Interview

With

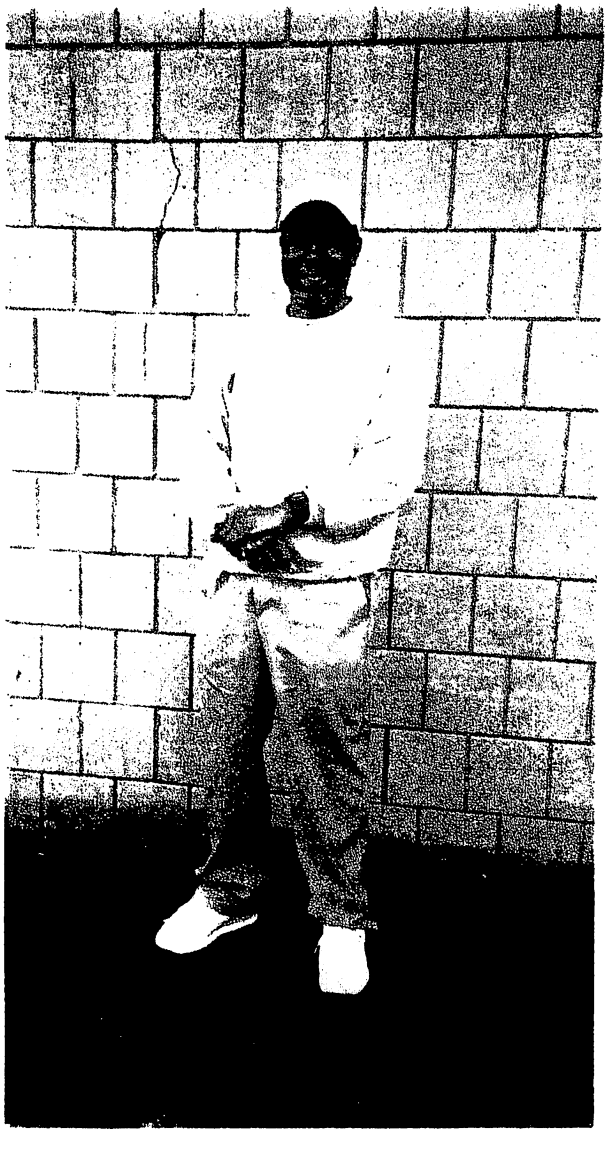
Sundiata

Acoli

Including,

Letter to Washington Heights High School Students

Sundiata Acoli



I was born, Clark Edward Squire on January 14, 1937, in Decatur, Texas to Naomi Squire and Rosevelt Johnson. I have one sister, Alice Squire who is two years older than I am. A year after my birth my mother migrated with us children 150 miles west to Vernon, Texas, located at the mouth of the Texas Panhandle.

There my mother met and married our step-father, Jessie Walker, and there my sister and I were raised and schooled. Texas was segregated at the time and life in general was very hard for Blacks, Mexicans and poor Whites too, although most of them were just as racist, or more so, as the better off Whites. Alice and I graduated from Booker T. Washington High School together in 1952. Then we went to Prairie View A & M, a Black land-grant College and we graduated together in 1956: Alice with a B.A. in English and me with a B.S. in math.

After graduation, my sister married her college boyfriend and they moved to Los Angeles, CA. After an unsuccessful interview with a large electronic corporation in New York City, I landed a job with NASA as a computer programmer and began work at their Edwards Air Force Base, CA, installation in the Mojave Desert. I liked computer work but didn't like the desert, nor did my boss, a Southern White woman from North Carolina, care much for me and would not give me a raise. So, after a year I resigned and returned to Harlem, which I liked much better.

It was 1957. I was classified 1-A, and no commercial corporation would risk hiring or training me just to see me soon after become drafted into the military. So I worked for various military bases and Defense Contractors in upstate New York and on Long Island, NY until I reached the age of 26 ½ and was no longer eligible for the draft. At that time I moved back to NYC, on the Lower East Side and began working for commercial computer corporations in the City.

The Civil Rights struggle was going full blast with sit-ins, Black voter registration drives, pickets and demonstrations for equal rights and attacks on Black Civil Rights workers and their multi-national supporters by police, Klansmen and irate White citizens, all of which was played out on TV newscasts each night. The U.S. began to escalate the Viet Nam War and an incipient Anti-War Movement began to take root.

A Similar incipient movement began among women for equal rights and among students for student rights. Then, John F. Kennedy was assassinated and Barry Goldwater, the far right-wing conservative was nominated by the Republicans to run against Lyndon B. Johnson, the VP who succeeded JFK.

During that 1964 presidential campaign, Goodman, Cheney and Schwerner, 3 Civil rights workers, were brutally murdered in Philadelphia, MS, by the Neshoba County Sheriff, Klansmen and White Citizen Council

members. Several newscasts implied that the murders would drastically curtail the number of volunteers from the North, many of whom were 4 White, who were going South to help Blacks register to vote.

The tone of the newscasts made me decide to volunteer to go South to register voters. I called COFO, the Council of Federated Organizations and volunteered. They accepted me provided that I could pay for my own ticket. I did and flew into Jackson, MS where I was met at the airport by a 2-car convoy of Black men with concealed weapons and I was driven to Batesville, MS that night and housed with a 40-something year old Black woman who was the local community leader. The next morning I went to the local Community Center to meet the other voter registrants/community organizers and was assigned to go to the Court House with Joe, a young White guy, to help him register Black voters.

As soon as we reached the Court House's back steps where 10 or so Blacks were lined up to enter, the County Sheriff descended the steps and began cursing and screaming at Joe at the top of his lungs. Joe screamed right back and it looked as though a fight would break out at any moment. It didn't. Things settled down and Joe and I began assisting the Blacks with answers to their questions, requests for water, seats, sample voter forms or whatever they needed to prepare them to register. After standing in line in the hot sun all day, about 3 Blacks would be let inside the Court House to apply for registration and sometimes one, but mostly no one would pass the test. The rest would have to return to try it again another day.

This process, including the Sheriff and Joe starting each morning with a loud, vociferous argument, repeated itself each day along with some unforeseen emergency: someone fainting or having an epileptic fit from prolonged standing in the sun, or a drunken White having to be restrained by his buddies from approaching the line of Black registrants, or a dead snake, raccoon, cat or whatever on the back steps where Blacks lined up to register, or Whites making rebel yells from their cars while circling the Court House, etc., but no violence ever broke out. On weekends we worked the outlying plantations, county churches, community meetings, rallies, etc., urging Black people to come to the Court House and register. At the end of my vacation I returned to my computer job in NYC.

My political consciousness grew over time to the point where I felt the only solution to Black and (world) problems was revolution and I looked for a way to contribute to the Black Revolution. When the Black Panther party arrived in Harlem in the summer of '68, I joined them that fall fight after the birth of my youngest daughter, Sunni. A few years hence, I would learn that I had another daughter, Rita, older by 12 years, who lived in Texas.

I was elected Finance Officer of the Harlem Chapter and was soon engrossed in community organizing: community control of schools work, tenant organizing, campaigns to stop drug pushers, police brutality and the murder of Black people. Suddenly, on April 2nd, 1969, we were hit with the panther 21 Conspiracy Indictment / roundup in which the entire Harlem leadership was arrested and most of us were held in jail and on trial for 2 years before all defendants were acquitted on all counts in less than 2 hours of jury deliberations.

Most of us returned to the Party which was now rife with dissension and paranoia, plus COINTELPRO's police, FBI etc. had stepped up their harassment and provocations a hundredfold such that it became almost impossible to struggle effectively, avoid frame-ups or stay alive aboveground. So, one by one, many of us were eventually forced underground where most of us joined the Black Liberation Army, including me.



Sunalata: Artwork by Mary Taylor.

I had been underground and organizing in rural Alabama for over a year when during one of my periodic roundtrips to NYC, I was ambushed by state troopers on the Jersey Turnpike. My comrade/passenger, Zayd Shakur was shot and killed by the troopers and my other comrade/passenger, Assata Shakur was shot, wounded and captured by the troopers. Werner Foerster was shot and killed in the crossfire and the other trooper, James Harper, was shot and wounded. I was also shot and lightly wounded but escaped the scene only to be captured in the woods 40 hours later.

Both Assata and I were sentenced to life + 30 years in separate trials and 6 years later, on November 2nd, 1979, Assata was liberated by the BLA Multi-National Task Force and was given political asylum in Cuba, where she lives free to this day.

After 6 years in Trenton State prison, New Jersey, I was forcefully transferred into the federal prison system in September of 1979 and sent to USP Marion, IL the highest security prison in the nation at the time. Since then, I've continued to be held in the federal system at USP Leavenworth, KS, then USP Allenwood, PA and FCI Otisville, NY where I remain to this day.

Anthony Rayson Interviews Sundiata Acoli

Question #1: In my mind, we're all New Afrikans, even the Europeans and Native Amerikans can trace their origins back to Mother Africa. So, let's start there. Please sketch this history from the advanced societies, through the monstrous centuries of the trans-Atlantic slave trade, the subjugation by European colonialism and the National Liberation struggles that sent them packing.

Unfortunately, capitalism and racism and imperialism were never finally defeated. Africa is again in agonies' throes. What happened in Rwanda, the Congo, etc.?

Answer:

Yes we are all Afrikans, or New Afrikans so to speak, because humans originated in Afrika several million years ago. Frankly earlier scholars worldwide had known and publicized the 100's of years that humanity and civilization began in Afrika, so it raises questions about where many of the European founders of contemporary socialism were coming from when they dismissed Afrika as a vast wasteland unworthy of study and research in the creation of modern socialist/communist theory and practices. Naturally we knew where the capitalist/imperialist scholars were coming from when they ignored/denigrated Afrika, its history and contribution to world civilization. They were and still are doing it to justify their subjugation, robbery, murder and rape of the Afrikan people and continent.

A short sketch of Afrikan history, the rise and fall of its civilization and its recent liberation through independence struggles goes like this:

Millions of years ago the human race began in Afrika as a Black people. Many years later some spread to other continents where long separation, different climates, inbreeding and other factors changed their appearances to the general racial and ethnic features we recognize today.

Generally, Afrika was the land of the Blacks, the East was the land of the Arabs and other Asians, North America was the land of the Reds, South America and the West were the land of the Browns and Europe was the land of the Whites. On each continent great civilixations rose and fell, perhaps many times, with Afrika being the first and perhaps longest lasting civilization. It reached its zenith during the era of the Black Dynasties in Egypt. They built the pyramids, discovered the elements of the arts and sciences, math, reading, writing, philosophy, medicine, astronomy, chemistry, engineering etc. and they founded those civil and religious systems which still govern the universe today. Great Afrikan civilizations also rose and fell in Timbuktu, Zimbabwe, Ghana, Mali, Songhay and other parts of the continent.

The Europeans, or Whites, rise to power began a few centuries before Christ through contact with and repeated invasions and temporary 7 occupations of Afrika/Egypt from the North. These attacks, invasions and transient occupations of Egypt were often combined with Arab or Asian invasions. Afrika had beat back these invasions many times over the centuries/millenniums. Between invasions and during occupations, Europeans came to Afrika to study at its universities. The Greeks, Plato, Aristotle and other Whites, spent many years studying under Afrikan priests at Alexandria University in Egypt to learn philosophy, art, science and other aspects of Afrikan culture.

Afrika was last overthrown when it failed to beat back the invasion of Egypt in 650 BC. Over time, Europeans looted Egypt's temples, tombs, and libraries carrying many of its books and other treasures back to Greece, Rome and other European centers and burned the rest of the books along with the library to the ground. Europeans used Christianity to unify themselves under its banner and to create a mandate to go out and conquer other people and lands under the guise of spreading Christianity.

Europeans carried out further invasions along Afrika's northern coast, captured its seaports and cut Afrikans off from the Mediterranean Sea, the world's trading center at the time and drove them deeper into the harsher Afrikan interior. Further invasions by Arabs from the East, conquering in the name of Islam displaced the European occupiers in northern Afrika and at the same time, blocked Afrika from its eastern seaports. Afrikans were now cut off from direct contact with Europe and Asia and access to its latest superior weapon – firearms. As such, Afrikans were never able to rest or rebuild their societies for long before slave hunters crashed down on their heads again and kept them on the run and circling the interior for centuries. Meanwhile, Europeans rewrote history claiming every Afrikan discovery as their own.

About 500 years or so ago, Europeans found themselves cut off by the Turks from East India and its trade goods. They began sailing around the coast of Afrika hoping to find a new route to India and on each failed attempt went ashore and captured or invited Afrikans to return to Europe with them. From these Afrikans, they learned of navigation by the stars to cross the great Sahara and Sinai deserts; they also learned of Afrikan seamen who had sailed to distant new lands and back. Columbus put it all together to become the first European to reach the Americas. He brought the Bible and the gun with him.

Europeans began kidnapping Afrikans and enslaving them in the Americas. They set up the harshest color caste system the world has ever seen which had Blacks at the bottom, reds, Browns and Yellow (or Asians) in the middle with Whites at the top. Worldwide, slavery ended circa 1865. In 1865, Europeans divided up Afrika among themselves as colonies

and in 1957, Ghana finally regained its independence which set off a chain reaction of independence victories in other sub-Saharan colonies. Ghana's independence, along with the Montgomery Bus Boycott victory, set off the Civil Rights Movements in the u.s. 8

So, by 2000, the Afrikan continent had regained nominal independence and New Afrikans in the u.s. had defeated legal segregation, although the Afrikans and New Afrikans at home and abroad still have a long way to go to regain their independence, equality and control of our own destiny as can be seen in the oppression, control and domination visited upon Darfur, Zimbabwe, the Congo, etc., New Afrikans in the u.s. and other people of color and the poor throughout the world, by the u.s. and its imperialist allies.

Question #2: Culture and religion play such huge roles in a peoples' sense of identity, cohesion and outlook. New Afrikans were stripped of their heritage and had the "White man's" Christianity shoved down their throats. How have New Afrikans adapted Christianity to fill their needs and that of other religions – Islam, Afrikan ones, etc. How has religion affected political developments?

Answer:

Amilcar Cabral said in effect that no people can be fully conquered as long as they retained vestiges of their culture. Blacks still unconsciously maintain much of their Afrikan culture and some are in process of reviving lost Afrikan cultures, traditions and religions. Afrikans also substituted Afrikan deities for many of the Christian deities that Europeans forced down their throats plus they formed separate Christian churches that were more fitting to their Afrikan spirit. They also adopted and modified the Christian Religion to fit their needs for liberation. Marcus Garvey used Christianity and Black Nationalism to build a pan-Afrikanist consciousness among New Afrikans. Malcolm X used Islam and Black Nationalism to foment a Revolutionary Nationalist consciousness and martin Luther King used Christianity and Nonviolence to defeat racial segregation in the u.s.

Question #3: Drugs also play a huge role in this whole social nightmare. New Afrikans don't take *illegal* drugs at any higher a rate than so-called "Whites" (or anybody else.) Yet, they are repressed for it, many times more than others, for longer periods and under harsher conditions. Trace the role of the government in all this – from "King Heroin" in the wake of WWII, to the drugs flowing from Southeast Asia, during the Vietnam War, the cocaine coming up from South America (crack) Afghani heroin, crystal meth, etc., etc. Also, touch on

the drugs used in prison to subdue prisoners. How does the government used drugs to control communities, create laws, devise policy, build prisons, in short, criminalize New Afrikans and kill hope?

Answer:

Well, I *think* during the World War I era that opium and opium-based products were legal in the u.s. Still, during that era, Marcus Garvey raised Black consciousness to a very high level and organized a phenomenal number of Blacks in the u.s. and worldwide toward the goal of Afrikan liberation at home and abroad. So following WW II, after Blacks in the u.s. and Afrika had fought the Axis "Supermen" and seen them bleed and die, the u.s. government knew that Blacks would fight for their freedom when they returned home. So the u.s. government collaborated with the mafia (which had helped defeat Italy's Mussolini) to flood the major urban ghettoes with heroin in order to forestall or dampen the impending Black drive for freedom. Within a few years there were 100,000 heroin addicts in the u.s., most of them Black.

The same general pattern was followed during the Vietnam War which set off a massive anti-war movement amidst a huge Civil Rights, Women and Student's Movement. The u.s. again flooded the ghettoes with heroin from the Golden Triangle via the CIA's Air America airline and the thousands of addicted veterans returning home.

And now during the Iraq/Afghanistan War the u.s. has permitted the Afghanistan farmers to grow opium again (after the Taliban had eradicated it) so that the u.s. could resume smuggling heroin from the area to help finance the war and drug the amerikan populace, especially New Afrikans and others of color so as to smother their revolutionary potential, control their communities and criminalize their populations.

Question #4: Another hugely important factor in social and political development is culture – specifically, music. From traditional Afrikan storytelling, to the lamentations of slaves, to gospel, blues, jazz, rock and these days, hip-hop, New Afrikans have been at the forefront of all of these innovations of cultural expression.

You spoke of Leroi Jones (Amiri Baraka) in your *Updated History of the New Afrikan Prison Struggle* – (which I carry in my distro.) How have politically conscious musical militants affected the struggle, back in the day and nowadays?

Answer: Writers and playwrights like Amiri Baraka, author of Blues People, The Dutchman and other cultural/political works and musicians like John Coltrane, Ella Fitzgerald, Gill Scott Heron, Marvin Gaye, The Temptations, James Brown, Ray Charles, etc., all had a very profound

effect on the struggle back in the day, i.e. the insurgent '60's/'70's and they had a much greater effeot than many of us were able to discern at the time. I think popular artists and musicians in particular have a way of breaking down complex political entities so that they are easily grasped by the 10 masses and I think they do the same thing in reverse, that is, they gather the general political thoughts and aspirations of the people and put them in concentrated form in a song, poem, play or whatever to popularize and send it back among the people. We can also see the same thing going on today as musicians, poets, playwrights, etc. create songs, movies, poems, etc., about Katrina, the Iraq/Afghanistan War, Darfur, Bush, Cheney, Barack, etc.

Question #5: Another point you made in your terrific history was the creation and development of NAIM (New Afrikan Independence Movement) founded in 1968. Who were the driving forces behind this development, what are the basic tenets and goals of the New Afrikan Independence Movement? Also, who's been carrying the banner since then and what have they added?

Answer:

Well, the main driving forces behind the New Afrikan Independence Movement (NAIM) when it came into existence in 1968 was the Republic of New Afrika and its founding president Imari Obadele I, other founding members at the time: Gaidi Obadele, Queen Mother Moore, Herman and Iyaluua Ferguson, Max Stamford (now Muhammad Ahmad) of RAM and numerous other Black and Revolutionary Nationalists in the New Afrikan struggle. Later, I think came Chokwe Lumumba who eventually broke away and formed the New Afrikan Peoples Organization (NAPO) and perhaps Malcolm X Grassroots Movement (MXM). And lastly, there was the Black Liberation Army which was also a driving force behind NAIM.

The basic tenet of NAIM is the formation of an Independent New Afrikan state in the five Southern states of Louisiana, Mississippi, Alabama, Georgia and North Carolina. Since inception the banner has been carried by the Republic of New Afrika plus later groups such as NAPO, MXGM, BLA, N'COBRA and others. They've basically added more structure and ideology to NAIM as well as members and supporters.

Question #6: These days, I guess you're considered one of the elder lions of the struggle. You were active at a very tumultuous time – the sixties and early seventies. So, this question and the next are about your contemporaries. First, please place these sort of "larger than life" icons into historical perspective – Martin Luther King, Jr., Elijah

Muhammad and Malcolm X, and how and why have we degenerated to the likes of Jesse Jackson, Rev. Al Sharpton and the latest creation, Barack Obama?

Answer: 11

With regards to my personal perspective, my respect for MLK has grown considerably over the years, meaning that, I, like a lot of young or revolutionary-minded people at the time, didn't have a lot of respect or sympathy for King. I, and we, respected what he had done in the Montgomery Bus Boycott but we simply couldn't wrap our minds around, or embrace, nonviolence and for that reason we too often looked upon Martin with scorn. When you're young, aggressive and militant you often think like that which as an elder now, I look back somewhat in shame, particularly since history has proven that martin was sincere, which is the first and often main quality you look for in a leader.

Elijah Muhammad we respected because he preached/practiced Black self-reliance and wanted us to be an independent and proud people instead of obsequiously suffering all sorts of humiliation and violence to gain token integration into a corrupt amerikan society. Malcolm X was our premier leader because he expressed precisely our great longing for "freedom by any means necessary" and the fact that our struggle was not for integration or separation but for the human rights: the right to live on this earth as a human being.

We've degenerated to the likes of the present day leaders you named because the government, COINTELPRO or whichever you want to call it, killed off most of our leaders at that time plus they destroyed many of our most effective organizations of that era: the Black Panthers, SNCC, BLA, RAM, SCLC etc. Thus today we have leaders like Jessie Jackson who preferred the "publicity" (and profit) of running for President on the Democratic ticket instead of struggling for real "power" (after being scorned at the convention) by next time forming/running on an Independent Black and Poor Peoples Party. Instead he slavishly ran on the Democratic ticket again with similar results.

As for Barack Obama, I don't think he presents himself as anything other than a standard amerikan politician with agenda for "CHANGE," whatever that means. Regardless, I don't think he could or would change much of anything if he should win. I must admit that I am surprised at how well he has handled himself and his campaign and at how many (young) White people who have voted for him so far. Frankly it has changed my perspective on the ability of Whites to purge themselves of racism and on the progress this country has made against racism since the defeat of segregation. I think if Obama wins it will push Blacks, Whites and others

of color in this country (and perhaps the world) to the position that Blacks or non-White leadership in a capitalist society is neither the solution nor freedom and instead we must destroy capitalism and build a new non-oppressive society to attain freedom. 12

Question #7: You worked with some of the real dedicated revolutionaries in all our history! Please talk about each of these freedom fighters – and any others you feel deserve mention – Stokely Carmichael, H. Rap Brown, Assata Shakur, Fred Hampton, Angela Davis and Russell "Maroon" Shoatz.

Answer:

Both Kwame Toure (fsn Stokely Carmichael) and Iman Jamal Amin (fsn Rap Brown) were leaders before I became politically active by volunteering to go South to register Black voters in '64. I didn't work directly with them, only with some local SNCC personnel, community organizers and Eastern College students after which I returned to my computer job in NYC. By the time I joined the BPP in '68, Stokely and Rap had already joined and resigned from the BPP so that I never got to work directly with them, although I did attend a lot of their NYC speaking events as I canvassed various organizations while looking for one to join before settling on the Panthers. But basically I remember that both Stokely and his SNCC successor, Rap, were very powerful, dedicated leaders of the struggle whom COINTELPRO pulled out all the stops in their attempt to neutralize them. The dirty tricks ranged from fomenting strife between them and the Panthers in hopes that Panthers would eliminate them to printing articles in the New York Times (the flagship newspaper of the u.s.) that published Rap and Stokely's names and photos which boldly claimed they were CIA operatives. Never mind that the CIA never publishes the names or photos of its agents.

Naturally, I did work shoulder to shoulder with Assata Shakur, who's a giant of our struggle and who I have undying love and respect for, but we didn't work together in the party. Assata came into the BPP after I had been arrested in the Panther 21 case. By the time I/we were acquitted two years later, Assata had gone underground and joined the Black Liberation Army (BLA), which is where I met her, when I joined the BLA.

Fred Hampton was a Chicago Panther and obviously one of the most respected and dynamic Panther leaders of the time whom I and Panthers nationwide had the greatest love and respect for. I never got to work with him directly and I and most of the Panther 21 were in jail when he was assassinated on Dec. 4th, 1969.

Angela Davis is obviously a lion and legend of the Movement whom I

love, adore and have every respect for because she earned it. I never worked with her directly before I was imprisoned but have worked with some of her assistants at UCLA since my imprisonment. Angela has also signed petitions, made other efforts which support my release.

As for Maroon, Russell Shoatz, he's my heart and I have no greater love and respect for anyone over him.

We first made contact when I was at Trenton State Prison and contacted him at Dallas State Prison, near Pittsburgh, to congratulate him on his temporary escape from the prison there. He and several companions had broken out and escaped into the surrounding mountains, where all were soon recaptured – except for Maroon, who evaded capture for 30 days while trying to break through the encirclement that state troopers and prison guards had thrown around the valley he was trapped in. Naturally we, and I imagine prisoners all over the country, tuned in daily to follow his episodes: reported sightings by farmers, troopers, etc. and especially non-sightings which we hoped meant he had broken through their net.

But that was not the case after a month he was recaptured. Afterwards we kept in contact and worked together on the consolidation of the numerous BLA comrades who had recently been captured / imprisoned across country and we worked on other prison movement events of the era.

Later, I was transferred into the federal prison system and sent to USP Marion, IL, which somewhat interrupted our normal correspondence. Years later I was transferred to USP Leavenworth, KS, where BLA comrade Kojo Sababu, I and other good brothers there ran its Afrikan Cultural Society to politicize its prisoners.

Soon Kojo was transferred out but luckily it happened right around the time Maroon tried another escape at Camp Hill, PA that devolved into a hostage situation. When the news broke across the airwaves I could tell Maroon was involved by the respect the prison officials gave the hostage holders, although no names were mentioned. The situation was resolved peaceably and Maroon was forthwith transferred into the federal system along with a rack of other Camp Hill prisoners. They ended up at Leavenworth where Maroon and I hooked up again, this time in person, and worked shoulder to shoulder in the Afrikan Cultural Society until all Camp Hill prisoners were returned to Pennsylvania after a fight with the D.C. prisoners

It was a pure pleasure and an honor to work with Maroon as it was with Kojo, Assata, Angela, Sekou Odinga, Jalil Muntaqim, Afeni Shakur, Dhoruba bin Wahad, Soffiyah Elijah, Lumumba Shakur, Mutulu Shakur, Safiya Bukhari, Imari Obadele, Herman Bell, Nuh Washington, Geronimo, Jaan Laaman, Herman and Iyaduua Ferguson, Nancy Kurshan and Steve Whitman, Chinosole, Omali Yeshitela, Bonnie Kerness, Jamal Josephs, Joy

James, Florence Morgan, Atiba Shanna, Joan Gibbs, Ashanti Alston, Fayemi Shakur, Neil Batelli, Walidah Imarsha and numerous other 'rades too numerous to name whom I've worked with over the years including you, Anthony Rayson.

Question #8: I'm 54. So, I was around in the sixties, too, but I was just a kid. I *do* remember what a huge deal it was to "Free Huey!" Later, the whole world was riveted by the drama unfolding at Attica, before Governor Nelson Rockefeller sent his killers in. Shortly before that, the brilliant George Jackson was murdered. Can you talk about the prison struggle at that time, why it was so conscious and organized (relatively) and the government's response – the ratcheting up of repressive measures, the whole control unit prison phenomenon and the exploding of the prison population in general?

Answer:

The upsurge in the prison movement of the '60's was basically due, I think, to the dramatic increase of prisoners of color in the prison population combined with the influence of the Civil Rights Movement and other political movements that the era spawned. Before the '60's, except for the South, the prison populations were majority White as were most of the recognized political prisoners, usually White communist or anarchist such as Big Bill Haywood, Sacco and Vanzetti, Ethel and Julius Rosenberg, etc. Some exceptions were Cinque, the Scottsboro Boys and later, Martin Sostre and particularly the 5 Puerto Ricans Nationalists in the '50's who set the stage for the political prisoners and prisoners of war (PP/POW's) of the '60's although at the time of their arrest, I had not the slightest idea of who they were or what they were about.

Blacks and others of color began to find the Northern/Western prisons after WWII when the government via the Mafia, flooded the urban centers with heroin. The Civil Rights Movement together with the Black Power and various liberation movements provided political consciousness to the increasing number of prisoners of color and otherwise who were influenced by the struggles going on in the street and through the growing number of NAACP, CORE, SNCC, RAM, NOI, BPP, BLA, WVO, FLN, SLA (Symbionese Liberation Army), Brown Berets, Anti-War activists and other Liberation organizations' PP/POW's who were steadily being arrested and sent to jail and prison where they spread their politics to the prisoners around them.

So the prison struggle mirrored the struggle in the street and vice versa. The Civil Rights struggle spawned a struggle for equality and en end to segregation in the prisons, the Black Power Movement accentuated the

move toward Black Nationalism and nationalism in prison to combat the virulent White racism endemic there and the Black Liberation and other Liberation Movements spawned a nascent Prison Movement with the coalition of the "Free Huey" campaigns which saved Panther Huey P. Newton from the California gas chamber. The Prison Movement 15 developed into a full blown movement around the defense of renown San Quentin revolutionary George Jackson and reached its highest point at the Attica rebellion which was a multi-national prisoner revolt against inhumane prison conditions and a protest against the assassination of George Jackson. The prison struggles of those times were so dynamic and progressive specifically because of the great influx of prisoners of color, extremely harsh and racist prison conditions and lastly, the resisting prisoners had been politicized by exposure to the current struggles going on in the street and by the influx and influence of political prisoners from these struggles.

The government's COINTELPRO measures neutralized the Liberation struggles in the street; meanwhile it ratcheted up its repressive measures in the prisons by greatly increasing the number of control units, control prisons and the brutality and murders within them and filling them with PP/POW's and other standup/influential prisoners to cut off their influence on the general prison population and at the same time it went on the greatest prison building spree that this country, and perhaps the world, has ever seen and filled them all through mass incarceration of people of color and the poor over the last 3 decades or so. That basically cooled out the revolutionary struggle in the streets and the prisons to a certain extent while the movement goes through the process of rebuilding itself.

Question #9: I liken the murder of Fred Hampton to the Mossad's hit on Abu Jihad – very damaging. Fred was only 21, but like Abu Jihad, he had the powerful weapons – charisma and a penetrating insight, like Malcolm X and Abu Jihad. I believe he was executed because of his energetic work – genuine programs that helped the community and his efforts to politicize the gangs in Chicago. I know for a fact that *some of these* "gangs" were *being funded by* Springfield, because at that time, they *were* legitimate organizations doing positive things for their communities that the government wanted to co-opt.

We know now the tactics they decided to take were much more sinister than mere monitoring and economic manipulation. These would be murder (Fred and Mark) and criminalization. They would *rather they be drug-dealing* "gangstas" *than genuine freedom fighters*. Please trace this history.

Answer:

Yes, Fred Hampton's death was an out and out hit, primarily, I think, because of his revolutionary brilliance and the success he was having in politicizing the Chicago gangs. As for the fact that some of the earlier gangs were legit neighborhood organizations funded by Springfield, the state capitol, well was a standard method they used in the urban centers, especially in NYC, during the insurgent '60's. Almost anyone could get their neighborhood project funded by writing the proposal on notebook paper, attaching a dollar figure at the bottom, submitting to the City hall or the State Capitol and it would be approved almost on the spot. This was a trick the state used to draw out the hidden leaders and the real leaders of the community. Once they were heading up or employed by their chosen neighborhood organization, they could be surveilled, set up or corrupted or rounded up or hit at will.

I remember that I was at USP Leavenworth when the El Rukn brothers of Chicago came in. They were good brothers who seemed to have gotten caught up in the net where the good things they were doing for the community might have been augmented with some illegal activities and the state used that and snitches who were supplied with drugs and sex with their girlfriends and prostitutes to convict the El Rukn. It was blatantly illegal and I never found out whether they overturned their convictions or not.

Anyway, it seems that the main thing that always split street organizations was whether to be about the people or about the money; to be freedom fighters or gangsters. Sadly, to the detriment of our people and the struggle, most street organizations can't resist opting to "get paid," and in a way that becomes detrimental to their own people and the struggle in general. Thus the state will always prefer that they be drug dealing "gangstas" than freedom fighters, revolutionaries or anyone who strives to uplift their community. But slowly some street organizations are changing for the better, although there's still a long way to go.

Question #10: Now, we come to today. Instead of conscious community organizations, we've got a disgusting collection of pro-capitalist preachers, pimps, pushers and young gun-wielding punks. Those with money (the elite athletes and the Jay Z's of this world) flash bling, cruise around in a fleet of high-priced vehicles, exploit women – and cower in the face of political reality.

What needs to be done to energize the young ones coming up to transcend this misery and achieve genuine liberation?

I want to thank you, Brother, for your lifetime example of a true revolutionary. You've always been cordial and patient, even in the face of the horrific suffering you've been forced to endure. Your life work and your example will never be forgotten, nor will you ever stop teaching "the young ones coming up."

Answer:

What needs to be done is obviously the question of our time – all times really – and if we look back over the history of slavery, segregation and racial and class and other oppressions etc., we see that nothing gets done unless the masses become involved. So for slavery there were slave revolts, the Abolitionist Movement and the Civil War, for segregation there was the Civil Rights Movement and thus the elimination of racial, class and other oppressions will require mass movements, either serial or combined, or in other words, revolution. Mass movements don't spring up out of the clear blue sky. Someone or some ones must organize them. Thus, there's a need first for an organization that can move the masses in the direction they need to go to achieve true liberation.

Naturally, we don't have such organization in existence today but we've seen various aspects of such in the past: Abolitionist, Wobblies, Anarchist, Communist, Garvey Movement, Civil Rights Movement and the Panthers and other Liberation Movements. None have been perfect, some were more successful than others but all contained essential elements that we can learn from and seek to emulate.

The first thing we need is an organization that has an ideology and a plan for true liberation. Then, it must find a way to disseminate this ideology among the masses and draw them to its cause. Naturally the best way to draw the masses to one's cause is to solicit their desires/wishes and incorporate those wishes in one's plans. If an organization shows success in reaching the masses it will surely be attacked by the government with a vengeance, so it must be prepared to defend itself by whichever means necessary in order to carry out its plan for mass liberation and true liberation, which in the end can be nothing other than total revolution.

Write to Sundiata

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Letter to Washington Heights High School Students (2000)

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Hello Youngsters,

What's up? Que Paso? Your teacher, Ms. T., tells me that you all have a lot of questions about racism, police brutality, prisons, oppression and so forth. She asked me to write a letter to the class about it and run it down to you.

Well, I'm Black, so I know racism. I was a member of the Black Panther Party that fought against police brutality in the '60's/'70's, so I know about that. I've been in prison for the last 26 years, so I know prisons. And I've been oppressed all of my life and have fought against it all of my life, so you know I know about oppression.

Racism, police brutality, prisons and oppression are all connected. They all work together to keep people of color down in particular and poor down in general. Let's see how this operates.

RACISM

What is racism? My dictionary says it's "the belief that race accounts for differences in human character or ability and that a particular race is superior to others." Well, that sounds slick but it is a bunch of crap.

Racism is *not* about what a person *believes* about another race; it's about what a person, or race, *does* to another race. Beliefs are simply things in people's heads – their thoughts, ideas, opinions, etc. A person can believe or think anything they want and it won't hurt or help you in any way – as long as they don't do anything to you.

You can think or believe that Aisha is pretty. No problem, as long as you don't try to do anything, like kiss Aisha. That would be a problem... unless she wants to kiss you, too. If so, you and Aisha can then kiss with no problem because both of you want to and she consents (agrees by word or action) to kiss you.

But let's say Aisha doesn't want to be kissed by Goeffrey. Yet he throws her down and kisses her anyway. He likes it, kipnaps her, takes her home, names her "Beatee," beats her every night and locks her in the closet. He keeps her Half-naked and half-starved and only lets her out to clean

house, cook, or wash clothes. He never pays her a dime nor lets her go to school, nor does he teach her to read or write. And this goes on for 40 years until she no longer remembers her real name, or how she came to be in his house.

At that point Geoffrey stops chaining "Beatee" in the closet, begins paying her $1.00 a week for her work, and even lets her go outside to do his grocery shopping, laundry, and take his grandkids to the park. When his friends come over, he tells them that "Beatee" is a slut whom he found homeless on the streets at a young age, ragged, starving, barely human, unable to read and write, and hardly speaking English. He took her in, gave her a good home and raised her as best he could. She was happy, grateful and stayed on as his maid. His friends repeated his story to their friends and over time everyone came to believe it.

So one day you're bopping down 5th Avenue. At 72nd Street you see "Beatee" sitting in Central Park with Geoffrey's grandkids. You call out, "Yo, Sistah!" and she clutches her purse, grabs the kids and flees across the street to Geoffrey, who's waiting for the doorman to bring the limousine around.

You step up to Geoffrey and say, "Yo! Man, what's happening with her?" He repeats his story of "Beatee" that he's often told his friends. They stand around nodding in agreement. He ends saying, "I did the best I could do for her but she wasn't able to make something of herself like the White kids of this neighborhood did. I believe it's because she's Black and it accounts for the difference in her character or ability and the White kid's superiority to her."

You might believe his story unless you knew the true story of Aisha or remembered your grandparent's telling of her kidnapping and disappearance from the 'hood long ago. If so, you'd probably reply, "That's a bunch of crap! Being Black has nothing to do with it, nor do beliefs. Beatee's the way she is because of what you've done and are still doing to her."

Well, racism works the same way. It's not about what one race believes about another race, it's about what one race...(fill in the blank)...*does* to another race. When one race consistently, time and again, violates another race's will, consistently does that race harm, and consistently

uses force to take advantage of that race for the benefit of their won race – *that's racism.*

When you know the origin, or the true history, of a problem, you are much better able to understand it and come up with a solution to it. Millions of years ago the human race began in Afrika. They were Black people. Many years later some spread to other continents. Over time, the separation, different climates, inbreeding and other factors changed their appearance to the general racial and ethnic features we recognize today.

Afrika was the land of the Blacks, the East was the land of the Arabs and Asians, North Amerika was the land of the Reds, South America and the West were the land of the Browns, and Europe was the land of the Whites. On each continent great civilizations rose and fell, perhaps many times, with Afrika being the first and perhaps longest lasting great civilization. It reached its zenith, or highest stage, during the era of the Black dynasties in Egypt. They built the pyramids, discovered the elements of the arts and sciences, math, reading, writing, philosophy, astronomy, medicine, chemistry, and engineering. Moreover, these same people founded, based on the laws of nature, those civil and religious systems which still govern the universe. Great civilizations also rose and fell in Timbuktu, Zimbabwe, Ghana, Mali, Songhay, and other parts of Afrika.

The Europeans, or Whites, are newcomers and the latest arrivals to civilization. Their rise began a few centuries before Christ through contact with and repeated invasions of Egypt from the north, often combined with Asian invasions. Afrika had beat back their invasions many times over the previous centuries, in addition to earlier and ongoing Asian invasions. At this time race had no bearing on slavery. Slaves were generally those prisoners captured during wars, which was how slavery began. Whites, Blacks, Browns, and Yellows were all made slaves, if captured. A slave or ex-slave could and often did, rise to the highest position in society.

Between invasions and during occupations, Europeans came to Afrika to study at its Egyptian universities. The Greeks, Plato and Aristotle, and other Whites spent many years studying under Afrikan priests at Alexandria's University to learn philosophy, art, science, and other aspects of Afrikan culture.

Afrika was overthrown when it failed to beat back the circa 650 B.C.E. invasion of its crown jewel – Egypt, sitting at the northeast corner of the continent. Over time the Europeans looted the Egyptian temples, tombs, and libraries, carrying many of its books and other treasures back to Greece, Rome and other European centers, and burned the rest of the books along with the library to the ground. They used Christianity to unify Europeans under a single banner with a mandate to go out and conquer the world under the guise of spreading Christianity. 21

Europeans carried out further invasions along Afrika's northern seacoast, captured the seaport cities and thereby cut Afrikans off from the Mediterranean Sea, the world's trading center at that time. The invaders occupied the northern seacoast and drove Afrikans deeper into the interior where land was less fertile and they were less able to provide food and other basic necessities for life for large populations.

Afrika never fully recovered due to further invasions, this time mainly from the east as Arabs swept out of Asia and across northern Afrika, conquering in the name of Islam and displacing the European occupiers, but at the same time blocking Afrikans from its eastern seaports.

The Arabs made a practice of creating strong slave armies, both Black slave armies and White slave armies. The White slave armies were the Mamelukes. When stationed in Egypt, they revolted against their Arab masters in the 14th century, overthrew the government, and slaughtered so many Arabs, that it ended the enslavement of Whites from that day forward. Thereafter, Afrika became the only hunting grounds for slaves.

Now hemmed in from the north and the east, blocked from its commercial seaports, and pursued by both Europeans and Arabs, Afrikans fleeing enslavement were driven deeper into the center of the continent and broken up into smaller groups. The Arabs gained complete control of the Trans-Sahara trade routes which, combined with their control of the commercial seaports, gave them effective control over the economic life of Afrika, and therefore Afrika itself. Afrikans were now cut off from direct contact with Europe and Asia and access to its latest superior weapon – firearms. As such, they were never able to establish themselves or rebuild their society for

long before warring invaders and slave hunters crashed down on their heads again, forcing them to flee once more deeper into the interior in a circular movement that ultimately kept them on the move for centuries. 22

In the meantime, Europeans rewrote history to hide the Afrikan origins of World Civilization. They claimed every previous Afrikan discovery as their own. They said that Afrikans were and always had been heathens and savages who gave nothing to the world, and that it was the Greeks and Romans who laid the foundation to White Western Civilization.

About 500 years ago Europeans found themselves cut off by Turks from the land route to East India and its trade goods. They began seeking a sea route to India. Thinking the world was flat, they hoped to sail around Afrika, keeping near to its coastline, to reach India. They wanted to avoid sailing too far out into the ocean for fear of dropping off the end of the Earth.

On each failed attempt to circle Afrika they sailed part of the way along its western coast, gave up, and went ashore to capture or invite Afrikans to return to Europe with them. From these captives or guests, the Europeans learned of navigation by the stars, which Afrikan caravans had used for centuries to cross the great Sahara and Sinai deserts, two vast seas of sand. They also learned of ancient Afrikan sailors who had sailed across the ocean to a distant land and back – which was probably why they took the Afrikans back to Europe in the first place. Columbus put it altogether – navigation by stars and known voyages to distant lands – to become one of the first Europeans to reach the Americas. Also, years earlier the Europeans had been introduced to fire crackers in China. They used the technique to make gunpowder and the gun – and it was on!

Europeans began kidnapping Afrikans and bringing them and European convicts to the Americas as indentured servants. At first they released both European and Afrikans upon completion of their servitude or sentence, but over time the slave owners passed laws that made Afrikans indentured, or enslaved, for life.

At the same time, colonial Whites waged war against the indigenous people of the Americas, the Indians, or Red race, and began killing them off with guns and blankets infected with small pox, in order to take possession of

their land. While massacring the Reds and enslaving the Blacks in the Americas, they turned their cannons on the Brown races in the Caribbean islands, killing most of the Taino of Puerto Rico and the other indigenous peoples of Cuba, the Dominican Republic, Haiti, Jamaica, the Virgin Islands, Barbados, and other islands, so as to occupy and possess their land.

Everywhere Whites went in the Americas, they made war on the indigenous Red and Brown races. Often those not killed or driven deeper into the forest were enslaved alongside the kidnapped Afrikans. Whites took control of the land of indigenous peoples, stole their crops, and forced them to dig for gold and grow sugar cane to make rum to sell in the colonies and Europe. In Europe they bought more ships which built up the ship industry, bought more guns and supplies to kidnap more Afrikans to bring to the Americas to sell as slaves to work on plantations to produce more tobacco, cotton, sugar, and rum, to sell to Europe. With the money earned they then brought more Europeans to the Americas to build up their population to fight the Red and Brown races and take more of their land. And this vicious circle continued for centuries.

Everywhere Whites went, they spread their racism by setting up the most vicious racial caste, or category, system the world had ever seen. All people were ranked by color – Whites at the top, then Yellow, Brown, red and Blacks at the bottom. They fanatically forbade any sexual relations between White women and men of other races. The rule did not, however, apply to White men having sexual relations with women of other races, which was in fact rape, since women of color had little or no say or choice in the matter. Sexual relations among races of color were mostly a matter of choice, preference, or cultural tradition – the Whites looked down on any woman having sexual relations with Black men.

Social relationships between Whites and other races were mostly forbidden. The only use most Whites had for other races was their labor, their land, and their women. Whites took first preference of anything they liked, and shunned anything they disliked. They lived on the best land, in the best houses, and ate the best food, wore the best clothes, and held all positions of authority,

importance, or ease. The positions of governor, legislator, businessman, skilled professional, shop owner, plantation owner, overseer, boss, and straw boss, as well as all other desirable jobs, were restricted to "Whites first." 24

If no Whites could be found for a choice job, it was given to the next racial level, the Asians, usually Chinese or East Indian, or the biracial offspring of a White man and an Asian woman, or Brown, or Red woman, and lastly, a Black woman. If none could be found still, then the next racial level, Brown, would be permitted or made to take the job, and so on down the line to the Black, who was always last to gain and first to pain.

The color caste system was brutally enforced by Europeans in all dealings with other races. They would kill, brutalize, enslave, or imprison anyone of color, or even Whites, who violated the rules for any reason. With this policy, Whites fought their way through the Americas in order to establish their power over all other races. The lowest White normally had more power and was treated better than the highest person of another race. All Whites were above the law with respect to other races. A drunken White tramp or rogue could murder the chief of another race and most Whites would band together to protect him and prevent him from being tried by the injured race. Rarely, if ever, would he even be brought to trial. People of color were generally treated as less than animals, and were bought and sold, worked, bred, and often housed like animals. They were forbidden to speak their own language, practice their culture, or worship their Gods. They were only permitted to do what Europeans wanted: submit, work and accept European ideals, culture, and Gods. And over the years many forgot their own language, history, culture, and how European culture came to be in their hands.

All this was done by Whites to other races for 400 years by force of arms, cannons, whips, chains, the Navy, militia, police, White citizens, lynchings, beatings, slavery, prisons, guile and trickery in order to force other races to submit, work, idolize European culture, and be afraid to resist or practice their own culture, so that a White elite could rule and grow rich, and Whites in general could live well off the free and cheap labor of people of color and the poor. That's racism and the foundation of White

supremacy. Its purpose is to maintain power over people of color and the poor for the benefit of White elites and their cohorts.

That was then, what about now? Does racism still exist? Does White supremacy still exist? Yes, but after 500 years it's gotten slicker and changed somewhat so that it's harder to see or detect.

During the era of chattel, or physical, slavery, all white persons held authority over people of color. But people of color and anti-slavery Whites resisted. Eventually, slavery became too costly in terms of lives and money, and resulted in the Civil War which brought an end to chattel slavery. The color caste system simply switched to enslaving people of color and the poor through low pay, sharecropper wages, peonage, and later, segregation laws enacted for the purpose of keeping people of color in their places.

Following World War II, the U.S. became the world's leader, but the majority of the world's people were people of color. Most were engaged in armed and unarmed struggles for independence from European colonialism or control. The U.S. knew it couldn't sell its racist form of government, economics, and trade to the world as long as it had segregation codes against people of color at home. Moreover, the bad publicity from people of color and anti-racist Whites' growing resistance to segregation in the U.S. was hurting its world image. Colonized people worldwide were turning toward the non-racist socialist form of government as preached by the Soviet Union, North Korea, North Vietnam, Cuba, etc.

The Europeans were losing lives in doomed colonial wars. Growing Soviet trade was eating into U.S. sales abroad, plus segregation prevented many White businessmen in the hotel, restaurant, nightclub, school, university, and other trades from selling to the growing populations of color at home. Segregation had become too costly in lives and image as a result of the Civil Rights movement. Once again, the U.S. color caste system switched its image by taking all the segregation codes off the law books, but it never in fact, fully desegregated the country. It couldn't because the color caste system is the core of its governing and economic structure. It can't change the structure without giving up its goal of

maintaining worldwide white power and control over people of color and the poor. It can only change its image each time resistance becomes too costly to continue in its old form.

The European color caste system is still in effect today throughout the Americas and worldwide. During colonial times White invaders slaughtered many of the indigenous Red and Brown races in the Americas. Many of the surviving peoples are the result of inbreeding with both the White invaders and the imported Afrikan slaves. The complexion of citizens, range from White all the way to Black. Yet even today most of the positions of authority, wealth, or prestige in these countries still follow the old color caste pattern. The Presidents, upper classes, and skilled professionals are almost always its Whiter citizens, who have European features. Their first invaders or colonizers were from Portugal or Spain, which is why these countries speak Spanish and Portuguese today. Later came the British, Dutch, French, Belgians and Danish. They colonized those Third World countries that speak English, French or Dutch, today.

The White citizens of these countries still discriminate and look down on their own indigenous Brown races, who are usually called Indians. They also discriminate against their darker citizens who carry Afrikan blood. These are hush-hush topics throughout these countries, and wherever this sort of discrimination exists, because it shows that the old European color caste system is still alive and thriving. It's only been modified to make it more presentable and harder to see, but the core of the system and its function, remain the same.

So, what's a system? It's like a machine, except it's a network of people, places and things all working together according to a plan that's designed to produce certain results. A system enables a person to work in it by simply carrying out one's role, without having to know the whole plan. We, people of color and the poor, live in a system designed to produce certain results, although we neither designed it nor set it up.

The European invaders set up this color caste system we live under. They designed and used it to keep themselves in power and control over us, people of color and the poor, so that a rich, White elite could keep using us to make

fortunes for themselves and their supporters and a prosperous life for themselves, in general.

When you maintain or keep control over someone or something, that's called *domination*. And when you use or take advantage of someone, that's known as *exploitation*. The European invaders set up a system that dominates and exploits other races and the poor for the benefit of the White elite and its supporters. That's a racist system.

The children of the invaders, a rich White elite, still maintain that system, only it's been changed a little over the centuries to blind people to its true function. When a system is used to do something, that makes it *systematic*. So, finally, what is racism? *It's the systematic domination and exploitation of one race by another race for their own benefit.*

Once you look at racism in that light, you understand it and how it works, and you know it's not *beliefs*, but a *practice*, something that's *done* by one race to another. You also know it's not done because of "beliefs" or wrong ideas," but because one race benefits from dominating and exploiting another race. And last, you understand that racism is not some random or incidental encounter, but a system set up long ago by the White invaders who made it a cornerstone of their government and economics. They passed it on to their children who maintained its core, the color caste system, but changed its outer appearance each time resistance blocked it from continuing in its earlier form – thus it has come down to our times.

Racism is so systematic today that the majority of Whites no longer have to be personally racist toward people of color. And racism will continue no matter how many people of color become part of the system. Racism is ingrained in its very core. No matter who operates it, the mere operation of the system itself ensures that people of color and the poor will continue to be dominated and exploited by a White elite and their supporters.

So what is this racist system called? It's called capitalism – and it's maintained by a rich White elite who own the giant corporations. These giant corporations control the government. The government controls us, people of color and the poor, for the benefit of the elite White capitalists, their supporters and Whites in general. The capitalists benefit from their corporations, making

billions and trillions of dollars off people of color and the poor. Whites in general benefit from their White status, which gives them first preference to the best positions, businesses, jobs, homes, schools, hospitals, and all the other things that provide them with a better life than other races. That, in a nutshell, is racism.

Police Brutality

The term "Police Brutality," as used today, is actually incorrect. It should be called, "Police Murder and Brutality," since killings by the police are usually dumped into the brutality category.

Police Brutality is the use of undue force by the police. It refers to the slapping around, hurting, beating, choking, injuring, shooting, tasering, wounding and/or assaulting of someone unnecessarily. In strictly legal terms, an assault occurs anytime someone needlessly puts anyone in fear of life or limb. They don't have to be touched. It is enough that they are put in fear, such as having someone pull a gun or knife on them. That alone is legal grounds for an assault charge.

The point is that the many needless "stop and frisks" carried out by police in communities of color are actually assaults. They instill fear of the police into the people who live there. That's one reason the police do it. These uncalled for police assaults can also be classified as police brutality.

The police rarely or never conduct such "stop and frisk" tactics or "Crime Unit Sweeps" in White communities. Likewise, they rarely shoot and kill White youths. Yet they are quick to shoot and kill youths of color. In almost every case it's a White policeman killing a youth of color. Why is that?

The police are part of the system. They're a branch of government. The city policeman's job is to protect and defend the city. The state police, or troopers, defend the state, while federal police, FBI, etc., defend the U.S. federal government.

The police are part of the same color caste system that's designed to keep the White elite in power. To do that, they must keep people of color in particular, in fear and in their place so that they won't challenge White authority, the

system's authority, or the government's authority, which in essence are one and the same. 29

The standard way to spread fear among a people is to appear crazy or berserk, by shooting, killing and brutalizing them for no apparent rhyme or reason. The police, usually White, randomly shoot, kill and brutalize "suspects" of color to spread fear throughout their communities.

The *other* reason police constantly "stop and frisk" youth of color is that this tactic is designed to seek out and destroy the rebellious ones of our communities. Any youth who gets "uppity" during these stops is considered rebellious. Often, a pretext is found to brutalize or arrest them, give them a record early in life, and eventually, send them to prison.

Sending so many youths of color to prison makes it easier for the police to control the 'hood. Young people are quicker to fight and quicker to defend their communities. By sending them off to prison, the police have less resistance and communities of color are left more or less defenseless. Moreover, youth in prison can't produce babies, thus cutting down on the population growth of people of color. It allows Whites to remain the majority of the U.S. population for a little longer.

The police do inside the country, what the CIA and armed forces do abroad, although the distinction between them is blurred. The U.S. military treats Afrikans, Asians and South Americans in their countries the same as the police treat people of color and the poor in their communities. The police will continue to ride roughshod over people in the 'hood until its youths form organizations to defend themselves and their communities from police murder and brutality. The Black Panther Party (BPP) and the Black Liberation Army (BLA) were two such organizations that did this in the sixties and seventies.

Defending the community from police murder, brutality and terror, will make the government rein in the police, give the Civilian Review Boards teeth to ensure that killer cops are sentenced the same as people of color and the poor who commit murder, and pass laws that require the police to live in the cities in which they work.

Communities of color have been pleading for such changes for quite some time. The changes would decrease police abuse of people of color and the poor, although not 30 eliminate it. The latter could only be accomplished by changing the structure and nature of the system altogether.

Prisons

Prisons are also part of the system, or government. Just as there are city, state, and federal police, there are city prisons, called jails, as well as state and federal prisons. The police serve the government by arresting people. The prisons serve by holding, punishing, and making money on those convicted. The latest trend is the move toward private prisons owned by corporations, which make fortunes off the slave labor of prisoners. Private ownership also helps the government hide its hand in the back door move to re-enslave people of color through mass imprisonment.

There are currently almost two million people in prison, the majority of whom are Black. People of color make up over 80% pf the prison population. Does that mean Whites commit fewer crimes than others? No, it simply means that the government and police concentrate on arresting and sending, people of color to prison, while letting most Whites go free or on probation for similar violations.

Prisons are brutal places. They serve the same purpose as brutal police acts. They spread fear, keep the poor and communities of color submissive and afraid to resist for fear of imprisonment. Once imprisoned, the intent is to break the prisoners, just as in days of slavery, so as to return them to the streets, old, broken, and willing informants on their communities.

Prisons are racist. Most are located deep in rural White communities, far from the 'hood. They provide jobs and a better life for poor rural Whites. It keeps them solid defenders of government policies regardless of how these policies wreak havoc upon communities of color and other poor Whites.

After segregation was outlawed, prisons began employing more people of color. Most of those accepted such jobs did so to better their own lives and are staunch

defenders of government policies. Their positions in the prisons include wardens, captains, guards, and everything in between. But that doesn't change the racist function of prisons. Like the police, prisons are a major arm of government control. It doesn't matter how many people of color work in the prisons; in fact the staff could be all Black and prisons would still be racist. They remain an arm of the government, a color-caste system whose basic structure and function remain unchanged. That function is to maintain a White elite and their cohorts in power, over people of color and the poor.

Private corporations are investing in prisons in droves to reap fortunes off its cheap slave labor. This gives corporations additional motives to have the government step up even further the mass arrest and imprisonment of people of color, and give them even longer sentences to create a greater supply of slave labor on which to amass even greater fortunes. The time has long since arrived where prisoners have no choice but to go on nationwide strike to break this vicious cycle. All prisoners have to do is to "do nothing," lay down and refuse to work. The government will react harshly, but in the end, it and the corporations will have to withdraw their siege on our communities, both inside and out.

Oppression

According to my dictionary, to "oppress" is to *"keep down by severe and unjust use of force or authority."* That is a good description of the system we live under. It keeps people of color and the poor down by severe and unjust use of force and authority. It's unjust because it's racist and exploitative. It's kept in place by unjust force of the police, prisons, and the armed forces. Despite all the sweet talk of freedom, democracy, equality, free enterprise and so forth, when you look behind the mask, it is all based on the unjust use of force and authority.

The rulers, the White elite owners of the giant corporations, set policies that will make them trillions of dollars. The government uses its authority to carry out the policies. The police at home and the Armed Forces abroad use force on anyone or any country that won't fall in line with the dictated policies. That's what the recent protest

demonstrations against the WTO (World Trade Organization) in Seattle, Washington, and elsewhere, were all about.

People of color are kept down, or oppressed, as a race. That's racial oppression. Poor Whites are oppressed because they do manual labor; that's class oppression. Women have historically been oppressed because they are female; that's sexual oppression. There are many other forms of oppression.

Naked forms of oppression, such as police murder and brutality, or the National Guard patrolling the streets during a rebellion, are easy to see. Other forms of oppression may be just as harsh and longer lasting, but are harder to see. The latter category includes racism, poverty, low pay, bad housing, schools and hospitals, as well as drugs and diseases, particularly genocidal ones such as AIDS today, or the small pox infected blankets given to the Native Americans during colonial times which killed many, many more indigenous people than all the cavalry battles, combined.

History shows that this racist, capitalist system cannot be reformed, or adjusted, to make it work for all people. When resistance gets too costly, it only changes its methods, then it continues down the same path – the unbridled pursuit of riches through world domination of people of color and the poor.

The entire system must be destroyed. It has failed humanity miserably. And even now it's rushing headlong down the path of world destruction. The greatest fight that young people can take today is the fight to save yourself, your people, other oppressed people and the World itself. You do that by fighting to destroy this racist, capitalist system.

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