

ARTICLE: "The Black
Struggle and Political
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THE BLACK STRUGGLE AND POLITICAL PRISONERS

"Free all political prisoners" has become more than a moving slogan in the past several year's period of the Black struggle. These words carry a message of where the movement "is at." They say, in essence, that 'brothers (and sisters, too) are being incarcerated but must not rot in jail.'

In order to comprehend the seriousness of this stage of struggle wherein a racist establishment is giving vent to fear and rage, unleashing the forces of 'law and order' to crush a legitimate and inherent struggle, the term "political prisoners" must evoke some appropriate definition. Who are political prisoners ? Why were they apprehended? What is the Black struggle about? What is the Black activists' role? The question is not, 'do they pose a threat?' but 'to whom do they pose a threat and why? For to be acknowledged as a "political prisoner" means that such a person was engaged in some kind of political action.

Generally speaking, political action, during the early part of the 'sanctioned sixties' was to expose, challenge, confront, and rectify injustices and discriminatory practices. But in today's context, the issue is not one of civil rights or in terms of individual rights. It is national liberation for the masses of Black people--that Black people decide its own destiny. Thus, as "colonized" people instead of disenfranchised American citizens, the struggle is one with the struggle of oppressed people everywhere. The oppression has been a combination of economic and socio-political strangulation; physical and psychological brutalizing^{all,} ramifications of racism.

The emotional impact compounded in the awakening and realization of how 'Negroes have been "cultivated" but alternatively Black men de-

veloped, may have been the launching pad of today's Black militant political activist. His basic role, whether a nationalist or a leftist, is to communicate; to relate; to teach; to unify; to love and dignify and give strength to his own--those who have been the most violated, degraded, and fragmentized. He must be hip and he must dig his own. It has also become his role to teach the need of defending oneself and his community; and to see a greater potential in liberation whether through separation or confrontation, (no longer reform) both of which will disempower the structure that oppressed and suppressed them. These two seeds of ideas, although different, have caused the establishment embarrassment (for their image) and fear (for their lives and properties).

All the hypocrisies and dualities of "American ideals" are being exposed, and at the same time, so too are the realities of flagrant everyday violations.

It is in this context that the Black activist, the Black struggle, and the ~~once triumphant~~ slave-master ^{nation} must be seen. Skin-color was/and/ is a political issue for it determined a prerequisite for Black life in the western hemisphere. Thus, all Black people who react or rebel against anything "American" in any manner, are acting politically. To Black people by their very life-experience, America is synonymous with racism and enslavement, the two congenital diseases that this country was born with.

America, too, is aware now of the ramifications of the American (racist) way of life. The malignancy was utilized in a cruel way, for a nation grew and expanded and became rich on the backs of slaves, and propagated myths to rationalize its acts. Human lives, a reservoir of potential and talent were wasted and snuffed out; or gnarled, reduced and emasculated, both physically and psychologically. Even more awesome was the world-wide influence of the western concept of white superiority

where the indigenous social mores, life styles, and religions were subordinated by Euro-American culture.

It is all this and more that have incited today's Black political activists to commit their lives for--to bring about revolutionary change and make Black liberation a reality. Their activities do not embrace crime. No criminal acts have been committed--if "crime" means "violations against humanity." There have been, however, many incidents of self-defense against the police. T\$ould there ever come a time when Black people may have to be in the offense, it will not be of criminal intent but of political substance....of SURVIVAL.

In today's enumerable court cases involving so-called Black militants or activists (as in the Panther 21 case), the charged are only allegations. Not only that there is no proof of criminal acts, but the allegations never took place. However, words like "conspiracy," "anarchy," and "plots" are cleverly used to enflame the public to insidious dangers. Charges like "possession of guns," "robbery," "arson" incite fear.

All the historical and daily violations against Black people in every facet of life--imbrutement, poverty, humiliation, contempt, defilement, denigration and rejection (except as cannon fodder) are part of Black life in White America.

The public must not only become aware of past history and present realities, but in the political context of weighing justice with the CRIMES that HAVE been perpetrated against people, and then bring about a verdict against the REAL CRIMINALS...and deal on that level.

Also, to be remembered is that political prisoners are people who become involved in political action motivated by political commitment (through LOVE for THEIR PEOPLE), in the same way that religionists, pacifists and humanists are inspired to ^{work for peace} ~~feel a brotherhood of peoples~~ by moral persuasion.

In the Black peoples' struggle for freedom, though wide and varied are the tactics and political ideologies, alike all national liberation ~~liberations~~ struggles, there is no personal or individual gain; only the achievement of objectives for the masses.

Key leadership through the sixties have been systematically wiped away by incarceration, self-imposed exile, assassinations, infiltration, entrapment, or cooption. In this way, the Deacons, SNCC, CORE, @AAU, BADU, BAND, Mau Mau, '67 Panthers (of New York), the Jamaica Rifle and Pistol Club, and RAM were reduced to becoming defunct. Today, the establishment is pointing its finger, or more correctly, its guns--at the Black Panthers. Tomorrow, it may be the RNA. Only the Muslims have managed in keeping 'cool' the past several years to emerge in its newest farm projects in the South.

Dozens of cultural nationalist groups, Black Art drama crews, outlaw writers, Black women's Committees, and draft counseling units are operating in their communities. There is also the unknown quantity of 'street' brothers and sisters who are available. The largest group, however, is probably the high school and college students who are "doing their thing." But all of these segments must be cautious in their involvements for they comprise ~~the~~ the would-be political prisoners, prime-movers that the establishment would like to grab....like Ahmed Evans, Martin Sostre, Rap Brown, Leroy Jones, Max Stanford, Herman Ferguson, Arthur Harris, Lee Otis Johnson, Eldridge Cleaver, Bobby Seale, Huey Newton, Robert Williams.

Political prisoners become symbols, both to their own group and to those they challenge for opposite reasons. Symbols of manhood and Blackness ~~are~~ Black men are taboo in this American society. Thus, to the public at large, they are presented as symbols of threat, danger and subversiveness.

As cases go into the courts, as events take place on the streets, as the mass-media distributes the news, dwell on the political prisoners for what he is, the establishment for what IT is, and formulate your own conclusions on what the Black struggle is about.