From

Self-Destruction

To The Reconstruction

Of Self:

My Path To

Redemption

By,

Kijana Tashiri Askari



"Prisons do not disappear problems, they disappear human beings." ~ *Angela Davis*

I've been in prison for the past 20 years, 17 of which has been consecutively spent in the Security Housing Unit (e.g. "The SHU.") which is a euphemism for solitary confinement. However, 20 years prior to my current incarceration, I had also served previous stints in prison, amidst several stints in & out of Juvenile Hall and the California Youth Authority (C.Y.A.).

Essentially, a Brotha had embarked upon a path of self-destruction, through the multitude of crimes that I was committing in the community, which were largely against the people of the community and their property. But it wasn't until the year of 1991 / 1992, while a Brotha was housed in Administrative Segregation (e.g. "Solitary Confinement") for a manufacturing weapons charge, is when I finally has a serious talk with myself and said:

"Self, what is wrong with this picture? Because, here we are, with the gearshift stuck in neutral and we're not making any real progress with regards to doing or achieving anything of real significance with our lives. And from the look of things, matters will not be getting any better, no time soon."

For, I was no longer armed with the ability to act upon my negative emotional impulses, seeing as my physical being had been restricted in practically every extreme, due to one's isolated confines. So, during the course of introspection, I had to honestly ask:

"Self - what benefit, if any, would we have in continuing down this path of self-destruction?"

As the solace of my solitude has now enabled me to realize, that my self-destructive ways were only creating a negative burden upon myself, from the perspective of, harming & preying upon the communities via committing acts of senseless crime / violence in the community, that perpetuated a "domino effect" upon the people and their families within our community. Because, up until that point in my life, I had lacked a complete and true understanding that prisons were an extension of every poor community within the free societies of the world.

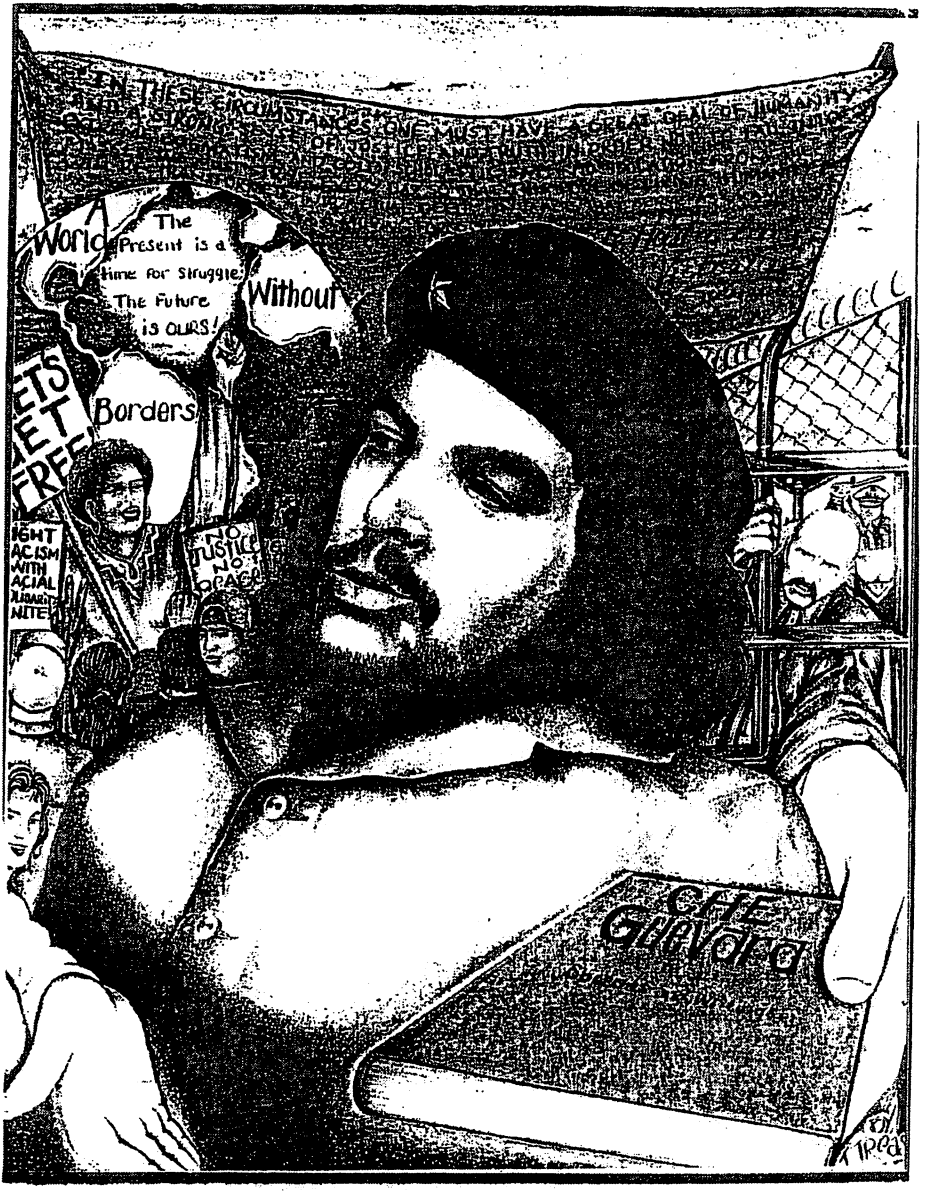
But what actually formulates the construct of a community? A community is defined as:

"A social group of any size whose members reside in a specific locality, share government, and often have a common political background, and/or a cultural and historical heritage."

So, it was right there, during the year of 1991/1992, where I said:

"Self, we cannot live like this anymore, as I know that life has got to have more to offer, than all of the negativities that we have experienced / endured, thus far."

Hence, the origins of my path to redemption via the reconstruction of my self-destructive ways, as I've now caught a glimpse of my true humanity. How to go about this redemption process was a whole different story in and of itself. So I had to first find out, what does redemption mean? So that I could constitute the application of redemption within my day to day endeavors, to thus manifest a concrete example of redemption.


IN THESE CIRCUMSTANCES ONE MUST HAVE A GREAT DEAL OF HUMANITY
The Present is a time for Struggle. The Future is OURS!
Without
Borders
NO JUSTICE NO PEACE
Che Guevara

Redemption is defined as:

"The salvation of and the atonement for guilt; to make amends for; to make up for."

Being that it was I, as an individual, who was literally terrorizing the community and the people who lived in them, the path to redemption had to start & begin with me, from the perspective of community healing, building & restoration. Meaning, I had to seriously change my attitude, values and the way I thought about and viewed matters, to thus, effectuate change in my behavior, as it pertains to being a productive member of the community.

Shortly thereafter, I was then released from administrative segregation and was placed back onto the general population mainline at New Folsom State Prison, where my path to redemption continued. It didn't take long for my captors and their crew of counter-intelligence agents, to now recognize my political transition into a revolutionary, albeit I was still in the embryo stage of development. Nonetheless, in August of 1994, as a Brotha was commemorating my ancestors historical legacy of struggle against U.$. imperialism, I was abducted from the mainline, under the facade of me organizing prisoners to commit a physical assault upon unidentified prisoners. This subsequently lead me to being relegated to indeterminate S.H.U. status, as an alleged "prison gang member."

Once I was sent to the S.H.U., my path to redemption continued, via the ongoing transformation of, uprooting the negative weeds of self-destruction that had been planted in my mind and thus, my actions. Hence, it was also necessary for me to start re-harvesting my mind with a crop of new ideas. Because, truthfully speaking, you are what you think & believe

in. So I began to study & read, any & all books, newspapers, magazines, etc. that I could get my hands on.

In solitary confinement, we're not provided with any community-based material resources, so I made it my business to constructively utilize any & all community contacts that I had - such as family & friends to send me money for canteen. I would make the necessary sacrifices by not putting in for a full canteen draw, so that I would always have some money to buy books, newspapers or magazines with. Or, I would ask my family & friends to use a portion of the money which they intended to send me, to instead, buy me some reading materials, so as to keep my mind stimulated with new & positive ideas. Because, it didn't take long before I realized that access to information is the crucible that sustains / nurtures our humanity, and thus empowers us as individuals. Knowledge is power!

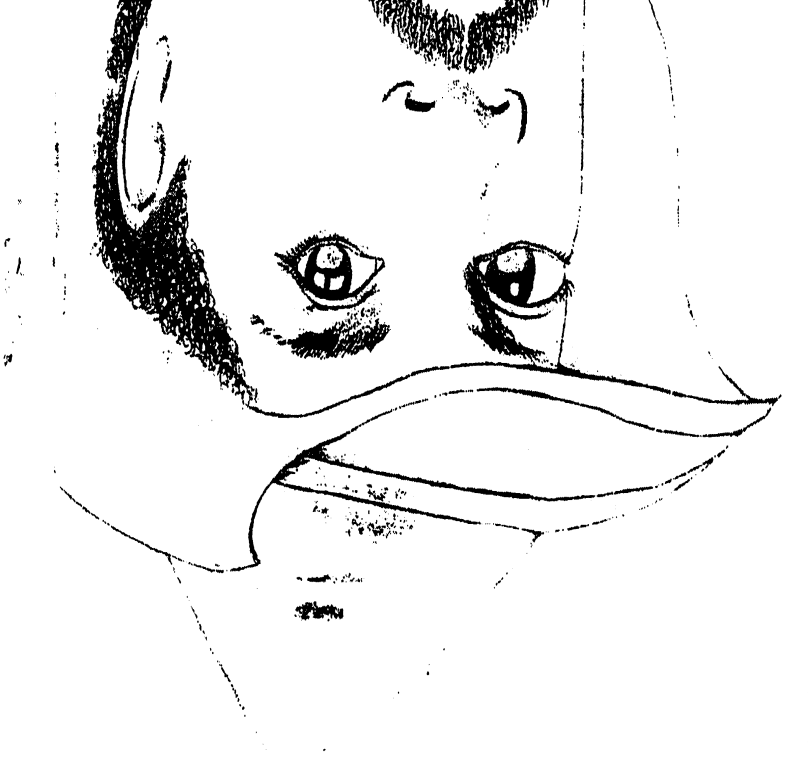
Hence, my humanity was further redeemed / restored, as I elevated my state of consciousness, through the reading of books like:

A Taste of Power, by Elaine Brown.
Women, Race & Class, by Angela Davis.
The Spirit of Man, by Iyanla Vanzant.
The Philosophy & Opinions of Marcus Garvey, by Amy Jacques Garvey.
The Destruction of Black Civilization, by Naim Akbar.
The African Origin of Civilization, by Cheikh A. Diop.
The Mis-Education of the Negro, by Carter G. Woodson.
Black Men: Obsolete, Single, Dangerous, by Haki R. Madhubutt.
Wretched of the Earth, by Frantz Fanon.

This is just to name a few. These beautiful New Afrikan Black Sistas / Brothas, shined a ray of light on the historical materialism, as to the atrocities that the U.$. imperialists were committing and continue to commit against the nation of New Afrikan Black People.







This only reaffirmed my commitment in serving and aiding all oppressed people. 10

Pusuant to penal code sections 2600 && 2601, us prisoners are allowed to share reading materials with one another and I would encourage this practice, as it gives you access to more positive information and allows you to build upon a sense of community in your locality. In addition, it provides the possibility of sharing & developing positive ideas with each other from this practice. Also, the newspapers & magazines gave me another medium, as to how to stay connected to the community, to thus negate my isolation caused by being held in solitary confinement (e.g. "The S.H.U.") For, the newspapers & magazines contain information and addresses about various community resources, events, organizations & programs that I was now able to reach out to and get involved with.

Through initiating & developing the necessary discipline, character & resolve to remain steadfast & committed to the practice of studying & reading any & all books, newspapers, magazines, etc. that I could get my hands on, I was then able to discover a new found ability to write about all of the things I had been reading & studying. In other words, one constructive outlet created another medium for me to not only sustain my humanity, but to also express my humanity, while relegated to indefinite solitary confinement status. And, before you knew it, I no longer had the time nor the desire to either think, act or behave in a negative & self-destructive manner. My thoughts were & remain focused on the positive reconstruction of self, via my path to redemption.

There is a positive to every negative, but the individual just has to take the time to identify the positive, in every perceived negative situation, because the negative only exists when you allow it to. You always have the option of turning sour lemons into lemonade, by disciplining yourself to the practice of

reading, writing & studying, as it gives you a real purpose & allows you to use your inner creativity. It defines your faith in self so that you can become a better person in the interest of the community, as every process of change starts with the individual & thus the community. It also gives you a new self-determination that would enable you to help save / rebuild our communities, that we once took part in terrorizing through our self-destructive ways. It also provides you with several additional principle variables of character building, which you may not have been aware of, prior to this transition.

Our struggle for New Afrikan Black Liberation must be defined & constructed under qualitatively developed principles that will ensure / sustain our propagated existence as a nation of New Afrikan Black People that are struggling for real freedom!!

Here is a core listing of principles that we must continue to build upon and utilize as our guide so that our ultimate goal of real freedom is achieved:

Our goal is to unify ourselves politically, socially, culturally, economically, etc. and to maintain unity from this perspective, through the reconstruction of our family and community values.

Our self-determination is our ability to define our propagated existence for the sole purpose of redeeming ourselves and thus our communities.

Our goal is to establish a model of collective work & responsibility in our communities, by functioning as a collective body with one voice, and to thus make the problems of each Sista / Brotha in our community, our problem, so that we can work together as a community by finding . Developing community-based solutions for our own problems.

Our goal as a community is to establish a functional model of cooperative economics which entails pooling

our resources together, so that we can build our own institutions of business and thereby shop at & buy from our own stores, food markets, etc.

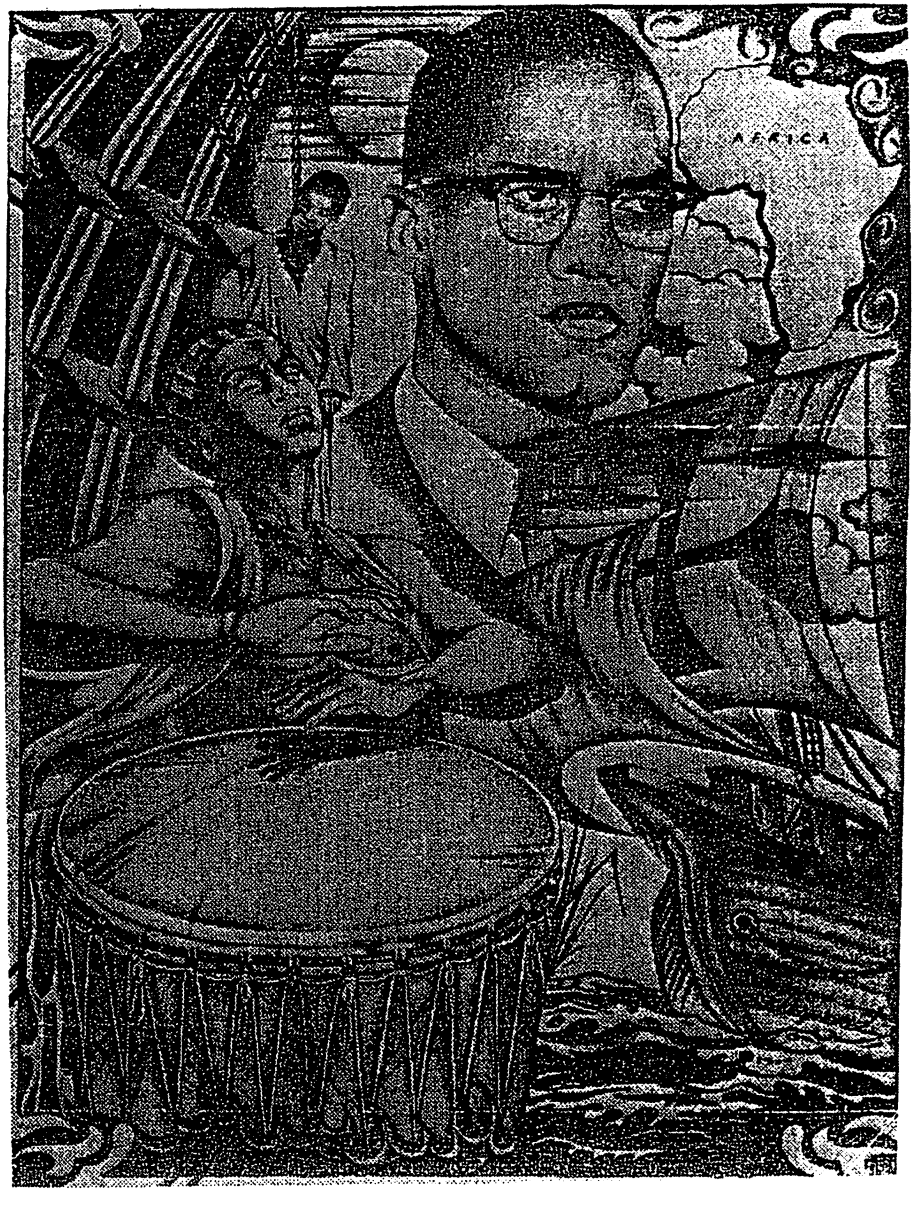
Our purpose is to make our collective vocation the building of our community, to restore our humanity back to traditional greatness and to create a social climate where each member of the community can consciously contribute to the rebuilding of our community.

Our inner creativity is to do as much as we can to leave our community more beautiful and beneficial than we inherited it, which will test and enhance our creativity.

Our faith is to believe with our hearts, that our every action will be a manifestation of righteousness, which will be guided by our humanity and love for the People in our community.

Here are a few questions to test and advance your understanding on the materialism of what you just read in this pamphlet. There are no right or wrong answers to these questions, as freedom is a constant struggle!!

1.) What does unity mean to you?
2.) What have you determined yourself to do or become?
3.) What does community mean to you?
4.) What does redemption mean to you?
5.) How can you redeem yourself for the sake of redeeming your community?
6.) What is your purpose in life?
7.) Who or what do you have faith in?
8.) Have you identified your inner creative self yet?


AFRICA

For additional reading of my pamphlets, initiatives, etc. you may write to:

Attention: South Chicago ABC Zine Distro
c/o Anthony Rayson
P.O. Box 721
Homewood, IL 60430

Ask for the following pamphlets, initiatives, etc.
The series - volumes 1 thru 4
Evidence of Corruption, Genocide & Neo-Colonialism
The New Afrikan Anti-Alcohol Initiative 101
New Afrikan Physical Fitness 101
The New Afrikan Domestic Crisis Intervention Initiative.

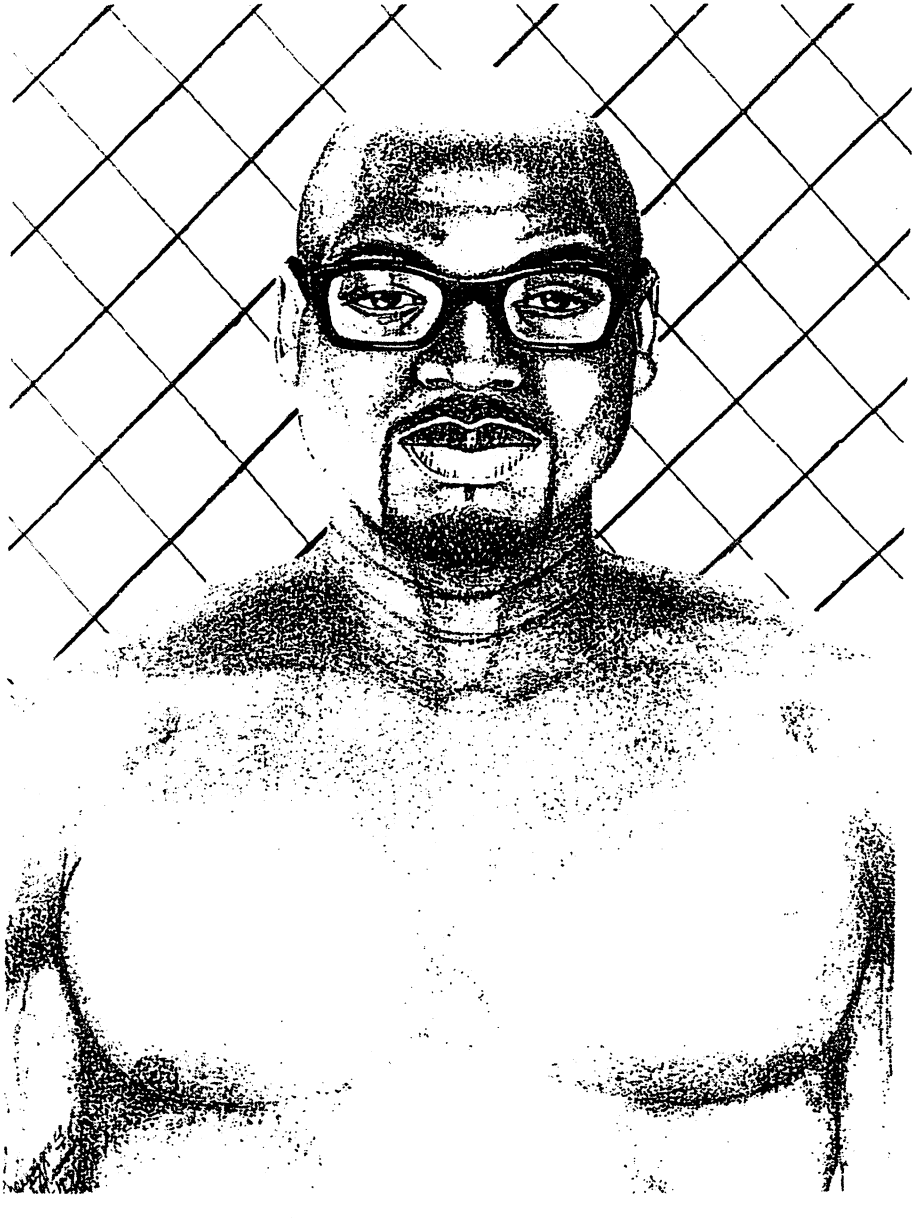
Chief Facilitators & Supporters

Chief Administrator
Ms. Hannah Bastienne
www.myspace.com/dare2struggle

Midwest Regional Facilitator / Coordinator
c/o Mr. Anthony rayson
P.O. Box 721
Homewood, IL 60430

Southern California Facilitator / Coordinator
Attention: Univ. of Calif. Riverside
c/o Mr. Dylan Rodriguez
Ethnic Studies Dept. #3602 - HMNSS
Riverside, Calif. 92521

Northern California Facilitator / Coordinator
Attention: Legal Services for Prisoners With Children
c/o Ms. Carol Strickman
1540 Market Street suite #490
San Francisco, Calif. 94102



For more information, contact me at:
Kijana Tashiri Askari
s/n Marcus Harrison #H54077
P.O. Box 7500 / D3 - 122 / SHU
Crescent City, Calif. 95531
www.myspace.com/dare2struggle
email: tashiri@gmail.com

The struggle continues!!!
Kijana Tashiri Askari

SOUTH CHICAGO
ABC ZINE DISTRO
P.O Box 721 Homewood, IL 60430