolution, as we did. They were close to Barnes and disagreed with us on our criticism of Barnes' trade union policy. They supported his policy on the unions, which we rejected—it was very sectarian. Frank Lovell, who was a good friend of mine, was part of that tendency, as was George Breitman, who was also a pretty important figure in the SWP. Steve Bloom was their tactical leader, the youth leader. Breitman was their ideological leader: He'd lay down the ideological and political line.

Tom Kerry supported our position; he was a member of our tendency, the Trotskyist Tendency. The other National Committee member was Lynn Henderson who's still a close friend of mine, a comrade. Lynn Henderson and I debated the leaders of the SWP at a convention on the question. He took up the trade union question; I took up the question of permanent revolution.

The transitional program

We broke originally over the question of the policies in unions. They were for forming labor party clubs all over the country, wherever we had a strong presence in the unions—which

was not very strong anywhere. They had a proletarianization policy of the student youth, the new recruits, by sending them all mechanically into the union. Not: "Go get a job, try to get a job in this union or that union." They picked five unions, five industrial unions in the country and asked all members of the party to join these five unions even though they already had jobs. It was a crash campaign to get the party into the unions. I was for the idea of getting comrades into the unions, but I was not in favor of the way they were doing it. They went into the union like they were going into a campus! They organized around socialist principles. They had a policy that they called "Talking Socialism." In other words, the idea being that we get known in the unions as advocating socialism, not participating in the struggles of workers at their level of consciousness! That was a rejection of the transitional program.

The strength of our politics is that they're easy to understand. The workers have to be prepared psychologically; their level of consciousness has to reach the point where certain proposals seem credible and other proposals do not. The Transitional Method means that you have to recognize and assess the level of consciousness of workers and decide what slogans can mobilize workers for action and lead them to a higher level of understanding.

So that is the proposal, for example, of the slogan of "shorter hours with no reduction in pay," to meet the problem of unemployment. At another stage, a higher level of understanding of the masses would make applicable the slogan of "nationalize the factories under workers' control;" they would just occupy the factories and operate them under workers' control whether the government liked it or not. Part of the proposal is nationalization, running an election campaign and proposing, "If we get elected, that's what we'll do."

We'd try to lead the masses in the direction of socialist revolution; it's as simple as that. It's not complicated, really. The slogans were all there in the transitional program written by Trotsky [*The Death Agony of Capitalism and the Tasks of the Fourth International*¹, 1938], but it's just a consolidation of the politics of the Bolsheviks. Everything that Trotsky wrote in what is called the transitional program is the politics advocated by the Bolsheviks in the course of the Russian Revolution. It worked! The revolution was made using the transitional method. It makes sense.

We don't write about nationalization of industry, although, when industries are marching and shutting down, that's a logical demand. But the workers are not ready for that yet—you raise that now and you look like you're off the wall. A more transitional slogan like a "class struggle" strategy as against "class collaboration" is better. Understanding that the interests of workers and employers are opposed. What's good for workers is bad for employers, and what's good for employers is bad for workers. It's as simple as that.

You've got to lead the workers to raise a slogan that meets the task that's before the workers at the moment, that has a logic of its own. If they accept that slogan, then that leads to a higher slogan. Then they get to see that that's not enough. They have to go further. That's the way it works.

What you do in the unions depends on what the problems of the unions are. Like if we were in the United Auto Workers union, now, we would have been part of the Soldiers of Solidarity, the grouping of rank-and-file trade unionists that were opposed to the contract and had a class struggle policy! They were quoted in the *New York Times* using the terms "class" and "class struggle" and so on. But you know, we tried to talk to workers in the language workers understand.

Expulsion

The Fourth Internationalist Tendency and our tendency were about equal in size. The majority of the San Francisco branch supported our Trotskyist Tendency. They had a minority in San Francisco with an old-timer, and a couple of comrades in Oakland and Berkeley.

We had a joint meeting. We formed a bloc. They wouldn't unite with us. We proposed a common tendency. At this point, when the SWP cancelled the convention, I said, "What we need is a faction. This is not a postponement." The FIT said it was a postponement to the convention.

I said, "It's not the postponement. It's the cancellation of the convention. We may not be here in 1984 for the convention."

I don't think they even set a time at first, but they postponed it and they said in '83 they were going to have an educational conference, not a convention. It was at the educational conference that we were expelled, and we were expelled for this.

I proposed that the two tendencies in the bloc form a faction. Between us we had maybe 125 to 150 people. Steve Bloom reported to the convention that he had dissolved the bloc. They asked him: "Why did you dissolve the bloc?" He wouldn't tell them, because he figured if he told them, they would expel us because we proposed forming a faction. Factions were legal in the SWP constitution. You can form a faction at any time. You don't need anybody's permission.

So they were afraid, because Barnes, the SWP National Secretary, introduced what became known as the "New Norm." It was an eight-dollar bulletin, spelled out "Re-Establish the Norm." Of course, it's not mimeographed. He printed it on a big printing press. It raised the question about making factions illegal—because they always lead to splits, was the rationale,

and therefore we can't have any more splits. That's absurd, because it produced a split! See? They expelled us: That's a split!

They expelled us. Why? Because we wouldn't tell them why we formed the faction! We were asked at the meeting of the National Committee, at the Educational Conference, at the very end. At the plenum, the first question point on the agenda was about dissolution of the bloc, and we were asked to explain it. The FIT wouldn't tell them. Saying that we proposed a faction and that they dissolved it meant that the National Committee and Barnes would expel us and then they would be the ones who fingered us and got us expelled. See? So they couldn't do that.

Had we said that it was because we formed a faction, that we proposed forming a faction, the FIT would have been expelled for not reporting. So you could have argued that we should be principled, but you see that doesn't stand up. We'd go down in history as having helped the majority with the expulsion of a tendency with whom we closely agreed.

I said, "Let them expel us! They can't do it, because there's nothing in the constitution that says you can't form a faction!" The "new norms" doesn't change the constitution! That's just a document that's passed by the majority; that's not a constitution. The constitution says you have a right to form faction—tendencies and factions are legal. You don't need anybody's permission. Of course, once you form a faction, you have to report it. But if you didn't report it, then they have a case. But we didn't form a faction, because the other tendency split. They voted against it. I think the meeting was in my house. I could hear it in another room, and we could hear them arguing with Steve, trying to convince him that we should form a faction, but he was adamant. He wouldn't do that. He came there without any intention of listening to us.

So they dissolved and we won the majority at the founding convention of Socialist Action afterwards. They were forced to reestablish a relationship with us because we were expelled.

What do we do? Well, we propose a convention.

They had no choice but to go along with it, but they didn't send their comrades. We made a concession to them. We gave them equal numbers of delegates. That was a concession on my part. Otherwise, they wouldn't come to the convention. We wanted them to formally be there and with a vote representing the comrades that left. But they lost some of their own comrades. So we won them over! We said, "We've got to form a public faction of the SWP." Then we said: "That wouldn't work; you're in the United States.

The current state of things

If we had the kind of party that we had before the split in the SWP and before Barnes, if we had the party we had in the days of Cannon and Farrell Dobbs and Tom Kerry, when they were the leadership of the party, they'd be right in the middle of these Soldiers of Solidarity in the United Auto Workers.

The Soldiers of Solidarity, and the Future of the Union, and Factory Rats are the three main groups that were formed during this UAW fight. They got at least a third of the vote in opposition to the contract. That's a considerable force!

This crisis is just the beginning of the next Great Depression and this one's going to be far more intense and severe and widespread and wide-ranging. It's going to combine financial, monetary (the dollar is sinking), and a crisis of oil production— all three at the same time. That's how you get a formula for revolution; that's what it is, once it gets going. I can't see any way the capitalist class can stop it; that they can save themselves.

International solidarity

You can't get the understanding of internationalism just by reading books, as well as observing events in the world. It's easy for educated workers—what we call the "vanguard" or "advanced workers," "thinking workers"—to understand what's happening in the world because they just extrapolate from their own experience. Solidarity is something that you learn from practical experience: It's not just an idea that you get from reading a book. It just makes sense.

There's the examples of American history: "We all hang together or we'll all hang separately." You've got that and you've got Tom Paine and you've got Thomas Jefferson and all of the wonderful words of every revolutionary document, including the American Revolution, the Civil War, and so on. Abraham Lincoln and all that—So all those things are a part of it and my internationalism doesn't come from my experience. What experience did I have? Well, everybody who goes abroad learns something. Everything that we are is a result of a life experience; it's not just this, that, or the other thing. It's all of it put together. Of course, there's a focus to everybody's life.

The bourgeois mindset

What makes people do what they do? It's not easy to figure out. There's lots of variables that make him do it. I get all twisted up trying to explain in my article why workers voted for a cut in wages during the UAW strike, when it's against their class interests. There's a number of explanations, one of the most important being: They were taking the buy-out. A lot of workers took the buy-out. Probably more than a third of the UAW membership took the buy-out. They're not the same people that they were. They've got a lot more to lose than they had to lose in 1934, or even in 1956.

Of course, it's not over. Now that they've established a new contract, it's

going to be a transient one—a big flood of workers leaving and new workers they hired at half-wages, at non-union wages.

They call their standard of living "middle class standard of living." That doesn't come from the workers. That comes from the bourgeoisie. It comes from the mass media. They talk about higher-paid workers as "middle class." How much you earn doesn't determine your class. The role that you play in the process of production determines your class, not how much money you get paid. So if workers have a strong union and you get double the pay that the non-union workers make, does that mean they're middle class? That's absurd!

Trotsky and Lenin

There are things I've changed my mind about in my life. I think that we were a little too rigid, I think, and I was too rigid. I was very rigid on the organizational principles. As soon as I detected a divergence, I was quick to catch it and to respond to it critically. I "had a nose" for it, as they say; I could smell it. My comments were introducing a subtle variation in our political orientation; it was more than a subtlety. It was a break from our understanding, the accepted understanding. Some breaks are justified, like Lenin's concept of the organizational principles of the party, of the revolutionary party, democratic centralism, a disciplined organization.

Trotsky's concept of permanent revolution was similar to Lenin's, but was different in some important respects. Rather than permanent revolution, Lenin's view was summed up in the phrase "the democratic dictatorship of workers and peasants," in which he saw a connection between the peasants, the revolutionary aspirations of the peasants for land. That's the essence of a democratic revolution, which breaks the power of the old feudal class, the landlord class, and the role of the workers. Trotsky's view was slightly

different and Lenin, I think, came closer to Trotsky's view in the *April Thesis*, when he didn't call for a democratic dictatorship, but called for the dictatorship of the proletariat. See, that was the essence of Lenin's *April Theses*, in April 1917.

That's why Trotsky joined the Bolsheviks, in addition to other things. The Bolsheviks were playing a dynamic role, a leading role, and of course Trotsky was a leader of the 1905 Revolution, which was based on soviets. So here you have two great thinkers coming together based upon experience. Trotsky saw the value and he rejected Lenin's organizational principles, but he saw it in action and he became convinced. Lenin saw in action that the workers in their soviets were playing the decisive role and he was the source of the inspiration for the slogan "All Power to the Soviets." Of course, the soviets were workers' councils. But then, as an expression of Lenin's view, there were peasant soviets. The peasants followed the example, in the rural areas, of workers in the cities and they formed what were really democratic local organizations representing the interests of poor farmers. Poor and landless farmers. They called their formation a "soviet."

It shows the predominant influence of the working class because of their role in society. Not because they're smarter. Of course, you have to be a little more trained in writing and the formal educational skills, to be a worker. A mechanic has to know how to use a ruler. The peasants don't need to use a ruler; they can "step off" to measure. They don't need to use a ruler as a rule, using the two meanings of the same word. So that's another manifestation of the dialectic. Of course, dialectic was originated by an idealist. Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel thought that the idea was the source of all reality and that concrete reality was only a reflection. Marx "turned Hegel onto his feet." It's not just a cute expression.

It's a very profound thought, and a lot of profound thoughts can be simplified like that and that's a skill that I don't have and some people have.

My wife, Sylvia

Sylvia was like that. Sylvia was a wonderful woman, and I didn't really understand how wonderful she was until she died, unfortunately. I mean I knew she was great, but I didn't realize how great she was. A very modest, unassuming person: Not like me. A good writer: Much better than I'll ever be.

She was the one who popularized the slogan "It will be a great day when the schools get all the money they need and the Navy has to hold a bake sale to buy a ship." She was one of the most articulate spokespersons for the women's movement. There was a rally in Golden Gate Park organized by the National Organization for Women—our comrades in NOW were in the NOW leadership—and Sylvia was scheduled to speak, as was Mayor Willie Brown. Sylvia had just started her speech and he walked up and pushed her aside, gently. He said, "Sylvia, dear, I have to leave. Would you let me speak now?"—and cut her off. Just a few minutes after she started, she had the crowd cheering, and he came in and cut her off and stopped her. That was calculated. That's why he was there. That's my opinion.

Well, our line was "Down with the Democratic Party; they're the enemy." Of course, most of our opponents in NOW were Democrats. The leadership of NOW, the national leadership, was Democrats. The SWP and Barnes wouldn't help our fraction in NOW when they were redbaited and expelled from NOW by the national leadership, who moved in on San Francisco through their agents because we were in leadership of the San Francisco chapter. Not formally, but we had leadership positions on the executive committee, so everybody looked to Sylvia and Carole Seligman as their leaders.

Sylvia also ran for the San Francisco School Board. She had ten thousand votes or something like that. We never got that many votes for mayor. I ran for mayor, once, but I didn't get many votes, probably less than two thousand. I debated former San Francisco mayor Dianne Feinstein, who won the election. She was the president of the City Council.

I like to talk about Sylvia every chance I get. She was something special. She was a fighter! I found out that when she was young, she told me she was sort of a tomboy. She played baseball and so on. I once got into a fight with my landlord. He was a young Italian guy. We rented the apartment immediately after the war, in a three-story building. The landlord, on the ground floor, was originally an old Irish woman who was a sweet old lady. Then he bought it—a young man about my age and his wife—and they thought that they were barons. He tried to order us around. I went down to pay the rent—I think the rent was something like twenty-five dollars a month, and I gave him thirty dollars and I expected him to give me five dollars change.

I said, "I don't have change." In those days, we didn't have a checking account. He wouldn't give it to me! He said, "Well, I fixed something and I'm taking the five dollars." He never said anything to me about it before.

I said, "Hey! What do you think you're doing?" His wife started pushing me, and I pushed her back, and he said, "You struck my wife!"—and he leaped at me. He was a big guy! I'm pretty good with my fists, and I was fighting and the two of them were trying to get at me. Sylvia heard the commotion, and she came running down from the apartment upstairs and she leaped from around the fifth step from the ground onto the landlord's wife's back and pulled her off of me. And she got into the fight with me! That was Sylvia! That was a comrade; that was somebody special.

I never really told her how much I loved her. I feel bad about that.

I don't know what that has to do with politics, but it gave me a chance to talk about Sylvia. We were "a perfect union," as the founding fathers said about the United States. Almost perfect—she was perfect, I wasn't.

Intellectual debate within the party

There's a caliber, a quality, of the members of the SWP that I knew. I knew mostly the working class members, the trade unionists. They were all—almost all of them—what you could call "worker intellectuals." They were people who liked to talk about poetry, liked to argue politics. It was also that they were very interested in ideas, not only ideas about socialism, but all ideas: science, poetry, culture, art, everything. They talked about everything, argued about everything, but the kind of argument that is fruitful and not necessarily antagonistic.

To the extent that I can be called an intellectual, I'm a worker who became what Lenin called an advanced worker. I didn't go to school, so that qualifies me as a worker who is not an intellectual, no formal education.

There's always a stage in the discussion where it's civil relations, but then when the differences sharpen, the discussion becomes more serious, the moods change on both sides, and that's the nature of human beings. It's part of the promise and the curse of human nature. We're animals, and we have self-preservation as a fundamental instinct, and but we're also social animals, which means that we can't survive as a species without a high degree of social consciousness. We are stronger because we work together and collaborate instead of fighting all the time, but we also fight all the time. They like to say about socialists—especially cynics who have been through the movement and see everything negatively—"You just have split after split after split

after split! And then: splinters! Splits of splits, and so on." That happens. It happens. It's life; that's the way it is.

This is the end of the 2007 interview with Nat. Nat went on in his political life after 1983 to help form and lead Socialist Action and then to edit and write for Socialist Viewpoint. He remained a committed revolutionary socialist until the end of his life May 9, 2014. He was 89-years-old.²

¹ <http://www.marxists.org/archive/trotsky/1938/tp/>

² "Nat Weinstein—An Oral History," parts I, II, and III can be found in Socialist Viewpoint, Vol. 14, No. 5

http://www.socialistviewpoint.org/sepoct_14/sepoct_14_38.html

"Nat Weinstein—An Oral History," parts IV, V and VI can be found in Socialist Viewpoint, Vol. 14, No. 6

http://www.socialistviewpoint.org/novdec_14/novdec_14_36.html

Understanding that the interests of workers and employers are opposed. What's good for workers is bad for employers, and what's good for employers is bad for workers. It's as simple as that.



SOCIALIST VIEWPOINT

Where to find us:

www.socialistviewpoint.org

info@socialistviewpoint.org

(415) 824-8730

EDITORIAL BOARD

Carole Seligman, Bonnie Weinstein

GRAPHIC & WEB DESIGN

Mykael

BUSINESS MANAGER

Carole Seligman

The Socialist Viewpoint Publishing Association publishes *Socialist Viewpoint* in the interests of the working class.

The editors take positions consistent with revolutionary Marxism. Within this context the editors will consider for publication articles, reviews or comments. The editors may publish comments to accompany these articles. Photographs and cartoons will be appreciated.

Socialist Viewpoint reprints articles circulated on the Internet when we deem them of interest to our readers. Such articles are reprinted exactly as they appeared in the original source, without any editorial or stylistic changes by us.

No limitation will be placed on the author(s) use of their material in their subsequent work provided acknowledgment is made of its publication in *Socialist Viewpoint*. The Socialist Viewpoint Publishing Association retains for itself rights to reprint articles as collections, educational bulletins, and similar uses. With the inclusion of an acknowledgment and a notice of the copyright ownership, permission is hereby given educators to duplicate essays for distribution gratis or for use in the classroom at cost. The author(s) retain all other rights.

Signed articles do not necessarily represent the views of *Socialist Viewpoint*. These views are expressed in editorials.

Socialist Viewpoint is printed by members of Local 583, Allied Printing Trades Council, San Francisco, California.

Special Introductory Subscription Offer!

One year of *Socialist Viewpoint* for \$20.00,

Bargain rate: \$35.00 for two years;

(Regular rate: \$30.00/International Rate: \$50.00)

Make your check payable to: *Socialist Viewpoint*, & mail to:

SOCIALIST VIEWPOINT

60 29th Street, #429

San Francisco, CA 94110

Please include your name, address, city and zip code.

To help us know who our subscribers are,
please tell us your occupation, union, school,
or organization.

Note to Readers:

Socialist Viewpoint magazine has been edited and distributed by a group of revolutionaries who share a common political outlook stemming from the old Socialist Workers Party of James P. Cannon, and Socialist Action from 1984 through 1999.

After being expelled from Socialist Action in 1999, we formed Socialist Workers Organization in an attempt to carry on the project of building a nucleus of a revolutionary party true to the historic teachings and program of Marx, Engels, Lenin and Trotsky.

What we have found is that our numbers are insufficient for this crucial project of party building. This problem is not ours alone; it is a problem flowing from the division and fragmentation that has plagued the revolutionary movement in capitalist America and the world since the 1980s.

What we intend to do is to continue to promote the idea of building a revolutionary Marxist working class political party through the pages of *Socialist Viewpoint* magazine. We continue to have an optimistic outlook about the revolutionary potential of the world working class to rule society in its own name—socialism. We are optimistic that the working class, united across borders, and acting in its own class interests can solve the devastating crises of war, poverty, oppression, and environmental destruction that capitalism is responsible for.

We expect that revolutionaries from many different organizations, traditions, and backgrounds will respond to the opportunities that will arise, as workers resist the attacks of the capitalist system and government, to build a new revolutionary political party. Just as we join with others to build every response to war and oppression, we look forward to joining with others in the most important work of building a new mass revolutionary socialist workers' party as it becomes possible to do so.

No Matter What They Say or Do, We Die

BY KEVIN COOPER



Kevin Cooper

Kevin Cooper is an innocent man on San Quentin's Death Row in California. He continues to struggle for exoneration and to abolish the death penalty in the whole U.S.

They elect the first African American President of the United States, and we still die. They say that we now live in a post-racial America, yet we still die.

President Obama says to the youth to be patient, because change takes time,

Continued from inside front cover
rent rules at military confinement facilities, it is very unlikely that I will have any photos taken until I am released—which, parole and clemency notwithstanding, might not be for another two decades.

—Reader Supported News, December 16, 2014

<http://readersupportednews.org/news-section2/318-66/27526-why-speaking-out-is-worth-the-risk>

and while we have patience, we still die. President Obama says that times have changed, and that things aren't as bad as they used to be. Times may have changed, but we are still dying!

They say that they are fighting a war on drugs, yet we die. They say that they are fighting a war on terrorism, yet we die. It appears that no matter what kind of war that they claim to fight, we die!

When they seek justice for their kind, we die.

When they stand their ground, we die.

When they claim to be protecting their 2nd Amendment right to the United States Constitution, we die.

When they enforce the law, we die.

When they think, we die.

When they get scared, we get dead.

When they chase us, we die.

When they protect and serve, we die.

Certain people in positions of power within this country often speak about the importance of peace and the rule of law. Yet when we peacefully protest, we die by the hands of the law. When we protest against their violence towards and against us, we die. When we vote, we die and when we don't vote we still die!

Who are "We?" We are the poor and minority peoples of this country. The "have nots" within the land of the "haves." We are Black, and Latino and Native American, and Asian and poor white. We are Gay, Lesbian, Transgender and Queer. We are the "other" Americans, but we are Americans. But most importantly, we are all human beings.

It's an historical truth, no matter what they say or do, we die!

Who are "They?" They are the powers that be, the *status quo*, the law enforcers and makers, the unjust crim-

inal justice system, which they own, run and control. Despite what some of them claim, this is not about "a few bad apples." These inhumane things have been going on far too long within this country for it to be just a few bad people doing these inhumane things to their fellow citizens. This is institutional racism and classism within America. This can no longer be business as usual, not in these times.

As long as it stays the same and doesn't change, we will continue to die, here in the "land of the free" where "we" are said to be equal. What kind of equality is this where only the poor and minorities get death by any reason?

—freekevincooper.org

http://savekevincooper.org/pages/essays_content.html?ID=375

Write to Kevin Cooper at:

Kevin Cooper C-65304, 4 EB 82

San Quentin State Prison

San Quentin, CA 94974





Like high prison walls, the separation wall dividing Israel and Palestine. (UPI Photo/UPI/Debbie Hill). Read *Turning Gaza Into a Super-Max Prison* on page 55.



The Cuban 5 reunite after their release by the United States. Read *U.S. and Cuba: A Change in Relationship* on Page 43.

On the Front Cover: ►
Artwork by Kevin “Rashid” Johnson depicting recent police murders of unarmed Black and brown men.



Demonstrators march holding images of missing students in protest for the disappearance of 43 students in the state of Guerrero, in Mexico City. (AP Photo/Eduardo Verdugo) Read *Forth-Three Faces that Move the World* page 46.