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With so much at stake, many abolitionists, organizers, and communities dedicated to resisting the harms of Trump’s presidency and fighting for liberation have iterated the need for people to come together with a shared vision and strategy. Many have even called for a platform to unite around. In considering how we can best defend our movements while advancing our struggles, we take this time to look back to the BPP and their powerful vision laid out in the Ten Point Program.

Though much has changed since the peak of the Panthers, their Program remains an inspiring and revolutionary document. The issues it covers remain as pressing as ever, from the demand for housing and radical education, to seeking an end to the state’s caging of Black people.

Informed by an investigation of their conditions, the Ten Point Program powerfully communicated the BPP’s purpose. In doing so, the document served as a signal to the world of the growing potential of the Ten Point Program. In the experimental work of the organization and the structures they developed to realize its aims. Each of the articles in this paper reflects on the points covered in the BPP’s program through a contemporary lens, drawing lessons for strengthening our fight for abolition, self-determination, and liberation.

We hope that this issue of The Abolitionist contributes to the growing thought and movement seeking to understand and strengthen our collective resistance in this current moment, and for the coming years. With pieces including an opening from former Black Panther and current political prisoner Mumia Abu Jamal, to an elaboration of the BPP’s internationalism by civil rights and Black Power scholar Robin Speyer, to the sharp prescriptions from imprisoned writers on responding to Trump’s dictatorship, we are excited by the range of contributions to this issue, the historical lessons they draw, and their reflection on current struggles toward liberation in the spirit and ongoing legacy of the Black Panther Party, fifty years later.

In Solidarity,
The Abolitionist Editorial Collective

Letter from the Editors

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2. WE WANT FULL EMPLOYMENT FOR OUR PEOPLE.

Ban The Box Movement

BY MANUEL LA FONTAINE

The Ban the Box movement is a campaign started by All Of Us Or None, an organization of people who have been formerly incarcerated or convicted. We are fighting to end the systemic discrimination faced by tens of millions of people in the United States, and for the full restoration of our civil and human rights to those who have been formerly incarcerated or convicted.

Since we recognize that language is the first thing we must confront in our struggle to achieve a humane, public, and community-based criminal justice system, we use words that reflect who we are and what we are fighting for. We do not use labels like ‘criminal,’ ‘offender,’ ‘criminalized,’ and so forth—only a label that defines a person as the embodiment of their past mistakes or the false accusations used to take away their freedom for no reason other than to criminally stigmatize them. Instead, terms like ‘formerly incarcerated person,’ or ‘people with conviction records,’ or ‘criminals’ are only confusing; people are the operative word, describe a condition rather than define a person.

We work towards amplifying and unifying our voices, vision, and leadership to be seen as more than statistics, storytellers, seal-fillers, or tokens. We demand a shift in our society from a culture of retribution and punishment to one of transformation by challenging the dominant paradigm that prisons are the answers to our current economic and social problems and that individual responsibility transcends social accountability and corporate culpability.

We know that “banning the box,” or removing systemic discrimination from job applications, allows people to compete more equally with those based on their past convictions rather than the stigma associated with them. So we’re working with employers to remove all questions asking about a person’s conviction history from employment applications, interviews and postpone any background check until after a conditional offer of employment. After a conditional offer and presum- ably a background check is conducted, an employer must determine whether a conviction is directly related to the specific responsibilities of the job in order to consider it. Providing a fair hiring process means that even a finding of a record does not necessarily constitute a conviction and job responsibilities does not mean that employers automatically disqualify applicants. Rather evaluating the can- didate as an individual person, allows for formerly incarcerated people to be meaningfully considered for employ- ment and able to sustain themselves.

Today, nationwide, 25 states and over 150 cities and counties have adopted the “Ban the Box” law, and over 300 compa- nies have signed the White House Fair Chance hiring pledge. Nine states and 15 major cities have signed the “Ban the Box” law, and San Francisco, have adopted fair chance hiring laws that take into account past convictions and provide a fair chance for people to get a job. This is a grassroots campaign emanating from people who were once in cages, facing the same problems that we do, the one closest to the solutions, yet further away from resources and power.” We ask you to join our movement.

Manuel La Fontaine is a formerly imprisoned orga- nizer with All Of Us Or None, a project of Legal Services for Prisoners with Children.
3. WE WANT AND END TO THE ROBBERY BY THE CAPITALIST OF OUR BLACK AND OPRESSED COMMUNITIES.

Until We Win: Black Labor and Liberation in the Disposable Era

This piece was originally published in Counterpunch in September 2016.

BY KALI AKUNO

Since the rebellion in Ferguson, Missouri in August 2014, Black people throughout the United States have been asking a number of critical questions such as why are Black people being killed by the police and military and what to do about it. The dominant actors in the global economy – multi-national corporations, the trans-nationalist capital and state managers – are in crisis mode. National corporations, the trans-nationalist capital and state managers (including the military) have produced a truly coordinated system of repression and hundreds of urban rebellions.

The Value of Black Life

There was a time in the United States Empire, when we noticed a surplus in a politically justifiable (but expedient)ist class, and state managers – are in crisis mode. National corporations, the trans-nationalist capital and state managers (including the military) have produced a truly coordinated system of repression and hundreds of urban rebellions.

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We are living and struggling through a transformation of the 21st century capitalism. The Age of Disposability

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fulfill our material needs. To ensure that these are not mere Black capitalist enterprises, these initiatives must be built democratically from the ground up and must be owned, operated, and controlled by the workers and consumers. These are essentially “serve the people” or “survival programs” that help the people to sustain and attain a degree of au-
tonomy and self-determination. We have to challenge the system by using the monetary and the systemic logic and dynamics of the capitalist system itself.

The fundamental question confronting African people since their enslavement and colonization in territories held by the US government is to what ex-
tent can Black people be the agents and instruments of their own liberation and history? It is clear that merely being the object or appendage of someone else’s project and history only leads to a disposable future. Black people have to forge their own future and chart a clear self-determining course of action in order to be more than just a mere footnote in world history.

Self-determination and social liberation, how do we get there? How will we take care of our own mate-
rial needs (food, water, shelter, clothing, health care, defense, etc.) and address the social contradictions that shape and define us, both inter-
nally and externally generated? How should we and will we express our political independence?

There are no easy or cookie cutter answers. How we get there will depend on creating a regenerative economic transformation. To press for our goals we must seek to challenge the status quo and establish broad-based campaigns that are strategic and tactically flexible, including mass action (protests) methods, direct ac-
tion methods, and organizing methods. This means that we are not born-
sed and subordinated to someone else’s agenda – in this case that of the Democratic party (which has been the grave of social movements for generations) – but not getting distracted by sym-

tactic reforms or losing sight of the strategic in the pursuit of the everyday.

What combination of these efforts will amount to the creation of Black Autonomous Zones. These Autonomous Zones must serve as centers for collec-
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panied by the construction of Black Autonomous Zones. The Anarchist Abolitionist social project is noted throughout this short work, Black people in the US are not the only people confronting these existential challenges and seeking con-
crete solutions and real allies as much as we do.

Our Autonomous Zones must link with, build with, and politically unite with oppressed and marginalized peoples, social sectors and social movements. The manifestos and projects of Black people have always engaged in building autonomous, self-organized social projects as it fo-
turns, while at the same time building up its own so-
cial base. We must voice the needs of people in financial peril, those who are bombarded with.

The tremendous imbalance of forces in favor of capital and the intersecting, oppressive systems that beset them. The Anarchist Abolitionist position dictates that the strategy needed to implement this is not the same as anybody else’s, but rather to build an alternative social sector that is different, that is not based on the extraction of surpluses. The capitalist system has essentially run out of surpluses, and therefore does not possess the flexibility that it once did. Because real profits have declined since the late 1960’s, capitalism has resorted to operating largely on a parasitic basis, commonly referred to as neo-

liberalism, which calls for the dismantling of the so-
cial welfare state, privatizing the social resources of the state, eliminating institutions of social solidarity (like trade unions), eliminating safety standards and protections, promoting the monopoly of trade by corporations, and running financial markets like casinos.

Our objectives therefore, must be structural and nec-
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cial base. We must voice the needs of people in financial peril, those who are bombarded with.
four decades ago, the Black Panther Party (BPP) demanded decent housing. They did not demand shelters, they demanded homes for our people to live and raise families in. Specifically, the BPP’s 10-Point Program stated that:

1. We demand that our community, the Black community, be given the right to determine its own destiny.

2. We want decent housing fit for the shelter of human beings.

3. We want all our lands returned to our community from the White landlords.

4. We want decent housing fit for the shelter of human beings.

5. We want an end to the war on Black people.

6. We want permission for our community to run its own affairs.

7. We want an end of studentローン.

8. We want an end to the war on Black people.

9. We demand that the government aid, build and make decent housing.

10. We demand the right to community control of lands, “as the Panthers demanded, our cities and homes shall be the ultimate in cooperative ownership of housing and shelter.”

The BPP demonstrated that low-income communities can and will solve the problems they are responsible for those problems. Federal, state, and municipal policies have actively supported gentrification and displacement. By subsidizing developers, giving property transferred to CLTs. We’re fighting to build alternative institutions that will enable poor people to control their homes and their communities toward self-determination.

Mainstream media and popular stereotypes would have you believe that homelessness is caused by individual dysfunction, like substance abuse, mental illness, or laziness - but systemic problems like displacement resulting from gentrification are the real root of our current homelessness crisis. Plenty of wealthy people have substance abuse issues or mental illnesses, but no one is arguing that they should lose their membership in the human family. Rising rents and vanishing jobs are the real problem - and in a country as profoundly racist as the US, it should surprise no one that people of color would be disproportionately impacted by the housing crisis. For example, 96% of families in NYC homeless shelters are Black and/or Latino. Homelessness has exploded in the past fifty years. Throughout that period, neighborhoods where Black people control their own real estate and their own resources have been torn down completely.

Had we spent the past fifty years organizing the people who need housing and fighting for “cooperative ownership of housing and shelter,” as the Panthers demanded, our cities would look profoundly different. And it’s not too late to continue following the BPP’s leadership to wage that fight - and to win.

Poor and working class communities of color cannot depend on the US government to solve their problems when state policies are corporate ones. What’s worse, we have the resources to solve this problem. In NYC, the Department of Homeless Services spends a billion dollars a year on managing homelessness. However, instead of spending the money to stabilize communities impacted by gentrification and help homeless people find dependable housing, that money gets poured into dangerous, disruptive, expensive shelters. Here at Picture the Homeless we refer to this system as the shelter-industrial complex.

The violence of policing is a spectrum. The same mentality that enables an officer to kill people without consequence also empowers them to routinely harass, ticket, and arrest homeless people who aren’t causing any harm.

This year, the Movement for Black Lives released its policy platform. Among the many excellent demands outlined there, was this one, with echoes of the BPP’s Platform:

Financial support of Black alternative institutions including policy that subsidizes and offers low-interest, interest-free or federally guaranteed low-interest loans to promote the development of cooperatives (food, residential, etc.), land trusts and culturally responsive health infrastructures that serve the collective needs of our communities.

Fifty years later, the Black Panther Party’sPlatform is as urgently needed as ever - and homeless people here in New York City, some former Panthers themselves, are fighting like hell for it.
Know History, Know Self

BY ALYKIAN BOOALI

We always start with ritual—something to remind us that every day is connected, and that our work has always been connected to what has come before. But I also think it’s important to add to that the idea that we are a direct continuation of the work that has gone before us. We cannot separate our work from the history of struggle that has come before us.

The history of struggle is not just about the past; it is about the present and the future as well. We must always remember that our struggles are not isolated events, but are connected to the struggles of others around the world. This is why it is so important to connect with and learn from each other.

As educators, we must teach our students about the history of struggle and the importance of self-defense. We must show them that self-defense is not just about individual protection, but is also about collective action. We must teach them that self-defense is about protecting the community and the world from the dangers of racism, colonialism, and capitalism.

The concept of self-defense has been twisted and turned in recent years. The Panthers’ call for self-defense was about protecting the community from the dangers of police brutality and state violence. But today, self-defense is often used as a justification for violence and aggression. This is not true self-defense. True self-defense is about protecting the community and the world from the dangers of racism, colonialism, and capitalism.

We must continue to educate our students about the history of struggle and the importance of self-defense. We must teach them that self-defense is not just about individual protection, but is also about collective action. We must show them that self-defense is about protecting the community and the world from the dangers of racism, colonialism, and capitalism.

The history of struggle is a continuous one, and we must always remember that our struggles are not isolated events, but are connected to the struggles of others around the world. This is why it is so important to connect with and learn from each other. We must teach our students about the history of struggle and the importance of self-defense. We must show them that self-defense is not just about individual protection, but is also about collective action. We must teach them that self-defense is about protecting the community and the world from the dangers of racism, colonialism, and capitalism.
The Oakland POWER Projects
Decoupling Policing from Health Services: Empowering Healthworkers as Anti-Policing Organizers

Policing is Failing Oakland.

The Oakland Power Projects helps Oakland residents invest in practices, relationships, and resources that build community power and wellbeing. By identifying current harms, amplifying existing resources, and developing new practices that do not rely on policing solutions, the projects remind us that we can make our families and neighborhoods safe and healthy without relying on the cops.

The Oakland Power Projects (OPP) builds the capacity for Oakland residents to reject police and policing as the default response to harm and to highlight or create alternatives that build community power and wellbeing. By identifying current harms, amplifying existing resources, and developing new practices that do not rely on policing solutions, the projects remind us that we can make our families and neighborhoods safe and healthy without relying on the cops.

Oakland Power Project #1: The Anti-Policing Healthworker Cohort

We know from personal experience, stories shared in our communities, and mainstream media headlines that cops are increasingly involved in health-related events, whether they are medical or social workers. The disruption and harm they cause in the delivery of care is increasingly seen as both legitimate and normal. Whether someone is facing a mental health crisis, an interpersonal conflict, a medical situation, or an accident, police on the scene worsen the situation. Cops are the antithesis of care providers, as evidenced by the many instances in Oakland and across the country of police harming and even killing the person who needed care. At best, the person requiring care (or people in their company) is subject to a delay in healthcare, if not intimidation or harassment by police, detention, arrest, or deportation. With this information and a rigorous analysis of the Oakland political landscape CR-Oakland developed the Oakland Power Projects.

Because policing fails to meet people's needs, and puts people in danger of injury or denial of needed care, arrest, imprisonment, and/or even death, we must eliminate connections between policing and healthcare.

Critical Resistance-Oakland chapter (CR-OAK) launched the Oakland Power Projects (OPP) in 2015 to build Oakland communities' capacity to resist the everyday violence of policing and to minimize its harmful impact. Critical Resistance-Oakland (CR-OAK) identified the outrageous and routinely mundane intersection of healthcare and law enforcement as a strategic site to intervene, erode the power of policing, and support access to necessary healthcare, which serves the short and long term goals of stabilizing community wellbeing.

If you'd like to receive a copy of our full report on the Oakland Power Projects, please write to us:

Critical Resistance
ATTN: Oakland Power Projects
1904 Franklin St, Ste 504
Oakland, CA 94612

6. WE WANT COMPLETELY FREE HEALTH CARE FOR ALL BLACK AND OPPRESSED PEOPLE.
Black Liberation and the Abolition of the Prison Industrial Complex: An Interview with Rachel Herzing


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Casey (CG): Hi Rachel, thank you so much for taking the time to do this interview. The specific timing of this interview is important to highlight, as we’re now about midway through Black August. Could you possibly explain what Black August is, and why it is so important for people to recognize today?

Rachel (RH): Black August is a call for reflection, study, and action to promote Black liberation. Its roots go back to the early 20th century to a period of sustained struggle and resistance against racialized violence against Black imprisoned people, especially those calling for Black liberation and challenging state power. Ignored by the deaths of Jonathan and George Jackson in August 1970 and August 1971, and hoping others who died in prison, too, publications by William Christmas and James McClain, a group of imprisoned people came together to develop a means of honoring that sacrifice and promoting Black liberation. While August is significant because of the deaths of the Jackson brothers, it is also a month with many other significant moments in Black history in the United States including the formation of the Underground Railroad, Nat Turner’s rebellion, the March on Washington, and the Watts uprising, to name just a few. So there was an idea that this could be a time that imprisoned people in the California prison system could use for reflection, study, and to think about how to strengthen their struggles. During the month, people wouldn’t use radios or television, would fast between sun up and sun down, and practice other measures of self-discipline. Eventually the commemorations during that month were taken up outside of prisons, too. Malcolm X Grassroots Movement became the stewards of the commemorations outside prisons, although many people honor and celebrate this legacy and the roots of the practice. Black August is important to commemorate and I hope that the variability of ways that people commemorate that legacy can be nurtured and encouraged, in part, because it connects imprisoned organizers and revolutionaries with communities outside of prisons that are struggling for similar things. It’s often the case that imprisoned communities are meant to be invisible, and essentially cut off from non-imprisoned communities, especially communities of struggle. I think that is an important reason to reflect, as well as to study and honor the sacrifices Black people have made to stop the state violence and to recommit ourselves to the struggle. Black August provides one important vehicle for doing that.

CG: On this note, how did the contemporary prison and policing abolition movement emerge? What are some of the major theoretical and historical connections existing between abolitionism in its current iterations and those earlier articulations of the Black/Prisoner liberation struggle just mentioned?

RH: Well I think the periodization probably depends on who you talk to. So since you’re talking to me, you’re going to get something pretty specific [laughter]. I think it is also important to put the “contemporary” in my mind, there is a long through line of people fighting particularly for the abolition of imprisonment that goes back to Eastern State Pentitentiary, which was the first modern day US prison. That was in Philadelphia, 1829. Almost immediately, the Quakers, who played a role in building this institution to encourage reformation, understood that this was a mistake. And Quakers ever since that time have been on the front line of advocating for the abolition of imprisonment. So there is that old-timey version of it. Then we move into the grassroots organizing and the build up of penitentiaries as institutions of containment and human control. If you jump ahead to the 1970s and 1980s, you begin to see organisations that are fighting for a moratorium on prisons construction, but also groups advocating actively for the abolition of imprisonment. For instance, there is a book that came out during this period called Instead of Prisons, published originally in 1976, by a group called Prison Research Education Action Project (PREAP). At that time, they were looking at a national prison population that was 500,000. They thought surely this is a tipping point, we need to take action now. And so, as we continue toongan the nation population in the US to nearly 2.3 million. So this struggle dates back, then, to the sevenies and eighties, and it became something that was rekindled in certain periods, but never completely went away.

1988 is another important year: the founding of Critical Resistance. Since CR conference was held in Berkeley that year. That conference did some work to reinvigorate the concept of “abolition,” and not just a thing to aspire to, but more intellectually, but to organize campaigns and projects around, as well. It also introduced the con-cept of the prison industrial complex (PIC) into a more popular consciousness. While that conference didn’t form some kind of modern abolitionist movement, it did reignite an energy that may have been less prominent or less active just prior to it. That conference was still very focused on imprisonment and it wasn’t until 2001, when Critical Resistance first happened that there was a really strong attention toward thinking about the abolition of the prison industrial complex as a whole. That was kind of at the forefront of what that conference was all about.

I think today, and since becoming an organisation in 2001, CR plays a particular role in advocating for the abolition of the entire system—of the entire prison industrial complex—rather than just being a prison abolition organisation. CR was really at the forefront in the early 2000s as an organisation advocating for the abolition of policing, too. Nowadays you hear a lot more people talking about policing as something to fight, as opposed to resolving its function within the PIC or even just its relation to imprisonment. It is more common these days for people to think about ways to live without some idea that law enforcement is a kind of natural feature of our world.

So I think there is a through line there from early Quaker opposition to imprisonment to contemporaneous movement for PIC abolition. And like all movements, there are some ebbs and flows to it, but there are some of the key markers that I would use to talk about its development.

CG: What exactly brought you into the abolitionist movement? Do you identify as an abolitionist, or is this one aspect of a larger, overarching framework which informs your praxis?

RH: I think it is both, I definitely identify as a prison industrial complex abolitionist. I do that work because I believe in the liberation of Black people and I think that it is one of the foremost ways to see that broader goal fulfilled. Without the abolitionist movement and without a commitment to ending mass criminalization, containment, and death of Black people, I don’t think Black liberation is possible in the United States—or elsewhere, frankly. So I come to this work as a survivor of sexual harm and law enforcement harm who doesn’t believe the PIC makes me any safer, and as somebody who is committed to the liberation of Black people.

CG: You alluded earlier to the differences between a politics of gradualist police and prison reform and a prison-industrial-complex abolitionist praxis. What are your thoughts on framing political struggle in terms of either “abolition” or “reform”? Are there not limitations to framing the conversation in this way?

RH: I don’t think it’s very useful to position those as binaries. I think it’s more about different end games. Back in the early 2000s, Critical Resistance started using a framework that a lot of people are using now, and almost never credit CR by the way (which I hope just means it has permeated the common sense and not that people simply don’t credit [laughter]). We started saying that the distinction between abolitionists and reformers (or people who either have abolition as their end goal or reform as their end goal) is that reformers (or to see the system as broken—something that can be fixed with some tweaks or some changes. Whereas abolitionists think that the system works really well.
They think that the PIC is completely efficient in containing, controlling, and 
disappearing the people that it is meant to. Even if it might sweep up additional 
people in its wake, it is very, very effective at doing the work it’s meant to. So 
rather than improving a killing machine, an abolitionist goal would be to try and figure out how 
to take incremental steps—a screw here, a cog there—and make it so the system cannot 
continue—or it ceases to exist—rather than improving its efficiency. Whereas reform 
and criminal justice reform being their end goal, believe there is something 
worth improving there. So the groups have different end games.

I have never understood or participated in moves toward abolition that didn’t take 
steps of some sort. A reform is just a change, right? So there can be negative reforms and 
there can be positive reforms. You can make a change that entrenches the system, 
improves its ability to function, increases its legitimacy, so: a non-abolitionist goal. 
Or, you can take an incremental step that steals some of the PIC’s power, makes it 
more difficult to function in the future, or decreases its legitimacy in the eyes of the 
people. I think the false distinction between reform and abolition assumes that there is some 
kind of pure vision that doesn’t require strategy or incremental moves. If it is possible 
to get everybody to open all prison doors wide today, fantastic! If it is not, then what 
can we do to chip away, chip away, chip away so that the PIC doesn’t have the ability to 
continually increase its power or deepen its reach and hold on our lives?

CG: What do you see being the most significant overlaps between: the past two 
decades of abolitionist organizing, “Black Lives Matter,” and the movement for Black 
lives in its current phase? I know it’s a messy question, because there are folks at 
the forefront who are situated both ideologically and physically at the intersections 
between each. Maybe be a better way to phrase it: do you see any tensions or contradic 
tions between the abolitionist work that has unfolded over the past two decades and 
the emergent Black-led political forms taking shape today?

RHE: First off, I want to be very clear: I cannot speak for Black Lives Matter. I’m not a 
member of Black Lives Matter, I’m not involved in that organization, and do not have 
the ability to speak on their strategy or form. But I know there is a distinction between 
them and the Movement for Black Lives, which is a network of nearly sixty Black-led 
organizations. The Movement for Black Lives recently released this policy platform, 
titled A Vision for Black Lives, with more than thirty policy pieces in it.

I guess I would say a few things to this question. First, I think that what we are seeing 
emerge today—what I would loosely call a Black protest movement, which includes a 
lot of these organizations and formations just mentioned—would have actually been 
impossible to come out in the way that it has (to have the foundation to stand on and 
and to have people move in the way that they have) if there hadn’t been growing move 
ments against imprisonment and policing in the United States over the previous two 
decades, I don’t know if there is a single set of politics within Black Lives Matter (and 
I know it’s not true within the Movement for Black Lives) that compels an abolitionist 
orientation towards their work. I think there are some people who lean that way and I 
think there are some people who lean other ways and I think there are a variety of po 
litical perspectives and orientations that I’ve seen emerge from this broader network. 
I guess, at various points, I’ve been surprised that so little attention has been paid to 
the decades of work (well actually centuries of work, but recent decades in particular) 
done by Black people and Black organizations to fight the violence of policing in the 
United States, especially when the protest movement jumped off. I understand that 
people participating in that protest were fueled in no small part by outrage and in just complete disbelief at the scale and scope of the violence, and that people are 
being activated and drawn out for the first time. There are some who felt compelled 
to action right away and weren’t necessarily connected to those other organizations or movements.

I think as the past two years have unfolded I’ve seen, particularly in the Movement 
for Black Lives, some of that leadership and some of those organizations doing good 
study, thinking about other Black liberationist platforms, thinking about the histories 
of Black struggle around a variety of other issues and really broadening their under 
standing of the violence facing Black people. That is, not only issues surrounding the 
prison industrial complex, but also the economic, social, and political features 
of it. I don’t know that there is a direct relationship between the previous decades of 
work—and again, I mean prior work along the spectrum from abolitionist to moder 
ate reform—and these new Black protest formations. I think there is probably overlap 
of people, probably some overlap of thinking, and probably some overlap of strategy, 
but I don’t know if they’re in direct relationship to each other. I would say that while 
there can be no doubt that Black Lives Matter has had unprecedented cultural signifi 
cance and impact on US popular culture (on US media and the cultural life of people 
in the states and globally), it is less clear to me what the organizing impact will be. And 
in a place like Oakland where I live, there are strong organizations with decades of 
strong organizing going back to the Panthers and before that set the stage differently 
than what might be true for other places that have a different history. So I think the 
longer term impacts of this most recent activism on the power of the prison industrial

Continued on next page
complex over Black lives (and the lives of people of color) are influencing the tactics of law enforce-

designing war to take place in spaces outside of the

data collection \[laughter\]. The work of

influencing the tactics of law enforce-

To return to the movement that is meant to do that

in Texas, when it was used to kill Micah Johnson

that what I think is oversimplified to just say: “Oh, well did

regularly by domestic law enforcement; data collection

gies once tested out in such theaters of war are used

in Dallas has been used in Iraq; surveillance technolo-

ographic and actual physical violence used to eliminate

Indigenous people from this land, to the ongoing struc-

tural and actual physical violence used to eliminate

the domestic context (and I know its articulations are

abroad. While I do not use the word “war” lightly in

I think it is oversimplified to say “Oh, well did

the fact that people are always struggling inside. There

have the left, who are supposed to be committed to

every conceivable opinion on every conceivable

subject. As far as I can tell, you have extreme right,

right-wing politics appears to be like a dog walking

Reagan, who come right out and let you know where they

have the left, who are supposed to be committed to

justice, and affirmative ideology and practice. Affirmatively, this is

onment” or “I want to eliminate the cops. “ It really is an

to people in similar conditions around the globe is a

In my mind, self-defense requires an understanding of

Assata, for instance \[laughter\]. And that is not to criticize

unique to the so-called “Left” that is as troubling for

say, this kind of militant presentism (and ahistoricity)

I think the goal is a much more media
tural impact on perceptions and policies, not just legis-

promote and protect. The scenarios are incredibly racist, really sensa-

trainings for SWAT and other special law enforcement

creation and growth of the Department of Homeland

One way this has played out dramatically is with the

United States are influencing the tactics of law enforce-

One thing I believe in is that law enforcement is not

I think we need to improve, where we need to tighten up, and

But to return to the movement that is meant to do that

issue, or that’s what the mobilizations against policing are

is a kernel of that there, then part of our work as orga-

I mean this as a reiteration of criminological notions of

have the left, who are supposed to be committed to

movement which I also think is a direct antecedent to

a base. But people make different choices about what

they get more closely monitored. That balance between

My sense is that strong organizations are a good line of

to clearly differentiate between aboveground

caging. 

CG: So, to shift gears a bit, how do you suggest we

about the relationship between struggles against the

continue to happen. 

CG: So on this, I think it is oversimplified to say

I think it has sustained. I don’t necessarily think that is

onment, and get the latest night-vision goggles, the newest guns,

I think in these moments where there is a heightened

I think the pacing and the urgency and all that is required to

danger. The enforcement of these wars uses a lot of the same
tactic, which is not only the war-making tenor. There are very clear examples of this kind of

be seeing we are now seeing without those

One thing I think is that law enforcement is not

What comes to mind after hearing this quote?

I think this in moments when there is a heightened

So, what can be done with that, or the knowledge

that organizing, a lot of that conversation happens over

our shared interests, to compel them

I think it is still

I think it has sustained. I don’t necessarily think that is

I think the goal is a much more media

the time to use regarding the genocidal practices at

be seeing we are now seeing without those

to clearly differentiate between aboveground

What is required from our organizations or move-

I think in these moments where there is a heightened

What is required from our organizations or move-

What is required from our organizations or move-

I think this in moments when there is a heightened

I think this in moments when there is a heightened

This is also an important point. Building a sense of how we defend our own abilities to

they could actually live and fight from. The work of

But to return to the movement that is meant to do that

promote and protect. The scenarios are incredibly racist, really sensa-

be saying that it couldn’t happen) an engagement or activism

Where do you think we are influencing the tactics of law enforce-

be seeing we are now seeing without those

I think the goal is a much more media

I think this in moments when there is a heightened

What comes to mind after hearing this quote?

one-to-one over economic issues and some of the

What comes to mind after hearing this quote?

I think this in moments when there is a heightened

What comes to mind after hearing this quote?

I think the goal is a much more media

I think this in moments when there is a heightened

Where do you think we are influencing the tactics of law enforce-

What comes to mind after hearing this quote?
The Black Panther Party’s Anti-Imperialist Vision

BY ROBYN C. SPENCER

When Sherwin Forte considered joining the Black Panther Party in Oakland in 1966, he was not just influenced by domestic police brutality and unemployment. He understood that joining the Panthers was a strike against U.S. imperialism. From their inception the Black Panthers sought to challenge poverty, sexism and racism at home while using common cause with activists in the Third World that they perceived to be engaged in similar struggles of self-determination. The Panthers connected their domestic resistance to the anti-colonial Man’s March activities, the Cuban revolution, the US invasion of Santo Domingo and the second wave African independence movements in 1960s. Of all these international causes, Vietnam became a pivot point because of the slow snowball of US intervention. In August 1969 the Panthers’ newspaper, a voice that spoke to the militarization and occupation of the everyday. Panthers started with revolutionaries from Angola, Zimbabwe, and other movements from around the world. Panthers worked and lived alongside delegations and liberated sections of the world. Wardlaw, chairman of the Latin America Committee, pointed to the importance of military involvement on the relationship between the Black Freedom movement in the US and the global liberation movements by the 1960s and 70s. The radical internationalism that the Panthers helped to create bonds of mutual support and solidarity with oppressed people all over the world. They boldly spoke out against US actions and policies and called for an end to all wars of aggression. The increased visibility and activism towards state violence against Black people in the form of police brutality in the 2000s dismantled the popular understanding that the鲜活 heads that he became one of the first six young men who heeded Bobby Seale and Huey Newton’s call to oppressed groups around the world. They self-started with the “world revolution” and targeted their foreign policy as the imperialist enemy to the people. The Black Panthers Matter organization embraced globalization as a core principle and mobilized towards the impact of US foreign policy in the Middle East, Africa, Latin America and the Caribbean. Other activists like the Black Lives Matter movement organized their collective into the political and social spaces of Black women’s liberation, feminist organizations. The Movement for Black Lives platform boldly states that “America is an empire that uses war to expand territory and power.” The platform critiques the imperialist desire to expand its colonial occupation and teens on whom they are built. Black radical tradition has always been rooted in resistance against the global south under the recognition that our liberation is intrinsically tied to the liberation of Black and Brown people around the world. This is not just rhetoric; as a plan for federal, state and local actions. These activists are standing on bridges that were forged by earlier generations of radical internationalist in the 1960s and 70s.
Arming Ourselves With The Most Powerful Ammunition There Is: A Collective Memory and Connected Link in Our Long Chain of Struggle

BY LACINDO HAMILTON

We Want Freedom for All Black Men Held in Federal, State, County and City Prisons, Jails, and Military Prisons and Jails. We Want Trials by a Jury of Peers for All Persons Charged with So-called Crimes Under the Laws of This Country.

H e re we are, 2016, the 50th Anniversary of the release of the Black Panther Party’s Ten-Point Platform. The document, drafted by founders Huey P. Newton and Bobby Seale, seeks change in a context where Black death is a routine occurrence. There are important lessons to learn from this document in relation to the eighth point of the Platform, with what appears to be the most obvious: Too many people today perceive Black death as a result of personal responsibility rather than a systemic one. To imagine a world where dialogue is valued over adversarial processes, where justice and punishment are seen as contradictory rather than synonymous, we need a framework for thinking about collective memory and connected link in our long chain of struggle.

The Black Panther Party helped produce a vast literature on the inherent and biased structures of the criminal justice system, along the way building general awareness that the punishment of crime is a political act—"it represents the will of the state to control the lives of people that the state has defined as criminals in doing so they made the radical choice to redefine how conflict is mediated and justice is dispensed. Unfortunately, today, rarely do critiques of mass incarceration come from the people who bear the brunt of the war on drugs and mass imprisonment."

The Black Panther Party’s call for prison abolition was not merely a threat to certain, concrete conditions within the postwar landscape, but a radical challenge to the very logic of mass incarceration. Their radical political imagination demonstrated the ability to achieve it. You can write to him at Lacindo Hamilton, 40944 N. 55th Ave., Chippewa Correctional Facility, Cuyahoga County, OH 44075.

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Juries and “Justice”

BY DEMONTRELL MILLER

How can a white person truly understand how and why a 15 year old Black child got involved with gang activity and committed robbery? Or how his conditions are determined by the criminalization of young Black people? How can they understand that world when they live in a different reality? How can they understand this kid’s hopes and dreams and struggles to survive? It is easy to condemn another’s choices, but sometimes the only choice we are given is whether to survive.

The Black Panther Party saw this reality fifty years ago, when they wrote their vision-ary platform. They rightly noted that, while the U.S. constitution guaranteed the right of the accused to be tried by a jury of their peers, the reality for Black people in the U.S. is much different.

From what I have seen, first hand, from prosecutors, they do not want a large number of Black people on any jury. In most cases, they don’t want any Black people. Do they find us too compassionate? Studies, including research done by Reprieve in Louisi-ana, show that Black people are less likely to vote to convict, less likely to support the death penalty and harsher sentences, and less likely to believe the testimony of police. These beliefs are rooted in actual experiences. We have seen our family members unfairly prosecuted. We have seen police plant evidence. We have been harassed by police for no reason. We have seen how the prison industrial complex has devastated our communities. For these reasons, prosecutors regularly try to exclude Black people from being on juries.

Prosecutors see Black people all day as “criminal.” They do not want us to have the power to render a verdict. They will use every excuse they have to keep the jury all white, and use all their pre-emptive strikes. They will do this for any defendant, white, Asian, Latino or Black.

Police, prisons, and capitalism are devastating our communities. Ultimately, this so-called criminal justice system was not made by us, and it is used as a tool to further subjugate us. It is a fig leaf of reason to cover for the continuation of slavery by another name.

The words of the Black Panther Party are as true today as they were 50 years ago. If the constitution was applied “honestly” – if we really were tried by our peers – the prisons would not be so filled with Black bodies and Black suffering. But we know this is not how the system was set up, and the Black Panthers were exposing this fact through their program.

Let’s be honest: Prisons and law enforcement are big business and tools of state vio-lence. To fulfill the demands of this business and maintain the status quo, lawmakers have to be “tough on crime” and prosecutors must have high conviction rates to keep the pipeline flowing. And that pipeline runs right through Black communities.

I am not saying that Black people would not hold a Black person accountable for something they’ve done. That is far from the truth. Being from a Black community, where your neighbor can discipline you, then take you home to be disciplined by your mother, I know accountability is well and alive in our communities!

We still need to fight for the Black community to have what is guaranteed in the constitution: equal and civil rights. This will not end all suffering, but it will be a step forward toward a society where we can hold each other accountable without prisons or police.

Demontrell Miller is currently imprisoned at Allan B. Polunsky Unit in Texas. He can be reached at: Demontrell Miller #999551 Polunsky Unit 3872 FM 350 S. Livingston, TX 77351

California Coalition for Women Prisoners was founded in 1996 and they are fierce freedom advo-cates and a leader in the fight to bring women and transgender people home from prison. CCWP is a grassroots social justice organization, with mem-bers inside and outside prison, that challenges the institutional violence imposed on women, trans-gender people, and communities of color by the prison industrial complex (PIC). We see the struggle for racial and gender justice as central to disman-tling the PIC, and we prioritize the leadership of the people, families, and communities most impacted in building this movement.
Re-entry support and services for people returning from prison

www.criticalresistance.org
While I had long been aware of the veneration that Malcolm inspired in various parts of the world, I was still struck by the love and appreciation that so many have for Malcolm beyond the black world. There are a number of reasons that might explain why 52 years later so many still pay homage to Malcolm. For those of us who operate within the context of the Black Radical Tradition, Malcolm’s political life and philosophy connected three streams of the Black Radical Tradition: nationalism, anti-colonialism and internationalism. For many, the way in which Malcolm approached those elements accounts for his appeal. Yet, I think there is something else. Something not reducible to the language of political struggle and opposition that I hear when I encounter people in the U.S. and in other parts of the world when they talk about Malcolm. I suspect it is his defense, his dignity, his courage and his selflessness. For me, it is all of that, but it is also how those elements were reflected in his politics, in particular his approach to the concept of human rights.

The demands for clean water; safe and accessible food; freedom and healthiness for all; housing; public transport; wages and a social productive job that allow for a dignified life, ending of mass incarceration, universal health care, opposition to war and the control and eventual elimination of the police, self-determination, and respect for democracy in all aspects of life are some of the people-centered human rights that can only be realized through a bottom-up mass movement for building popular power.

By shifting the center of human rights struggle away from advocacy to struggle, Malcolm laid the foundation for a more relevant form of human rights struggle for people still subject to the tentacles of Euro-American colonial domination. The PCHR approach that creates human rights from the bottom-up views human rights as an arena of struggle. Human rights do not emanate from legalistic texts negotiated by states—it comes from the aspirations of the people. Unlike the liberal conception of human rights that elevates some mystical notions of natural law (which is really bourgeois law) as the foundation of rights, the People’s Center for Human Rights (PCHR) framework provides an alternative and a theoretical and practical break with the race and class-biased liberal approach to human rights that sprung from a business-as-usual legalism that informs mainstream human rights.

The people-centered framework proceeds from the assumption that the genesis of the assaults on human dignity that so many of us have experienced is not only a social and cultural phenomenon but is also located in the relationships of oppression. The PCHR framework does not pretend to be non-political. It is a political project in the service of the oppressed. It names the enemies of freedom: the Western white supremacist, colonial/capitalist patriarchy.

*PCHR is a political project in the service of people.*

Therefore, the realization of authentic freedom and human dignity can only come about as a result of the radical alteration of the structures and relationships that determine and often deny human dignity. In other words, it is only through social revolution that human rights can be realized.
1. We want freedom. We want power to determine the destiny of our Black and oppressed communities.

We believe that Black and oppressed people will not be free until we are able to determine our destinies in our own communities ourselves, by fully controlling all the institutions which exist in our communities.

2. We want full employment for our people.

We believe that the federal government is responsible and obligated to give every person employment or a guaranteed income. We believe that if the American businessmen will not give full employment, then the technology and means of production should be taken from the businessmen and placed in the community so that the people of the community can organize and employ all of its people and give a high standard of living.

3. We want an end to the robbery by the capitalists of our Black and oppressed communities.

We believe that this racist government has robbed us and now we are demanding the overdue debt of 40 acres and two mules. Forty acres and two mules were promised 100 years ago as restitution for slave labor and mass murder of Black people. We will accept the payment in currency which will be distributed to our many communities. The American racist has taken part in the slaughter of over 50 million Black people. Therefore, we feel this is a modest demand that we make.

4. We want decent housing, fit for the shelter of human beings.

We believe that if the landlords will not give decent housing to our Black and oppressed communities, then housing and the land should be made into cooperatives so that the people in our communities, with government aid, can build and make decent housing for the people.

5. We want decent education for our people that exposes the true nature of this decadent American society. We want education that teaches us our true history and our role in the present-day society.

We believe in an educational system that will give to our people a knowledge of the self. If you do not have knowledge of yourself and your position in the society and in the world, then you will have little chance to know anything else.

6. We want completely free health care for all Black and oppressed people.

We believe that the government must provide, free of charge, for the people, health facilities which will not only treat our illnesses, most of which have come about as a result of our oppression, but which will also develop preventive medical programs to guarantee our future survival. We believe that mass health education and research programs must be developed to give all Black and oppressed people access to advanced scientific and medical information, so we may provide ourselves with proper medical attention and care.

7. We want an immediate end to police brutality and murder of Black people, other people of color, and all oppressed people inside the United States.

We believe that the racist and fascist government of the United States uses its domestic enforcement agencies to carry out its program of oppression against black people, other people of color and poor people inside the United States. We believe it is our right, therefore, to defend ourselves against such armed forces and that all Black and oppressed people should be armed for self-defense of our homes and communities against these fascist police forces.

8. We want an immediate end to all wars of aggression.

We believe that the various conflicts which exist around the world stem directly from the aggressive desire of the United States ruling circle and government against oppressed people of the world. We believe that if the United States government or its lackeys do not cease these aggressive wars it is the right of the people to defend themselves by any means necessary against their aggressors.

9. We want freedom for all Black and oppressed people now held in U.S. federal, state, county, city and military prisons and jails. We want trials by a jury of peers for all persons charged with so-called crimes under the laws of this country.

We believe that the many Black and poor oppressed people now held in United States prisons and jails have not received fair and impartial trials under a racist and fascist judicial system and should be free from incarceration. We believe in the ultimate elimination of all wretched, inhuman penal institutions, because the masses of men and women imprisoned inside the United States or by the United States military are the victims of oppressive conditions which are the real cause of their imprisonment. We believe that when persons are brought to trial they must be guaranteed, by the United States, juries of their peers, attorneys of their choice and freedom from imprisonment while awaiting trial.

10. We want land, bread, housing, education, clothing, justice, peace, and people’s community control of modern technology.

When, in the course of human events, it becomes necessary for one people to dissolve the political bonds which have connected them with another, and to assume, among the powers of the earth, the separate and equal station to which the laws of nature and nature’s God entitle them, a decent respect to the opinions of mankind requires that they should declare the causes which impel them to the separation. We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal; that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights; that among these are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. That to secure these rights, governments are instituted among men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed; that, whenever any form of government becomes destructive of these ends, it is the right of the people to alter or to abolish it, and to institute a new government, laying its foundation on such principles, and organizing its powers in such form as to them shall seem most likely to effect their safety and happiness.

Prudence, indeed, will dictate that governments long established should not be changed for light and transient causes; and, accordingly, all experience hath shown that mankind are most disposed to suffer, while evils are sufferable, than to right themselves by abolishing the forms to which they are accustomed. But when a long train of abuses and usurpation, pursuing invariably the same object, evinces a design to reduce them under absolute despotism, it is their right, it is their duty, to throw off such government, and to provide new guards for their future security.

We believe that if the landlords will not give decent housing to our Black and oppressed communities, then housing and the land should be made into cooperatives so that the people in our communities, with government aid, can build and make decent housing for the people.

We believe in an educational system that will give to our people a knowledge of the self. If you do not have knowledge of yourself and your position in the society and in the world, then you will have little chance to know anything else.

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