

MISSISSIPPI... old and new



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Much has been written in the national press about the New South -- how the tradition of racist terror is being abandoned by a new breed of public officials who are ushering in a new era. Discrimination is out; lynching is a distant memory. And Jackson, Mississippi, is supposed to be a model New South city.

But on August 18, 1971, Jackson police and Special Agents of the FBI made an armed, pre-dawn attack on the Republic of New Africa (RNA) Center at 1148 Lewis Street, and a short while later raided another RNA headquarters at 1320 Lynch Street. A shootout at Lewis Street resulted in the death of Lieutenant William Skinner, and the wounding of another policeman and an FBI agent.

City and State public officials indicated their support of the raid. Lt. Governor Charles Sullivan, Mississippi Attorney General A. F. Summer, and prosecutor Jack Travis all made statements to newsmen indicating a program to "rid the state" of the Republic of New Africa. Mayor Russell Davis, one of the so-called "New South" politicians, said, "Every legal possibility for forcing the RNA out of Jackson has been explored, but that Wednesday was the first chance law-enforcement officers had to move in on the headquarters."

Already the court record is filled with evidence of a police-FBI conspiracy to deprive the RNA citizens of life, liberty, and property. The transcripts show that the Jackson area head of the FBI, Special Agent Elmer Linberg, and the head of the Jackson city police, Lavell Tullos, met together the evening before the attack, at Linberg's initiative, and planned the operation. They subsequently briefed a combined force of about 35 FBI agents and policemen to carry out the attack.

No warrant was served on anyone, despite the claim that the purpose of the raid was to serve warrants. The one member of the police department's warrant division assigned to the attack force never saw the warrants, and he didn't know for whom they had been issued.

Chief Tullos and Special Agent Linberg agreed in advance to fire gas into the house after one minute and fifteen seconds, if no one came out following the bullhorn announcement calling for their surrender. At Lynch Street, the RNA citizens came out right away, and there was no shooting. At Lewis Street, the police and FBI opened fire after 75 seconds as planned, even though it was 6:30 a.m., when most people are asleep.

When the attack began, the attackers saw no guns pointed at them, and no sign of trouble coming from the house.

A patrolman who had served a warrant on RNA President Imari Obadele at Lewis Street only eleven days earlier was not consulted about his experience, although he was assigned to the task force.

Four persons were arrested at Lynch Street after surrendering, including one female, despite the fact that no warrant was for a female, and no one named in any warrant was present.

The Jackson Police and the FBI came prepared for attack, despite the fact that there had been no trouble in serving the previous warrant. They brought bullet-proof vests, helmets, riot guns, gas masks, and service revolvers. They even brought an armored tank, which previously had been parked in front of the courthouse as a symbol of Jackson's stand against the civil rights movement -- another relic of the "Old South."

The whole procedure was out of the ordinary for serving warrants. Chief Tullos had never served a warrant before as chief, yet he participated in the raid. Two patrolmen testified that the method was unusual for serving a warrant, and neither had served a warrant this way before. One had been on the force for seven years, the other for five years.

The eleven RNA citizens arrested on August 18 face charges ranging from murder and levy of war against the state of Mississippi to possession of stolen property. Six are being held without bond. President Imari is being held in lieu of \$75,000 bond. The other four have been released on personal recognizance.

So far, only the "official" story has received much attention. But the truth is finally beginning to come out. More and more Mississippians, white and black, are protesting the police-FBI conspiracy, and joining in the efforts to free President Imari Obadele and the RNA Eleven.

What is the Republic of New Africa?

On March 31, 1968, 500 black nationalists met in Detroit. One hundred of them signed a Declaration of Independence. Next a provisional government was elected, and the nation was given a name, the Republic of New Africa. The Declaration of Independence asserts the following as its aims:

- * To free black people in America from oppression;
- * To support and wage the world revolution until all people everywhere are so free;
- * To build a New Society that is better than what we now know and as perfect as man can make it;
- * To assure all people in the New Society maximum opportunity and equal access to that maximum;
- * To promote industriousness, responsibility, scholarship, and service;
- * To create conditions in which freedom of religion abounds and man's pursuit of God and/or the destiny, place, and purpose of man in the Universe will be without hindrance;
- * To build a black independent nation where no sect or religious creed subverts or impedes the building of the New Society, the New State Government, or the achievement of the aims of the revolution as set forth in this Declaration;
- * To end exploitation of man by man or his environment;
- * To assure equality of rights for the sexes;
- * To end color and class discrimination, while not abolishing salubrious diversity, and to promote self-respect and mutual respect among all people in the society;
- * To protect and promote the personal dignity and integrity of the individual, and his natural rights;
- * To assure justice for all;
- * To place the major means of production and trade in the trust of the state to assure the benefits of this earth and man's genius and labor to society and all its members, and
- * To encourage and reward the individual for hard work and initiative and insight and devotion to the Revolution.

The political, economic, and cultural design of the Republic is Ujamaa -- a system based on the concept of familyhood and fashioned from this practice in traditional African societies. All policymaking, legislative, and judicial power is vested in the People's Center Council of which the President is Chairman.

All industry and land under this system are in the trusteeship of the government. Six essentials of human life are provided by the government at no cost to citizens -- food, housing, clothing, education, medical treatment, and defense.

The territory claimed as the Republic's land includes the five black-belt states of the Deep South: Louisiana, Mississippi, Georgia, Alabama, and South Carolina. The RNA identifies this area as its national homeland because it contains the traditional homeland where black people have lived in majority for 200 years, and because land is due as part of the reparations settlement for slavery.

In addition to reparations in land, the New Africans seek reparations payment of \$10,000 for every black person. These reparations in money and land would represent the completion of Reconstruction's promise to the freed slaves -- fifty dollars, forty acres, and a mule -- which was never kept.

According to an RNA basic document, "Our black government is trying to negotiate peacefully for our freedom from the United States." Speaking from Parchman Prison, President Imari said, "The tactic being used against us is to make us concentrate on violence and ignore the programs and methods of the Republic of New Africa. Of course the Republic of New Africa believes in and teaches self-defense."

His statement continued, "After 100 years of lynching, we would be worse than fools to do otherwise. But we have threatened no one with arms in Mississippi (except of those occasions when we have been threatened first). And we have made it plain in endless public pronouncements and through our work that our purpose here is to organize a plebiscite (an independence election) peacefully and to build New Communities -- peacefully."

His statement concluded with a call for two things, "First, the people must join us in demanding that United Nations observers be sent to Mississippi so that fear can end, so that we may organize peacefully for a plebiscite and so that Black people of Mississippi may freely speak their true minds; and Second, the people must join us in supporting the right of black people in America -- including the Republic of New Africa -- to self-determination, and insist that the United States respect that right."