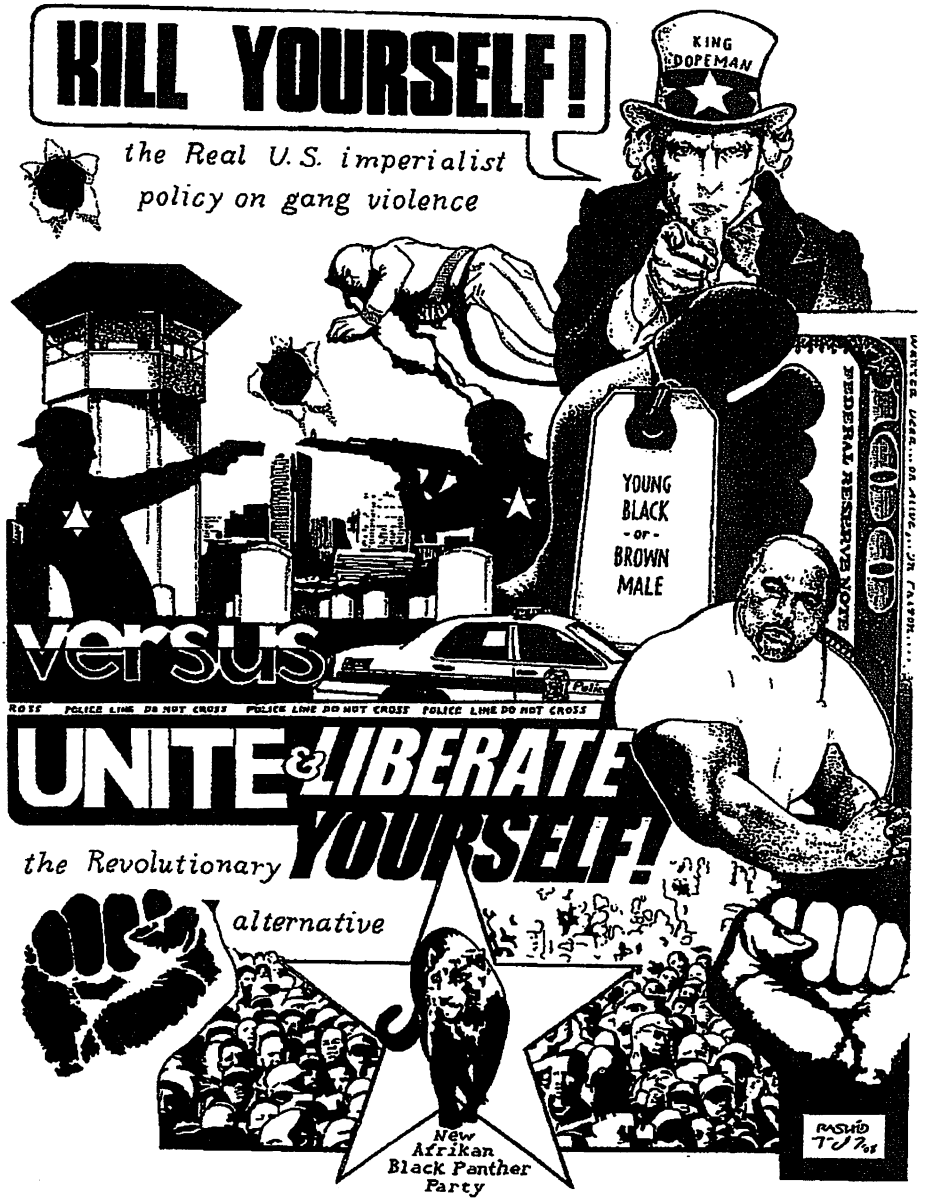

KILL YOURSELF!
the Real U.S. imperialist policy on gang violence
KING DOPEMAN
YOUNG BLACK -or- BROWN MALE
FEDERAL RESERVE NOTE
versus
POLICE LINE DO NOT CROSS
UNITE & LIBERATE YOURSELF!
the Revolutionary alternative
New Afrikan Black Panther Party
RASHID '95

KILL YOURSELF OR LIBERATE YOURSELF: THE REAL U.S. IMPERIALIST POLICY ON GANG VIOLENCE VS. THE REVOLUTIONARY ALTERNATIVE

2010

> "Look into the matter of your enemy's alliances and cause them to be split and dissolved. If an enemy has alliances, the problem is grave and the enemy's position is strong; if he has no alliances the problem is minor and the enemy is weak."
>
> *Chinese military proverb*

> "Approximately 28% of the [FBI's domestic covert action] efforts were designed to weaken groups by setting members against each other or to separate groups which might otherwise be allies and convert them into mutual enemies. The techniques used included ... encouraging hostility up to and including gang warfare between rival groups ..."
>
> Church Committee, *U.S. Congressional Report: Intelligence Activities and the Rights of Americans,* 94th Congress, 2nd Session, Report No. 94-755 (1976)

There are some one million youth gang members in Amerika today. No wonder the popular image of a young Black male, or a youth of color is that of a violent "gang banger." While no one can deny that gang violence is a common occurrence in the oppressed communities, what is seldom mentioned is that the U.S. government has been behind instigating and spreading this violence and creating the conditions that gave rise to it.

The official response to gang warfare is to demonize and violently attack gang formations while refusing to discuss or address the social and economic problems that contribute to gang activity. Moreover, no effort has ever been made to resolve the

conflict of gang rivalries, because deliberate government policies are at the root.

Many of the groups labeled as youth "gangs" actually began with missions to serve, uplift and defend the poor and oppressed communities. But government policies directed at destroying grassroots political leadership that was a strong influence attempting to steer these groups in a positive direction pushed them in a negative and criminal direction to prey upon and destabilize their own communities.

After the government destroyed such organizations as the original Black Panther Party, the Puerto Rican Young Lords Party, the Chicano Brown Berets and Alianza, and the Appalachian white Young Patriots Party in the 1970s, it moved to destroy the political consciousness and unity of the oppressed urban communities—especially the New Afrikan communities. In 1978, the National Security Council decided to implement a policy set out in National Security Council Memorandum No. 46 (NSC-46) the purpose of which was to ensure the continued demise of the Black civil rights and liberation movements.

Among the "policy options" proposed in NSC-46 was preventing the rise of any genuine Black leader who could unite the New Afrikan people in the U.S. and link the struggle here with the liberation struggles in Afrika, and to cause splits and internal conflicts within the movement and the communities. These things were proposed in the interests of "national security." Here are some of the proposals in NSC-46:

> "The concern for the future security of the United States makes necessary the range of policy options. Arranged without intent to imply priority they are:
>
> "... (b) to elaborate and bring into effect a special program designed to *perpetuate division* in the Black movement and *neutralize the most active groups* of leftist radical organizations representing different social strata of the Black community; to *encourage* division in Black circles;
>
> "(c) to preserve the present climate which *inhibits the emergence* from within the Black leadership *of a person capable of exerting nationwide appeal;*

> "... (e) to support actions designed to sharpen *social stratification* in the Black community—*giving rise to growing antagonisms between different Black groups and a weakening of the movement as a whole ...*"

The motive and goal is plainly stated: to destroy our genuine leadership and divide the people against themselves. It is the old Roman dictum *"Divide and Rule."*

With these stated intentions in mind, the facts and considerations set out below should be given *serious* thought by *every* critic, victim and member of the youth gang subculture. The reader needs first and foremost to recognize that the violence, crime, lost lives, and suffering that is taking place within and between the various "gang" formations of every "race" and ethnicity are the result of an *officially orchestrated scheme of divide and rule* in the context of a system of class exploitation and a policy of deliberate genocide.

The cycle of violence that has caused the deaths and injury of countless "homies" and the consequent chaos that is wrecking our communities is not the "fault" of the youths caught up in the culture of "gang bangin'," rather the blame belongs with the government so many Amerikans blindly trust and hold in uncritical awe. The New Afrikan Black Panther Party-Prison Chapter (NABPP-PC) calls upon *all* of the brothers and sisters in the street "tribes" to critically examine the truth, end the fratricide, and unite in a *clenched fist alliance* to serve, uplift, protect and defend our home communities and join in the struggle for our common liberation from this capitalist imperialist system that is at the root of *all* our problems.

The Art of Divide and Rule

In understanding the imperialist game behind spreading and perpetuating gang warfare, two things should be kept in mind:

- Divide and Rule (or Agitate, Indoctrinate and Divide), and
- Self-Inflicted Genocide

Divide and Rule is a strategy of containing and controlling populations that are of profitable use to those in power, but represent a threat if allowed to unite. Genocide is a strategy employed to dispose of a population seen to be of little or no profitable use to those in power. Self-Inflicted Genocide is the strategy of Divide and Rule *taken to the extreme.*

Within this framework two trends in Amerikan history are relevant. The first is described in the autobiography of Frederick Douglass, an escaped and self-educated Black slave. Douglass observed that when groups of slaves from different plantations came together, they would often fight each other over whose "owner" was "superior." As absurd as this sounds, even though *all* of them hated being enslaved, they would brawl over what amounted to claims of territorial supremacy and identification with their hated masters and the plantation he put them on. None of them *owned anything*, and all were oppressed and exploited, yet they felt compelled to "rep" their masters and their status and fight each other. Sound familiar?

The second trend relates to the extermination of the Indians and the theft of their lands. This "Indian removal" and genocide (which reduced them to less than 1% of the population of their native land), was accomplished in large part by the Europeans playing different Indian nations against each other and getting them to kill each other—*the equivalent of gang warfare.* Think about that!

On the plantations, (which were built upon the Indian's stolen land), the labor of the Black slaves was the source of the plantation system's wealth. They cleared the fields, planted, tended and harvested the tobacco, sugar cane, cotton and other crops and performed other useful labor. They were therefore "highly valued *property*," so with the slaves, the strategy of Divide and Rule was employed—(recall the Willie Lynch process). But because the Indians proved too difficult to enslave profitably and they stood in the way of expansion of the plantation system, genocide was the strategy employed against them.

But since the abolition of chattel slavery, the value of Blacks has gone down to the capitalist rulers and genocide has been employed proportionately. Following the Civil War, lynchings, KKK terror and the "chain gang" were employed to force the freed slaves back to work for the landowners as "sharecroppers"

and to deprive them of newly won civil rights. During World War I masses of Blacks were pushed to migrate to the industrial centers to replace white workers called to war, then in the '20s, another wave of KKK terror, lynchings and bloody "race riots" were instigated to push them down into the lowest paying jobs in segregated ghettos.

Following the uprisings in the '60s and '70s and the emergence of the Black Panther Party and Black Liberation Movement, an even more serious plan of genocide and marginalization was hatched involving flooding the ghettos with drugs and criminalization and mass incarceration of the poor, and promotion of self-genocide in the form of gang warfare. The "War on Drugs" is in reality a war on the poor—and in particular the Black youth.

Sun Tzu, the ancient sage of the "Art of War," recognized that unity is essential in war. He also pointed out that *"all warfare is based on deception."* It is on this basis that the very imperialist system that is waging this war hides itself and its true intentions behind a cover of "serving and protecting" us, in the guise of "Law and Order," keeping us passive and ignorant victims. But to actually conquer a foe, Sun Tzu proposed three stages:

The first stage, which he gave top priority, is to *"stop the enemy's plans."* That is, defeat the enemy's strategy with one of your own, or in other words, prevent him from making and executing successful plans against you. One effective way to do this is to identify and neutralize his strategic thinkers and leaders. Another method is to confuse his plans and prevent his being able to execute them.

The second stage, if the enemy's plans cannot be stopped, is to *"disrupt his alliances."* This is, in essence, the principle behind *"Agitate, Indoctrinate and Divide."* But methods of dividing the enemy are not only to be applied between the enemy and his potential allies, but also *within the enemy's own ranks.* As long as his ranks are divided (by jealousy, fear, ambition, anger, hate, etc.), he cannot move against you with full effect. Therefore you must keep your enemies divided—this is common sense.

The third stage proposed by Sun Tzu is *"attack and defeat the enemy"* with armed force. At this point, if the enemy has good leadership and you can't divide his ranks or him from his allies, success then turns on your military skills in formulating and executing battle plans.

So in simple terms the three stages are: 1) ATTACK THE HEAD (and the body will remain disorganized, confused and vulnerable), 2) DIVIDE THE BODY (so it cannot function together to carry out the will of the head), and 3) FIGHT THE BODY (to destroy or cripple it with armed force).

> "If you cannot nip his plans in the bud, or disrupt his alliances when they are about to be consummated, sharpen your weapons to gain victory."
>
> *Chang Yu, Chinese military historian and annalist*

The Combined Method of Imperialist Conquest

The U.S. ruling elite recognizes that the body of the oppressed masses is amorphous and adaptive. Like a salamander, its severed limbs are capable of growing back, and new leaders will emerge to replace the fallen. The imperialists therefore combine and apply all three stages of military conquest to contain and defeat the mass resistance of poor and working-class people, both without and within Amerika.

In "Protect Our Leaders Defend Our People," we discuss the U.S. government's persistent efforts to pinpoint and destroy every genuine leader and leading organization that has arisen from amongst our oppressed ranks. Then they replace our fallen or isolated leaders with ones they pick and approve to mislead us. In this way they "ATTACK THE HEAD."

They also "DIVIDE THE BODY," and this is where promoting division and sectarian violence between the youth gangs (the major focus of this discussion) comes in. Furthermore, they "FIGHT THE BODY" by engaging the gangs—and whole communities—in low intensity warfare through the increasingly militarized police forces.

But because the people are kept leaderless, divided and confused, they generally don't realize that they are under constant enemy attack. The government sanctioned misleaders deceive the people into thinking that their real enemy is their protector, therefore we don't quite detect the real meanings behind such plainly declared Establishment terms as the "*War on Drugs*," the

"War on Crime," and more precisely, the *"War on Gangs,"* which are in effect and reality declarations of war on the poor and people of color.

The U.S. government (as the armed protectors and enforcers of the U.S. monopoly capitalist ruling class), destroys our leaders and leading organizations, divides and destabilizes our communities with crime, violence and drugs (that they covertly promote), and then it uses the chaotic conditions to vilify the poor and people of color, and justify targeting us with its own armed attacks and incarceration. Therefore, we can see that U.S. imperialist policy combines Sun Tzu's methods of attacking the head, dividing the body and fighting the body's scattered parts.

Let's examine the features and evidence of each of these methods more closely:

1. Attack The Head

Comrade George Jackson, who was a product of the inner cities, developed into one of the most prominent strategic thinkers of our liberation movement in the 1960s and '70s. He understood that capitalist imperialism was and is the real enemy and the cause of our overall suffering, oppression and exploitation. He was keenly aware of the oppressed people's need for leaders to unite and organize against and overcome their oppressed condition. More to the point, he recognized that the imperialists also recognize this need and the Establishment remains alert and vigilant in identifying and neutralizing potential leaders as part of a well-developed policy of containing and keeping the oppressed leaderless.

Here is how Comrade George broke it down:

> "Capitalism is the enemy. It must be destroyed. There is no other recourse. The system is not workable in view of the modern industrial city-based society. Men are born disenfranchised. The contract between ruler and ruled perpetuates this disenfranchisement.
>
> "Men in positions of trust owe an equitable distribution of wealth and privilege to the men who have trusted them.

Each individual born in these Amerikan cities should be born with those things that are necessary to survival. Meaningful social roles, education, medical care, food, shelter, and understanding should be guaranteed at birth. They have been part of all civilized human societies until this one. Why else do men allow other men to govern? To what purpose is a Department of Health, Education, and Welfare, of Housing and Urban Development, etc.? Why do we give these men power over us? Why do we give them taxes? For nothing? So they can say the world owes our children nothing? The world owes each of us a living the very day we are born. If not we can make no claims to civilization, and we can stop recognizing the power of any administrator. Evolution of the large city-based society has made our dependence upon government complete. Individually, we cannot feed ourselves and our children. We cannot, by ourselves, train and educate them at home. We cannot organize our own work inside the city structure by ourselves. Consequently, we must allow men to specialize in coordinating these activities. We pay them, honor them, and surrender control of certain aspects of our lives to them so that they will in return take each new helpless entry into the social group and work on him until he is no longer helpless, until he can start to support himself and make his contribution to the continuity of society ...

"What is it that has been working against my generation from the day we were born through every day to this one?

"Capitalism and capitalist man, wrecker of worlds, scourge of the people. It cannot address itself to our needs, it cannot and will not change itself to adapt to natural changes within the social structure.

"To the Black male the losses were most tragic of all. It will do us no good to linger over the fatalities, they're numberless and beyond our reach. But we who have survived must eventually look at ourselves and wonder why. The competition at the bottom of the social spectrum is for symbols, honors, and objects; Black against itself, Black against lower class whites and Browns, virulent, cutthroat, backstabbing competition, the Amerikan way of life. But

the fascists cooperate ... This competition has destroyed trust. Among the Black males a premium has been placed on distrust. Every other Black male is viewed as the competition; the wise and practical Black is the one who cares nothing for any living ass, the cynic who has gotten over any principles he may have picked up by mistake. We can't express love on the supposition that the recipient will automatically use it against us as a weapon. We're going to have to start all over again. This next time around we'll let it all hang out, we'll stop betraying ourselves, and we'll add some trust and love.

"Recall the stories you've read about the other herd animals. the great Amerikan bison, the Caribou or Amerikan reindeer.

"The great Amerikan bison or buffalo—he's a herd animal, or social animal ... just like us ... we're social animals, we need others of our general kind about us to feel secure. Few men would enjoy total isolation. To be alone constantly is torture for normal men. The buffalo, cattle, caribou, and some others are like folks in that they need company most of the time. They need to butt shoulders and butt butts. They like to rub noses. We shake hands, slap backs, and rub lips. Of all the world's people we Blacks love the company of others most, we are the most socialistic. Social animals eat, sleep, and travel in company. They need this company to feel secure. This fact means that socialistic animals also need leaders. It follows logically that if the buffalo is going to eat, sleep, and travel in groups some coordinating factor is needed or some will be sleeping when others are traveling without the leader-follower complex, in a crisis the company would roar off in a hundred different directions. But the buffalo did evolve the leader-follower complex as did the other social animals; if the leader of the herd of caribou loses his footing and slips to his death from some high place, it is very likely that the whole herd will die behind.

"The leader-follower complex. The hunter understood this. Predatory man learned of the natural occurrence of leadership in all of the social animals, that each will by

nature produce a group leader, and to these natural leaders fall the responsibility for coordination of the group's activity, organizing them for survival. The buffalo hunter knew that if he could isolate and identify the leader of the herd and kill him first, the rest of the herd would be helpless, at his mercy, to be killed off as he saw fit.

"We Blacks have the same problem the buffalo had; we have the same weakness also and predatory man understands this weakness well.

"Huey Newton, Ahmed Evans, Bobby Seale, and the hundreds of others [of our genuine leaders] will be murdered according to this fascist scheme.

"A sort of schematic natural selection in reverse. Medgar Evers, Malcolm X, Bobby Hutton, Brother Booker, W.L. Noland, M.L. King, Featherstone, Mark Clark, and Fred Hampton—just a few who've gone the way of the buffalo.

"The potential Black leadership looks at the pitiable condition of the [leaderless, confused and scattered] Black herd: the corruption, the preoccupation with irrelevance, the apparent ineptitude concerning matters of survival. He knows that were he to give the average brother an M-16, this brother wouldn't have anything but a club for a week. He weighs this thing that he sees in the herd against the possible risks he'll be taking at the hands of the fascist monster and naturally he decides to go for himself, feeling that he can't help us because we are beyond help, that he may as well go get something out of existence. These are the 'successful Negroes,' the opposite of 'failures.' You find them on the ball courts and fields, the stage, pretending and playing children's games. And looking for all the world just as pitiable as the so-called failures.

"We were colonized by the white predatory fascist economy. It was from them that we evolved our freak subculture and the attitudes that perpetuate our conditions. These attitudes cause us to give each other up to the klan pigs. We even on occasion work gun in hand right with them. A Black killed Fred Hampton; Blacks working with the CIA killed Malcolm X; Blacks are plentiful on the

payroll of the many police forces that fascism must employ to protect itself from the people. These fascist subcultural attitudes have sent us to Europe, Asia ... and even Afrika [to kill] ... and die for nothing ... We are so confused, so foolishly simple that we not only fail to distinguish what is generally right and what is wrong, but we also fail to appreciate what is good and not good for us in very personal matters concerning the Black colony and its liberation. The ominous government economic agency whose only clear motive is to further enslave, number, and spy on us; the Black agency subsidized by the government to infiltrate us and retard liberation, is accepted and by some even invited and welcomed, while the Black Panther is avoided and hard-pressed to find protection among the people ... If we allow the fascist machine to destroy [the Black Panther Party], our dream of eventual self-determination and control over the factors surrounding our survival is going to die with them ...

"The young Panther party member, our vanguard, must be embraced, protected, allowed to develop ... our communion in perfect harmony and there'll never, never be another Fred Hampton affair."

But the BPP was identified as a herd leader. It was labeled as "the greatest threat to U.S. national security" by the FBI, and it was destroyed by the U.S. government. The leadership was not protected as Comrade George pointed out was essential to advancing our struggle. Indeed, only a year after writing the above words he was himself assassinated by San Quentin prison guards. Our herd leaders were identified and neutralized. And just as Comrade George predicted, the masses scattered in confusion and have since remained vulnerable to enemy attack.

The youth, deprived of the strategic leadership of the BPP and similar formations, saw these revolutionary structures replaced with a rise of sectarian gang formations that were devoid of revolutionary guidance and vision. These groups fell under the spell of gangsterism that was glamorized by Hollywood. As Comrade Russell "Maroon" Shoats noted, the youth went from representing the leading force in our liberation struggle to promoting "expensively dressed big hat wearing, Cadillac driving, imitations of the Italian Mafia." Furthermore, Maroon observed,

they were converted from "fighting oppression into pawns who were used to further destroy their own communities." Even worse, these formations fell into the old slave mentality of fighting each other over turf that none of them owned, but with violence on the level of Self-Inflicted Genocide.

Other BPP leaders predicted this counter-revolutionary outcome, that it was what the government planned in its efforts to destroy the revolutionary leadership, leaving the urban masses confused, helpless, and easily divided and played against themselves. Black Panther Comrade ji-Jaga expressed as much in a 1993 interview:

> "Huey Newton [the BPP's Minister of Defense] gave a lecture on that one time and we had foreseen that this was gonna happen. After the leadership of the BPP was attacked at the end of the '60s and the early '70s, throughout the Black and other oppressed communities, the role models for up-coming generations became the pimps, drug dealers, etc. This is what the government wanted to happen. The next result was that the gangs were being formed, coming together with a gangster mentality, as opposed to the revolutionary progressive mentality we would have given them."
>
> Quoted in Mumia Abu-Jamal's *We Want Freedom: A Life in the Black Panther Party* (2004), pp. 237-238

Another BPP veteran, Comrade Dhoruba Bin-Wahad, made a similar observation in a recent article on the execution of Stanley "Tookie" Williams, cofounder of the Crips street gang:

> "[I]t was the destruction of militant groups such as the Black Panthers that left a social, political and ideological void in Afrikan Amerika to be filled by street gangs ... Although law enforcement experts are anxious to dispel and distort the social and political roots of street gangs such as the Crips, the fact of the matter is that gangs like the Crips were in part a consequence of the success of [the U.S. government's] devastation of the militant Black liberation movement in Amerika."
>
> *The Ethics of Black Atonement in Racist America: The Execution of Stanley Tookie Williams*

Even today the imperialist U.S. government opposes oppressed people admiring the leadership example set by the BPP. Because Tookie dedicated his book *Life in Prison* to Black Panthers (specifically Comrade George), California's Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger rejected the plea to spare Tookie's life. He said that the dedication "defies reason and is a significant indicator that Williams is not reformed."

The imperialists remain ready and willing to identify and "Attack the Head" of the oppressed to defeat our attempting to resist our oppression. Having accomplished their intentions, the body was left leaderless and deprived of revolutionary vision. Their next step was to divide the body.

2. Divide The Body

As part of the strategy to keep the oppressed communities, and particularly their youth, divided, the Establishment has continuously kept the politically leaderless street gangs locked in a cycle of fratricidal violence. While some Amerikans may be fooled, most of the aware people realize the U.S. government has no wish to resolve sectarian gang violence. Certainly no "gang bangers" believe it does. Within gang circles it is widely believed that the government murdered Bobby Lander, an OG Blood in Watts in 1989, staging the killing to appear as though the Crips were responsible to destroy a peace treaty established in 1986 between the groups.

This predictably set off a wave of back and forth revenge killings. Furthermore, most youth involved in the gang subculture have personally experienced or witnessed police "gang units," "narcotics squads," "gang task forces," etc. deliberately instigate violence between youth from rival groups or neighborhoods.

Here is a typical scenario I've heard over and over. The cops pick up one or several young males under the pretext of arresting them, but instead they're driven to a rival neighborhood and kicked out of the police vehicle. The pigs then draw the attention of a group of rival youth to the "marks" and quickly drive off leaving the unarmed targets to fight and/or flee for their lives. Whatever the immediate outcome, the objective and ultimate outcome is to provoke or continue a cycle of retaliatory violence.

Plainclothes police driving unmarked, often confiscated, cars and wearing clothes bearing gang colors and making identifying gang signs have been identified, or suspected, of shooting and killing leaders and members of rival gangs to undermine alliances and truces and spark wider-scale gang wars. The 1989 murder of Bobby Lander and the murder of OG Crip Raymond Washington, (which was blamed on Piru Bloods), are two such examples.

In his book, *Blue Rage, Black Redemption* (2004), Tookie bore witness to the role of the police in inciting and escalating gang wars:

> "Yes America, as unbelievable as it may seem, 'hood cops, with impunity, commit drive-bys and other lawless acts. It was common practice for them to abduct a Crip or Bounty Hunter and drop him off in hostile territory, and then broadcast it over a loudspeaker. The predictable outcome was that the rival was either beaten or killed on the spot, which resulted in a cycle of payback. Cops would also inform opposing gangs where to find and attack a rival gang, and then say, 'Go handle your business.' Like slaves, the gang did exactly what their master commanded. Had they not been fueled by self-hatred, neither Crips, Bounty Hunters, nor any other Black gang, would have been duped.
>
> "The 'hood cops were pledged to protect and serve, but for us they were not there to help, but to exploit us—and they were effective. With the cops' Machiavellian presence, the gang epidemic escalated. When gang warfare is fed and fueled by law enforcement, funds are generated for the so-called anti-gang units. Without gangs, these units would no longer exist."

The 1976 Church Committee report of the U.S. Congress found that the FBI and local police were repeatedly involved in inciting gang wars, and in fact took pride in their roles in the resulting carnage they'd caused. In the words of that report:

> "This report does demonstrate ... that the chief investigative branch of the Federal Government, which was charged by law with investigating crimes and preventing criminal

conduct, itself engaged in lawless tactics and responded to deep-seated social problems by fomenting violence and unrest ...

"The select committee's staff investigation has disclosed a number of instances in which the FBI [manipulated] violence prone organizations ... in an effort to aggravate 'gang warfare' ... equally disturbing is the pride which these officials took in claiming credit for the bloodshed that occurred."

This ongoing policy of officials inciting violence between various youth groups and races is especially played out inside U.S. prisons. Many of the rivalries begin in the prisons and carry over to the street. Indeed prison officials even admit to such schemes. California, where the U.S. gang sub-culture has its deepest roots, provides a clear example.

The 1997 documentary film "Maximum Security University" exposed the "gladiator fights" set up from 1989 to 1994 between rival prisoners at California's Corcoran State Prison. Many of the involved prisoners were seriously injured or murdered by rival prisoners and guards, who shot them with rifles for fun under the pretext of breaking up the fights they'd arranged. These were not isolated occurrences. In fact, in 1999, California's Department of Corrections (CDCR) officials admitted facilitating and manipulating violence between rival prisoner groups allegedly to keep control of their prisons.

In response to a prisoner hunger strike at the New Folsom Prison, where prisoners were protesting to receive yard time with prisoners they got along with instead of with rival groups, CDCR Ombudsman Ken Hurdle refused to negotiate, stating: "Then you'd have two groups normally aligned on the yard at the same time. They would have only the staff as their enemy." (Quoted from the *Sacramento Bee*, Dec. 8, 1999.) The motive of "Divide and Rule" couldn't have been stated plainer.

Further reports followed, culminating in a February 23, 2000, melee involving 200 prisoners. The summer 2000 issue of *California Prison Focus* (CPF) newsletter found that these riots resulted from CDCR officials deliberately fostering tension between rival racial groups at Pelican Bay State Prison and their arranging a number of smaller fights between members of rival groups. CPF stated:

> "At the center of this [violence] is the longstanding CDCR policy of forcing warring prisoner groups onto the yard together while, at the same time, refusing to provide any means of for these rival factions to negotiate peaceful resolutions to their disputes."

CPF went on to add:

> "The February 23 incident [which resulted in guards firing 24 rounds from their assault rifles, killing one prisoner and injuring 15 others], occurred on only the second day since the August incident that the entire population was placed on the yard. In the months between these two full scale melees, instead of moving to lessen hostilities, prison officials appeár to have made matters worse by instigating a long series of smaller fights. Either Pelican Bay officials have lost control of their institution or we are witnessing a return of the 'gladiator days' of early 1990s Corcoran."

Of course the CDCR wasn't losing control of its prisons. As Ken Hurdle admitted, keeping prisoners violently divided and at each other's necks is a policy calculated to maintain control and keep the prisoners' focus off of the officials who are oppressing them all. As CPF concluded: "CDCR officials have a long history of promoting and instigating violence among prisoners. This has been documented in legal proceedings ..."

The officially instigated violent cycle grew to the point that, according to Taxpayers for Improving Public Safety, there were 315 prisoner-on-prisoner riots in 2005 alone. Furthermore, California's prison guard's unions have been involved in inciting the "gang wars" to promote building more prisons in California. As Comrade Tom Big Warrior noted:

> "Complicity between neo-Nazi white inmates and guards and Southern Hispanic gangs is becoming more evident in all these 'spontaneous' race riots. Governor Schwarzenegger has clearly failed in his attempt to gain control over the California prison system and institute reforms. His predecessor, Governor Davis, virtually handed over the prison system to the notoriously corrupt guards union, and Schwarzenegger's attempt to reassert control

has collapsed under pressure from the special interest groups, as cited by prison chief Roderick Hickman in his resignation last month.

"Though the majority of California's 170,000 prisoners are Black, and the politically conscious Chicano, Indigenous, and Northern Mexican prisoners are struggling to build unity between all prisoners, the white Aryan Nation and other neo-Nazi factions have found willing allies among the Southern Hispanic gangs who are the instigators in the racial violence with the complicity of the guard union. The goal is to polarize and drive a wedge between the prisoners along racial lines, to put a halt to reform efforts that would interfere with the construction of new prisons.

"In 2004, Hickman announced a bold new change in policy that would highlight drug rehabilitation, halfway houses, and home detention for minor parole violators as an alternative to sending them back to prison. This was attacked in a media campaign sponsored by the guards union and a victim's rights group, and Schwarzenegger got 'cold feet' and backed down."

Anatomy of a Spontaneous Prison Riot

So the reality boils down to government instigated racial and group violence which it exploits to generate public alarm and consequent support for building more prisons, (which benefits only the industries, corporations and special interest groups whose profits are tied in with prison expansion), and intensifying the nationwide "War on Gangs"—all under the pretext of responding to the very death and bloodshed officials themselves incite and spread. These "Divide the Body" tactics are applied everywhere in U.S. prisons. Virginia, for example, has been on a prison building binge in economically strapped rural white communities since the late 1990s, building them at a pace far faster than the state can fill, despite abolishing parole, revoking "good time," enacting "three strikes" laws in the mid-1990s, and having one of the nation's highest conviction rates.

When those prisons, especially Virginia's two "supermaxes," were repeatedly exposed as unneeded and the justifications used to promote building them were exposed as lies, Virginia

officials had to keep crafting new rationales for continuing its prison expansions. The latest "justification" being promoted is to "curb gang violence." In reality, the officials have been working overtime to instigate and spread prisoner-on-prisoner gang-related violence.

For example, at Red Onion State Prison (ROSP), the remote supermax where I am confined, prisoners identified as members of rival ethnic gangs, (particularly leaders and the most territorial individuals), are concentrated in two select segregation units called "gang pods," to keep hostilities festering between them. Because the foul motives behind the use of such units are obvious, ROSP officials deny the existence of these units.

These rival prisoners are then released piecemeal from the "gang pods" into the general population units. The intent is to see the festering conflicts erupt into group violence in the larger open population setting. Any resulting (deliberately manufactured) situations then validate official claims of "problems" with gang violence, justifying their demonizing labels and predesigned intentions to enhance measures of repression and official violence against ethnic youth, demands for increased public funding for crime and "gang" control, expanding the prison and militarized police structures, and overall: *Keeping the body divided, confused, and warring with itself.*

So these systems operate to provoke and increase gang violence (*divide the body*) and in turn *respond* to the violence they have created with official counter-violence (*fight the body*). This is a general imperialist offensive military strategy applied in both "*Low Intensity*" wars (like the war on youth in the oppressed communities) and "*High Intensity*" wars (as in Iraq).

Indeed, we see it being applied to divide the Shiite and Sunni Muslims in Iraq, and justify the continued U.S. military occupation. From the very beginning of the U.S. invasion in 2003, the plan was to seize control through winning the allegiance of the majority Shiite population, (in whose territory most of the oil reserves are located), by playing them off the Sunni minority, (just like the U.S. ruling class keeps power in Amerika by playing the white "majority" against the Black and other ethnic "minorities").

The overthrow of Saddam Hussein and his Sunni-dominated Baathist government was essentially intended to win over the

Shiites. But as with all wars of imperialist occupation, overreaching U.S. military violence against Iraqi resistance to foreign invasion prompted a nationalist response from both Sunni and Shiite ethnic populations. This led increasingly to united resistance against the common enemy, despite the persistent efforts of the U.S. imperialists to drive a wedge between them. By 2005, calls by Shiite clerics and resistance groups for a formal Shiite-Sunni alliance and increasing armed resistance compelled drastic measures to divide the Iraqi people as U.S. casualties shot up and morale plummeted.

On February 22, 2006, the Golden Mosque, the holiest Shiite shrine, (which is in Samara), was bombed while full of worshipers, killing scores of Shiites and destroying its golden dome. U.S. intelligence agencies and media assets quickly spread the word that the Sunnis were responsible, but many observers suspected that U.S. and British forces were the culprits. In fact video footage of British troops dressed as Arabs packing explosives surfaced. However, nothing could stop the rage generated by the attack from sparking a wave of back and forth sectarian revenge killings, which diverted some of the heat off the occupying U.S. and U.K. forces. Just like the government-instigated gang wars in the U.S.

During June 2007, Nuri al-Maliki, the U.S. hand-picked, puppet, Shiite Prime Minister of Iraq, told U.S. Deputy Secretary of State John Negroponte in a phone conversation, "We've eliminated the danger of sectarian war," indicating that Sunni-Shiite hostilities were winding down. The *very next day* the Golden Mosque was bombed again, bringing down its minarets. You do the math!

The main cry of the U.S. officials is that Shiite-Sunni hostilities present a danger of all out civil war in Iraq if U.S. forces are withdrawn. Therefore, it is argued, the military occupation must go on and on indefinitely.

On a similar note, there is a lesson that can be drawn from Amerikan history. It is a little known fact that originally Black, white and Indian forced labor worked side by side on the early plantations. That is until 1676 when white and Black slaves rose in rebellion in the Virginia colony, overthrew the colonial government, and burned down the capitol at Jamestown. The leader and organizer of the rebellion was Nathaniel Bacon, a white

man, who became ill and died at the height of the revolt. By losing its head, (Bacon), the body of rebelling slaves and servants lost cohesion and became vulnerable to counter-attack and defeat by colonial forces.

Upon regaining control, the Virginia Company implemented a plan to permanently *divide the body* of the poor masses that set the pattern of racist division that has continued until today. In 1682, the colonial government passed laws that made slavery a permanent and inherited status for Afrikans. The enslavement of Europeans was phased out and the colonial society was divided along racial lines of "white" and "negro" (Afrikan).

The line was further established and underscored in 1705 by a law that classified as "negro" anyone having "one drop" of Afrikan blood. The poor whites were given a sense of social privilege, even though many were poorer than the slaves, and a belief in "racial superiority," as well as license to lord it over and brutalize the "negroes" in the role of overseers. Whites were culturally conditioned to hate and fear Blacks (and vice versa), and to strive to make sure the slaves never united in numbers except to labor under close supervision of overseers. Some Blacks were also chosen to be overseers, and all were encouraged to be "snitches" and spies for their white masters—AGITATE, INDOCTRINATE AND DIVIDE—DIVIDE AND RULE!!

Returning to the present and the gang wars, the sectarian violence generated by the U.S. government—attended by the flooding of the oppressed communities with drugs—also imperialist-generated—has in turn been used to justify open warfare against the divided body of the oppressed masses. What's worse is that these tactics have turned the oppressed communities against their own youth. The anti-social behavior of the gangs invokes fear and turning to the police for protection. Desperate to contain the gang violence and predatory behavior that threatens their security, the people in the oppressed communities turn to their oppressors to increase and enhance the militarized police occupation of their communities, only to be further outraged when these occupiers kill innocent people and act no different than the gangs.

3. Fight The Body

Under the cover of waging a "War on Drugs" and a "War on Gangs," the U.S. government has increasingly enhanced its militarization of the police in the inner cities and stepped up its violence against the youth and oppressed communities. Since 9-11, this has been increasingly incorporated with the government's "War on Terrorism." The steady erosion of civil rights and civil liberties parallels the widening divide between the incomes and lifestyles of the rich minority and those of the poor and working-class majority. Youth gangs, and youth of color generally, feature as principal targets of each of these "Wars." In a 1984 report of the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), the imperialist's fear of the youth is explained:

> "The youth of a growing population may very well play a major role in pressing for change. They are among those who are usually disproportionately disadvantaged: they have less at stake in the existing structure of authority, more idealism, more impatience, and in a society with a steady or rising rate of growth their proportion of the total population increases. The density of the number of youth relative to the total population may thus be one clue to the strength of the pressure for change."

This sheds light on their focus on youth gangs. But let's trace the sequence of the domestic "War on Drugs" to the "War on Gangs" and how in each of them urban youth gangs have been the major targets of official violence. First though, a little history of how the youth gangs became so prominent is in order. As already noted, in the late 1960s and early '70s the imperialists moved to suppress and destroy all revolutionary political consciousness within the oppressed urban communities. These actions were rationalized under the cover of preventing and containing violence—the same rationale promoted today.

California features largely in the history of this repression, which is not surprising as it was in California that the original Black Panther Party was formed in 1966. It was also in California that two of the major youth gangs, the Crips and the Bloods were formed. According to the Establishment's National Gang History website:

"In 1969, a Los Angeles youth named Raymond Washington, 15, organized a group of other neighborhood youths and started a gang called the Baby Avenues. The Baby Avenues wanted to emulate a gang of older youths who had been involved in gang activity since 1964 and provided minor crimes for the Black Panthers of Los Angeles. This gang was called the Avenue Boys since they claimed their turf on Central Avenue in East Los Angeles. Raymond Washington, along with Stanley 'Tookie' Williams and several other gang members from the Baby Avenues Gang were fascinated with the hype of the Black Panthers and they wanted to develop the Baby Avenues gang into a larger force. The Baby Avenues Gang began using the name Avenues Cribs since members lived on the avenue (Central Avenue). Crib members would wear blue scarves (now called bandanas) around their necks or heads. The color blue became their representative color.

"In 1971, the use of the word 'Crip' had become so common among the Avenues Cribs that it became an acceptable name for the gang. Meanwhile, Raymond Washington and his collection of young gang members influenced other area youth gangs resulting in the formation of many Crip sets. Some of these sets included Avalon Garden Crips, Eastside Crips, Inglewood Crips and Westside Crips. Crips gangs were violent and constantly expanded their turf. Because of their aggression, several rival gangs joined forces as a gang collective called the Bloods. They adopted the color Red as their representative color. A fierce rivalry between these two gangs existed throughout the 1970s and '80s. By the early 1980s, Crips gangs were heavily involved in the drug trade that they commenced an expansion throughout the United States to sell a new drug product called 'Crack.' Throughout the 1980s and 1990s the Crips developed intricate networks and a respected reputation with other gangs across America and neighboring countries."

In August 1965, the South Central Los Angeles ghetto of Watts erupted in violent rebellion. The six-day uprising was driven by the outrage of Black youth to the racist status quo, to police brutality and murder of Black youth, systematic discrimination and poverty, and the government's repeatedly subverting and

suppressing attempts to peacefully organize and effect change.

These conditions, which prevailed in Black ghettos across the country, attended by the ideas of Malcolm X, who was assassinated that same year, inspired Huey P. Newton and Bobby Seale to form the Black Panther Party for Self-Defense in Oakland, California. The series of urban uprisings that swept across Amerika from 1964 to 1968, (which included the 1965 Watts Rebellion), and the subsequent rise of political activism and consciousness of the urban youth, prompted the federal government to finance and undertake various studies designed to contain the Black rebellion. In 1973, Ronald Reagan, (who was then governor of California), announced in his State of the State address a planned biomedical facility—the Center for the Study of the Reduction of Violence—to be set up at the University of California in Los Angeles (UCLA). Louis "Jolly" West, a controversial psychiatrist who had long worked with the CIA, was to run the facility.

West proposed to focus on Mexican and Black neighborhoods to screen residents for "genetic defects" and proposed implanting electrodes in their brains as a "cure." Broad public opposition to this plan prevented it from getting off the ground. West then sought to set up a laboratory for humyn experimentation at a former U.S. missile base in Santa Monica, California.

Following the Watts Rebellion, West proposed mass sterilizations of youth of color to render them passive eunuchs. In 1972, he proposed chemical sterilization of U.S. prisoners. Protests across California in 1974 against West's proposals, and plans to implement them, led to cuts in government funding for his Nazi-like projects. But he still remained on the government's payroll.

The next year (1975), in a book he edited entitled *Hallucinations: Behavior, Experience and Theory*, West revealed that use of narcotics was being considered as a weapon of social control against select "minority" and political groups. He wrote:

> "The role of drugs in the exercise of political control is also coming under increased discussion. Control can be imposed either through prohibition or supply. The total or even partial prohibition of drugs gives government considerable leverage for other types of control. An example

would be the selective application of drug laws against selected components of the population such as members of certain minority groups or political organizations."

This revelation has great relevance to the "War on Drugs" that would be declared only a few years later—which has focused almost exclusively on people of color. It was also in this time period (1978) that NSC-46 was developed by the White House with the expressed intent of forever destroying the Black political movements in the U.S.

Throughout the 1970s, the BPP came under vicious attack by the government—led by the FBI—and it was destroyed. The Bloods and Crips, although then relatively small factions, became locked in conflict over turf, respect and other grievances—with both accusing the other of harming the communities under their control.

In the early 1980s, events occurred that pushed these and other urban youth gangs into prominence, namely the introduction of crack cocaine into the inner cities—starting with Los Angeles—by the CIA, under President Ronald Reagan. Reagan's Vice-President, George Bush, Sr.—a prior CIA director—was appointed to be head of Reagan's National Narcotics Border Interdiction System and immediately expanded the CIA's role in drug operations. Under the Reagan-Bush administration, the CIA channelled tons of cocaine into the hands of the Bloods and Crips in LA through a local dealer named "Freeway" Rick Ross, (who processed it into crack). Crack, which is both cheap and highly addictive, proved to be a very effective weapon in the government's *attack against the divided body.*

The cocaine was being shipped to LA from Colombia by Nicaraguan exiles—and the CIA itself—and was sold to the Crips and Bloods to finance a mercenary army (the Contras) that the CIA had organized to overthrow the revolutionary Sandinista government in Nicaragua.

"Reagan came into office just after a revolution had taken place in Nicaragua, in which a popular Sandinista movement (named after the 1920s revolutionary hero Augusto Sandino) overthrew the corrupt Somoza dynasty (long supported by the United States). The Sandinistas, a coalition of

Marxists, left-wing priests, and assorted nationalists, set about to give more land to the peasants and to spread education and health care among the poor.

"The Reagan administration, seeing in this a 'Communist' threat, but even more important, a challenge to the long U.S. control over governments in Central America, began immediately to work to overthrow the Sandinista government. It waged a secret war by having the CIA organize a counter-revolutionary force (the 'contras'), many of whose leaders were former leaders of the hated National Guard under Somoza.

"The contras seemed to have no popular support base inside Nicaragua and so were based next door in Honduras, a very poor country dominated by the United States. From Honduras they moved across the border, raiding farms and villages, killing men, women, and children, committing atrocities. A former colonel with the contras, Edgar Chamorro, testified before the World Court:

"'We were told that the only way to defeat the Sandinistas was to use the tactics the agency [the CIA] attributed to Communist insurgencies everywhere: kill, kidnap, rob, and torture ... Many civilians were killed in cold blood. Many others were tortured, mutilated, raped, robbed, or otherwise abused ... When I agreed to join ... I had hoped that it would be an organization of Nicaraguans ... [I]t turned out to be an instrument of the U.S. government ... '

"There was a reason for the secrecy of the U.S. actions in Nicaragua: public opinion surveys showed that the American public was opposed to military involvement there. In 1984, the CIA, using Latin American agents to conceal its involvement, put mines in the harbors of Nicaragua to blow up ships. When information leaked out, Secretary of Defense Weinberger told ABC news: 'The United States is not mining the harbors of Nicaragua.'

"Later that year Congress, responding perhaps to public opinion and the memory of Vietnam, made it illegal for the United States to support 'directly or indirectly, military

or paramilitary operations in Nicaragua.' The Reagan administration decided to ignore this law and to find ways to fund the contras secretly, looking for 'third-party support.' Reagan himself solicited funds from Saudi Arabia, at least $32 million. The friendly dictatorship in Guatemala was used to get arms surreptitiously to the contras. Israel, dependent on U.S. aid and always dependable for support, was also used."

Howard Zinn, *A People's History of the United States* (NY: Harper Collins, 1999), pp. 585–586

The U.S. also pursued two other channels for funding the illegal Contra War: one by selling weapons to Iran in exchange for the release of U.S. hostages held in Lebanon, and giving the profits from those sales to the Contras (the Iran-Contra scandal), and the second by allowing the Contras to raise money by dumping tons of cheap crack cocaine into the U.S. inner cities—starting and spreading the "crack epidemic." The Contras not only flooded the inner cities with crack through the gangs, but also sold the gangs military weapons to enforce their power against each other and over disputed drug turfs. This sudden access to wealth and weapons enhanced the power and prestige of the gangs and membership flourished inside the poor ghettos. As Mike Davis observed:

"With 75,000 unemployed youth in the Watts-Willowbrook area, it is not surprising that there are now 145 branches of the rival Crips and Bloods gangs in South LA, or that the jobless resort to the opportunities of the burgeoning 'crack economy.'"

"Chinatown Part Two? The 'Internationalization' of Downtown Los Angeles" *New Left Review*, Vol. 164 (1987), p. 75

These were the government-created conditions that produced the crack explosion and gang wars beginning in the early 1980s.

The CIA's role in the whole affair was first exposed by a series of front page articles, written by journalist Gary Webb, from August 18–20, 1996, in the *San Jose Mercury News* under the heading "Dark Alliance," and subtitled "The Story Behind

the Crack Explosion." The series prompted a major outcry from LA residents whose communities had long suffered the ills of the crack infestation and attendant gang warfare. The CIA first denied any involvement and used its power to destroy Webb's career. On December 10, 2004, Webb was found dead from two gunshot wounds to the face. His death was dismissed by officials as a "suicide."

Black Congresswomyn Maxine Waters, who was the Representative for LA, received a flood of complaints from LA residents in response to Webb's 1996 articles. In turn she pressed for Congressional and CIA investigations and herself conducted an independent investigation. She found Webb's story fully validated. She later recalled:

> "In South Central Los Angeles we wondered where these guns were coming from. They were not simply handguns, they were Uzis and AK-47's, sophisticated weapons brought in by the same CIA operatives who were selling the cocaine because they had to enforce bringing the profits back in. It was at this time when you saw all these guns coming into the community that you saw more and more killing, more and more violence. Now we know what was going on. The drugs were put in our communities on consignment, out to the gangs and others. If they did not bring the profits back, the guns were brought in so they could enforce their control. The killing just mounted and people said, 'What are they fighting about? What are all these drive-by shootings about? What is this gang warfare?' And the press they said, 'Oh, it's the colors. Some like red, some like blue.' Well, you know it was about the drugs, it was about the crack cocaine, introduced into our communities by people who brought it in with a purpose."
>
> quoted in Alexander Cockburn, et al.,
> *Whiteout: The CIA, Drugs and the Press*
> (NY: Verso, 1998), p. 65

Her efforts to get Congress to conduct public hearings and for mainstream media coverage ran into brick walls, leading her to spread the word independently. The CIA conducted an internal investigation of itself, not digging too deep. Its final report

revealed clear known connections between the CIA and the Contras' drug trafficking. Yet the report concluded by denying CIA knowledge or involvement. Waters responded that the report "lacks credibility and its conclusions should be dismissed." Under mounting pressure the CIA finally revealed in October 1998 that it had concealed from Congress and other agencies its knowledge and support of the Contras smuggling drugs into the U.S. to fund their operations. Further revealed was that the CIA had clearance from Reagan's Justice Department in 1982 to keep the CIA's knowledge and role in these activities secret.

But CIA involvement in drug-running is nothing new. In fact, throughout its existence the CIA has been the central facilitator of the international drug trade, in pursuit of financing its many illegal foreign and even domestic operations. Indeed, the CIA was behind the heroin epidemic that shattered Black communities in the 1960s and 1970s, prompting Richard Nixon's first "War on Drugs."

> "What cannot be denied is that U.S. intelligence agencies arranged for the release from prison of the world's preeminent drug lord [Charles 'Lucky' Luciano on February 9, 1946], allowed him to rebuild his narcotics empire, watched the flow of drugs into the largely black ghettoes of New York and Washington D.C. escalate, and then lied about what they had done. This founding saga of the relationship between American spies and gangsters set patterns that would be replicated from Laos and Burma to Marseilles and Panama ...
>
> "A few weeks before he died [in 1962] Luciano gave an interview to an Associated Press reporter who asked him why he had been released from prison. 'I got my pardon because of the great services I rendered to the United States,' Luciano said ...
>
> "From the moment of its inception the CIA has held to the same policies of its progenitors in keeping gangster organizations in business. By 1947 the Agency was backing heroin producers in Marseilles, Burma, Lebanon and western Sicily."
>
> *Whiteout*, p. 134

Those who don't recognize the genocidal implications of the U.S. imperialists flooding the oppressed communities with narcotics should pay close heed to the words of Professor Yusuf Nuruddin, who narrowly survived the heroin epidemic of the 1960s and '70s:

> "I estimate that circa 1967–1972 roughly two-thirds of the males between 16 and 35 in my [Bedford-Stuyvesant] neighborhood [in Brooklyn, NY] were [using] heroin. Decades before the so-called 'paranoid' accusations of the CIA involvement in distribution of crack-cocaine in Los Angeles surfaced, many folks in my generation had surmised that local police were involved in heroin distribution ... Those who didn't die of overdoses or simple long-term neglect of basic health which characterizes hard core addiction, found themselves victim of shared 'dirty' needles ... [T]he AIDS epidemic wiped them out. Between the ages of 35 and 39 they were dropping like flies. Few brothers in my neighborhood from [my]generation reached the age of 40. Ninety percent of the generation was wiped out. It was genocide."
>
> "Brothas Gonna Work it Out!" *Socialism and Democracy*, Vol. 18, No.2, July–Dec. 2004, p. 246–47

Worse still he has witnessed a repeat of history with the crack epidemic, but on a more destructive level due to the role of armed gang warfare, and how this process has served the imperialists.

> "Shying away from needles ... the early Hip Hop generation ... turned to smokable crack-cocaine as a drug of 'choice.' I watched the whole cycle of generational genocide re-occur in the mid-to-late '80s and '90s, as the violence of the drug trade escalated to unprecedented levels (heroin junkies were known for theft, but not for violence). This time the powers that be pumped not only drugs into our communities, but drugs and guns. Hold ups for cash, jewelry, and shearling leather coats by crack junkies frequently ended up in violence and death. While the heroin trade had been controlled by middle-aged whites in organized crime

cartels like the Mafia (increasingly challenged by rising adult Blacks in cartels such as the Nicky Barnes outfit), the trade in crack-cocaine was controlled by ... rival gangs of young Blacks who regularly engaged in gun battles for control of turf. Held in a grip of rampant drug abuse and narco-terrorism, the inner cities imploded. The anger that had triggered 'social explosions' (inner city insurrections, urban uprisings, civil disturbances, 'riots') in the past had now been channelled by the powers-that-be into 'social implosions'—violent inward collapsings of community life. This was all part and parcel of a socially engineered policy of containment—containment of the revolutionary potential of the Black masses via the transformation of latent guerrilla warriors into thugs and addicts. Who's really in charge?"

Ibid. p. 247

After creating the crack epidemic, the U.S. government declared a "War on Drugs," which was soon merged with a declared "War on Gangs." To win public support for these "wars" the Empire pushed a major media campaign against drugs.

"In early September 1989, a major government-media blitz was launched by the President. That month the [Associated Press] wires carried more stories about drugs than about Latin America, Asia, the Middle East and Africa combined. If you looked at television, every news program had a big section on how drugs were destroying our society, becoming the greatest threat to our existence, etc.

"The effect on public opinion was immediate. When Bush won the 1988 election, people said the budget deficit was the biggest problem facing the country. Only about 3% named drugs. After the media blitz, concern over the budget was way down and drugs had soared to about 40% to 45%, which is highly unusual for an open question (where no specific answers are suggested).

"Now when some client state complains that the U.S. government isn't sending it enough money, they no longer say, 'we need it to stop the Russians'—rather, 'we need it to stop

drug trafficking.' Like the Soviet threat, this enemy provides a good excuse for a military presence where there's rebel activity or other unrest.

"So internationally, 'the war on drugs' provides a cover for intervention. Domestically, it has little to do with drugs but a lot to do with distracting the population, increasing repression in the inner cities, and building support for the attack on civil liberties."

Noam Chomsky, *What Uncle Sam Really Wants* (Berkeley, CA: Odonian Press, 1999), pp. 82–83

Under cover of the War on Drugs, the CIA-generated crack-cocaine epidemic was used to enact the Anti-Drug Abuse Act of 1986, a law targeted selectively, (as "Jolly" West had proposed a decade earlier), at crack-cocaine—the form of cocaine sold cheaply to inner city people of color. This law made mandatory criminal penalties for crack 100 times more severe than penalties for powder cocaine—the drug of choice in white suburbia. Likewise, under cover of the "War on Gangs," the sectarian gang violence over drug turf was used to validate violent occupation of the inner cities by militarized police, the creation of gang databases, and police conducting massive gang sweeps indiscriminately targeting males of color—most having no gang affiliations.

As Christian Parenti described in *The Soft Cage*:

"During the late eighties, before terrorism eclipsed communism as official enemy number one, the media and political class became almost delusionally obsessed with gangs. The moral panic had some basis in truth; after all, deindustrialization, increased economic inequality and the ready money of the new and chaotic crack trade did create an explosion of gang warfare in cities both large and small."

A major byproduct of the "war on gangs" has been the creation of huge computerized gang databases designed to identify and track gang members, suspected gang members and their associates.

The impact of the War on Drugs on the Black communities was to exacerbate crises.

"It would be difficult to find any documentary evidence that this war on drugs had anything other than a deleterious effect. By 1990 Black youth unemployment in the greater Los Angeles area was 45 percent. Nearly half of all black males under the age of twenty-five had been in the criminal justice system. Life expectancy for blacks was falling for the first time in this [20th] century, and infant mortality in the city was rising. Some 40 percent of black children were born into poverty."

Whiteout, p. 78

Not only has the drug war seen the U.S. prison population quadruple since the 1970s but militarized police have become a growing norm. In his *New York Times* article "Crack's Legacy: Soldiers of the Drug War Remain on Duty," Timothy Egan describes the situation:

"... what started out as a response to the violent front of the war on drugs has evolved, here and in cities across the nation, into a new world of policing.

"Special Weapon and Tactics Squads, once used exclusively for the rare urban terrorist incident or shootout, transformed themselves through the crack years into everyday parts of city life ...

"Encouraged by federal grants, surplus equipment handed out by the military and seizure laws that allow police departments to keep much of what their units take in raids, the Kevlar helmeted brigades have grown dramatically, even in the face of plummeting crime figures.

"'It is the militarization of Mayberry,' said Dr. Peter Kraska, a professor of criminal justice at Eastern Kentucky University, who surveyed police departments nationwide and found that their deployment of paramilitary units had grown tenfold since the early 1980s.

"'This is unprecedented in American policing and you have to ask yourself: What are the unintended consequences?'"

Here are two accounts on how this all plays out at the street level against urban youth of color (for those who don't live in the

'hood and see it everyday):

> "Members of the NYPD's street Crime Unit are known as 'the Commandos of the NYPD.' In existence since 1971, the unit has undergone a 300 percent buildup since 1997. Former NYC Police Commissioner William Bratton encouraged the men to 'become far more aggressive.' Currently made up of roughly 400 mostly white officers, this unit, along with the 7,000 strong Narcotics Unit, represent the front line in Mayor Giuliani's 'Quality of life' crackdown on—and criminalization of—people of color, especially young, poor and homeless people. They wear (and peddle) tee shirts that say 'Certainly There is No Hunting Like the Hunting of Men.' And their slogan is, 'We Own the Night.'"
>
> Frank Morales, "The Militarization of the Police," *Covert Action Quarterly*, Spring-Summer 1999

> "[R]ecently, there have been some very interesting studies of urban police behavior done at George Washington University, by a rather well-known criminologist named William Chambliss. For the last couple of years he's been running projects in cooperation with Washington D.C. police, in which he has law students and sociology students ride with the police in their patrol cars to take transcripts of what happens. I mean, you've got to read this stuff: it is all targeted against the black and Hispanic populations, almost entirely. And they are not treated like a criminal population, because criminals have Constitutional rights—they're treated like populations under military occupation. So the effective laws are, the police go to somebody's house, they smash in the door, they beat the people up, they grab some kid they want, and they throw him in jail. And the police aren't doing it because they're all bad people, you know—that's what they're being told to do."
>
> Noam Chomsky, *Understanding Power: The Indispensable Chomsky* (NY: New Press, 2002)

Even the ACLU has pointed out the destructive impact of the "Drug War" on Black communities and families and its targeting of Blacks:

"The collateral consequences of the nation's drug policies, racially targeted prosecutions, mandatory minimums, and crack sentencing disparities have had a devastating effect on African American (sic) men, women, and families. Recent data indicates that African Americans (sic) make up only 15% of the country's drug users, yet they comprise 37% of those arrested for drug violations, 59% of those convicted, and 74% of those sentenced to prison for a drug offense. As law enforcement focused its efforts on crack offenses, especially those committed by African Americans (sic), a dramatic shift occurred in the overall incarceration trends for African Americans (sic), relative to the rest of the nation, transforming federal prisons into institutions increasingly dedicated to the African American (sic) community. The effects of mandatory minimums not only contribute to these disproportionately high incarceration rates, but also separate fathers from families, separate mothers with sentences for minor possession crimes from their children, leave children behind in the child welfare system, create massive disenfranchisement of those with felony convictions, and prohibit previously incarcerated people from receiving social services such as welfare, food stamps, and access to public housing."

American Civil Liberties Union, "Cracks in the System: Twenty Years of the Unjust Federal Crack Cocaine Law," October 2006

Not only is this war on the oppressed communities seen to be a mass disposal project to sweep our youth into prisons where they cease to be able to reproduce, but also as a move to ultimately dispose of the urban Black communities. For example, residents and representatives from several projects in Watts, and California professors, saw these implications in federal efforts to learn from residents the whereabouts of young Black men, under claims of conducting hypertension research:

"The representatives from Watts saw sinister implications. At best, they believed the hypertension study was a cover story for violence initiative research [like that proposed by 'Jolly' West in the '70s]. At worst, the aim was to make a list of black resisters in preparation for future police or army

invasion of the projects, leading to their ultimate destruction. They feared that the iron fences erected around the project would ultimately be used to pen them in rather than protect them.

"Contrary to the public and media images, the project representatives felt grateful for where they are living. As fearful as they were about neighborhood violence, they were more afraid of the outside white community's intentions toward their homes and children. (Similarly, many black parents are more afraid of their children being hurt by the police than by neighborhood youth. Time and again, as I have traveled, mothers and fathers have told me stories about their teenage sons being arbitrarily arrested and brutalized by police officers). The bad publicity about the projects, describing them as nightmarish jungles did not fit with their experience of community and their gratitude for an affordable place to live. The uniformly negative public images of the projects among whites, they feared, are aimed at preparing the city to accept the demise of these communities. They felt sure that many white-owned businesses hunger to demolish the projects to make way for 'progress' through economic encroachment. They also saw hints of genocide through the dismantling of yet another established black community and the possibility of the ultimate extermination of the project population. They uniformly believed that government policies are purposely fostering the lethal environment of drugs, guns and gangs."

Dr. Peter and Ginger Breggin,
The War Against Children of Color: Psychiatry Targets Inner City Youth
(ME: Common Courage, 1998)

Many of these concerns have come to pass, as we see massive gentrification taking place in the inner-cities, demolition of projects, and even mass displacement, as occurred in New Orleans in the wake of Hurricane Katrina, with white businesses moving in to "redevelop" Black neighborhoods. And we should be reminded that the Louisiana governor used the patently false claim that "Black gang-bangers" had fired on the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers as a pretext for declaring "War" (martial

law) against a starving, dehydrating, drowning, stranded Black population in New Orleans during the Katrina crisis. The power structure uses the "gang" label as justification for any level of violence and abuse against people of color and our communities.

> "So take a significant question you never hear asked despite this supposed 'Drug War' which has been going on for years and years: how many bankers and chemical corporation executives are in prison in the United States for drug-related offenses? Well, there was recently an O.E.C.D. [Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development] study of the international drug racket, and they estimated that about a half-trillion dollars of drug money gets laundered internationally every year—more than half of it through American banks. I mean, everybody talks about Colombia as the center of drug-money laundering, but they're a small player: they have about $10 billion going through, U.S. banks have about $260 billion. Okay, that's serious crime—it's not like robbing a grocery store. So American bankers are laundering huge amounts of drug money, everybody knows it: how many bankers are in jail? None. But if a Black kid gets caught with a joint, he goes to jail.
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> "And actually, it would be pretty easy to trace drug-money laundering if you were serious about it—because the Federal Reserve requires that banks give notification of all cash deposits made of over $10,000, which means that if enough effort were put into monitoring them, you could see where all the money's flowing. Well, the Republicans deregulated in the 1980s, so now they don't check. In fact, when George Bush was running the 'Drug War' under Reagan, he actually cancelled the one federal program for this which did exist, a project called 'Operation Greenback.' It was a pretty tiny thing anyway, and the whole Reagan/Bush program was basically designed to let this thing go on—but as Reagan's 'Drug Czar,' Bush nevertheless cancelled it.
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> "Or why not ask another question—how many U.S. chemical corporation executives are in jail? Well, in the 1980s, the

> CIA was asked to do a study on chemical exports to Latin America, and what they estimated was that more than 90 percent of them are not being used for industrial production at all—and if you look at the kinds of chemical they are, it's obvious that what they're being used for is drug production. Okay, how many chemical corporation executives are in jail in the United States? Again, none—because social policy is not directed against the rich, it's directed against the poor."
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> *Understanding Power*, p. 372

Chomsky then described the Drug War for exactly what it is—a race/class war against people of color in Amerika and the poor:

> "[I]f you just look at the composition of the prison population, you'll find that the crime control policy that's been developed is very finely honed to target select populations. So for example, what's called the 'War on Drugs,' which has very little to do with stopping the flow of drugs, has a lot to do with controlling the inner-city populations, and poor people in general. In fact, by now over half the prisoners in federal prisons are there on drug charges—and it's largely for possession offenses, meaning victimless crimes, about a third just for marijuana. Moreover, the 'Drug War' specifically has been targeted on the black and Hispanic populations—that's one of its most striking features, so for instance, the drug of choice in the ghetto happens to be crack cocaine, and you get huge mandatory sentences for it: the drug of choice in the white suburbs, like where I live, happens to be powder cocaine, and you don't get anywhere near the same penalties for it. In fact, the sentence ratio for those drugs in federal court is 100 to 1 ..."
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> Ibid., p. 371

So whether most "gang-bangers" want to face it or not, you're being used like those before you, by the very forces that are oppressing us all (fascist U.S. imperialism) to destroy yourselves, your "homies," your communities, killing and injuring each other and poor people in general, only to be killed, injured or imprisoned in turn—a losing cycle for all except the powers that

be who're profiting off your actions and misery and keeping your focus on other victims. Consequently, you give the imperialists the pretext to justify waging open war against you, your "homies," and us all. Attack the head, divide the body, fight and destroy the divided body: An imperialist recipe for genocide.

Reverse Their Game

The Establishment recognizes the potential of the street formations to become revolutionary organizations. This is the main reason they are a major focus of official attack and disruption, and their potentially revolutionary leaders systematically purged. Remember it was Tookie's paying tribute to Black revolutionaries that sealed his fate. As the FBI stated in a memo dated March 9, 1968: "The Negro youths and moderates must be made to understand that *if* they succumb to revolutionary teaching, they will be dead revolutionaries."

Well, they're killing us anyway, purging and destroying our genuine leaders, dividing us against each other, manipulating us to kill each other, and warehousing us in concentration camps. So what we got to lose? Nothing but our chains! But, like the slaves on the old plantations, that *ain't* gonna happen by set tripping and bangin' against other slaves.

We need to pay heed to Sun Tzu and throw his book of war right back at them. Build alliances and defeat their strategy and plans. Their plan has been to destroy our leaders, to divide the people and the street *organizations*, to infest our *communities* with crime and drugs—let's unite: their plan has been to attack our divided numbers—let's *organize* for collective *community* defense!

Toward A Clenched Fist Alliance

Looking to history and the future, the street formations can and should formally unite in a common revolutionary alliance: A Clenched Fist and Red Front Alliance. The various formations' colors and flags wouldn't change, but as Clenched Fist and Red Front allies, they'd have the opportunity to explain and distinguish their changes in *orientation*, to present a revolutionary

option for other sets and gangs to follow their example and lead.

This is the only eventuality that could free all our oppressed peoples, communities and nationals from oppression and suffering. Each formation must realize that divided, their potential for power is sorely limited, and as such they will be continually played *against* each other with violence. And none have a monopoly on violence. When one formation or set attacks another, they in turn invite violent retaliation against themselves. Kill a rival and in turn they kill one of your own. The cycle repeats endlessly, the pigs are entertained by the result and our real need and struggle for liberation from imperialist oppression is neglected.

Before their leaders were picked off (killed or imprisoned), the Vice Lords became revolutionary. They styled themselves after the BPP, wore brown berets, etc. The Young Lords (NYC, Chicago, Philly) evolved into the Young Lords Party and became full allies of the BPP. They wore purple berets and later morphed into the Puerto Rican Revolutionary Workers Organization. In 1968 the Blackstone Rangers were paid to attack the anti-war demonstrations at the Democratic National Convention, but instead joined with revolutionary demonstrators in fighting the pigs, who attacked the demonstration.

Large contingents of the Almighty Latin Kings y Queens Nation turned out at demonstrations in NYC, including against the bombing of Iraq. In the 1940s the ALKQN began as a group that assisted Puerto Ricans immigrating into the U.S. and Chicago, and soon spread to the Mexican barrios providing the same support services.

In 1992, following the LA uprising, Bloods and Crips leaders in LA worked out a truce that included an economic plan for improving the communities. The pact lasted two years during which gang related killings declined immensely. The Establishment targeted the leaders and ultimately sabotaged the alliance.

The Gangster Disciples was founded in the early 1980s with a program of community support in Chicago influenced by the past example of the BPP.

Most all the prominent U.S. street formations began or at some point aspired to serve as assets to their communities. All were derailed by pig incitement and instigation and media

glamorization of violent "gangsterism" into fighting other formations. All were driven off the revolutionary path and into illegitimate capitalism (criminal activities) to survive, many after witnessing the destruction of the BPP by the U.S. government. The hatred and anger over lost lives and injuries are focused on the wrong "enemies." We are all victims of the same oppressive system—victims played against victims.

As pointed out, the violence of the youth street formations is what the imperialist system creates and then uses to justify its own counter violence against them and us all. A major tactic used to destroy the BPP was the U.S. government's creating a violent image of the party which it used in turn to isolate and violently attack it.

> "[R]ecently a reporter's Freedom of Information Act investigation in [the FBI's] COINTELPRO files found that the American government had done everything possible to infiltrate the Black Panthers and other lesser-known activist groups, then had its 'agents' lead the groups into violent gestures that would divide them, undermine their credibility and bring down the full weight of the state on the leader's heads. The lethal effects of ultra-left actions by misled people's movements have proved disastrous over and over again."
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> William Hinton, *Through a Glass Darkly: U.S. Views of the Chinese Revolution* (NY: Monthly Review, 2006)

The crimes of our oppressed class pale by comparison to those of the oppressor ruling class. Indeed our "crimes" are a direct product of the conditions of poverty and exploitation imposed upon us by those in control—and as has been demonstrated throughout this paper many of our crimes are the result of the direct manipulations and entrapments of the U.S. government itself. It is against these forces and system that we must struggle, and win the criminalized poor elements over to serving the people as revolutionaries.

The Clenched Fist Alliance would lead and organize our urban youth whose job would be to defend the communities and back up striking workers or rent strikers, discourage drug

dealing and street crime. It would promote and enforce a gang truce and channel youth's energies into productive activities and community service programs, lead in conducting political education and train in the methods of community defense, martial arts and urban combat.

A Concluding Statement

As a young brotha on the inside of a street formation pointed out to me in a recent discussion between us about this Self-Inflicted Genocide:

> "Killing ourselves is exactly what the poor Blacks, Brown, and even whites are doing. I believe the most incriminating evidence against the known ruling class and government promoters and instigators of this self-inflicted genocide is that everything in this society glamorizes such behavior. Especially the mainstream media that is owned, controlled, and regulated not by poor people but by the ruling class and government. But any movie, rap video, newspaper, school of thought, etc. which opposes this rotten system is anti-self hatred, promotes community independence and even hints of being politically conscious and pro-revolutionary is immediately criticized, neutralized, and its orchestrators destroyed. There is no mainstream conscious rap, all conscious musicians are forced to operate 'underground' unless they camouflage and water their message down to the point of swimming in contradictions. But the rappers who talk about selling drugs, bangin' and killing and other self-destructive, self-hating and frivolous shit are promoted far and wide by mainstream producers and record labels. It's the system that's teaching us, promoting and glamorizing this shit day in and day out! I'm in total agreement with you—we're being played right into the graveyard and prisons, while the real enemy (the real gangsters) are making bank off our suffering, doing shit to us that we'd never tolerate from each other (Who killed Tookie? Who runs our families out of the 'hoods at will? Who kidnaps us and throws us in jail at will? Who has us

fighting over a slice of bread—while they own the whole wheat field?), and keeping our focus off of him. Yeah, our priorities are backwards ... just like the broken slaves back in the day!"

Looking back to the near total extermination of the Native Americans and then considering the predicament of people of color and the poor in Amerika today, we see the undeniable truth of the old cliché that "those who don't learn from history are doomed to repeat it." But we can break the cycle of slavery and genocide and our chains, by uniting in revolutionary struggle. Otherwise we only play into the plans of this imperialist system and our own Self-Inflicted Genocide.

The key to victory as Sun Tzu pointed out is good planners (correct leaderships), strong alliances that can't be broken or weakened by enemy schemes, and highly skilled defense forces.

If we must rep anything let it be the united struggle for liberation from the chains of imperialism, and not for empty claims to turf owned by the imperialists—turf we cannot even defend from pig attacks, and that we are readily swept off of into prisons or barred from or run off of when they desire to seize entire neighborhoods for capitalist "redevelopment" plans. If we must die, let it be in struggle for freedom and not as pawns manipulated into fighting other slaves.

Dare to Struggle, Dare to Win!
All Power to the People!

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