

THE BLACK ACTIVIST

ISSUE THREE / SPRING 2014

FALLEN WARRIORS



TIME TO RETHINK
TIME TO REBUILD

The Black Activist is the journal of the Black Left Unity Network

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EDITORIAL

01 Memory and power: When warriors fall, it's time to rethink and rebuild

The reality of life is contained within the road traveled between life and death in the context of the social forces of history. One way to read history is through generations. Fanon points to this is the famous quote from *Wretched of the Earth*: “Each generation must, out of relative obscurity, discover its mission, fulfill it, or betray it.” There have always been revolutionary individuals and groups, but some generations have been able to discover their revolutionary mission. This is partly as objective possibility, and partly as subjective will.

We can look back to the 1930's and the 1960's. These are two decades when a critical generation threw themselves into movements. This involved radical ideological consciousness for social transformation. In the 1930's it was to rise up against a capitalist crisis and emergent fascism. People were being forced into poverty fearing political repression and global racism. In the 1960's the uprising was in the context of economic expansion. There was great optimism, rising expectations and the belief that social justice could be achieved under capitalism. This includes both within imperialist countries and for national liberation in the third world.

But there were some revolutionary people and groups in the 1960 that understood it would be impossible to achieve social justice within an imperialist country. Social justice was going to be achieved as a result of ending capitalism via a socialist transformation. A new reality check was forced on people when the two great social justice icons of the 1960's were murdered: Malcom X (1925-1965) and Martin Luther King (1929-1968). The system was once again discovered to be rotten to its core.

These 1960's Black liberation activists are now the elders of the movement. They are the living libraries of the Black liberation movement. Many academics and journalists are making every effort they can to grab this knowledge to create books, to turn this knowledge into commodities and advance careers. What is missing are autobiographical accounts that can be used as manuals for training new generations to become movement activists. Good examples of this are the *Autobiography of Malcolm X*, and James Foreman's *The Making of a Black Revolutionary*. In any case we need books not just about glorifying the movement, but to learn lessons from them to help rebuilding the movements of today.

We have recently lost key activists, elders from the 1960's revolutionary movements. The BLUN honors them and calls for all movement centers and groups to have discussions about them so

they can be models for the young activists now and those yet to step forward. There are many more left and it's time to learn from them before they also make their transition from life into death.

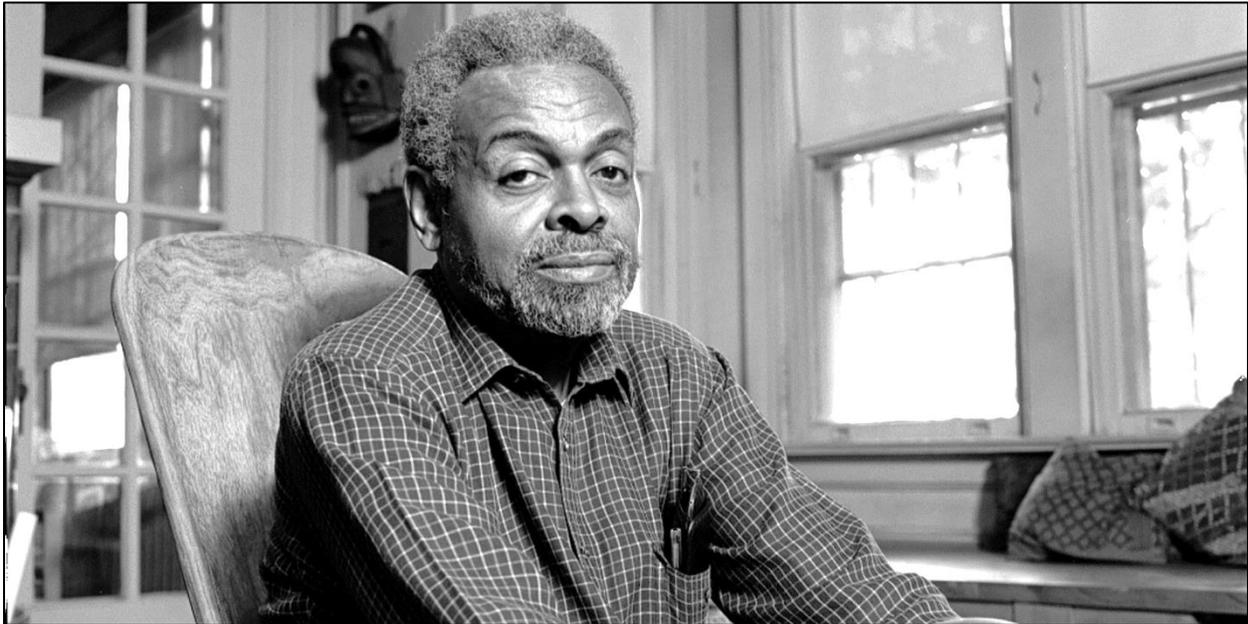
02 Jayne Cortez (1934-2012)



Jayne Cortez, poet, activist, independent publisher, and performing and visual artist, was born in Huachuca, Arizona in 1934. She is the author of ten books, and her works has been translated into twenty-eight languages. Some of her major titles include *On the Imperial Highway: New and Selected Poems* (2008), *The Beautiful Book* (2007), *Jazz Fan Looks Back* (2002), *Somewhere in Advance of Nowhere* (1997), *Coagulations: New and Selected Poems* (1982). Not only was she a skilled technician of language, but one of the world's major Afro-Jazz and political visionaries, surrealist poets, whose dynamic charisma and explosive delivery of her work thrilled audiences worldwide.

Jayne Cortez was a committed Pan Africanist, a Women's / Human Rights activist, and was a member of the Student Non-violent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) in Mississippi, registering Black voters, in 1963 and 1964, during the 1960 Civil Rights Movement. Sister Jayne Cortez was major Djali/Griot of the modern African post-colonial experience, and a major writer in the U.S. and African world. Historically she is a "Sister" to the great Negritude poets, such as Aimé Césaire and colleagues. We must remember her as one of the major voices and visionaries of our time.

03 Amiri Baraka (1934-2014)

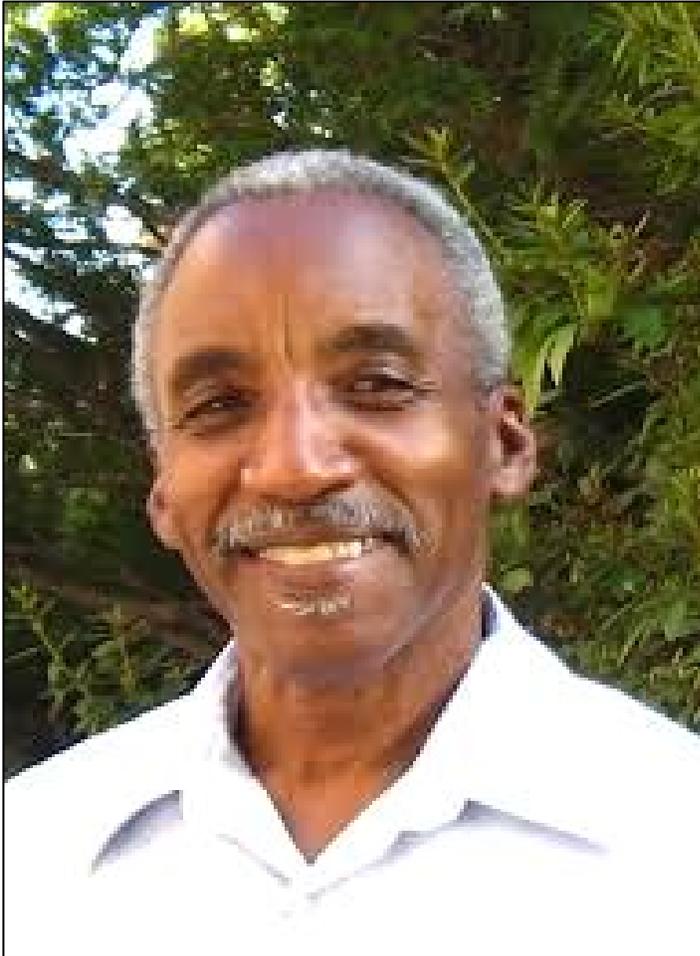


Amiri Baraka started out as a beat poet in Greenwich Village in New York City. His 1960 trip to Cuba after Fidel Castro came to power had a radical impact on his life. As poet, author, and playwright, Amiri Baraka built a national and international reputation as artist. After the assassination of Malcolm X in 1965 he moved to Harlem where he founded the Black Arts Repertory Theatre/School. As one of the major figures along with Larry Neal, Sonia Sanchez, and Askia Toure, they are regarded as the architects of the Black Arts Movement that worked in tandem with the emerging Black Power Movement. He became a leading force in the African Liberation Support Committee. Amiri eventually moved back to Newark, NJ, where he and his wife Amina founded the Committee for Unified Newark and the Congress of African People. He published several journals and the newspaper *Unity and Struggle* that used Marxism-Leninism to inform the Black Liberation Movement.

We should remember Amiri for his contributions to not only the Black Liberation Movement, but for his struggle to connect the national question of Black self-determination to the international class question of capitalist and imperialist exploitation of working people. Amiri was not born a revolutionary. It was his engagement as an artist who grew more conscious of how oppressive a capitalism society functions. Instead of buying into the privilege of a celebrated artist, Amiri embraced the black masses bringing his artistic and intellectual skills into his community giving voice and advocating for democratic Black power. Throughout the various phases of his life, Amiri continued to grow politically grappling with how to fuse the struggle for Black liberation and struggle for socialism in America. By struggling to take up

different questions and changing his outlook and his own practice made him a transformational revolutionary, someone who was self-critical and reflective about building a new society.

04 Rod Bush (1945-2013)



Rod Bush was an internationalist, humanist, and Black revolutionary who devoted his life to fundamental social change. His love and care for humanity meant a life committed to the fight for transformational justice. Merged in his legacy is the synergy among ideas, practice and relationships. Indeed, Rod's life was grounded in love, community and a profound belief in humanity. His scholar activism was rooted in that revolutionary care and practice. He was central to the organizational work of SOBU/YOBU and ALSC. He served on the editorial staff of Contemporary Marxism and on the Board of the Left Forum. His engagement with and support of the aims of the Black Left Unity Network will not be forgotten.

An award winning scholar, his work is still too little known. Thus in the midst

of recognizing his revolutionary activism we applaud Rod's scholarship. His last book, *The End of White Supremacy* is noteworthy in several respects. Rod locates Black internationalism as foundational to Black struggle. In the text, he astutely articulates how it happened that racism was established as constitutive of the capitalist world economy, which used racism as a justification for the establishment of a hierarchical system to the benefit of the pan-European world. As a theoretician, Rod articulates the power of Black internationalism as foundational to historical change and radical social transformation. His earlier book, *We are Not What We Seem: Black Nationalism and Class Struggle In the American Century,* won the 2000 Oliver Cromwell Cox Award of the Marxist Section, American Sociological Association. Indeed, Dr. Rod Bush developed a rich body of work, highly exemplary of the Black radical scholar-activist

tradition. That is, his scholarship and activism were articulated in deep relation. And, importantly, Rod Bush bridged different ways of thinking and acting, in service to the struggle.

05 Cheryll Greene (1943-2013)



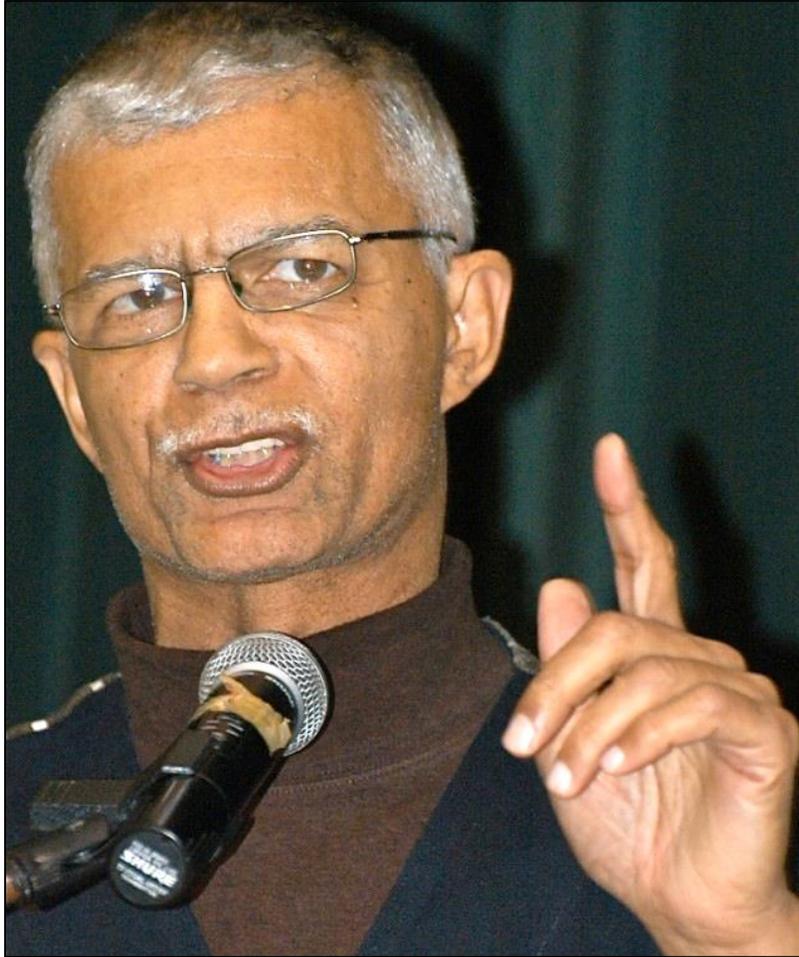
Cheryll Yvonne Greene: Journalist, writer, public intellectual... activist within the Black Liberation Struggle. Sister Cheryll was a quiet *SisterForce* that helped shaped how the world saw Black Women through her editorial work in the building of *Essence Magazine*... and later in life, through her leadership in the global work of *YariYari: Black Women Writers and the Future*.

In the tradition of so many Sister Activists before her, Cheryll sacrificed family and a lucrative job to go to Atlanta and help shape the

groundbreaking radical activist think tank, the Institute for the Black World. Sister Cheryll honed her editorial skills in the midst of the Black Liberation Struggle as well as the “established literary and arts world” such as *Cosmopolitan* magazine, W.W. Norton, and the Studio Museum of Harlem. Her sharp editorial skills were always available to Black Causes and rising Black writers while she was constantly engaged in Harlem’s grassroots battles against racism and economic exploitation.

Without the dedicated work of Sister Cheryll, we would not have had the now classic book: *Malcolm X-Make It Plain* as well as the Schomburg Center’s 2005 *Malcolm X: A Search for Truth*. And in spite of her long battle with cancer, she made her razor sharp skills and probing mind available to rising Black writers, fellow Sister Activists needing advice while contributing to and theorizing about the broader Black Liberation Movement.

06 Chokwe Lumumba (1947-2014)



Chokwe Lumumba was a leader in the national Black liberation movement. He emerged as a leader out of the Provisional Government of the Republic of New Africa (PG-RNA), one of the 1960s Black liberation organizations whose formation was influenced by Malcolm X. As one of the main organizations actively demanding the holding plebiscite to declare 5 states in the South as an independent Black Nation, Chokwe spent the last 26 years of his life working in the state of Mississippi organizing the Black masses under the slogan of “Free The Land.”

After experiencing shootouts in self-defense against police

agencies at the PG-RNA founding conference in 1969 at the New Bethel in Detroit, Michigan and in Jackson, Mississippi in 1971, Chokwe Lumumba decided to go to law school and serve as Minister of Justice for the PG-RNA. He defended most of the high profiled cases of Black political prisoners and prisoners of war of the Black liberation movement, gaining him the title of the people’s lawyer. He was also the lead prosecutor in the 2007 International Tribune on Hurricanes Katrina and Rita that charging the Local and U.S. federal government with committing ethnic cleansing and other crimes against humanity against Black and poor people in New Orleans and the Gulf Coast Region impacted by the hurricanes.

Chokwe became member of the Jackson City Council in 2008, and was elected Mayor of Jackson in July 2013 where he brought forward a vision of people’s democratic governance and an economy accountable to the people. He died after only eight months as Mayor.

* * *

The Black Left Unity Network looks to find lessons that run through the lives of all of these fallen warriors. While we have taken note of several individuals, we hope everyone knows that these are not the only ones to fall. The Malcolm X. Grassroots Movement has published research that presents evidence of severe police repression: Every 28 hours a Black person is killed by the imperialist state. (<http://tinyurl.com/every28hours>)

We would like to propose the following for broad discussion and debate:

1. The grand narrative of African American history is the fight from slavery to freedom
2. Black unity of action of the working class and poor people is a strategic requirement for Black liberation
3. Our unity of action must uphold the tactical law to fight “by any means necessary.”
4. We link the fight against racism and male supremacy with the fight against class exploitation in search of a future beyond capitalism
5. We link the fight for Black liberation in the US to the freedom struggle throughout the African Diaspora and in support of freedom loving people all over the world
6. We fight to yank back Black Studies from the academic mainstream to its historic role as an intellectual arm of the Black liberation movement

These simple statements are the basis for serious political study and application to our practice and organizational development within the left for Black liberation and social revolution. The BLUN 12/21 symposium is one example of how these points are part of the developing Black left in motion today.

Join us as we fight forward.

Black Left Unity Network

Photo sources

Jayne Cortez:

<http://3.bp.blogspot.com/-9WxpRMLqj94/UN6CpFRw0I/AAAAAAAAABXQ/IEwNIYuWkM/s1600/jayne.jpg>

Amiri Baraka:

<http://i.huffpost.com/gen/1554271/thumbs/o-AMIRI-BARAKA-facebook.jpg>

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<https://encrypted-tbn1.gstatic.com/images?q=tbn:ANd9GcQBvbkM71uaWjToKgglgAOxcKM6-tZA5WqE8zWq-36XhM70hP>

Cheryll Green:

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Chokwe Lumumba:

<http://voices.clarionledger.com/racheljamesterry/files/2013/04/CHOKWE-LUMUMBA.jpg>



Black Left Unity Network meeting in North Carolina in 2012.

OUR MOVEMENT

These documents are reports that were provided for a December 21, 2013 Black Left Unity Network meeting. BLUN invited various Black activist organizations to Washington, DC, to sum up and discuss a way forward.



Group portrait at the conclusion of the December 21, 2013 BLUN meeting. Seated, left to right: Ajamu Dillahunt, Saladin Muhammed, Abdul Alkalimat, Ashaki Binta, Kathy Knight. Standing, left to right: Roger Newell, J. R. Fleming, Tony Menelik Van Der Meer, Dennis Orton, Kia Van Der Meer, Sam Anderson, Shafeah Mbalia, Rose Brewer, Tony Monteiro, Toussaint Losier, Rukiya Dillahunt, Taliba Obu, Jonathan Stith, Carl Redwood, Tdka Kilimanjaro, Jamal Oliver, Akinjele Umoja.

07 Opening comments by Saladin Muhammed

Comrades,

Welcome to this meeting to discuss the work of our various organizations, our understanding of the nature of the oppression faced by our people in this historical period and stage of capitalism, and how our work and unity can contribute to the liberation of our people and the revolutionary transformation of U.S. and global capitalism.

This meeting represents an important juncture in an almost 8 year journey to unite Black activist organizations rooted in the mass struggles of the Black working-class, to work together to rebuild a national Black liberation movement that is anti-capitalist, anti-imperialist and anti-patriarchy and internationalist.

The protests against the oppressive conditions created by US imperialism's racist system on national oppression which has its deepest impacts on the Black working-class, while an important aspect of Black resistance to oppression, do not usually focus on building areas of mass based strategic power to force major reforms and fundamental changes that alter the balance of power in favor of revolutionary change.

Most of the local struggles are fighting around issues that derive from the structures and policies of a national and international capitalist system. However, they are mainly fought as local struggles, without seeing these struggles as part of common national and international battlefronts attacking the local structures of a U.S. led international system.

The unity of Black activist organizations within and connected to a national and international framework can help us to better define the targets of the systemic forces, and to coordinate national and international actions that mobilizes the power of the Black working-class.

This unity begins to establish the nucleus for a conscious Black left unity tendency that develops institutions, national organizations and activities that connect Black activists organizations in common education, movement building assemblies and summations, and in launching local, statewide, national and international campaigns. This Black left unity tendency is important galvanizing force for developing and connecting the new militants being radicalized by the spontaneous struggles.

We have seen the challenges facing national liberation movements throughout the world in dealing with the question of what path for self-determination, capitalism or socialism. These struggles have mobilized the power of the masses against the forces of capitalism and imperialism, but the transfer of power has too often entered into subordinate and dependent relationships with the forces of capital, establishing at best a Black and oppressed nationality bourgeoisie that becomes partners with the global capitalist ruling-class.

Unlike most national liberation movements, we are struggling inside of an imperialist state that along with the U.S. ruling-class is the leading military and economic force of global capitalism. A Black left within the U.S. must have a clear and sober understanding of how the struggle for self-determination becomes a struggle for revolutionary Black working-class power that helps to alter the balance of power for revolutionary change. This recognizes that the U.S. imperialist state also oppresses and exploits other oppressed nationalities and peoples, workers, women and social sectors denied human rights.

The capitalist crisis has intensified the exploitation and repression of working class Black and other oppressed nationalities. The election of Obama was financed in large part by sections of the U.S. ruling-class to put a brake on the emergence of a national Black struggle around an anti-capitalist democratic program. While there continues to be many local struggles during the

Obama administration, they don't take on the character of national demands against the federal government's complicity with the U.S. and global capitalist ruling-class because of the reluctances to challenge the Obama administration.



This reluctance stems in part from the vile racist attacks on Obama and Black people by the right-wing and neo-fascists, and from the lack of unity of the Black left with a race/nationality, class and gender analysis working to organize and mobilize the Black and broader working-class around a Black working-class led national agenda. Instead of the Black left uniting to develop a Black working-class led agenda, it divided.

The unity of the Black left thus requires an example of the willingness to unite by Black activists organizations with a credibility of organizing and mobilizing the Black masses to fight back against the government and capitalist attacks.

The BLUN draft program document has proposed structures, tasks and timetables that represent the organizational consolidation of Black left organizations at a pace that is dictated by the intensifying conditions of oppression created by the capitalist crisis.

What is needed and how to get there, requires a collective recognition of what needs to be done. It must take into consideration the factors of linking largely local organizing,

consciousness and campaigns, into a national movement framework. This is an essential part of the unity process that must be led by the organizations involved.

The starting point is the forming of a Continuations Committee with committed representatives from the various organizations to work on the draft document and to lead the BLUN up to the formation of a National Council that begins the formal consolidation and expansion of a Black left to work to rebuild a national Black liberation movement.

This meeting represents a step to make the transition from a Black left network of individuals to a network of organizations.

- A. We need to have unity around the 3 fundamental BLUN principles:
- B. We are Black people fighting for power and liberation
- C. We fight to end the system of capitalist exploitation, patriarchy, homophobia, and all forms of oppression

We organize by connecting the local battlefronts rooted in a working-class perspective to build national unity of action and international solidarity with other struggling oppressed people.

A Black left must anchor our fight for Black liberation among Black workers and the poor; must advance the leadership of women and young people, and must rebuild the Black liberation movement as anti-capitalist and anti-imperialist.

Today our voices will be heard on key questions:

- A. to gather our diversity of experience and beliefs
- B. to find our unity and areas of difference
- C. to learn from each other and prepare together for the future.

Forward Together!

08 Black Workers for Justice

The international Situation

The impact of the international economic crisis continues to hit hardest on the African American people in the USA. The rate of unemployment for African Americans remains at its constant and historic rate of at least twice that of whites, especially among youth. Fifty years after the Civil Rights “March on Washington”, our rate of exploitation is summed up by the fact that median income for the Black family is 60 percent or less for that of white families. (And only 60 percent because white families have lost ground during the economic crisis as opposed

to the plight of black families improving). Median wealth for whites is 20 times higher than for blacks and 18 times higher than for Hispanics. Median wealth for single Black women remains at \$5.00.



Ashaki Binta, Black Workers for Justice

These disparities has led to higher of housing foreclosures and evictions and homelessness among Blacks – Black families 7 times more likely to be homeless than whites. It is these conditions of intense oppression that project the image of desperation and being on the hunt that the racist system exploits as part of the criminalizing and racial profiling of Black people, especially the young.

The murders and brutality of Black youth at the hands of the police and racist white vigilantes is an ever-present threat to the safety of our communities and white communities ventured in by Black youth. The percentage of incarceration for African Americans is the highest of any nationality inside the US. Combined with Hispanics, according to studies, African Americans are 58% of those incarcerated, while still only 12 to 13 percent of the US population.

Domestically, the far right, with tendencies of fascism has hijacked the electoral system and dominates the public discourse in support of the most blatantly open and draconian policies seen in this country since the Jim Crow 1920s through the mid-1960s. These conditions are

compounded when unemployment benefits are cut and when taxes for the rich are lowered; while taxes for the average working person or families is increased. The various forms of political disenfranchisement highlighted by the U.S. Supreme Court's recent removal of Section-4 of the Voting Rights Act points to the denial of substantial Black democratic rights, as the electoral arena claims to be the essence of a "truly" democratic system.

This is not the cyclical crisis of capitalism, where an economic boon is expected to bring about a recovery in a few years. Conditions for a large section of the Black working-class will only get worse as there are no social programs being funded to allow people to survive once they become unemployed – only the military and prison industrial complexes.

Despite the current calls by low wage workers and some trade unions to raise the minimum wage, and the demand by others for a federally funded jobs program, the trade union movement lacks an effective national strategy to address the conditions of workers in this country. Street crimes, contrary to the mainstream media, become unfortunate and unintended crimes for survival. These conditions in sum equal what we understand as The War on Black America.

Internationally, globalization and domination by the western Capitalist/Imperialist economies remains intact. The majority of the world's wealth is concentrated in a more interconnected global ruling-class that control the global financial and trade institutions like the International Monetary Fund, World Bank and the World Trade Organization. However, there are some economic challenges from China, Brazil, Russia, India and China (BRIC countries).

The U.S. imperialist wars and invasions, both overt and covert, continue to shape the international political climate. The Middle East with the continued occupation of Palestine and the threats from Israel on the one hand and fascist political Islam on the other; threatens a democratic solution to the problems facing the Arab and North African masses and those states that have refused to bow to Israel and the unbridled intimidation of the U.S.

Resistance either through the "Arab Spring" or the political/economic challenges to imperialism from Latin America have not yet developed to the point of offering a strong and viable coordinated challenge to western domination. Using the lens of South Africa we can see that there is still the unfinished business of the national liberation movements and the Pan African revolution on the African continent that is necessary for uniting the people and resources, further developing the productive forces and defeating imperialist domination in Africa.

The U.S. has more than 1,000 military bases in many countries worldwide. Some estimates of maintaining U.S. bases abroad since the start of the so-called war on terror in 2001 range from \$1.8 trillion to \$2.1 trillion. This does not count the more than 4,000 inside of the U.S.

(<http://digitaljournal.com/article/339184#ixzz2s2Fp1cMf>) Thus military spending greatly

contributes to the economic crisis facing the working-class and oppressed inside the U.S. Our program, for more than economic reasons, calls for opposition to imperialist wars. We are therefore internationalists in our understanding of the relationship of our struggle for national liberation against U.S. imperialism, and the worldwide struggles against U.S. led global capitalism.



Tony Monteiro with Shafeah Mbalia and Kathy Knight, both from Black Workers for Justice.

The mass work of the BWFJ is concentrated in 4 main areas: 1) building a politicized Southern rank-and-file labor movement to exercise workers power in the Southern and US economy; 2) building bases of independent Black working-class led political power to control resources, policy decisions, and to establish people's democratic governance; 3) fighting for community development and environmental justice; 4) building international labor and anti-imperialist solidarity. Within these concentrations we have taken up issues of women's oppression, environmental racism, and immigrant rights. We have begun experimenting with community cooperatives. Opposition to all forms of state repression is an ongoing part of our struggle for democracy and against the consolidation of fascism that is rising as part of the U.S. and global economic crisis.

Organizing Labor in the South: Key to Strategy for Fundamental Change

A critical aspect of a revolutionary strategy is how the revolutionary forces organize the masses to be strategically positioned to struggle against capitalism, imperialism and the U.S. imperialist state.

The basic orientation of the BWFJ is guided by our understanding of the key role that the South continues to play in the historical and current stage of development of US and global capitalism, and how it impacts Blacks and Latino's in the US South, throughout the country and the working-class throughout the U.S. and globally.

In the past 20 years, the South has seen a boom in its service economy, manufacturing base, petrochemicals, aerospace, high tech industries, and the financial sector. Alabama, Tennessee, South Carolina, Mississippi and Georgia have made the South a major region of the auto industry with factories producing: Mercedes-Benz, Hyundai, Toyota, Kia, BMW, Volkswagen, GM and Nissan. Germany has a large-scale state of the art steel mill in Mobile, Alabama.

Two of the world's largest research parks are located in North Carolina and Alabama. The region is the home of 65 Fortune 500 companies. It is headquarters of major banking corporations – Bank of America, AmSouth Bancorporation, BBVA Compass, SunTrust Banks, BB&T and district headquarters of the Federal Reserve Bank of America. The U.S. South is a major region for foreign direct investment and thus a major region of capitalist globalization.

The South's share of the U.S. gross domestic product (GDP) is 31%. As a region the combined domestic states product of \$3.73 trillion makes it the fourth largest economy in the world. United States - 12.36 trillion, China - \$8.86 trillion, Japan - \$4.02 trillion, The South - \$3.73 trillion.

The majority of Black people, close to 57%, live in the South. The Black Belt areas where the largest concentration of Blacks live in the South, is a long stretch of contiguous Black majority and significant minority counties with major areas of under development, and the more blatant forms of political disenfranchisement, is now a major region of global capitalism.

The reverse migration over the past 20 years that brought about a 5% increase of Black people in the South was also a period of migration into the South from throughout the Americas. Of the 101 million people in the South, close to 40% are comprised of Black, Native American, Mexican/Latino and Caribbean peoples, all nationally oppressed victims of U.S. imperialism.

The leadership of the Black working-class in the struggle for Black political and workers power in the South, can forge a Southern workers alliance collective led by the most exploited and

oppressed sectors, with a strong base among women, including the unemployed, becomes a major strategic factor in the struggle against U.S. and global capitalism.

However, this strategic power must be organized in the South, a region that has lacked a major coordinated organizing concentration by the national federations of the U.S. labor movement in more than 50 year. As a result, the South is the region with the lowest number of union membership. New York State has more union members than all 12 Southern states combined.

The resolution passed at the 2014 AFL-CIO national convention is very important. However, the national trade unions must not see organizing the South as making up for the loss of union members in the once union strongholds outside of the South. New organizing in the South must not subjected the workers to the union rivalries, the raids and the bureaucratic top down denial of rank-and-file democratic control. With the large number of foreign owned companies, Southern based unions must practice international labor

Recognizing how cities like Detroit, once having the high paid workers and a mega city of employment, education and Black culture, can deteriorate and go bankrupt when corporate power dominates over the city, it is important that the Southern labor movement and wider working-class have a vision of a new society, starting with the power relations between capital and labor and the entire working-class in the cities, counties and states where they work and live. This means having a goal of building workers power over all of the institutions impacting their economic, social, political and cultural lives.

The working-class must be told the truth about capitalism, so that they understand the reasons for the deep poverty, social decay and crime in the working-class communities. If not told by the labor movement and working-class organizations, they will only be told by the mainstream media and the mis-education system that blames these conditions on the workers, and especially Black workers.

Having the largest concentration of anti-labor state right-to-work laws than the other regions of the U.S., it is important to educate workers about the historical context that the majority of these laws were developed in. Labor rights in the South were denied by slavery and Jim Crow. Most right-to-work laws in the South were enacted during the period of Jim Crow y all white legislators when Blacks were denied the right to vote. They should be viewed and struggled against as Jim Crow laws.

The Southern Workers Assembly

It is for these reasons we have worked to build the Southern Workers Assembly (SWA). Initiated at Charlotte, NC on September 3, 2012, during the time of the Democratic National Convention (DNC), the SWA brought together workers and supporters from 7 Southern states to form a

South-wide organizing network to promote and help build a rank-and-file democratic labor movement.

The fact that the DNC was holding its convention in an anti-union right-to-work state, there were threats by the AFL-CIO to call on labor to boycott the DNC. The SWA organizers saw this as an opportunity to bring workers together in Charlotte where major national and international media would be present, to project the beginnings of a movement to organize the South. Charlotte and Mecklenburg County, where it is located, also introduced and supported the right-to-work law in 1949, immediately after Taft-Hartley was enacted. That made it illegal and a crime for public sector workers to form or join unions.

The Charlotte City workers chapter of the NC Public Service Workers Union-UE Local 150, that BWFJ helped to organize, held daily pickets for two weeks at the Charlotte City Hall leading up to the opening of the DNC, demanding at the right of the city workers to use payroll deduction to pay their union dues, and for the city to address problems faced by the workers, including not having a pay raise in 4 years. This embarrassed the Democratic Party that has a majority on the Charlotte City Council.

This struggle exposed that the City of Charlotte had received \$50 million from the U.S. Congress to cover some of the costs of holding the DNC. However, nothing was slated for the city workers that were working round the clock to prepare the city for the holding of the DNC. <http://www.charlotteobserver.com/2012/09/13/3528224/corporate-cash-paid-ncs.html#storylink=cpy>

The SWA core principles are Rank-and-file democracy; national and international labor solidarity; developing women's leadership; organizing the unorganized; fighting all forms of discrimination; building a Southern labor congress; and building labor's power for independent political action. Our core demands are Repeal Taft-Hartley and Right-to-Work laws, collective bargaining rights for all workers, organize the unorganized, family supporting living wages, equal pay for equal work, a federally funded jobs program, a universal single payer healthcare system and labor and democratic rights for undocumented workers.

Environmental Racism

Our Environmental Justice work sticks out as a major part of the struggle against the system of national oppression, as it is the working-class Black and oppressed people's communities where the majority of the environmental injustices take place. Thus, the framing - environmental racism, describes the main communities and politics of our environmental justice work.

The historic struggle against toxic dumping in Warren County, North Carolina in 1982 and our participation in the momentous Southern Community-Labor Conference for Environmental

Justice that drew over 2,500 participants to New Orleans in 1992, had a major influence on shaping the perspective of our work and put us in contact with other grassroots fighters for environmental justices throughout the South and nationally.

Our environmental justice work grew out our work of organizing community controlled Peoples Clinics in 3 rural communities, where people had to travel long distances for basic health checkups. The Peoples Clinics did health screening, detecting conditions that were related to pollutions in the communities and workplaces.



For the past 25 years our members have led and supported struggles against industries contaminating the air, land, well water that people drink, and the streams where people fish mainly in Eastern, NC. The meat packing industry with corporations like Smithfield Foods (recently bought a company in Hong Kong, China) has the world's largest pork processing plant, slaughtering and processing 35,000 hogs a day, is a major violator of environmental racism.

www.huffingtonpost.com/.../problems-persist-after-sm_b_4617980.html

Smithfield owns and is supplied by most of the 2,500 mechanized Confined Animal Feeding Operations (CAFOs) that house 10 million hog sows in mainly rural working-class Black, Latino and poor communities with open lagoons the size of football fields that are filled with the urine and feces of the hogs. Studies have shown that CAFOs cause major health problems and have

depreciated the value of the homes of, and the quality of life of thousands of Black folks in the affected counties.

In the Shiloh community, the home of some BWFJ members our work forced the government to declare the area an EPA Cleanup site. With the hog farms, grassroots actions over years led by the North Carolina Environmental Justice Network (NCEJN), where a BWFJ member is the lead organizer forced state government to enact a moratorium preventing the building of new hog CAFOs and the issuing of renewal permits.

One of the actions in the campaign against the CAFOs was setting up a mock CAFO at the legislative building with real hog waste, where more than 200 people from the affected communities camped out for 51 hour vigil.

While the NCEJN is anchored in rural and some urban communities, it is a strong supporter of unionizing workers. It built support for the union drive of the United Food and Commercial Workers (UFCW) against Smithfield's brutal anti-union campaign, resulting in victory for the close to 5,000 majority Black and Latino workers. At the annual NCEJN Summits bringing together representatives of impacted community organizations, a workers session has been included for the past 8 years, where the issue of the environment includes the conditions inside the workplace, and the important relationship between workers and the communities in the struggle for environmental justice is taken up.

In 2012, the NCEJN lead organizer attended the Rio+20 Climate Justice Conference in Brazil to learn how the Climate Justice movement connects to the struggle against environmental racism, and how to bring a deeper race and class analysis to the Climate Justice work.

Under the leadership of the current right wing state legislature, the NC Department of Environment & Natural Resources has announced it will renew all of the CAFO permits in 2014. The struggle continues.

The BWFJ Women's Commission

The Women's Commission of BWFJ was founded in 1986 to promote women's participation and leadership development in BWFJ organizing campaigns, and for BWFJ members. It is the vehicle through which we do most of our work around women's oppression and the struggle against patriarchy. It has engaged in both organizing directly as well as helping the organization and allies assess strengths and weaknesses in addressing women's participation, leadership or other issues especially affecting women.

In initial years, the Women's Commission (WC) engaged in direct organizing at the Rocky Mount Undergarment Plant of 200 workers that had 95% majority Black women. First assisting the

International Ladies Garment Workers Union (ILGWU), that pulled out after not being able to sign up a majority of the workers in a short timeframe for an NLRB vote, the WC held a community election with a ballot box set up outside in front of the plant where a majority of the votes were to form a union. The Undergarment workers formed an active fighting independent union without a contract and elected Sister Ida Boddie (now deceased) a 26 year Undergarment worker and chairperson of the Rocky Mount Chapter of BWFJ, as union President.

The WC published a pamphlet, "Women Workers Are Leaders, Too", sponsored local tours, and held International Working Women's Day events featuring international speakers, educational and organizing skill development workshops.

In 2003, the WC sponsored an International Women Workers Conference in Atlanta, GA where women attended from across the South, other parts of the U.S. and from several countries. Its recent activities have included sponsoring a book discussion group, International Women's Day, a supply drive for a local women's shelter and support for fired Raleigh City worker, Shirley Venable, a victim of domestic violence at home and harassment on the job. A number of WC members are active members, leaders and organizers in the postal workers, teachers, public service workers and diesel workers unions.

The goals of the WC for the coming year include at least 1 to 2 more rounds of the book discussion group adding more structure and focused political education; a "health & healing in the context of political struggle" session or series, International Working Women's Day activities and some focus on workplace organizing.

Public Education

Each year, over 3 million students across the country are suspended and over 100,000 are expelled. In North Carolina, over 122,000 high school students were suspended in 2011-2012, which is about 1 out of every 7 students-one of the highest suspension rates in the country. The criminalization of student behavior forces the students out of school which causes them to fall behind in their school work and encourages them to drop out of school. This constant push out is a direct line to the School-to-Prison Pipeline.

As the right-wing takeover of NC state government works to dismantle public education, including removing the right of teachers to due process, continued no teacher salary increase for 7 years, providing vouchers for private schools, removed the cap on the number of charter schools. North Carolina is number 46 in the nation's education. The North Carolina Association of Educators a state affiliate of the National Education Association has recently filed two lawsuits against the state on the voucher and teacher tenure bills.

Quality public education is a major issue for the Black working-class. We have been engaged locally and nationally in demanding that public education be recognized as a Human Right. African American youth/families continue to be disproportionately harmed by suspensions, discrimination and academic failure. We participate in coalitions that work to secure the human and constitutional rights of every child to receive a high-quality public education in a safe and supportive school environment.

BWFJ members engaged in this work have helped to organize and train parents to advocate for students whenever necessary. Parents and students participate in train the trainer workshops. These workshops have been very successful for students appealing suspensions and remaining in schools. Workshops include know your rights and students are also given Know Your Rights Cards. We also have utilized a Hotline for students and parents to call when they need assistance.

BWFJ along with other grassroots organizations across the country have launched local campaigns calling for a moratorium on out-of-school suspensions until comprehensive plans are put in place to effectively address this serious problem. We are demanding that schools support the research-based approaches, such as Positive Behavior and Support Interventions, peer mediation and restorative justice programs that help young people learn from their mistakes. Locally, the coalition won a major fight when the school board voted for a moratorium on level one suspension this school year. Black Workers for Justice is part of a national initiative that promotes Solutions not Suspensions.

Moral Mondays

As part of the fight against the right wing takeover of state government, BWFJ joined the Moral Monday campaign; an outgrowth of the People's Assembly known as Historic Thousands on Jones Street (HKOJ) a vibrant movement led by NC NAACP President William Barber.

In 2007, HKOJ brought together representatives from 150 social justice organizations and from the 120 NC NAACP branches to develop a 14-point agenda. HKOJ declared the NC General Assembly as the people's house and holds mobilizations each year during the period when the General Assembly is in session. Collective bargaining for all workers, opposition to the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, affordable healthcare and housing, were some of the plants in the agenda.

Based on this progressive agenda and a response to the right wing assault, the people's opposition was framed as a moral response to the devastating policies. This took the moral high ground away from the right wing and religious fundamentalist in defining what is moral and immoral.

On May 13th, to call for more visibility and action by labor rank-and-file in the Moral Mondays campaign, and to encourage fight back against the increasing abuse of power by management at the workplace, the BWFJ participated in a Moral Monday rank-and-file labor delegation organized by the Southern Workers Assembly, where 10 labor activists from UE, FLOC, NALC, APWU and the BWFJ wearing yellow wristbands were arrested for engaging in civil disobedience in protest against the attacks on worker rights.

Saladin Muhammad, member of BWFJ and Co-coordinator of the SWA was the first to be tried and found guilty of the 941 Moral Monday civil disobedience arrestees. We initiated a campaign to drop the charges against all Moral Monday arrestees and overturn the conviction of Saladin. This campaign, while in need of more development is an important part of challenging the criminalization of the people's right to protest. This level of repression, including redbaiting is an effort to split forces in the coalition and to prevent the alienation spawned by the crisis from considering radical alternatives.



Many see North Carolina as ground zero in the effort of the Right-Wing to impose austerity budgets and to retrench any semblance of democracy, including Black folks ability to vote. The denial of people, especially the poor coverage for adequate healthcare shows clearly that the legislators acting on behalf of the capitalist elites care nothing about human rights. This denial

along with other cuts in social safety-net programs has to be seen as a slow form of genocide, to get rid of the millions that capital no longer need as workers.

The state's refusal of Medicaid expansion denies medical coverage for 500,000 poor people in NC. Medicaid in North Carolina currently covers children under 18, some pregnant women, people with disabilities, select low-income parents and elderly poor. In 2013, the NC Medicaid program cost \$14 billion. The state's portion was \$3 billion, and the federal government paid the rest. NC will also give up 25,000 jobs by turning down billions in Medicaid expansion funding. <http://pulse.ncpolicywatch.org/2013/11/27/more-than-500-jobs-already-lost-from-nc-gov-general-assembly-refusal-to-expand-medicaid/#sthash.Z23YhX2M.dpuf>

Every Southern state except Arkansas has rejected Medicaid expansion. The 2012 U.S. Supreme Court ruling that the federal government cannot force states to except Medicaid expansion to provide coverage for the poor shows that the U.S. refuses to use its powers to end the national, working-class and women's oppression in the South and throughout the country, and is complicit with the human rights violation of its states.

The thousands that gathered each Monday were largely white. Many had supported the efforts of the HKOJ Coalition. Others had not been engaged or had even been supporters of the Republican majority but were outraged at the breadth and depth of the cuts and changes. The Black community mobilized by the NAACP and other organizations, and the nature of the call participated in growing numbers each week. Black participation while credible, has been impacted by travel and work challenges.

However, on the Moral Monday following the courts not guilty verdict of George Zimmerman, the murder of young Trayvon Martin, there was an increase in the Black turnout. BWFJ distributed hundreds of flyers and posters saying Stop the War on Black America and Justice or Trayvon Martin that were taken and held high not only by Blacks and people of color, but also by many whites.

Mobilizing resistance to attacks is a key component of the fight to Stop the War on Black America. It is not simply a fight to get Republicans out of office but to strengthen the organizations of the people in a struggle to change the balance of power locally, regionally and nationally. We are encouraged to see a movement developing in Georgia and other places based, in part, on the NC model. While the Black working class does not yet have the strength and organization at present to lead these movements, we must engage with them based on the issues and a plan to bring our various efforts together as part of a national campaign.

BWFJ and the BLUN

Our work faces many challenges - resources, connecting rural and urban bases and issues, a weak left in NC with no base in the working-class and Black communities, membership education in understanding the strategic implications of the various areas of work and struggles we are engaged in. The leadership of BWFJ has been the most engaged in radical political organizations and historical periods of struggle, where political education, study and actions helped to produce revolutionary consciousness, and a stronger unity of forces within the national the Black liberation movement.

Along with the constant pulls of the spontaneous struggles, the focus on political education and cadre training has decreased within the BWFJ over the past years. As a result, the confidence and political clarity around strategy and political line aimed at challenging capitalism, is uneven among the members of the BWFJ. The majority of the BWFJ membership's main political consciousness has been shaped around tactics and struggling for working-class reforms connected to their areas of work without a sufficient understanding of how these struggles and reforms relate to the struggle against capitalism and for self-determination and revolutionary change...

There have been efforts to expose members to activities, meetings and field trips nationally and internationally. Several members have been to South Africa, Nicaragua, Germany, the UK, Mexico, Cuba and Colombia, meeting with trade unionists, social justice and left organizations.

Speakers from these and other countries have spoke at our annual Martin L. Kings Support for Labor Banquets and at our worker centers.

This period of capitalist crisis, and the blatant role of the state is helping BWFJ members see the need and importance of study and deeper analyses of the dynamics of the capitalist system. The irrationality and human rights violations of capitalism become plain for all to see when it is in crisis. Record profits and surplus capital exists side-by-side with high unemployment, massive home foreclosures and homelessness.

While the BWFJ program has been able to guide our base building work in important ways, our collective understanding of the potential of our bases as part of a national revolutionary movement is not clear. In addition to weaknesses in study, the weaknesses in strategic understanding also suffer because of the fragmentation of the forces of the national Black liberation movement, which does not enable members to see the connection. BWFJ believes that the BLUN is an important network ad framework for helping to rebuild a national Black liberation movement rooted in the Black working-class and that is anti-capitalist and anti-imperialist connecting our work in the South to a national strategy and program.

The work of the BWFJ in the U.S. South while very important cannot constitute the total basis of a program for Black liberation and revolutionary change. National oppression while its depth and major history is anchored in the South, it is national in scope and constitutes a fundamental aspect of capitalism's exploitation of the entire U.S. working-class.

In order for our labor and community bases and institutions to further serve the needs of the Black working-class as the crisis of capitalism has forced a search for alternatives, BWFJ must begin to connect to a movement framework that enables it to understand the Black liberation movement as a force leading a national liberation revolution, where the struggle for self-determination is more consciously anti-capitalist, anti-imperialist, anti-patriarchy and internationalist. Our participation at this BLUN meeting is because we believe that a national framework uniting fighting organizations is needed to establish a conscious process for rebuilding a national Black liberation movement of a new type.

09 Project South



Emery Wright, Project South

Project South was founded in 1986. It was first envisioned to be an educational arm for the social movement after key leaders reflected on and evaluated a significant voting rights struggle that took place in West Alabama. As movement veterans from the 1960s and 1970s the

founders of Project South recognized that movements will rise and fall but the development of movement leadership is a constant need. Project South has gone through many different eras and continues to develop movement leadership while also participating in social movement work on a local and regional level with national and global connections.

Project South is a membership organization. We have about 50 member-leaders mostly in the South who are very active. We have about 600 dues-paying members who are very active. And about 2000 people who we are in regular communication with. So our presentation and our presence here is with due respect and in reference to all of those folks. We are also an anchor of about 15 social justice organizations in the South who are part of this southern movement assembly process. So we represent that work as well. Today Project South focuses on youth leadership development and organizing locally and movement convergence and governance practice regionally, while continuing to produce curriculum and hold workshops for movement leadership with a strategic focus on the US South.

I want to focus my comments today on a question around the international situation. For us, a very simple yet troubling reality of the global economy over the last couple of years is that part of the crisis of capitalism in this era has to do with the fact that there is more debt than there is liquid cash to cover that debt. So, in their own terms, capitalism is bankrupt. We think that's created - for our people, for people globally, for our allies all over the world - a bend in the river of our global society towards fascism, and specifically the social control of migration/movement through violence as a key element of fascism. This crisis is playing out right here in the US South in multiple ways and has created grassroots struggle on multiple fronts. The attacks on immigrants, youth, black people, formerly incarcerated, women, queer community, workers and the unemployed have sparked struggle rooted in leadership from these same communities.

Borders, prison walls, police, and poverty are just some of the factors that violently divide these communities from themselves and from each other. These realities could potentially stunt the growth and development of social movement based in the US South powerful enough to dismantle capitalism and liberate ourselves from the ideologies of white supremacy, gender oppression, and imperialism.

Regardless of our different eras, we always have had a strategic emphasis and focus on the South. We've always had an emphasis on political education and leadership development and contribution to the growth and development of social movements. Over the last five years we've been committed to developing this Southern Movement Assembly process that really started from our work around the US Social Forum, a process we played an anchor leadership role in 2007 and 2010 when it was in Detroit. As we have seen in the work of other organizations in Mississippi and North Carolina, the assembly process is not unique to Project South and is not unique to this country. The assembly process is something that a lot of us using

as a mechanism and means to both build power at the grassroots and build connection across some of the borders that divide us.

For Project South and many of our partners we are also using Southern Movement Assemblies as a process of democratic movement governance that can both accumulate and converge our thinking and work a process of synthesis that advances into coordinated action plans across the region. It has been critical to do this coordination in a way that preserves and deepens the independence and self-determination of all forces involved. Cultivating the concept of liberation on multiple fronts of struggle within current movement work has also been an important part of this process over the last several years.

In terms of Black liberation in the 21st century, our practice identifies and supports the movement and community-based struggles on the fronts that impact our people most directly. Simultaneously, it is import to develop international connections of solidarity and specifically a pan African program that can connect our work in the US South with what's happening in other parts of the Black world. We're in a process globally where re-colonization, perpetrated by new and old forces and paradigms, is happening. Whether we're talking about Africa, the Caribbean, or the US South, the former colonies of the Black world, and indeed the entire world, are facing the prospect or reality of re-colonization. A new character to the re-colonization involves its ability to learn from and enforce any or all of the multiple tactics of imperialism employed over the last 500 years. The need for re-colonization has everything to do with the global economic situation and the smoke & mirrors required to maintain Capitalism supreme. A lot of our work right now has to do with the fallout from the crisis of Capitalism and its increasing tendency towards fascism.

We are indeed at a crossroad: fascism versus democratic grassroots power; Imperialism and the colonial legacy versus decolonization; Capitalism versus a fair distribution of wealth & knowledge; and male supremacy versus gender liberation. These are some of the ways we're looking at the landscape where our work is located.

So, based on that analysis, our work includes: local organizing, regional movement building, and developing tools for popular and political education. These strategies definitely have been the focus of our work for the past five years. A new component of this regional movement building we have been developing over the past few years is strengthening the thinking and practice for decentralized, coordinated movement infrastructure. This question of Black Left Unity is very important to Project South in that unity and the power of collective action is the only basis from which we will survive as a people. The stakes are higher today when humanity possesses the technological power to destroy the ecosystems that ensure life. As crisis deepens and occurs without warning in many of our communities, an important question is: How can we develop

movement infrastructure that allows for social movement rapid response to crisis and unexpected attack on our communities?



Niqua Douglas, Project South.

I'm 36 years old. A lot of people in my generation were on the front lines of struggle and movement work when the Gulf Coast disaster hit. We saw and experienced firsthand what happens when movements are not able to rapidly respond and the results of this inability: massive human suffering and death. There was a commitment made by many of us at that time that part of our responsibility in leadership over our lifetime is to build movement power, including the means and mechanisms that will allow us to rapidly respond when crises hit. This charge has driven much of our work over the last 8 years.

This summer when the verdict came down freeing George Zimmerman for cold-blooded murder, we saw —and we were not all in the same room, but in rooms across 12 Southern states— we saw the opportunity and responsibility to test how we could rapidly respond. Within seven days of the verdict all 14 organizations in the Southern Movement Assembly process, and some of our partners and allies around the South converged in Jacksonville, Florida, and began a 122 mile walk to Sanford, Florida. Along the way, we held assemblies with the local communities to talk about the questions: What do we need from each other and what will we do for each other to stop the murders of our people? The Walk for Dignity had two demands: the immediate resignation of Angela Corey and, two, the immediate release of Marissa Alexander. There's been a lot of headway, as people are probably aware about, in the Alexander case. One of our partners in Jacksonville is spearheading that effort, the New Jim Crow Movement.

Another aspect of building movement power, mechanisms and means requires understanding the ground conditions and the groundwork that need to exist for movements to be able to grow and mature. Part of our assessment looking at the last 30 or 40 years is that the lack of sustained liberation movement over that same time period, is partially caused by an enhanced understanding by the forces against us in regards to how movement can be choked out and undone before we are even self-aware as movements. From that premise, we need to take a look at what needs to be on the ground to support the development of movements while understanding the nature of our work while also blocking the many attacks that stifle the growth and potential of emerging movement force.

Some of this groundwork has been real basic. We are looking at the same things we've been looking at a long time. For instance communications infrastructure and what exists. How can we work not only through new technology but through older technology that is still being used. Sometimes potential infrastructure is already in place but is fragmented and disconnected. For instance, all the many radio stations throughout the South that play southern soul, blues, gospel. These stations are alive and well in small towns and big towns and big cities. That's infrastructure. That's Black-led infrastructure that we have. We've had great success approaching them and working with them through the Southern Movement Assembly process. What they want is quality, relevant content, and a lot of these stations are facing major financial stress. They might have 1 or 2 people who are part-time running the whole thing. So the ability to connect some of that infrastructure, to support the continuation of some of that infrastructure and be able to talk to our people all at once is both realistic and holds an incredible potential.

As the attacks on our people grow worse, another important question for those of us engaged in Southern movement work today is: What does 21st century direct action look like here in the

South? We are world famous for what Direct Action can look like and achieve historically, but what is our version of that here in 2014 and beyond?

Communications infrastructure, leadership development, skillbuilding, and other types of political education work and movement infrastructure development all components of this work. We've been thinking a lot about alliances, networks, collaboratives and assemblies and different ways to connect them. Those are just a few examples. The front-line states and other examples for highly flexible yet very powerful and effective alliances and networks and united fronts that accomplish their goals.

So those are some of the things that were working on. We really value this Black Activist Journal space and the visions that people are outlining for why they want to be a part of this process of Unity.

10 Black Left Unity and Our Fight for Ideological Clarity, from the Philosophy of Black Liberation Saturday School

I'm very grateful for having been invited to this important event in the life history of the African American Left. I want to express my appreciation to Saladin, Abdul and the others responsible for bringing us together. I appreciated and am in agreement with the presenters that preceded me.

Philadelphia is legendary in the history of the Black liberation struggle, as a center of protest and resistance, and it remains that. The Black Power Conferences, the Black Panther Party's Constitutional Convention, the legendary NAACP chapter, headed by Cecil B Moore, the "Don't Buy Where You Can't Work" campaigns that united four hundred ministers and their congregations in overturning racist hiring in some of Philadelphia's largest corporations. Philadelphia in recent times is best known for the 1985 bombing of the Move family's house, killing eleven children, young people and adults and also for the fact that two of the world's most important and well known political prisoners and intellectuals are from the Black liberation struggle in Philadelphia, Russell Maroon Schoatz and Mumia Abu-Jamal.

I visited Mumia a few weeks ago. He's doing extraordinarily well. He's writing another book on imperialism. And he looks forward to his release from prison. Our fight to realize his freedom is intensifying. Pam African who remains one of the most extraordinary figures in the post-civil rights post Black power period remains a stellar leader and example for growing numbers of radical youth. If Mumia is off death row in a lot of ways it has to do with her. We continue our

fight for the release of the Move 9 who are in their 34th year behind bars. The movements to free political prisoners, against police brutality, stop and frisk and for the educational rights of our youth and children is giving birth to a new youth movement composed of both students and nonstudents. This is very encouraging. In many ways they're attracted to Mumia and the movement to free him, but all of those things emerging from the crisis of capitalism that imperils their lives. They're finding their way in the ways that youth will find their way. Most of us are very hopeful about that.



Tony Monteiro, Black Liberation Saturday School.

In the case of the retaliatory firing of myself by the dean of the college of liberal arts at Temple University, a strategic component of the fight for me to be reinstated are students and young people. Among the campaigns that they are developing is one with buttons and t-shirts declaring, "I was taught by Dr. Monteiro." As Temple became a center of student activism for Mumia's freedom and increasingly for justice for Russell "Maroon" Schoatz, the administration, the Fraternal Order of Police, and probably Republicans in the state Senate started looking with anger at these efforts. They believe such developments of a democratic and free speech movement had to be stopped. Furthermore, at a forum on Trayvon Martin in the fall semester, I was on a panel with Philadelphia's DA, Seth Williams. In the course of the discussion I engaged him on the case of Mumia. I insisted that it was hypocritical to call for justice for Trayvon and not call for justice for Mumia. He, of course, took issue with me as I did with him. I am certain

that political forces far beyond Temple and African American Studies want to know who is this “Black radical “ and how can we get rid of him.

Philadelphia's working class, especially the Black and Latino working classes, are extremely poor. A growing impoverished white working class is seen throughout the city. In fact it seems to me that the words Black, working-class, and poor are synonymous. If you say Black you can assume you mean poverty and extreme poverty. The growing poverty and crisis of the white working class has not yet produced a trend to anti-racist and working class solidarity with African Americans. However, I remain hopeful the psychological trends produced by crisis will force changes, all be they incremental, among the white working poor in particular.

But I'd like to talk about the ideological struggle in this time of crisis. I don't know that humanity has ever seen a time like this. By which I mean, never have the dangers been so great, not just for the working class but for humanity itself: side by side with this historic economic depression is the ecological and climate disasters, the threats of wars of new types and weapons of new types and genocide against nations and peoples all over the world. Finance capital has produced a global calamity. Eighty-five families own more wealth than 3.5 billion people in the world.

The Capitalist Economy: The Rise of Inequality And New Ideological Challenges

The rise of economic inequality is now so severe that even the captains of finance capital and their ideological minions had to make it the center of the agenda at Davos, Switzerland. Rather than the failure of markets, as the Davos crowd would have it, inequality reflects the capitalist markets working precisely as they should. Inequality has nothing to do with market imperfection: the more perfect the capitalist market, the higher the rate of return on capital is in comparison to the rate of growth of the economy and of wages, the wider is inequality. The higher this ratio is, the greater inequality is. And what we see are historically high returns on capital, reflecting higher rates of exploitation of labor worldwide.

The six-decade period of growing equality in western nations – starting roughly with the onset of World War I (which began after and in fact offset the depression of 1913) and extending into the early 1970s – was unique and highly unlikely to be repeated. That period represented an exception to the more deeply rooted pattern of growing inequality.

Those unusual six decades were the result of two world wars and the Great Depression. The owners of capital – those at the top of the pyramid of wealth and income – absorbed a series of devastating blows. These included the loss of credibility and authority as markets crashed; physical destruction of capital throughout Europe in both World War I and World War II; the raising of tax rates, especially on high incomes, to finance the wars; high rates of inflation that

eroded the assets of creditors; the nationalization of major industries in both England, Germany and France; and the appropriation of industries and property in post-colonial countries.

At the same time, the Great Depression produced the New Deal coalition in the United States, which empowered an insurgent labor movement. The postwar period saw huge gains in growth and productivity, the benefits of which were shared with workers who had strong backing from the trade union movement and from the dominant Democratic Party. Widespread support for liberal social and economic policy was so strong that even a Republican president, who won easily twice, Dwight D. Eisenhower, recognized that an assault on the New Deal would be futile. In his own words Eisenhower argued, "Should any political party attempt to abolish Social Security, unemployment insurance, and eliminate labor laws and farm programs, you would not hear from that party again in our political history."

The six decades between 1914 and 1973 stand out from the past and future because the rate of economic growth exceeded the after-tax rate of return on capital. Since then, the rate of growth of the economy has declined, while the return on capital is rising to its pre-World War I levels, that is the levels they were at at the time of the 1913 depression. This means, simply, that the rate of exploitation has increased. For Black workers this is doubled edged, the increasing rate of exploitation goes alongside catastrophic levels of poverty, unemployment and underemployment. The crisis for the Black working class is all-sided, comprehensive and ,under the current regime of capital, irreversible.

If the rate of return on capital remains permanently above the rate of growth of the economy, it generates a changing functional distribution of income in favor of capital and, if capital incomes are more concentrated than incomes from labor (a rather uncontroversial fact), personal income distribution will also get more unequal — which indeed is what we have witnessed in the past 30 years. On a global scale producing the grotesque fact that 85 families have more wealth than 3.5 billion people. Or the astounding fact that 147 global corporations control most of the resources ,production and finance of the planet.

The ideological relationships and the ideological struggle under these circumstances take on new significance to humanity. Ideological processes occurs occur through propaganda and and the penetration of human psychology. Propaganda says things are getting better, in spite of the fact that most people say we're still in a recession. On the other hand it produces a culture of distraction, to prevent a culture of resistance arising. At the psychological level a collective psychology of nihilism, egotism, and celebrity worship all of which attempts to have the working people internalize attitudes that predispose them to defeatism and "let me do my thingism."



At the levels of elites, especially for African American elite academics and intellectuals, the ruling class strategy is to produce a discourse that privileges petit bourgeois concerns, with personal identity, “high” culture and matters that do not impact the masses. In fact, the racial bribe is such that these élites are paid well not to talk about or identify with Black suffering.

Amiri Baraka, Cultural Revolution and the Ideological Struggle

Another part of this is the project by elite Black academics to treat the lives and works of outstanding Black radical intellectuals as dead carcasses to be feasted on and deconstructed by these intellectual hyenas. This is now the case with the revolutionary legacy of Amiri Baraka. The same thing goes on with Du Bois and Baldwin, among others.

It is well known that Baraka from 1974 until his death insisted upon a class analysis of culture and politics. His break with petit bourgeois and cultural nationalism was replaced with the idea of Cultural Revolution, anchored to the Black proletariat. However, many of his so called friends from the Black Arts Movement act as though he remained a cultural nationalist. At his funeral none of them mentioned his Marxism, anti-imperialism and rejection of narrow cultural nationalism.

On the other side, academic “experts” are crafting ways to talk about Amiri in ways that make it look like his revolutionary work is not serious, not his best work, is bombastic and propagandistic. Even the so-called feminists among them (female and male) don’t mention the decisive ideological role of his comrade and wife of almost 50 years played in his making his great leap away from petit bourgeois and nationalism. It was she who leapt ahead of him.

In the case of Baraka it his turn to Marxism-Leninism, socialist realism and proletarian art and politics that gets him in trouble with “those who know about these matters.” In reality, though, Baraka never left the blues, Bessie Smith, Billie Holliday, Sarah Vaughn (Sassy) and Dinah Washington. He never left bebop or hard bop, or for that matter Miles Davis, Duke Ellington, Jackie Mc, Art Blakey, Lee Morgan, Max Roach, Philly Joe Jones, Coltrane or Thelonius Monk, to name a few. In fact he got even closer to The Music (classical African American/American Music), as he moved to the left, championing and working with the avant-garde—the next generation, the flamethrowers and revolutionaries. Albert Ayler, Ornett Coleman, Cecil Taylor, David Murray, Hamiet Bluiett, Andrew Cyrille, Grachan Moncur III, Arthur Blythe, Don Pullen, Craig Harris and more. They inspired his Afro-proletarian poetry and plays and he inspired them and gave them confidence to remain true to their proletarian roots and vision.

1974 to 2013, almost forty years, is his longest, his most innovative, experimental and creative period. The petit bourgeois poems of the beat period, the nationalism of both the Black Arts Movement and Cultural Nationalism, of the early New Ark years, are reworked, given a new and more profound proletarian grounding after 1974. He announced that Afro-American people’s art must be anchored to the working class (the proletariat), uphold the right to self-determination of the Afro-American people and position itself as a force for ideological clarity against imperialism.

This period, for the petit bourgeois is unpalatable and distasteful. We must defend Baraka’s oeuvre as a living and not a dead carcass to be picked over by intellectual hyenas.

Obama, Imperialism and Ideological Struggle

If there's anything that the Obama administration and its foreign policy teaches us, is that imperialism has no limits in what it will do and the weapons that it will use against people. And it does this with arrogance, triumphalism and a celebration that I don't think any of us has ever seen. We can talk about the Reagan and Bush Administrations, but I don't believe any of us have ever seen anything like this. Drone Wars, targeted assassinations, the continuing operation of Gitmo prison, wars against Libya, Afghanistan, Syria and Yemen, the turn to encircle China, the support of right wing and fascist forces in the Ukraine. Along with this domestic spying and repressive means using the electronic media surpass anything Hoover’s FBI or COINTELPRO were capable of.

Now of course this creates enormous problems psychologically and ideologically for the Black liberation struggle. The majority of Black folk, albeit disappointed, see Obama as possibility, as progress, as "we now getting our shot at power", rather than as a representative of imperialism and racism. The Obama symbology has (and let's hope temporarily) weakened the normal and necessary oppositional stance of Black folk. The Obama presidency rather than opening possibilities for the Black Left, as many leftist thought, has produced the opposite, the relative isolation of the Black Left and the rise to prominence of a new Black petit bourgeoisie. It embraces and apologizes for Obama at any cost. The Black Left has not effectively waged the necessary ideological struggle to clarify precisely what Obamism is. The outstanding exception is the Black Agenda Report. A central task in this moment is for us to ideologically retool, to sharpen our analysis and to within the left fight for both ideological and practical unity on key issues.

Sadly, for the first time in the history of polling Black people support war over peace, and support NSA spying at higher percentages than whites do. You know back in the 1950s, William L Patterson made the statement that the Black liberation struggle is the Achilles' heel of American imperialism. Well if remain that we have been severely weakened as US imperialism's Achilles' heel. We have to find ways to strengthen ourselves as the Achilles' heel of American imperialism. Because we can't be internationalists unless we are anti-imperialist, and if we're not internationalists we're not left, if we're not internationalists we're not revolutionaries. We can't be internationalists unless we are ideologically clear about imperialism and the multiple and varied forms and manifestations it adopts in order to adapt to its crises and the changes in the global political economy.

We must help our people to understand there cannot be Black liberation on the terms of American imperialism. Malcolm and Martin Luther King taught us that in the 1960s. So we're confronted in the struggle for unity, Black unity, the unity of Black people, the unity of the working class, and the unity of the people in general, with ideological challenges that are new, ideological challenges that arise in the context of the general crisis at a new stage.

Questions of Stages of the General Crisis of Imperialism

Understanding the question of the stages of the general crisis of imperialism is paramount to understanding imperialism. Hence, for us at this moment the question is, what stage are we at? Each stage of this general crisis has produced revolutionary possibilities that were taken advantage of by revolutionary forces somewhere in the world, be it the Russian revolution, the Chinese revolution, the Cuban revolution, the African independence movements, the armed struggles in southern Africa. At this stage, what will be the forms of revolutionary struggle and of the transition from imperialism to socialism? Understanding stages of crisis has meaning

beyond merely understanding how the economy functions, it can help guide our analysis of the modes of transition away from imperialism.



I'd like to underline the concept of transition. One of the mistakes of left sectarian politics is to assert that it is possible to go from the system of capitalism in crisis to socialism. Every revolution is, in a sense, a transition state, and a moment in the process of the complete overhaul of human relationships. Every movement proceeds through transitions. And so we have to consider what are the forms of transition at this stage? I agree with Saladin, that our struggle, by the nature of the global crisis, is inevitably international. Hence, in considering the modes of transition we have to place them within the framework of international developments. We can fail to recognize this at our own peril. We, our struggle, the consciousness of our people are part of events in South Africa, Greece, Venezuela, and wherever people are fighting for a better and peaceful life, Each and every struggle is inevitably and unavoidably tied to every other on the planet. We are in the stage of history when the only answers, the solutions and way out of the crisis have to be conceive from an internationalist standpoint. In other words, our national struggle cannot afford to be nationalistic. Our struggle can be national but it must in essence be international and that's what I think we mean when we say the working class essence of our struggle must be brought to the fore. And if it is working class in essence it means it is a part of all struggles against neoliberal capitalism and

neo-liberal globalization. The new normal of capitalism, stagnation, low wages, part-time jobs, and catastrophic levels of unemployment, is the same throughout the world, in every continent and nation.

Working Class Analysis as Opposed to “Radical Structural” Analysis

I think we serve ourselves better in understanding the new normal of poverty and unemployment not by focusing upon Bureau of Labor Statistics numbers and other statistical measures, but by our own observations and direct experiences with the working class. This does not mean we don't deal with official governmental and other statistical and quantitative measures of the economy and the conditions of working people. We must decide where we begin. I suggest we begin at the level of the lived experiences of working people, particularly Black working people. We must anchor our analysis and understanding at the level of the people, in the factories, communities, welfare offices, churches, union halls etc. There are neighborhoods where nobody works, most young people have been in jail, everybody's been racially profiled at one time or another, most young men have been stopped and frisked, one half of the young men are either in prison or under the control of the criminal justice system, women and children live in extreme poverty. Government data doesn't capture this level of misery. But we have to fully grasp the meaning of all of this. It is a picture of oppression that is only equaled by that of the Palestinian people. I suggest that no people on this planet except the Palestinians experience the levels of oppression that we African Americans do. And I think that ours in some ways goes beyond there's because we experience a type of human diminishment.

Questions of the diminishment of the humanity of Black people have to be considered. Corporate created popular culture operates to diminish Black humanity, not unlike late 19th and early 20th century minstrelsy and Hollywood stereotypes. The anti-black symbology, often performed by blacks, is at new and dangerous level. It says to our children each and every day that you are worth very little and don't expect anything in this life or from this system, producing a nihilism and expectations of immediate gratification. And if you think you're going to get out of line, we have forces out here that can deal with you in the most extreme and violent manner. The souls of Black people are attacked each and every day. We haven't found an answer to it yet. Our people have not yet produced in this period a real culture of resistance, liberation and self and people's self-affirmation.

The over two million Black young people under the control of the criminal justice system, the vicious severity of the treatment of Herman Wallace's 41 years in solitary confinement, Mumia 30 years in solitary confinement, surpasses in barbarity even the apartheid regime in South Africa. Even they treated its most dangerous political prisoners with more humanity.

Many people who call themselves left, Marxist and revolutionary examine the system from a structural theoretical position. They and their analysis are disengaged from, separated from the people. I would suggest that for revolutionaries a more accurate way of looking at the system is by understanding the oppressed and exploited victims of the system. Because all of us read tens of studies produced by and published in white left journals, and we could name hundreds of white left academics who produce volumes of empirical evidence about the system. What they never do is talk about the system from the bottom up, from the people, from Black folk, from the working class. The absence of working class centered analysis leaves their analysis devoid of an in depth explanation of Black oppression and dehumanization. Moreover, looking at the system from the top down, from a purely structural standpoint, leaves the analysis unable to show possibilities of changing the system.

On the other side looking at it from the day-to-day lives of the people, as difficult as their lives are, you can see possibilities for change. And then you can see in different ways what the ideological challenges are.

Neoliberal Black Ideologues and the Struggle for Our Future

I think there are three principal areas of ideological struggle against black neoliberalism. First, the Obamites. Public figures like Reverend Al Sharpton and academics and public intellectuals like Charles Ogletree and Melissa Harris-Perry fall into this group. A whole army of academics could be added to those whom I've named. They provide political and intellectual cover for Obama's neoliberal economic and social policies, and his neoconservative foreign policies. They claim that Obama is a liberal and some insist a progressive. As the true nature of Obama's policies become known and as the situation of Black folk becomes direr, their apologies for Obama become increasingly dishonest, bordering on open lying. They consider Obama's left critics to be enemies of Black progress, deserving unmitigated attacks, marginalization and something coming close to a witch-hunt. Their attacks upon left critics of Obama have begun to take on forms of anti-communism.

Secondly, bogus Pan-Africanism manifested as new forms of cultural nationalism. This line supports US neo-colonialism in Africa and is aligned with neo-colonialist and pro-West forces in Africa. They hide their true politics behind calls for an African Renaissance and for the cultural unity of Africans throughout the world. They oppose anti-imperialist unity across Africa and anti-imperialist solidarity between the African Diaspora and the continent. This form of Pan Africanism is unquestionably pro US imperialist. They generally support the Obama Africa policies or are silent about such policies as AFRICOM and military intervention in Libya, Somalia and support to Paul Kagame's genocidal regime's war in eastern Democratic Republic of Congo.

Lastly right social democracy, which is the most developed and ideologically experienced and sophisticated center of anti-radicalism, anti-communism and neoliberalism. Claiming to support liberalism reforms at home, i.e. gay marriage, gay rights, certain women's rights, Black elected officials, and claiming that such reforms prove that capitalism, even under neoliberal economics, can be democratic and progressive. As against class struggle, anti-racist and national self-determination they propose creating new civil society institutions. Civil society formations, they insist, are forms of people's power against hegemonic institutions like the state. Right Social Democracy's essence, is anti-radical, opposing advanced democratic resistance and struggle, and ultimately defend the system, even as it becomes more authoritarian and anti-democratic. Like bogus Pan Africanism and cultural nationalism, right social democrats disguise their pro-imperialist/neoliberalism behind so-called cultural analysis and claims of supporting democratic renewal through culture, such as changes in racial, gender and sexual identity. All of this they claim can go forward under neo-liberal policies and neo-colonialism. The political economy and the crisis of capitalism and the growing exploitation and suffering of working people worldwide is absent from, goes unnoticed and is never put forward in their discourses.

The Planet Erupts in Struggle

The planet is being shaken each and every day by mass struggles; hundreds of millions of people, from Thailand to Egypt to Mexico and Greece to South Africa rock the foundations of the old and decadent system pushing humanity towards a new epoch. Cuba, Venezuela, Bolivia, Ecuador and Nicaragua in combat with imperialist backed oppositions continue to consolidate people's democratic state power.

Obama apologists, neoliberal intellectuals, bogus Pan-Africanists and right Social Democrats argue there is no alternative to capitalism. The Cubans and Venezuelans don't agree with that. And in fact, even though it is not the socialism that I would prefer, the BRIC countries especially Brazil, Russia, India, and China, still represent, if not state socialism, opposition to neoliberal capitalism and US hegemony and Empire.

US imperialism is today the greatest danger to humanity and to social progress. Unity against US imperialism is the main task of our time. We must fight for unity, Left unity, Black Left unity, Black unity, working class unity and international unity against war and neo-liberal capitalism. We need a global advanced democratic front. To achieve this in our country we must fight for an updated analysis and theoretical understanding of the current crisis. Proceeding from our long and glorious history and we must pose again at the start of the 21st century the questions posed by W.E.B Du Bois at the start of the 20th century i.e., how to unite democratic struggles and aspirations to international events, and how to undermine and ultimately defeat the anti-

democratic and authoritarian regime of the color-line as part of the struggle for social progress and socialism. This is our task. We have our marching orders.

11 New African People's Organization and Malcolm X Grassroots Movement



Participants from Malcolm X Grassroots Movement.

What period are we in?

Genocide is the order of the day. The system of imperialism is in crisis. Due to the policies of neo-liberalism, working and oppressed people bear the brunt of the crisis and global capitalism experiences record super-profits. Our historic communities and culture are significantly challenged with gentrification and marginalization. The international capitalist crisis, the manipulation of a sector of the ruling elite, and the absence of a significant radical alternative have also provided an environment for an upsurge of right-wing political activism within the oppressor nation. The descendants of white settlers demand the return of their perceived birthright of dominion and manifest destiny. Connected to the right wing upsurge and the decline of the domestic economy of the empire is the increased violence inflicted against Black people, particularly Black youth. The decline of manufacturing displaced workers, particularly

Black workers. Black labor is becoming increasingly unnecessary in a more capital intensive/ technology driven economy. Thus Black life is less valued in U.S. society.

National liberation and revolutionary forces are weak and seriously compromised throughout the world. In the US empire, the BLM has not regained a sustained momentum since the COINTELPRO covert and low-intensity war of the 1960s and 70s. The inability to effectively rebuild the BLM in this period is a result of the lack of 1) unity among Black activists, 2) the inability of the most progressive forces to reach and access the social consciousness and resources of our people, and 3) the waning of national and insurgent consciousness among the masses of our people.

What must we do?

- A. Develop a pro-self-determination political program that “unites the many to defeat the few.”
- B. Build a political program that can unite Black Liberation forces on the basis of principled unity and mutual respect (allows for our respective political identities and autonomy).
- C. Build our capacity and human and material resources to provide Black Liberation forces in with the necessary resources to initiate and sustain our movement.
- D. Build a political program that engages and encourages the organization of our people, particularly workers, women, youth and students for the struggle against white supremacy, capitalist exploitation, patriarchy and imperialism and provides political education towards building a pro-self-determination, class conscious, and anti-sexist, national liberation movement.
- E. We must consolidate identifiable bases through the creation of intentional communities, grassroots institutions, the penetration of influential bodies, and when possible, the electoral control of strategic political offices and jurisdictions given our overall capacity.

Our Contributions

We are presently working on two major interventions in the effort to help rebuild the BLM. These efforts are: 1) the Every 28 Hours Self-Defense Campaign and 2) the Jackson-Kush Plan.

Every 28 Hours Self-Defense Campaign

There are three core documents which frame Every 28 Hours Self-Defense Campaign and seek to educate and train the masses on how to more effectively defend our communities against the state repression and white supremacy. These documents are:

1. Operation Ghetto Storm <http://www.operationghettostorm.org/>

2. Let Your Motto Be Resistance <http://mxgm.org/let-your-motto-be-resistance-a-handbook-on-organizing-new-afrikan-and-oppressed-communities-for-self-defense/>
3. We Charge Genocide Again! <http://mxgm.org/we-charge-genocide-again-new-curriculum-on-every-28-hours-report/>

The campaign is primarily focusing on educating the masses of our people on the necessity of organizing ourselves during this period of extreme reaction and open attack. We are encouraging all our communities to organize various types of self-defense committees, people's assemblies, and people's tribunals to hold confront state and vigilante terror and hold those who commit crimes against us accountable.

The Jackson-Kush Plan

The Jackson-Kush Plan is a long-term initiative to advance the struggle for self-determination and economic democracy in the Black Belt sections of Mississippi. To read the Plan visit <http://navigatingthestorm.blogspot.com/2012/05/the-jackson-kush-plan-and-struggle-for.html>.

This plan was conceived nearly 10 years ago, but started attaining critical success in 2008 – 2009 with the establishment of the Jackson People's Assembly and the election of Chokwe Lumumba to the City Council of Jackson, MS.

In June 2013 Chokwe Lumumba was elected Mayor of Jackson and ushered in the next phase of the Jackson-Kush Plan. Enclosed is a short break down of some of the joint initiatives being pursued jointly by the Lumumba administration and MXGM/NAPO:

An Update Note to the Allies and Supporters of the Malcolm X Grassroots Movement on the Jackson-Kush Plan and What Can be Done to Help Advance It

Since Chokwe Lumumba was elected Mayor of Jackson, MS in June, many folks throughout the country and the world have been inquiring: What's next? And what can we do to help? What follows is a brief update on developments in Jackson, MS being advanced by the Malcolm X Grassroots Movement (MXGM) and the Mayoral administration of Chokwe Lumumba, and some preliminary outlines on what folks can do to help advance the Jackson-Kush Plan Initiative.

Since leading the charge to get Chokwe Lumumba elected Mayor of Jackson, the Jackson Chapter of MXGM has been working to advance several of the strategic initiatives of the Jackson-Kush Plan as will be described in brief below. We are also working to regroup and reorient the People's Task Force and People's Assembly, to become a citywide vehicle of people's power on the one hand and to be a vehicle of accountability on the other.

Since assuming office on July 1st, the Lumumba administration has primarily focused on staff assessment and alignment, budgeting for the 2013 – 2014 fiscal term, and addressing several infrastructure mandates determined by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to improve the city's water management and waste treatment. The administration has also started to produce and disseminate more information about its vision and plans for the governance and development of Jackson. The clearest expression of this is the "Jackson Rising: Building the City of the Future Today" vision statement that was released on November 20th (see attachment). We encourage everyone to read and share this critical document, as it will serve as the basis for many of the core things the administration is going to promote in the comprehensive Master and Economic Development plans the administration will be working on in 2014.

The Forward Initiatives

Malcolm X Grassroots Movement Initiatives

What follows are a few of the primary initiatives MXGM is advancing nationally and internationally that we are calling on all of our comrades, allies, supporters, and fellow travelers to support us on in realizing the vision of the Jackson-Kush Plan.

1. Cooperative Community of New West Jackson (CCNWJ). The Cooperative Community of New West Jackson (CCNWJ) is a target community for base and institutional building for MXGM Jackson. The community is structured around an urban farm, a community market, an educational and training facility, a growing cooperative housing network, and a community center – the Malcolm X Center for Self-Determination.
2. Ujimaa Community Development Corporation (UCDC). The UCDC is a new Community Development Corporation being developed by MXGM to advance the Jackson-Kush Plan. Its primary objectives are to: a) support the development cooperative enterprises, b) establish a land bank and a land trust, and c) build quality, sustainable affordable housing (via housing cooperatives and other affordable means).
3. National Development Fund (NDF). The National Development Fund is the tentative name for a fund being organized by MXGM to support the UCDC and the cooperative enterprises we are in the process of helping to develop in the city.
4. A Fund to Support Southern Cooperatives with Southern Grassroots Economies Project (SGEP). This is a fund being set up through the auspices of SGEP, which is a strategic alliance that MXGM is a member of. SGEP is fully committed to the Jackson-Kush Plan and to helping MXGM secure the resources needed to advance the cooperative development dimensions of the plan. This Fund initiative will support the Cooperative Development Fund that the Lumumba administration is establishing (see Jackson-Rising statement), various cooperative initiatives being pursued in Jackson (starting with Recycling and Waste Management

enterprises) as well as securing resources for cooperative development throughout the South.

Lumumba Administration Initiatives

From a movement perspective the “Jackson Rising” statement provides the most comprehensive document produced to date outlining what the Lumumba administration is focusing on to advance the Jackson-Kush Plan, and how it is aiming to do so. The statement outlines many of the core aspects of the Lumumba administrations vision of economic and social development and constitutes the core content the administration is planning to use to formulate a comprehensive Master Plan scheduled to be released in January 2015.

In short, the document outlines:

1. How the administration is going to build and support several human rights institutions in Jackson to “deepen” the practice of democratic governance by building participatory and transparent processes and institutions.
2. How the administration is going to engage in participatory budgeting processes to deepen democracy and put more resources directly into the hands of the communities for them to decide how they should be spent.
3. The Four Focus Areas of the Administration dealing with:
 - a. Rebuilding and Redeveloping Jackson’s Infrastructure
 - b. Making Jackson the Greenest, most Sustainable city in the Southeast
 - c. Redeveloping West, South, Northwest, and Downtown Jackson
 - d. Building a dynamic “New Economy” based on Cooperative Development
4. And creating facilitating institutions for cooperative economic development, such as a Cooperative Incubator and a Cooperative Development Fund.

What You Can Do to Support the Advancement of the Jackson-Kush Plan

The reality is the answer to this is and will be an ever evolving and expanding. But, for now there are several concrete things we would like all our comrades, allies, friends, and fellow travelers to do to help advance the Jackson-Kush Plan Initiative.

1. Join us from May 2nd – 4th, 2014 for the “Jackson Rising: New Economies Conference” (see attachment for JPEG flyer). At this stage would like your support in a) raising funds to support the conference and b) plan on attending if you support cooperative economics and cooperative development and see it as a means of transition to economic democracy.
2. Support a National Organizing Tour to promote the Jackson-Kush Plan that MXGM is organizing for 2014.

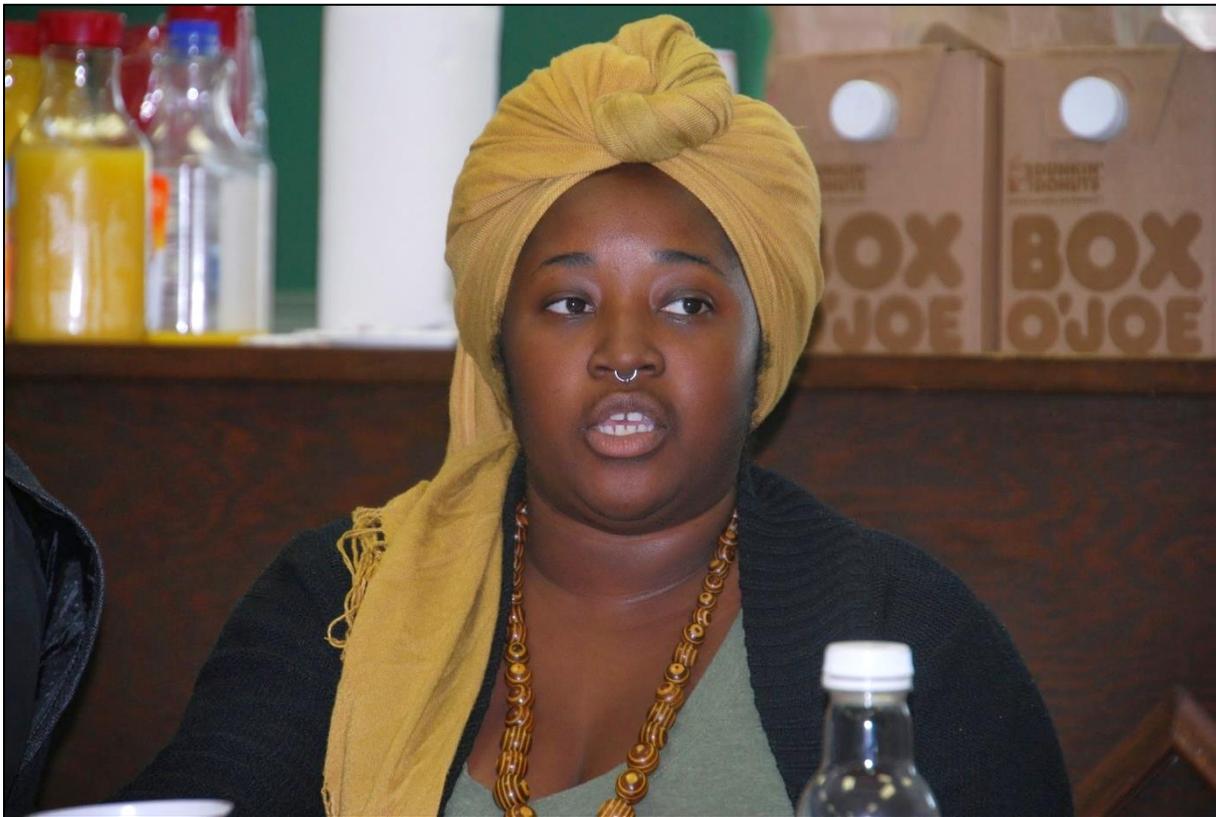
3. Support MXGM fundraising efforts for the Cooperative Community of New West Jackson, the Ujimaa Community Development Corporation, and the National Development and Southern Cooperative Development Funds.
4. Join the National Solidarity Committee that MXGM is in the process of creating. The primary tasks of this Solidarity Committee would be to a) raise funds and develop and secure resources, b) help attract productive industries and businesses to Jackson, and c) help coordinate strategic events like the National Tour.

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First speaker: Just looking at what period we're in genocide is the order of the day. The system of imperialism is in crisis. Due to the policies of neoliberalism, working and oppressed people bear the brunt of the crisis and global capitalism experiences record super profits. Our historic communities and our culture are significantly challenged with gentrification and marginalization. The international capitalist crisis, the manipulation by a sector of the ruling elite, and the absence of a significant radical alternative have also provided an environment for an upsurge of right-wing political activism within the oppressor nation. The descendants of white settlers demand the return to their perceived birthright or dominion and manifest destiny. Connected to the right-wing upsurge and the decline of the domestic economy of the empire is increased violence affected against black people especially black youth. The decline of manufacturing displaced workers, particularly black workers. Black labor is becoming increasingly unnecessary in a more capital intensive, technologically driven economy. Thus black life has less value in US society. And that's what undergirds the genocide. National liberation and revolutionary forces are compromised internationally, not just domestically. In the empire the black liberation movement has not regained a sustained momentum since the Cointelpro covert war of the 1960s and 70s. We've had some ups, but we haven't sustained it since the 1960s and 70s. The inability to effectively rebuild a black liberation movement in this period is the result of a lack of unity amongst black activists.

Which is why we're here right? The inability of the most progressive forces to have access to the social resources of our people. Cause there is some resources out there. For instance in Atlanta we have Creflo Dollar, Eddie Long, can I go on and make a statement there or get a petition? So there are some resources there. We could go some places, but I give you that as an extreme example. The compromise of national and insurgent consciousness among the masses of our people. So we propose--and some of these things have been said already-- to develop a pro-self-determination political program that unites the many to defeat the few. Because we have to have a sense of developing a united front also, amongst our people but even amongst other folk, other nationalities and other progressive folk, to defeat the few. We must build a political program that can unite black liberation forces on the principle of principle, unity, and

mutual respect that allows for our political identities and autonomy. Must build our capacity in human and material resource development that puts black liberation forces in control or having access to the necessary resources to initiate and sustain a movement. We have to build a political program that engages and encourages the organization of our people, particularly workers, women, youth, and students, that fights white supremacy, capitalist exploitation, patriarchy, and imperialism and provides political education towards building a pro-self-determination, class-conscious, and anti-sexist national liberation movement. We must consolidate identifiable basis through creation of intentional communities, grassroots institutions, penetration of influential bodies and when possible electoral control of political office says and jurisdiction, given our capacity. This is an overview to connect with the rest of our presentation.



Taliba: with that as our background we understand that oppressed people and communities can and will only be secure in this country when they are organized to defend themselves against aggressions of the government and forces of white supremacy and capitalist exploitation. We must defend ourselves and we have every right to do so, by any means necessary. The Every 28 Hours report originally started out as Every 40 Hours and within a week we had to take it down to Every 36 Hours, because there were 10 additional killings. And by the end of 2012 it was Every 28 Hours. Which we feel would be Every 24 Hours, because there were

another 75 murders that we couldn't confirm as Black, but we know that more than likely they were oppressed people of color. The Every 28 hours report was a consciousness-raising, connecting the extrajudicial murders of black women, men and children to counter the phenomenon that Trayvon Martin was an individual act of violence, although he was the 31st person killed in 2012. Every 28 Hours was able to bring the topic of the active war on black communities into the conversation of Black circles as well as progressive circles and it hits some levels of mainstream. There were a few articles in popular publications like Essence and Jet, and it was also referenced during the youth-in looking at racial discrimination in the US. In the interim report which was entitled Operation Ghetto Storm, which was named after police training of how they were going to engage with Black communities, we also released some curriculum called Let Your Motto Be Resistance, a handbook to begin to organize block by block in our communities to form these self-defense networks, so we can start defending ourselves. We wanted not only to just have a report to say hey our people at being murdered, with a confirmed count of around 313 in the year 2012, but we also wanted to delve into some active ways of how we can organize against that. So Trayvon Martin in 2012, which we do have a copy of it. All this curriculum and different reports that I am referencing is on our website mxgm.org.

But the Trayvon Martin murder in 2012 was the 31st murder. We know that that number mirrors Emmett Till which as history told us lynching was not a phenomenon. It was the way they used to control our communities and it was just an extension of state violence. Perpetrators were not held accountable by the state, and we saw that same thing happen again with Zimmerman in 2013. As an organization we did release a statement, and we demanded racial justice but due to capacity, media leaders co-opting what the next move should be of our black community, and the state of our movement, we weren't able to per se make advancements of that moment. But the murdering has not stopped and the times are not alleviating. These experiences that we see, with continual murders like the Felicia McBride, or Douglas Brown, who was a local Fulton County man down in Georgia who died in state custody due to lack of medical attention, and his charge was child support non-payment. So now we are focusing on 1) identifying and acknowledging that self-defense is not foreign to our people, our movement, and definitely not our investment. Among the different focuses we want to continue to nullify the notion that there is not an active war on the black community. We want to continue to teach and organize self-defense networks, both New African and Black, and then also the oppressed community networks that we can be working in as allies and partners, as Baba stated, to defeat the few. And then we want to continue to educate and acknowledge that this is our right to defend ourselves. We produced that curriculum. We have those two reports that affirm that this is our reality, that we are being murdered and that those who are murdering us are not being held accountable. 68% were murdered by the state or self-appointed vigilantes, 40% may have been charged, but as we see in the Zimmerman verdict they are not being found guilty or held accountable for these murders. Also I want to just

mention that we also have a book called *We Will Shoot Back*, it's authored by Baba A.K. Umoja, but it just states around our resistance that took place in Mississippi which shows in our history again, this is not foreign to our people to defend ourselves against these attacks. Armed resistance will continue to move our advancements for liberation. So as an organization, we stand on preparing our people for liberation by challenging different policies and building alternatives, with the Jackson-Kush plan, which Baba Chokwe will talk about later, our community safety act, which talks about ending discrimination and racial profiling.

Jamal: As hopefully most of you know, New York City has a history of doing cop watches and know-your-rights trainings, specifically in the area of central Brooklyn. Out of that work, several of our members were involved in court cases, either being accosted by the police officers or being arrested by police officers. We had two cases that went to trial. The first case out of that case came as release of statistics about how police in New York are and were, how many people they are actually stopping and frisking at any one time. The second case, which is the most recent case some of the results of that were an independent monitor, was assigned to look at NYPD, and also a request to develop the forms with community organizations that have been working on this the entire time. Also by that case was body cameras. The judge required police officers to wear body cameras. So they can tape all interactions with civilians. That case actually went to the Second Circuit Court and was actually appealed and is actually in process right now, so obviously work is never done, but this is something that is actually still very much in process but those are some of the results that came out of those specific cases. We also have developed coalitions and committees and cop-watch networks in New York City. As I said most of the work was initially been in central Brooklyn but through those coalitions and committees and networks we've actually expanded work to the larger five boroughs, setting up cop watches in Queens, North Manhattan a.k.a. Harlem and also in the Bronx there's plans and then parts of Brooklyn like Bushwick. Central Brooklyn is mainly Bed Sty and Flatbush but moving that work to Bushwick as well. We've also developed a structure of town halls a.k.a. people's assemblies which is something that is a part of our Jackson-Kush Plan and that's where mxgmn has hosted groupings of different constituencies in this case in central Brooklyn, the city Council members in the area as well as organizations outside of mxgmn in that area as well as some media personalities. It's an opportunity for those constituencies to engage each other and to problem solve in an effort to better living situations of those in our community. Mark Lamont Hill was referenced earlier and he actually co-emceed one of those town halls for us in a positive way. New York has worked really hard to engage our city Council in an intriguing way. While they're not members of the chapter, they do work in concert with us and they do communicate with us regularly in an effort to move forward the work. The last thing I'll talk about well the second to last thing I'll talk about because I do want to go back to the inter-ethnic coalitions but it's also part of the Jackson Kush Plan work we're trying to develop. An act that was actually passed by the City Council due the work of MXGM and other organizations and coalitions. It was enforcing

a ban on profiling by police officers by the police department and expands the categories of individuals who are protected by discrimination but the key point is that it prescribes a right of action so that people who were discriminated by the police department can file a suit. The suit is not to pursue money, which in America is probably the most damaging thing you can do, but it does allow them to force change due to the filing of claims. That in and of itself is a good step because before that there was no real clear structure. One of the things that also came out of this process was an independent, semi-independent the Department of investigations can now review police cases as well. I'm not sure how that's happened, they were not able to review everything, now they're able to review police cases. So, second to last thing. Part of the success can be attributed to our work with other communities i.e. CAAAV, which is Asian Americans, and Justice Committee, which is largely Latinos, and through efforts with People's Justice, we were able to work in concert to touch more than just the Black community. And we also now are working towards international connections so we just recently send somebody to Venezuela to get an understanding and be on the ground with them in terms of some of the developments they have in Venezuela.



We will say that BLUN played a significant role in Chokwe's election in Jackson. His election in Jackson is only part of the plan. Actually it starts way before that, his election to city Council, the establishment of the people's assembly there. BLUN actually by participating in the fundraising for his campaign for mayor, I know that he for instance came to North Carolina and

money was raised at their annual King banquet, then there were several members who participated in the runoff excuse me in the primary, the runoff and the general election and that was a significant I think Saladin mentioned in his early statements how we can't achieve anything by ourselves as entities. So that's an example of the necessity. We even have to take that to a higher level in other places.

Another possibility: I know that you all initiated or you all were a part of the Moral Monday and some of the forces in Atlanta we been working with around are connected to Every 28 Hours, the police terrorism. We have been working with a loose coalition of forces in our community around those efforts in Metro Atlanta, not just in the city of Atlanta. Some of the same forces are part of an effort to bring Moral Monday to Georgia. I just found out about that process. So that might be expanded, we might need to find out the lessons. I know we've had some discussion before about that, but some of the lessons you've learned in dealing with that in North Carolina as this process spread to Georgia. It's important that we also share the lessons of the campaigns that were engaged in different places cause I'm sure there's some to know, given some of what I know. I talked to Ajamu and Rakil about that and you shared some of the challenges. So we need to get an early start. If you're dealing with a broader coalition it's going to be necessary to know how to engage these folks.

12 Chicago Anti-Eviction Campaign

Chicago Anti-Eviction Campaign is a human rights organization. In addressing issues of human rights, we seek to enforce them through mass demonstrations, direct action, and political education. We currently focus on bringing together poor and working class people to enforce the human right to housing.

For our organization, the current period is marked by an escalation in the decades-long effort to remove poor and working class Black people from the inner city into outlying areas. This view is informed both by the political thought of the Western Cape Anti-Eviction, one of South Africa's most militant, anti-capitalist social movements, who inspired our organization, as well as the lived experiences of residents of the Cabrini-Green public housing development, who founded our organization in 2009.

Pan-African Inspiration

Under the policy of apartheid, the racist South African government ethnically cleansed the Black working class from its strategic location close to the center of Cape Town during the 1960s and 1970s. Once forced to the city's outskirts, these people served as the base for the African National Congresses' campaign to make the country ungovernable through nonviolent

mass action and armed insurrection. Since 2001, the Western Cape Anti-Eviction Campaign had been mobilizing the poor and working class residents of Cape Town to challenge the privatization of public housing, electricity, water and other basic services. This movement has repeatedly blocked the implementation of the ANC's neoliberal capitalist policies through road blockades, protest camps, and other forms of militant direct action.



Toussaint Losier and J. R. Fleming, both from Chicago Anti-Eviction Campaign.

In Chicago, we founded our organization to directly confront a wave of economically motivated evictions linked to the further privatization of Cabrini-Green. This public housing development is located right next two of the city's most affluent neighborhoods, the Gold Coast and Lincoln Park. Since the announcement of the Chicago 21 plan in 1973, downtown corporations and city officials have sought to replace the development's roughly 14,000 residents with market rate housing for a new class of white-collar workers. Repeated efforts to demolish this and other public housing developments culminated in the 2004 Plan for Transformation and the subsequent destruction of hundreds of units of public housing in Cabrini and throughout Chicago.

From our first eviction blockade in the Francis Cabrini row houses, the anti-eviction campaign has continued to support the elected Local Advisory Council in opposing the privatization of public housing. At the same time, however, the campaign has expanded its work across the city to challenge the ongoing spike in evictions in the private housing market. Most of these

evictions have come as a result of the rise in the home mortgage foreclosures since the onset of the most recent financial crisis.

Accumulation by Dispossession

This mortgage foreclosure crisis was initially triggered by the poorly regulated sale of sub-prime mortgages and mortgage backed securities, particularly during the years leading up to the capitalist crisis of 2007-9. Black neighborhoods, like those on the South Side of Chicago were systematically and illegally targeted for these mortgage products. At the height of the housing boom, bankers rated nearly 50% of all mortgages to Black families “sub-prime.” Put another way, after years of denying these neighborhoods investment capital through redlining, the finance industry made these same neighborhoods ground zero for the injection of this toxic, high-risk credit.

When these mortgages, true to their design, failed, mortgage servicers and commercial banks acquired millions of forged affidavits to speed-up the foreclosure process. As a result, the deepest capitalist crisis since the Great Depression wiped out some \$200 billion in home assets in just three years, the largest loss of Black wealth in modern history. Between 2005 and 2009, the median wealth of Black families had dropped from \$12,125 to \$5,677. By 2009, the median Black household owned roughly one twentieth of their white counterpart.

It is important to note that this systematic exploitation of the Black working class laid the foundation for a mortgage foreclosure crisis which has mired these same neighborhoods with even higher levels of unemployment. In Chicago, residents living on the city’s South side, the largest contiguous concentration of Black people in the U.S., accounted for 86 percent of job losses between 2002 and 2008. In the context of a weakened Black Liberation movement, tens of thousands faced losing their homes as the Black working class was made to bear the brunt of the crisis.

A Human Rights Crisis

For our part, the Chicago Anti-Eviction Campaign goes further in identifying this situation as reflective as a profound crisis in human rights, specifically the human right to housing. Since the beginning of 2007, this housing crisis has displaced at least 10 million people, roughly the size of Michigan, from 4 million homes. In Chicago alone, there are an estimated 62,000 vacant properties, larger than the city’s homeless population.

For finance capital, this has been accumulation by dispossession where the city’s Black population has lost more land in eight years than we gained in fifty. More than two thirds of these people-less homes are on the city’s South and West sides. Whether owned by Bank of

America, Wells Fargo, or one of a number of financial institutions, these properties are left to rot, until they are demolished or sold to a speculator for pennies on the dollar.

In the interim, at least 7 reported crimes and 3 criminal or sexual assaults take place at a people-less home on an average day. This new round of mass displacement comes behind the loss of more than 200,000 of the city's Black residents between 2000 and 2010 and has directly contributed to the further destabilization of these neighborhoods, making them easier targets for further displacement.

Seizing and Liberating Homes

In an effort to address this destabilization, our organization liberates these vacant and abandoned homes by making them livable for homeless families. We call this playing matchmaker between people-less homes and home-less people. This involves identifying suitable homes, recruiting homeless families, negotiating with neighbors and working with volunteers to repair them. While we currently rely on volunteer workers, we eventually hope to be able to train and provide a basic wage for unemployed workers through these repair efforts.

Although this work is on its face illegal, we have done much of it publicly to successfully create a popular base of support. Since we publicized our first home liberation more than three years ago, we have faced multiple evictions, but have not lost a single property. Over the past several years, we have trained some half-dozen organizations in Chicago as well as inspired similar work in Boston, Minneapolis, Atlanta, Springfield (MA), Los Angeles, and New York City.

Along with liberating vacant homes, we have also worked to keep homes from becoming vacant by regularly canvassing homes facing mortgage foreclosure. In this mass work, we largely rely on students and local residents to go to the homes of the household in foreclosure. We seek to connect these families with free legal services and a local base of support. From this base, we use a variety of tactics – including petitions, pickets, and sit-ins – to halt their eviction and force

the banks to renegotiate. And like the socialist and communist party cadres of the 1930s, we mobilize neighbors to put families back into their homes after they have been evicted.

Rebuilding the Black Left

These tactics point towards affirming the human right to housing by decommodifying it. We seek to do this by not only seizing homes, but also acquiring the title to them in a democratically controlled Community Land Trust. Through this, we envision a world where communities collectively control and jointly manage the land on which they live.

In securing a base of quality, low income housing on the South side, the campaign seeks to provide a secure a base for the city’s working class, while at the same time raising the tenor of working class struggle. As a mass organization, we see our role as part of a broader effort to educate, agitate, and organize poor and working class people to directly challenge the terms of their dispossession and exploitation. This would involve addressing not simply housing, but a variety of community and workplace concerns.

Ultimately, a final resolution of these issues will only come from a change in the economic system. The Chicago Anti-Eviction Campaign seeks to contribute to this by directly linking our efforts to the overall project of rebuilding and rejuvenating the struggle for liberation through internationalist, anti-capitalist, anti-patriarchy, and anti-imperialist Black Liberation Movement.



OUR TRADITION

13 8th Pan-African Congress: Black Labor and Black Liberation by Abdul Alkalimat, Black Left Unity Network (USA)



Greetings, comrades and friends, brothers and sisters all:

I am honored to share some thoughts on Black labor and Black liberation in order to help open our 8th Pan-African Congress (<http://www.8thpac.com/index.html>). Where else if not at 8PAC can we join a global process of rethinking Black liberation in the 21st century? We are living in a time of great global transformation and everyone needs to delink from the old experience of previous generations. Of course we learn from all that has preceded us, but we must dare to be in the now, in the revolutionary transformation of our economies, cultures, and the ways we do things in the everydayness of life in all of our societies. The Pan African Congress movement must continue on, and enable us to share our strategic visions and to implement global collaboration as we face our common global enemy.

African people in the US are mainly descendants of Africans captured as slaves and forced to work for the benefit of their captors. This is why we are here at this 8th Pan-African Congress as an African American delegation, to maintain a link with our common history of resistance in Africa and the African Diaspora since those terrible days of the European slave trade. We in the US are the African descendants who are the deepest probe into the West, deep into the life of what started out as a genocidal European settler colony and is now a global experiment for the future of humanity. People are in the US from all parts of the world, making their home in the midst of the greatest concentration of capitalist class exploitation, racist oppression and all other forms of domination including male supremacy and marginalization of the aged and those

with health challenges. The US has more people in prison relative to its population size than any other country in the world and nearly half of these people are Black.

We urge you to learn from our experience and not fall victim to the illusion of US democracy leading the so called “free world.” In a word, don’t fall for the illusion that the first African American president Barack Obama makes the US any different than it has always been. As I will make clear, Obama has not made things better. If anything, the conditions that we face (and you face all over the world) are worse! He has fallen way short of our expectations. But he has lived up to the expectations of the bankers with his billion dollar bailout, of the military with his policy of permanent war (although he declared the invasion of Libya was not a war) and his spy agencies like the NSA implementing an end to global privacy.

The general historical context we are living in is a global technological revolution. This revolution is being carried out so as to benefit the global 1% of super-rich banks and corporations. The fundamental contradiction is the great polarity in all our societies between the rich and the poor. Many of the national liberation movements in Africa and the civil rights movement in the US have vaulted a few Black people into the higher capitalist classes. But this has usually been at the cost of their delinking from the masses of Black people and adopting the neo-liberal policies of the World Bank and the IMF. Our broad movement served those few, but they abandoned us. We must press on. They can no longer lead or define the path for Black liberation.

My argument is that the fundamental basis for Black liberation is a class question. Only when Black workers and the masses of our people, marginalized in dire conditions of poverty, can transform society and create equitable conditions for all can we begin to achieve Black liberation. Today I will describe the exploitation and impoverishment of the Black masses in the US. On this basis we can begin to think about rebuilding the US Black liberation movement in the 21st century and the global Pan-African movement for world revolution.

Historical Periodization of Black Labor

By way of introduction, let’s consider the role of Black labor over the history of the US. There have been three main stages in this historical experience, each adding a new systemic experience. First there was the full employment of slavery. After the Civil War that ended slavery, Black people joined the employed with ever-present unemployment due to the cyclical crises of industrial capitalism and complicated by the pervasive structures of racist employment practices. Finally, for several decades now Black people have started to be delinked from work, permanently unemployed, due to the technological revolution guided by neo-liberal policies. At every previous stage of US history, Black labor was at the center of accumulation on which the rulers of the US stand. Now as Black labor is thrown aside, we face the dangers of the genocidal

conditions that stalk the Black masses in both urban and rural communities that are being torn asunder.

The origin of this is the European slave trade. Slavery was a labor system for the maximum use of African labor. Joined with technological innovation, Black labor drove the US economy, especially with the production of cotton. The mechanical cotton gin increased productivity in a very dramatic way. When cleaning the cotton entirely by hand, it took one slave a complete day to clean one pound of cotton. Later with the hand-powered cotton gin, one slave could clean 150 pounds per day. Even later with the steam-powered gin, one slave could clean 1000 pounds per day.

Fueled by this ever-more-productive labor, the economy exploded. In 1790, the US produced 6,000 bales of cotton. In 1810 this was up to 178,000 bales of cotton. By 1860 slaved produced four million bales of cotton. Put another way, in 1820 cotton was more than 50% of all US exports and by 1825 US-produced cotton was 80% of the world's commercial supply. Cotton had become King. Between 1830 and 1860 more money was invested in land and slaves for cotton production than all the rest of the entire US economy put together! In 1790 there were 700,000 slaves and by 1860 there were 4 million, of whom more than 70% toiled in cotton production.

This economic condition did not entirely end with the Civil War in the 19th century. It was finally ended in the mid-20th century with another technological innovation, the mechanical cotton picker. As the mechanical picker came to the cotton fields, the sharecroppers were literally driven off the land in the Great Migration of Black people out of the rural South into the urban industrial North. From 1910 to 1970, more than six and a half million Black people migrated from the South. Five million left after 1940 as the mechanical picker came in. Thereafter, only half of the Black community was in the South, and only 25% remained rural. Everything began to change. The historical mass Black experience of rural labor, under slavery and sharecropping, was bracketed by two technological innovations: it began with the cotton gin in 1790 and ended with the mechanical cotton picker in 1942.

In sum, 1790 to 1942 saw increases in production through stages of elimination of rural human labor. Then job elimination happened in industry. In 1913 Henry Ford had introduced the assembly line for making cars. This led to a great demand for labor in the factory system. When he hired Black workers at \$5 a day this was a big increase from the starvation wages people had gotten picking cotton. But several decades later, digital technology combined with the profit motive led to robots making cars and the city of Detroit in ruins. At its peak in the 1930s Ford's River Rouge plant in Detroit employed over 100,000 workers; today 6,000 workers work there. Across the US, Black factory workers live in conditions of permanent unemployment. If they have unemployment checks and social welfare support, even that is being taken away.

The fundamental role of Black labor has been to produce and circulate commodities, processes that are at the heart of every capitalist economy. Black people have mainly been workers, a fundamental part of the global proletariat. The current technological transformation of the economy and social life in general is eliminating jobs. Black workers in the US are now under attack in this technological environment. This impacts the young and the old. If you are still at work, you face longer hours, lower wages, layoffs, and disappearing health benefits and sick leave.

Current Conditions

This brings us to the current conditions. The data here covers the years of Barack Obama, who took office in January 2009.

Consider wealth: The US is dominated by a superrich capitalist class. The top 1% own 38% of the wealth. The bottom 60% own 2.3% of the wealth. One family, the Walton family who own Walmart, owns more than the bottom 40% of the US population. (Walmart operates today in 27 countries, including South Africa.) In this polarized context, the total US median wealth for white families is \$97,000 and for African Americans it is \$4,900. (Figures as of 2010)

Now consider jobs: Since Obama came into office, more than 600,000 public-sector jobs have been lost. This has long been the sector employing more Black people at the highest wages, so those lost jobs hit Black middle-income workers hard. Black unemployment continues to be about twice that of the total population, and is especially acute for Black youth where in some cities Black youth are over 50% unemployed. Over half of the Black unemployed were out of work for more than six months. Black workers in all regions of the country are more unionized than their portion of the entire work force, especially in large metropolitan areas and in the South.

Let's look at income: Since 2008, 95% of new income has gone to the top 1% of income earners. US household income declined from 2007 to 2010, by 5.4% for whites and by 10.1% for Blacks. Black family income was 63.5% of whites in 2000 but declined to 61% by 2010.

Now think of the family: Currently fewer than 1 in 5 Black households include two parents. So by and large mothers and grandmothers—or state agencies—are raising Black children. Since 1960, the percent of African American women who are married has dropped from 51% to 29%.

We live in poverty: More than half (52%) of female-headed households with children under 5 years of age live at or below the official poverty line. This includes 46.5 million Americans, 7% of all white people, 25% of all Black people, 40% of all Black children.

Our health places us at risk: 38% of Black men and 54% of Black women are classified as obese. Black people experience two or three times white people's rates of illness of the heart, stroke, cancer, asthma, influenza, pneumonia, diabetes, HIV/AIDS and homicide. Further, 20% have no health insurance.

Out of work, we are sent to prison: One in fifteen Black men are in prison. Over the course of a lifetime, one-third of Black men will spend time there. When confronted by the police, Black people are four times more likely to have the police use force. Every 28 hours, a Black person in the US is killed by police or some kind of security force. The typical inner-city urban Black community faces police occupation, and most Black youth are stopped and harassed frequently and so develop their so-called criminal record.

In poverty we face homelessness: Black people are seven times more likely to be homeless than whites. One out of 141 Black people are homeless. And 56% of homeless veterans are Black.

Even in this land of plenty many of us go hungry: One in four African American households are food insecure and have trouble feeding themselves. Black people are three times more likely than whites to rely on food welfare programs. A total of 90% of African American children will receive government food assistance at some time before reaching the age of 20.

The US is not a utopia for Black people. Black people from the African Diaspora who migrate to the US come with high expectations, but they must remember that their children grow up as African Americans and face the conditions described in this paper.

Strategy for Black Liberation

Any strategic program for Black liberation requires that we think about class formations and the struggles that will realign the classes in unity for Black liberation. This means it is necessary to promote unity in action against a common enemy that represents the capitalist system and its police state. In opposition to the mass propaganda of racist capital, we have to assert that the majority of Black people are opposed to the capitalist system and in favor of socialism! The Pew Research Center reports that 51% of Black people view capitalism negatively and 55% view socialism positively. (<http://pewrsr.ch/tCcgou>) As usual, the Black masses are ready for politics that the Black movement activists have for the most part not yet formulated and advanced as their ideological banner. This has to change.

As indicated by the description of the current conditions, there are three terrains of struggle: the state, the economy, and the community. All of these are structural representations of racism, sexism and class oppression. During the hard segregationist period, racism was dominant and the Black middle classes played leading roles in the resistance. Now we have moved from *de jure* racist structures (by law) to *de facto* (in fact), and class differences have led

to the geographical dispersion of the community into class-specific enclaves. Black liberation is primarily the mission of those most exploited and oppressed. They alone have it in their interest to fight the capitalist system because they have no chance of any kind of reform agreement.

There are four critical class formations destined to be critical component parts of the fight for Black liberation.

1. **Small capital:** There are small businesses, farmers, and cooperatives that operate within the capitalist system but are in contradiction with big capital. For example, raising the minimum wage (\$7.50 per hour) to a livable wage (\$15 per hour) would not only raise millions out of poverty but would circulate the money through small capital and grow the economy. Further, giant monopolies like Walmart are driving small business into ruin and killing the local infrastructure of communities. Small capital can be predatory or utilitarian. Their relationship with the Black liberation movement will determine their direction of development.
2. **Professionals and students:** This wing of the Black middle class is undergoing its own form of proletarianization. Teachers are now in unions.



Cuban OSPAAAL poster. From <http://www.gottahaverockandroll.com/lot-3986.aspx>

Formerly small entrepreneurs, medical professionals work today for large hospital and health corporations. The same goes for lawyers. Students are being squeezed as higher education is leaving them behind and proving not to be a secure passage to a good job. Certainly members of this class formation have historically been an essential component of the freedom struggle. As these forces begin to fight in their own interests, the key will be the extent to which they align themselves with the working class and masses of poor people that make up the majority of the Black community. One historical example of this was the Black Panther Party's Serve the People programs. Stores contributed food for the free breakfast program and lawyers and doctors set up free clinics for the people. This kind of service for the people will be crucial in the coming period.

3. **Black workers and the temporary unemployed:** As previously stated workers are the base of the Black community. They are the majority and the heart of its social and cultural life. Here we can see many sectors of Black workers. At the base there are workers who work full time and still are listed as below the poverty line. Many of them work in the fast food industry or for big retailers like Walmart. They are leading the fight for a livable wage of \$15. Next to this group are the temporary unemployed, people being laid off having long term unemployment compensation cut short. This creates desperate situations and heightens the social crisis of homelessness, health problems without insurance, hunger, drug abuse, and internal fratricidal violence within the community. Of course the majority of workers have the need to continue fighting for union organizations since without this self-organization workers are at the mercy of the bosses. The orientation of the union faces a crisis in two major respects: Does it educate the workers against the capitalist system as well as organize the workers to fight for better contracts and higher wages and benefits? This includes employed workers fighting on behalf of unemployed workers. Does it organize the workers as a class force to fight for progress on all social and political questions outside of the workplace?
4. **The permanent unemployed:** This is a new formation that we have to understand. What is its role in history? As Fanon instructed, each generation has a mission that it must fulfill. This applies to each class formation. Can a class or class formation *in itself* become a class or class formation *for itself*? People cast aside by capitalism with no hope of ever having a stable job or a way to survive within the system will begin to discover that they have to fight to survive. They will not fight to save capitalism, making their quality of life contingent on someone being able to make a profit. They will fight for a new system in which the moral and political mandate for society is to care for all its members without capitalism's usual collateral damage. This is a new class in human history. It will become the bedrock for a Black revolutionary agenda. It is the wretched of the earth. It is the last that must become the first.

With these four class forces in mind, we can theorize how their convergence will rebuild a new phase of the Black liberation movement. The first and critical development is that each must first fight for their own interests and exhaust the possibilities of a reform deal with the system. Will higher education extend a new open admissions policy with supportive financial aid? Will workers be able to unionize and fight for a living wage and better working conditions? Will survival programs help to stabilize those who face permanent unemployment, including the elderly? This is not the 1960s, when deals were made and the Kennedy-Johnson programs co-opted the social movements with reforms. This is neo-liberal austerity at its peak. The ruling elite is showing no mercy. It is in the struggle for these necessary developments that these class forces will begin to rediscover the need for broader national and even international movements for liberation and social transformation.

This is beginning to happen. The spontaneous movement is showing signs of real energy. One example is the response to the 2005 Katrina disaster, when the ruling elites implemented an ethnic cleansing program on the city of New Orleans. The refugees formed Peoples Assemblies and devised strategies to fight back. One of these led to a People's Assembly in Jackson, Mississippi that persisted and in 2013 elected a Black liberation fighter as mayor (Chokwe Lumumba of the Malcolm X Grassroots Movement). The murder of a Black youth, Trayvon Martin on February 26, 2012, sparked protests in several hundred cities united around the slogan, "No More Trayvons! Stop the War on Black America!" The masses of Black people are not taking their suffering lying down.

As part of this we have to make clear that we are in danger of a Great Forgetting as the generation of activists of the 1960s is passing or at least facing their own financial and health crises. Those of us who are still active face the task of rising above the historical polemics of the past, moving past old grudges and personal clashes to find new possibilities for unity. Remember the old slogan: Unity without uniformity. If we infect the youth with past sectarian battles, the fate of the future is sealed. Our task is to share the past from the perspective of the future, accepting the necessary criticism that must come if we are to move forward.

One such effort is the Black Left Unity Network. We are networking with organizations that have activists on the ground, immersed in fighting campaigns of the above mentioned class forces, especially workers and poor people in the Black community. Some come from the struggles in the socialist camp, variously supporting the Soviet Union, China, and/or Cuba. Some come from the nationalist camp, whether in culture, in the Black Belt south, or focusing on the African Diaspora. Some are new to the struggle and are representative of the emerging generation of activists. These kinds of realignments are at the heart of the rebuilding the Black liberation movement in the US and the revolutionary Pan-African movement on a global level.

Comrades, Brothers and Sisters,
Forward to the work that must be done!
Amandla!
¡Venceremos!
Power to the people!

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8. Mississippi Workers Center for Human Rights
<http://www.msworkers.org/>
9. US Human Rights Network
<http://www.ushrnetwork.org/>
10. Defenders for Freedom, Justice, and Equality
<http://www.defendersfje.org/>
11. Malcolm X Grassroots Movement
<http://mxgm.org/>
12. Project South
<http://www.projectsouth.org/>
13. Coalition of Black Trade Unionists
<http://www.cbtu.org/>
14. Monthly Black Worker Report
<http://laborcenter.berkeley.edu/blackworkers/report.php>
15. People Organized for Progress
<http://nipop.org/wordpress/>

16. Organization for Black Struggle
<http://obs-onthefrontline.org/>
17. Revolution
<http://revcom.us/revolution/index.html>
18. League of Revolutionaries for a New America
<http://www.lrna.org/>
19. Network for Revolutionary Change
<http://www.networkforrevolutionarychange.org/national/>
20. Workers World
<http://www.workers.org/>
21. Coalition of Labor Union Women
<http://www.cluw.org/>
22. Jobs with Justice
<http://www.jwj.org/>
23. Labor Notes
<http://labornotes.org/>

FRONT LINE REPORT

14 Open Letter to the Jackson Rising Conference

The Malcolm X Grassroots Movement forces in Jackson, Mississippi, are convening an important conference to plan an anti-capitalist campaign for workers cooperatives. The BLUN supports this campaign and offers this letter as a contribution to the gathering.



The Black Left Unity Network (BLUN) salutes the bold initiative of the Malcolm X Grassroots Movement (MXGM) and co-sponsors to call the “Jackson Rising: New Economies Conference.” The BLUN recognizes the city of Jackson as a new battlefield in the struggle for Black liberation and revolutionary change in the interest all oppressed and exploited people.

The holding of this conference is part of a radical agenda to join the long march in opposition to the brutal exploitation and oppression of the capitalist system. When the masses of our people

begin to build cooperative structures that exclude capitalist exploitation in favor of utilizing the wealth produced by the workers for social equality, then we believe they can begin to glimpse a society that is truly “of the people, by the people, and for the people.” We know we don’t have this now, but this conference is a step in that direction.

We must keep in mind that the forces of capitalism and their representatives in all levels of government, will try to discredit, derail and co-opt efforts that seek a different direction. It is therefore important that the conference deal with some of the major challenges, and form commissions to develop plans for organizing and empowering the larger working-class in the Jackson and Mississippi economy.

We urge the Conference to develop a set of political demands that assist the Jackson People’s Assemblies to call for the Jackson City Council to enact the following or similar public policies:

1. Pass a livable wage resolution for city workers and employees of any contractual agency with the city
2. Follow the city of Richmond California to use eminent domain as a tool to help end homelessness in Jackson Mississippi
3. Pass a resolution calling for the unionization of all Jackson City workers and that supports the right of private sector workers to unionize and engage in collective bargaining for a contract that provides protections, improvements and that empowers.
4. Require all banks handling city funds to demonstrate a just and equitable policy on their loans and mortgages for all citizens.
5. That the Jackson City Council establish a fund to assist workers and communities in forming cooperatives.
6. Keep public education public, democratic, culturally relevant and free from corporate takeover that comes through charter schools, the high stakes testing industry and Teach for America.

BLUN members will be participating in this conference to help build unity for the future. BLUN member will have BLUN buttons on to identify ourselves for focused discussion.

Long live the legacy of Chokwe Lumumba!

Forward with the Unity of militant activists building the fight for Black liberation and the Emancipation of the Working Class!

Forward with the cooperative workers movement!

Black Left Unity Network

THE LAST WORD

If We Must Die by Claude McKay

If we must die, let it not be like hogs
Hunted and penned in an inglorious spot,
While round us bark the mad and hungry dogs,
Making their mock at our accursed lot.
If we must die, O let us nobly die,
So that our precious blood may not be shed
In vain; then even the monsters we defy
Shall be constrained to honor us though dead!
O kinsmen! we must meet the common foe!
Though far outnumbered let us show us brave,
And for their thousand blows deal one death-blow!
What though before us lies the open grave?
Like men we'll face the murderous, cowardly pack,
Pressed to the wall, dying, but fighting back!



Artist unknown. From <http://bit.ly/PMQ24b>



Hands Off Assata! by DignidadRebelde.com