


Imperialism in Africa • Jena 6 • Queer Left • Domestic Workers Alliance

# leftturn

NO. 26  
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The illustration depicts a woman with long, dark, dreadlocked hair and a young child with curly hair, both looking upwards with expressions of awe or concern. They are positioned in the foreground, with the woman on the right and the child on the left. The woman is wearing a patterned, short-sleeved top, and the child is wearing a striped long-sleeved shirt. In the background, several military helicopters are silhouetted against a sky with horizontal bands of orange, yellow, and red, suggesting a sunset or sunrise. The helicopters are of various types, including a large Chinook-style helicopter and several smaller attack helicopters. The overall style is a graphic illustration with bold lines and a limited color palette.

**THE  
REACH  
OF  
EMPIRE**

C. ROAD



What began with three nooses hung from a tree in a segregated schoolyard in Jena, Louisiana, has developed into a national movement.

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# FREE the Jena Six

New York Collective of Radical Educators (NYCoRE - <http://www.nycore.org>) has developed a curriculum guide for teachers to address what's happening in Jena. Contact [breebree@mindspring.com](mailto:breebree@mindspring.com) or [arianamangual@gmail.com](mailto:arianamangual@gmail.com).

See the Left Turn coverage and resource guide at [www.leftturn.org](http://www.leftturn.org).

**Cover Art: CRISTY ROAD**  
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**A**t the US Social Forum this summer, a rallying cry was, "Another World is Possible, Another US is Necessary." However, perhaps one of the most powerful moments of the Forum was when author, professor, and INCITE! Women of Color Against Violence co-founder Andrea Smith responded, "If another world is possible, why is the US necessary?"

While the corporate media focuses on the question of how many US troops will remain in Iraq, and for how long, the US quietly expands its worldwide military reach through military programs such as AFRICOM (The United States Africa Command) and the SPPNA (Security and Prosperity Partnership of North America). The reach of US empire is widening, but so is resistance. This issue focuses on US economic and military colonialism, and those struggling against it; from West Africa to Mexico to the Middle East; as well as resistance within the heart of empire, from Jena, Louisiana to death row in Texas.

In a special section on the US Social Forum, we look at some of the nationwide organizing that has come out of the USSF, from Queer Left activism to the new national Domestic Workers coalition and the Right To The City alliance. This issue also features a report on free trade agreements and health systems, an interview with Krip-Hop activist and performer Leroy Moore, reviews, activist reports, and more.

Left Turn is more than a media project, we are organizers and activists who seek to use this magazine as a tool and resource for communication and education within our movements. That is why we were actively involved in organizing around the US Social Forum, working with the "Another Politics Is Possible" track. It is why we are active in coalitions working for justice for the Gulf Coast, and for freedom for the Jena Six. We are antiwar organizers, labor organizers, and prison abolitionists. We are directly involved in movements for liberation, and we seek to be accountable to these movements.

We hope this magazine is useful to you in your organizing. Please let us know what you've liked, and what issues, organizing, and perspectives you would like to see addressed. Let us know how this project can support your work. Also, we invite you to contact us to find out how you can get involved. For example, you can get bulk copies of the magazine to distribute, you can volunteer on one of our working groups, or you can join or form a local Left Turn collective. On a basic level, if you are not a sustainer or subscriber, please consider becoming one - we couldn't survive without you.

Thank you for your support of Left Turn. We look forward to continuing to work together, building resistance, and a better world.

In solidarity,  
The Editors



# leftturn

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Like much of the work you all do, Left Turn is an all-volunteer collective. We are lucky enough to have written a lot of pieces donated from talented people from around the world. While we make every effort to honor the amazing work that people do for us, we sometimes make mistakes.

## DISCLAIMER

Articles appearing in Left Turn Magazine or on our website reflect the opinions of their authors. They are often authors we like and respect, but we may not agree with everything they say.

## mission statement

**Left Turn** is a national network of activists engaged in exposing and fighting the consequences of global capitalism and imperialism. Rooted in a variety of social movements, we are anti-capitalists, radical feminists, anti-racists, and anti-imperialists working to build resistance and alternatives to corporate power and empire.

Through our publication, **Left Turn Magazine**, our website, and other forums, we seek to create spaces for our various movements to reflect and strategize. The magazine serves as a resource to grassroots movements by reporting on and analyzing local and global struggles for justice. It is an all volunteer publication written by activists for activists.

We are committed to model the world we want to see by organizing collectively, democratically and without hierarchy, both internally and in the larger movement. Whether working on a local community campaign or doing international solidarity work, we seek to fight all forms of oppression through our organizing.

We recognize the importance of struggles waged by people and communities most affected by the policies of globalization and empire, whether in Brooklyn or Baghdad. Through each aspect of our work we highlight these struggles and forge connections between them in order to build a stronger more effective movement here in the heart of the empire.

Finally, we wish to project politics of hope, inspiration, and solidarity based on both the rich history of social movements and the visionary work of everyday people coming together to radically transform society and bring about a more just world.

[September 2005]





## EMPIRE'S REACH

To say that the United States is on the brink of a critical failure in the Middle East is not so controversial anymore. Despite the latest attempts at some kind of military solution in Iraq by increasing troops, Washington seems to be getting nowhere fast. With thousands of US troops tied down in Iraq and hundreds of billions of dollars spent, Bush has certainly been forced to limit his "New Middle East" quest, with the completely lunatic schemes like attacking Iran taken off the table for the time being.

Yet the Iraqi quagmire has not significantly eased Washington's heavy-handed intervention in the region as a whole. In Lebanon and Palestine, for example, the US is ac-

tually making some headway with equally dangerous consequences as those in Iraq. The administration is also testing out new, softer approaches such as working through local clients to achieve the same goals by other means. Unfortunately, Bush's self-immolation in Iraq has yet to reverse empire's march on the region.

In Iraq itself, the US continues to hold on for dear life despite all odds. And those who believe that a future Democratic administration will reverse course will be sorely disappointed. The damage to US credibility is far too great for anyone in Washington to be courageous enough to make such a decision. The occupation will probably continue well into the next administration,

and barring a united Iraqi resistance, US troops will be withdrawn slowly over an excruciatingly long period of time with the hope that no one will interpret it as a defeat.

### Formidable foe

In Palestine, Washington has been desperate to strangle the democratically elected Hamas government—resorting at times to the starvation of Gaza—but with little success. Finally, under the guise of assisting the Palestinian Authority in unifying its security forces, the Pentagon and CIA conspired with anti-Hamas elements, particularly those loyal to Fatah, to take over by force. Hamas managed, however, to fend them off in Gaza but lost the West Bank. For the US, and especially for

Israel, even this partial success is more than agreeable as the Palestinian national movement is effectively broken in half.

In Lebanon, it is a similar picture. Here resides perhaps Washington's most formidable foe, Hizballah, a mass popular movement with an armed resistance that has twice now humiliated the supposedly invincible Israeli military. Last July, in what seemed a last ditch effort to wipe Hizballah off the map, the US prodded Israel to continue fighting, rushing it plane loads of ammunition to no avail.

Having failed through Israel, Washington has turned to Hizballah's Lebanese opponents to squeeze it from within. So far, this strategy has been ineffective in weakening Hizballah, politically or militarily, but what is frightening is that it relies heavily on exacerbating the sectarian divisions that have repeatedly driven the Lebanese to butcher one another in bloody civil wars.

So, resistance movements are locked in a terrible logic whereby if they resist effectively, empire's response is to prey upon every possible social division to fragment and weaken them. The people of the region are given the option of either submitting to Washington's will or risk having their societies torn apart.

Now the US administration is in the process of dividing the whole of the Middle East into "moderate" and "radical" forces, pitting its clients (regimes like Saudi Arabia and Egypt as well as groups like Fatah in Palestine and Hariri's Future Movement in Lebanon) against those who oppose US meddling (i.e., Iran and Syria along with Hamas and Hizballah).

To turn up the heat particularly on Iran, Washington recently agreed to arm the Arab Gulf monarchies facing Iran to the tune of \$20 billion over the next ten years, sparking another round of armament by all sides in a region that is drowning in weapons. (Of course, for its part, Israel gets a \$30 billion package over the same period, including far superior weapons, paid for by the US taxpayer.)

Bush, perhaps to take the edge off a bit, has also declared that he will host an international conference on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. This is almost guaranteed to go nowhere but may serve to create the appearance that Washington actually has a heart somewhere. Given the amount of weapons the US is pouring into the area, we are more likely to see another round of wars in the region before we get the slightest whiff of peace.

### Bush crusade

The saving grace comes from two important elements that have brought ravenous empires like the US to their knees: one, of course, is the inevitable resistance that arises in the face of intervention and the other is opposition at home in the heart of empire. Both of these elements have been alive and well but have fallen short in some important respects.

The anti-war movement in the US grew quickly, particularly in the lead up to the invasion of Iraq, but never managed to become the kind of sustained mass movement necessary to stop the Bush crusade. There are many reasons for this, which have been amply discussed in the pages of *Left Turn*. Nevertheless internal pressure remains a necessary

component of stopping imperial adventures.

As for the resistance here in the region, the results have been mixed at best. Washington's ability to play factions off one another and cause internal havoc has undermined the effectiveness of local resistance groups. Even Hizballah, which easily repulsed an Israeli invasion last summer, has now been mired internally by way of US allies in the Lebanese government. In Iraq and Palestine also, internal divisions and disunity have also seriously crippled any effective response.

What has worked to our advantage is that Washington continues to approach the region with arrogance and incompetence, failing at every turn to make the necessary adjustments to please even its allies. Slowly the tide is turning against the US and anyone associated with it, and after the Iraq fiasco, few Arabs believe that Washington has anything to offer them. So the wind is at our backs, we have that going for us, but we cannot be complacent about empire, especially when it is facing ruin.

—Bilal El-Amine

*Bilal El-Amine is a former editor and founding member of Left Turn Magazine. Bilal returned two years ago to his native Lebanon, where he now lives and works.*





LATUFF 2007

## THE BIG DISCONNECT

On August 22, Bush declared that a “free Iraq” is within reach. So right on cue George Bush declared (August 22) that “a free Iraq” is within reach. The same day Iraq’s Electricity Minister told reporters that “armed groups”—not the Iraqi government—control the switching stations that chan-

nel power throughout Iraq’s energy grid. A new report from Bush’s own Intelligence apparatus declared that prospects for the Iraqi government to unite the country were somewhere between bleak and gloomy.

Bush’s dreamland “free Iraq” is part of the President’s “support for freedom and democracy throughout the Middle East.” Most Arabs

and Muslims, though, see that kind of support as “the kiss of death,” according to Turki al-Rasheed, a prominent (and largely pro-US) Saudi reformer. “The minute you are counted on or backed by the Americans, kiss it goodbye, you will never win,” al-Rasheed told the New York Times (August 10). The Times went on to report that, “the paradox of American policy in the Middle East—promoting democracy on the assumption it will bring countries closer to the West—is that almost everywhere there are free elections, the American-backed side tends to lose.”

It’s Alice-in-Wonderland come to life. Bush’s imaginings (and the imperial interests they are conjured up to defend) vs. the real world and most of the people in it. And on the second anniversary of Katrina, it’s impossible to speak of administration disconnects without flagging Bush’s one-time promise to rebuild New Orleans and the Gulf Coast. When race, racism and class inequities are concerned—as with war and peace—there’s Bushworld and then there is the real world.

### Bush blasted

Bush goes on to say that Iraq is the “central battlefield” in a war on terror that is making the world safer. But last week Foreign Policy magazine published an update in its “terrorism index,” a survey of security experts (80% of whom have served in government, including more than half in the Executive Branch and 32% in the military). Nearly all—92%—said the war in Iraq negatively affects US national security. Even 84% of the experts who described themselves as “conservative” held that view.

Bush says we’re making progress in Iraq and anyone who differs is “undermining the troops.” That whopper was busted in public by several of “the troops” themselves. In an extraordinary Op-Ed in the New York Times (August 19) six members of the 82<sup>nd</sup> Airborne who are still in Iraq wrote: “What matters is the experience of the local citizenry and the future of our counterinsurgency. When we take this view, we see that a vast majority of Iraqis feel increasingly insecure and view us as an occupation force that has failed to produce normalcy after four years and is increasingly unlikely to do so... [Iraqis] will soon realize that the best way to regain dignity is to call us what we are—an army of occupation—and force our withdrawal.”

Another huge disconnect is that most of the US army of occupation is not even counted in official (and media) reports about the US deployment. Over and over it’s repeated that about 160,000 troops are in Iraq. But Jeremy Scahill (author of *Blackwater: The Rise of the World’s Most Powerful Mercenary Army*—now high on the best-seller lists) reports: “With almost no congressional oversight and even less public awareness, the Bush administration has more than doubled the size of the US occupation through the use of private war companies. There are now almost 200,000 private ‘contractors’ deployed in Iraq. This means that US military forces in Iraq are now outsized by a coalition of billing corporations whose actions go largely unmonitored and whose crimes are virtually unpunished.”

Despite all this firepower Washington goes from failure to failure in Iraq. So Bush offers a scapegoat: Iran is to supposedly blame for

instability in Iraq and trouble all across the Middle East. This desperate excuse is exposed by the leading figures in Bush’s own client regimes. Iraqi Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki paid an official visit to Iran in mid-August, “held hands” with Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, met with Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, and called for cooperation between the two countries. The same week President Hamid Karzai of Afghanistan—standing next to George Bush in Washington—described Iran as “a helper and a solution” for his country.

### Not just Bush

Bush isn’t the only US leader who offers disconnects either. Not one of the three “top-tier” Democratic presidential candidates actually means “end the war” when they say “end the war.” The (pro-Democratic) New York Times tells the tale (August 12):

“Even as they call for an end to the war and pledge to bring the troops home, the Democratic presidential candidates are setting out positions that could leave the US engaged in Iraq for years. John Edwards would keep troops in the region to intervene in an Iraqi genocide and be prepared for military action if violence spills into other countries. Hillary Clinton would leave residual forces to fight terrorism and to stabilize the Kurdish region in the north. And Barack Obama would leave a military presence of as-yet unspecified size in Iraq to provide security for American personnel, fight terrorism and train Iraqis.”

And then there is the bipartisan blank check for Israel. The US signed a deal on August 16 to give Israel \$30 billion in military aid

over the next decade (up 25% from current aid) in what officials called “a long-term investment in peace.”

Meanwhile newspapers in Israel itself are exposing just what kind of “peace” Israel has practiced until now and has planned for the future. An editorial in the mainstream daily *Haaretz* this month admitted that last year’s war in Lebanon wasn’t started by Hezbollah but was “a war initiated by Israel.” A report by the Israeli army, leaked to the Israeli media, reported that cluster bombs were fired into Lebanese population centers at the direct order of the head of the Army Northern Command in gross violation of international law. To add to all the Israeli human rights violations, Human Rights Watch in September charged that most of the over 900 Lebanese civilian casualties came from “indiscriminate Israeli air strikes.” On the Palestine front, Israeli Defense Minister Ehud Barak proudly says that any talks between Israeli and Palestinian leaders are “meaningless” and Israel’s illegal occupation of Palestinian land will continue...and continue, and continue.

### Closing the disconnect

Another disconnect is the gap between widespread popular opposition to the Iraq war and the relatively small scale of ongoing grassroots antiwar activism. The latest polls show the US public more disapproving than ever of Bush’s Iraq policy. A majority even predicted that the September military assessment of the situation would try to make it sound better than it actually is. CNN Polling Director Keating Holland said the poll indicates “that anyone associated with the Bush administration may be a less than credible mes-

Illustration: <http://latuff.deviantart.com>



senger for the message that there is progress being made in Iraq."

Yet millions who oppose continuing the war have not (yet) moved from opinion to action. In large part this is a consequence of underlying circumstances: popular constituencies (which in the 1960s were on the offensive led by the Black freedom movement) have been battered by 30 years of right-wing rollback; and the complicated circumstances in Iraq—sectarian warfare intersecting with anti-occupation resistance—have made many who oppose the war still fearful of the effect of a US withdrawal.

There are no magic bullets for overcoming these obstacles. The need is for consistent, tenacious education and protest, for making links between peace and social justice struggles, for combining moral urgency with a long haul strategic perspective. This fall a host of activities provide focal points for chipping away at the popular action disconnect, among them the Iraq Moratorium beginning September 21 (<http://iraqmoratorium.org>) and the regional protests being planned by United for Peace and Justice on October 27.

The Bush administration is vulnerable, the policy-making elite is divided and anxious. There's no predicting what that extra little bit of pressure will be that causes their Alice-in-Wonderland Iraq policy to come tumbling all the way down.

—Max Elbaum

Originally posted in *War Times/Tiempo de Guerras* ([www.war-times.org](http://www.war-times.org)), *Washington's Wars and Occupations: Month in Review #28* on August 30, 2007.



racism & resistance:

## The Struggle to Free THE JENA SIX

Almost a year ago, in the small northern Louisiana town of Jena, a group of white students hung three nooses from a tree in front of Jena High School. This set into motion a season of racial tension and incidents that culminated in six Black youths facing a lifetime in jail for a schoolyard fight.

The story that has unfolded since is one of racism and injustice, but also of resistance and solidarity, as people from around the world have joined together with the families of the accused, lending legal and financial support, adding political pressure, and joining demonstrations and marches.

The nooses were hung after a Black student asked permission to sit under a tree that had been reserved by tradition for white students only. In response to the three nooses, nearly every Black student in the school stood under the tree

in a spontaneous and powerful act of nonviolent protest. The town's district attorney quickly arrived, flanked by police officers, and told the Black students to stop making such a big deal over the nooses, which school officials termed to be a "harmless prank." District Attorney Reed Walters spoke in a school assembly, which, like the schoolyard where all of this began, was divided by race, with Black students on one side and white students on the other. Directing his remarks to the Black students, Walters said, "I can make your lives disappear with a stroke of a pen."

The white students who confessed to hanging the nooses never received any meaningful punishment. Nor did the white students who months later beat up a Black student at a school party, nor did the white former student who threatened two Black students with a shotgun. But, after these incidents, when

Black students got into a fight with a white student, six Black youths were charged with attempted murder. The white student was briefly hospitalized, but had no major injuries and was socializing with friends at a school ring ceremony the evening of the fight. The accused students may not have been involved in the fight, but they were known to be organizers of the protest under the tree.

The Black students were arrested immediately after the fight, in December of last year. School officials and police officials took statements from at least 44 witnesses. The statements do not paint a clear picture of who was in the fight. Statements from white students refer to a group of "Black boys," but most testimonies are unclear as to the identities of who was involved. Some of the arrested youths are not implicated in the fight at all.

Despite this, when Mychal Bell, the first youth to go to trial, refused to take a plea deal in exchange for testifying against his friends, he was quickly convicted by an all-white jury. Bell's public defender Blane Williams, visibly angry at Bell and his parents because the youth did not take the deal, called no witnesses and gave no meaningful defense. Some have called Jena a throwback to the past, but in fact Jena presents a clear vision of the US criminal justice system—a system that has little to do with crime or safety, but is constantly being refined as a tool for enforcing elite power and social control.

### Local resistance

Immediately after the arrests, parents of the accused began organizing. Their call, "Free the Jena Six," was initially heard by activists

from other parts of Louisiana, such as the Lafayette public access TV show, "Community Defender," which was the first media from outside the immediate Jena area to give coverage of the case. Noncorporate media has been vital in spreading word of the case, beginning with coverage on [leftturn.org](http://leftturn.org), as well as Black radio stations, blogs and videos on YouTube. This slowly built to stories on Democracy Now! and in The Final Call, which eventually led to Newsweek and Anderson Cooper.

LaSalle parish, where Jena is located, is 85% white. The town is still mostly segregated—from the white barber who refuses to cut Black hair to the white and Black parts of town, separated by an invisible line. LaSalle is also one of Louisiana's most wealthy parishes, with small oil rigs in many backyards contributing to area wealth. The parish is a major contributor to Republican politicians, and former klansman David Duke received a solid majority of local votes when he ran for governor in 1991—in fact, he received a higher percentage of votes in LaSalle parish than in any other part the state. Jena was also the former site of a notoriously brutal youth prison, which was closed after years of lawsuits, negative media exposure, and community organizing. The prison is now scheduled to be reopened as a private prison for the growing business of immigrant detentions.

Only one church in town has allowed the parents of the accused youth to hold meetings. There has been local pressure on family members and their allies to stay quiet. However, in the face of opposition, their voice has grown louder. Without an infrastructure of support, without any paid organizers, this

struggle was initiated and is still led by six courageous families.

Three hundred supporters, most from the immediate region, but some from as far away as California, Chicago and New York, descended on Jena on July 31 to protest District Attorney Reed Walters' conduct and call for dismissal of all charges. The largest groups included Millions More Movement delegations from Houston, Monroe and Shreveport, and nearly fifty members of Families and Friends of Louisiana's Incarcerated Children from Lake Charles and New Orleans. Other delegations from across Louisiana included members of INCITE! Women of Color Against Violence, Critical Resistance, Common Ground and Malcolm X Grassroots Movement. The demonstration marched through downtown Jena—reported to be the biggest civil rights march the town of 2,500 residents has ever seen—and delivered a petition with 43,000 signatures to the District Attorney's office.

After the demonstration, more major allies began to come on board. The Congressional Black Caucus issued a statement calling for charges to be dropped, while the city of Cambridge, Massachusetts passed a resolution in support of the families. Al Sharpton and other national leaders visited Jena. Best-selling author Mary B. Morrison offered to pay for four years of college at the school of his choice for one of the youths.

ColorOfChange.org, which has coordinated much of the outside support, has gathered more than 80,000 signatures on a petition to Louisiana Governor Blanco, calling for her to pardon the accused, and investigate District Attorney Reed Walters.

Photo: Mavis Yorks

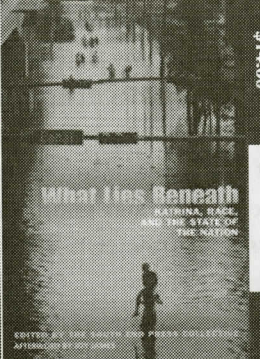


Blanco, a Democrat, responded with a condescending statement, tersely informing petitioners, "The State Constitution provides for three branches of state government—Legislative, Executive, and Judicial—and the Constitution prohibits anyone in one branch from exercising the powers of anyone in another branch." This is the same governor who, as Katrina approached, urged gulf coast residents to "pray the hurricane down" to a level two. When New Orleans was flooded and people were trapped in the New Orleans Superdome and convention center, she informed the nation that she was sending in National Guard troops, and "They have M-16s and they're locked and loaded. These troops know how to shoot and kill, and they are more than willing to do so, and I expect they will."

The case of Jena Six has served as a wake-up call on the state of US justice. It shows vividly the racial bias still inherent to our system. But it has also shown something else: that this group of families refuses to be silent in the face of injustice, and that hundreds of thousands of people around the world have chosen to stand with them. Together they have said that we are drawing the line, here, in Jena, Louisiana.

— Jordan Flaherty

Jordan Flaherty is a member of the Left Turn editorial collective. Please see <http://www.leftturn.org> and <http://www.freethejena6.org/> for more coverage of the Jena case.



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**what lies beneath**  
KATRINA, RACE & THE STATE OF THE NATION

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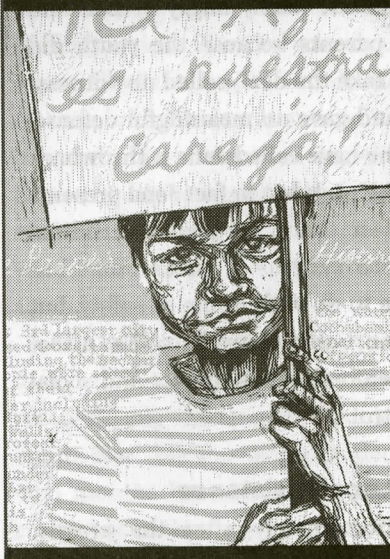
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# "DEMOCRATIC" TRANSITION MEXICO'S

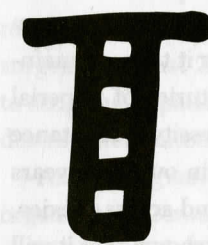
impunity & counterinsurgency



Photos: John Gibler

Almost a year after President Felipe Calderon took office, "democracy" in Mexico continues its study of the theater of the absurd. As Calderon gives speeches on the rule of law, police and soldiers attack social movements, drug-trafficking gangsters murder with impunity killing 1,951 people since January, and femicides continue in Ciudad Juarez and spread to other states. Roughly 50 million people are dropping deeper into the wreckage of hunger and exclusion.

BY JOHN GIBLER



he true design of the political class may be deciphered by juxtaposing *Fortune* magazine's announcement that Mexican monopolist Carlos Slim, with an estimated wealth of \$59 billion, is now the richest man in the world with the tales of impunity and counterinsurgency in two of Mexico's most marginalized states, Oaxaca and Chiapas.

The divisions in Oaxaca could not be starker, or more revealing. As the Oaxaca Peoples' Popular Assembly (APPO) spent the late spring months preparing a cultural festival, the state government was preparing to crack skulls. Governor Ulises Ruiz Ortiz hired a North Korean Tae Kwon Do champion, Kim Myong Chong, to come to Oaxaca to train the state police in submission techniques using a four-foot long wooden staff.

The police debuted their new skills on July 16—the first day of the APPO's cultural festival—ambushing an APPO march, and setting off a five-hour street battle that left 58 people injured. The predominant image from the battle was state police with their new sticks standing over APPO activists with faces bathed in blood. Police Chief Sergio Segreste Ríos, bragged to *Milenio* reporter Diego Osorno that they only used the staffs to "immobilize"

by striking against leg and back muscles. Opposite Ríos' quote in the newspaper ran a photograph of police with staffs in hand pushing and kicking a member of the APPO with blood gushing from his head.

The newspaper *La Jornada* published a series of three photographs taken on July 16 showing Emeterio Merino Cruz, a 43 year-old plumber who was apprehended on his way to work. The first picture showed a police officer with riot shield and staff in hand leading a compliant Cruz by the arm. In the second picture, Cruz is sitting on the street while an officer beats him. In the final picture,

Cruz lies in the hospital in a coma, being kept alive by a life support system.

The July 16 battle was a severe blow to the APPO, though not a fatal one. After thousands of federal and state police beat and imprisoned over 140 people on November 25, 2006, the APPO spent months slowly rebuilding their movement: working to free the people detained during the 6 months of conflict and holding marches, panel discussions, and assembly meetings. Their patience and grassroots work was paying off, with more and more people overcoming fear of repression and taking to the streets in marches and short-term protest camps. By June 14, the one-year anniversary of the police raid that sparked the civil disobedience uprising and the creation of the APPO, hundreds of thousands once again jumped into the movement.

## Polling disenchantment

Throughout the summer the APPO struggled with internal debates on how best to strategize around the upcoming state legislative elections on August 6 and municipal elections on October 7. Many of the indigenous organizations and smaller collectives argued that the APPO should have nothing to do with the elections, while some of the larger political organizations wanted to take advantage of widespread popular support for the APPO and launch candidates.

The APPO assembly eventually decided to remain autonomous of all political parties, supporting no can-



didates in the elections but calling for a “protest vote” against both Ruiz’s Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI) and Calderon’s National Action Party (PAN). They also decided that individual organizations could participate further in the elections by running candidates, though no potential candidate could serve as a council member in the APPO.

The electoral debate is one of the most divisive issues in contemporary Mexican left politics. Throughout 2006, the Zapatista’s Other Campaign argued long and hard against participating in electoral politics, while supporters of Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador sought to embrace his candidacy in order to effect change from within. The fallout from this division still haunts national left movements with sectarian attacks and counterattacks. Many groups associated with the Other Campaign—though not the Zapatistas themselves who have expressed their solidarity with and admiration for the Oaxaca movement—attack the APPO, erroneously accusing them of supporting Lopez Obrador’s Party of the Democratic Revolution.

The APPO managed, for the most part, to avoid major divisions. Due to the extremely hostile climate in the press, the APPO agreed to curb mudslinging between individual groups who have taken contrary positions on the elections. Though tensions are constant, the APPO has maintained its unity and avoided the sectarian bickering that so plagues other movements. In recent interviews, APPO participants expressed both their individual positions and their willingness to respect diverging positions, careful to not attack the other side. “It is an agreement of the APPO not to participate in the electoral process,” said Florentino Lopez, an APPO spokesperson, “but to respect individual organizations if they decide to do so, but not in the name of the APPO.”

However, the August 6 elections themselves spoke to the prevailing sentiment among the grassroots: the overall, landslide winner was disenchantment: 77 percent of registered voters failed to show up to the polls. The PRI took every seat in the state legislature. “The whole damn electoral process should just be disregarded from the beginning,” said Isaac Torres, a lawyer with the Mexican Human Rights League in Oaxaca in an interview before the elections, “it is only a perfected system of electoral fraud.”

#### **Walking free**

Over a year after the Oaxaca uprising exploded, still

no one has been punished for the 26 assassinations and scores of documented cases of torture and arbitrary detentions. The killers of 25 Oaxaqueños and US independent journalist Brad Will not only walk free, but continue to wear their uniforms and patrol the streets. The impunity in Oaxaca has led the Inter-American Human Rights Commission to express its “extreme concern,” and Amnesty International to travel to Mexico to release a report on Oaxaca and meet directly with Ulises Ruiz and Felipe Calderon.

After a 45 minute meeting between Ulises Ruiz and the Secretary General of Amnesty, Irene Zubaida Khan, Ruiz said that the Amnesty report “was written by the APPO,” and completely disqualified the organization as “partial” and “irresponsible.” Zumbaida Khan in turn told the Mexican Congress that, “the cases of Oaxaca and San Salvador Atenco clearly show the urgent need to attend to impunity and the failure of justice.”

Ulises Ruiz embodies an entire political edifice constructed on centuries of authoritarian rule. He is not an aberration of democracy or justice, he is the personification of a system of social control predicated on the use of overwhelming violence to force compliance, a system that is obviously willing to do whatever it takes to maintain power. Ulises Ruiz—and the centuries of imperial dominion behind him—creates the necessity of resistance movements like the APPO, the latest in over 500 years of uninterrupted struggle in Oaxaca, and across Mexico. And like the Zapatistas, the APPO has shown that it will not fade away or bow down in the face of violence.

Resistance is not only throwing rocks at riot police or tending to piles of burning tires at the barricades. Re-

### **THE ELECTORAL DEBATE IS ONE OF THE MOST DIVISIVE ISSUES IN CONTEMPORARY MEXICAN LEFT POLITICS.**

sistance can be brewing coffee and taking it to the tired barricade watchers or gathering rocks in shopping carts to ferry up to the frontline. Resistance can also be taking pictures at mobilizations, listening to the occupied radio stations, making protest stencil art and painting city walls, holding neighborhood meetings, marching in the streets, writing new protest songs, telling stories of resistance. There are many battlefields and most of them go unnoticed as such, never making the front-page

photograph or the television morning news. One aspect of genius in the Oaxaca movement is the unlimited opening of spaces of resistance on equal footing—all are members of the APPO, rock throwers, marchers, coffee brewers, graffiti artists, and songwriters alike.

#### **Militarization in Chiapas**

The facedown between impunity and resistance in Oaxaca is not isolated. While troubled President Felipe Calderon—still haunted by the surrealist vote-count of July 2006—has not so much as mentioned the persistent conflict in Chiapas, his administration has set in motion a new phase of counterinsurgency against Zapatista rebel communities designed to strip the Zapatistas of their land and thus uproot and destroy their autonomous municipalities.

An ongoing series of new reports by the Chiapas-based organization Center for Political Analysis and Socio-Economic Research (CAPISE) document recent changes in military deployment, paramilitary activity, and highway projects that combine to form a counterinsurgency strategy to displace Zapatista communities: “Now taking the water from the fish means taking land and territory from Zapatista communities,” said Sergio Lascano, director of *Rebeldía* magazine, at a CAPISE presentation in Mexico City.

Between 2005 and 2006, the Mexican army withdrew 16 military bases from indigenous regions in Chiapas, leaving a total of 79 bases in the state, including 56 permanent bases in Zapatista territory. The withdrawals would seem to indicate a de-escalation in the militarization of Zapatista and other indigenous regions, said Ernesto Ledesma, one of the directors of CAPISE and co-author of the report *The Face of War*. Instead, the opposite is taking place. Now the army is reinforcing the remaining military bases with Special Forces, including airborne elite troops and special elite units from Mexico City without jurisdiction to operate in Chiapas.



### **THE MEXICAN ARMY, IS TRYING TO FRACTURE THE ENTIRE PROJECT OF AUTONOMY AND THE GOOD GOVERNMENT COUNCILS.”**

These bases, now equipped with Special Forces, completely surround all the Zapatista Caracoles, the communities that house the various autonomous Good Government Councils, as well as other Zapatista communities where paramilitary groups threaten to dispossess the Zapatistas from their land. Paramilitaries that masquerade as indigenous rights groups like the Organization for the Defense of Indigenous and Farmers Rights (OPD-DIC) continue, with the cooperation of the army, to encroach upon and threaten Zapatista communities. “The Mexican Armed Forces act as a guarantee for the various groups that want to displace Zapatista communities,” said Ledesma of CAPISE.

The Zapatista community 24 De Diciembre is an example of the process being used to displace Zapatista communities throughout rebel territory. The community was founded in 1994 on 525 hectares of land reclaimed by the Zapatista Army of National Liberation (EZLN) and distributed to landless indigenous families who had supported the Zapatistas. In February 1995, then President Ernesto Zedillo (now a professor at Yale) broke the ceasefire and ordered the Mexican army into Zapatista territory to capture the EZLN’s commanders and sub-commanders. The families in 24 De Diciembre fled the army’s persecution and lived as refugees for 12 years in other Zapatista communities before returning to their



land on 24 December 2006. During their absence, no one inhabited or worked the land.

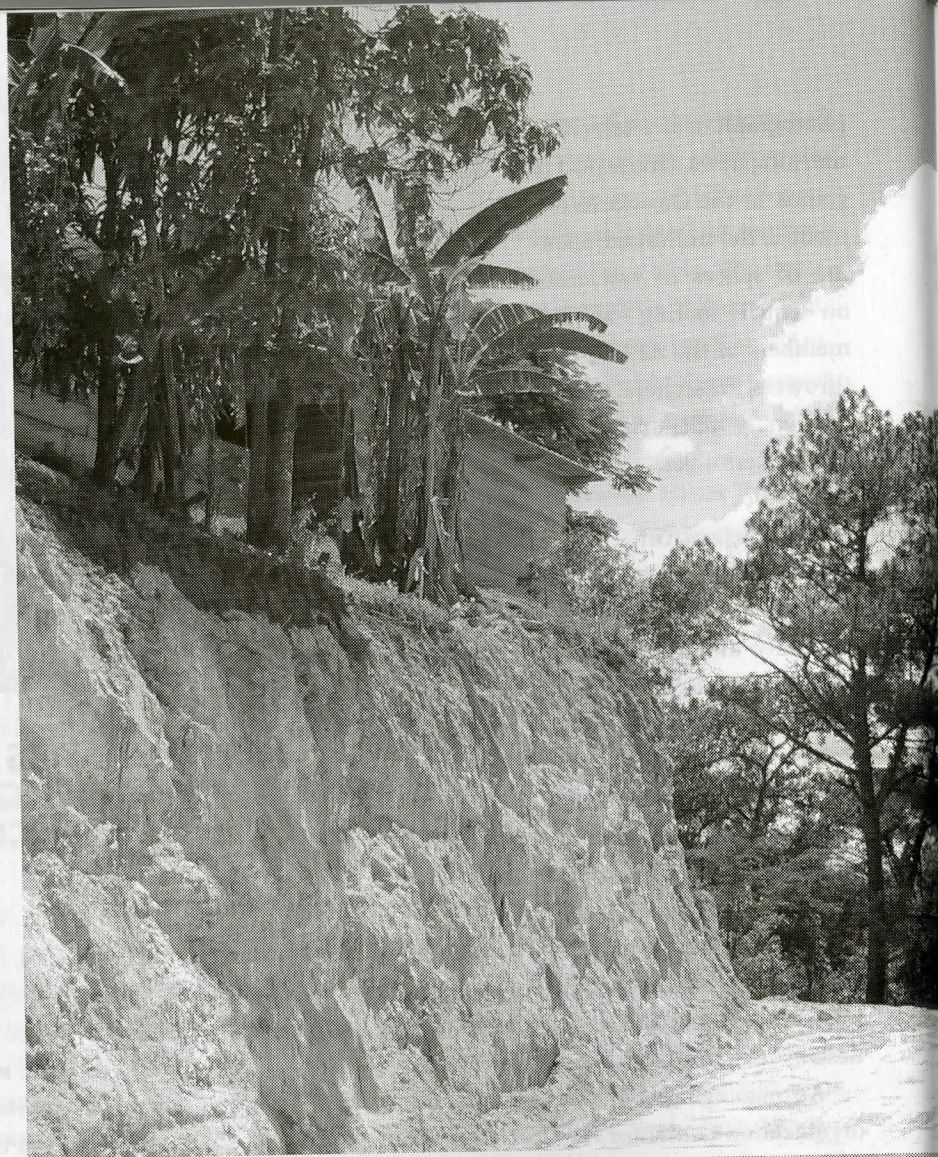
### Magical legalism

On July 17, over 50 members of the PRI-affiliated Union of Ejidos of the Selva, which sells coffee to the Mexican café chain, Café de la Selva, marched through the community wielding machetes and threatening the residents. The PRI members built a camp on the edge of the village, blocking the path the families use to walk to their fields. They have since built small one-room houses with wood stolen from the community right in the middle of the path. They go daily to the military base located only a few hundred yards from 24 De Diciembre to receive basic supplies and give them reports on the Zapatista community. They play soccer with the soldiers.

The Union of Ejidos, like the OPD-DIC and other PRI-affiliated paramilitary groups, has used magical legalism to create claim to the Zapatista lands. They create new *ejidos*—communal land holdings authorized by the state government that include Zapatista territories—which they then use to declare the Zapatistas land invaders.

Most of the Zapatista land was actually stolen from the indigenous by land barons like General Absalón Castellanos. Castellanos, a former army general and governor of Chiapas, was taken prisoner by the EZLN in 1994 and released on condition of surrendering land to the landless indigenous rebels, many of whom lived and worked as slaves for Castellanos before the Zapatista uprising. The government paid Castellanos for his reclaimed lands, but Castellanos then issued separate land grants to the state government.

These land grants are now used to authorize the new *ejidos* offered to PRI groups that have never lived or worked the land. "They told us to stop working the land, to leave voluntarily in order to avoid the spilling of blood," one member of 24 De Diciembre told me during



**ALWAYS, ALWAYS IT IS ABOUT THEIR NEEDS AND IN THE BEST INTEREST OF THEIR PEOPLE WHO ARE NOW OCCUPYING STOLEN LANDS**

an interview in July.

The Zapatistas are on alert, rotating support groups from different communities near La Realidad to accompany 24 De Diciembre, though the community continues to be surrounded by both soldiers and paramilitaries. Ledesma pointed out that the counterinsurgency actions in Chiapas involve full governmental support through both administrative and military institutions. The Secretary of Agrarian Affairs; the National Defense Secretary (the army); police forces on municipal, state, and federal levels; the Transportation Secretary; and Congress are all participating in overlapping counterinsurgency activities in Zapatista territory.

### Threatening alternatives

As a further example Ledesma showed that the Mexican Congress is quietly building a new "super-highway" through rebel territory to connect military bases and the Montes Azules bio-reserve (where police violently evicted 39 tzeltal indigenous people from their village on August 18) to other national highways. The highway is cutting through mountains, ostensibly to minimize curves for large trucks, and in some cases cutting directly through communities.

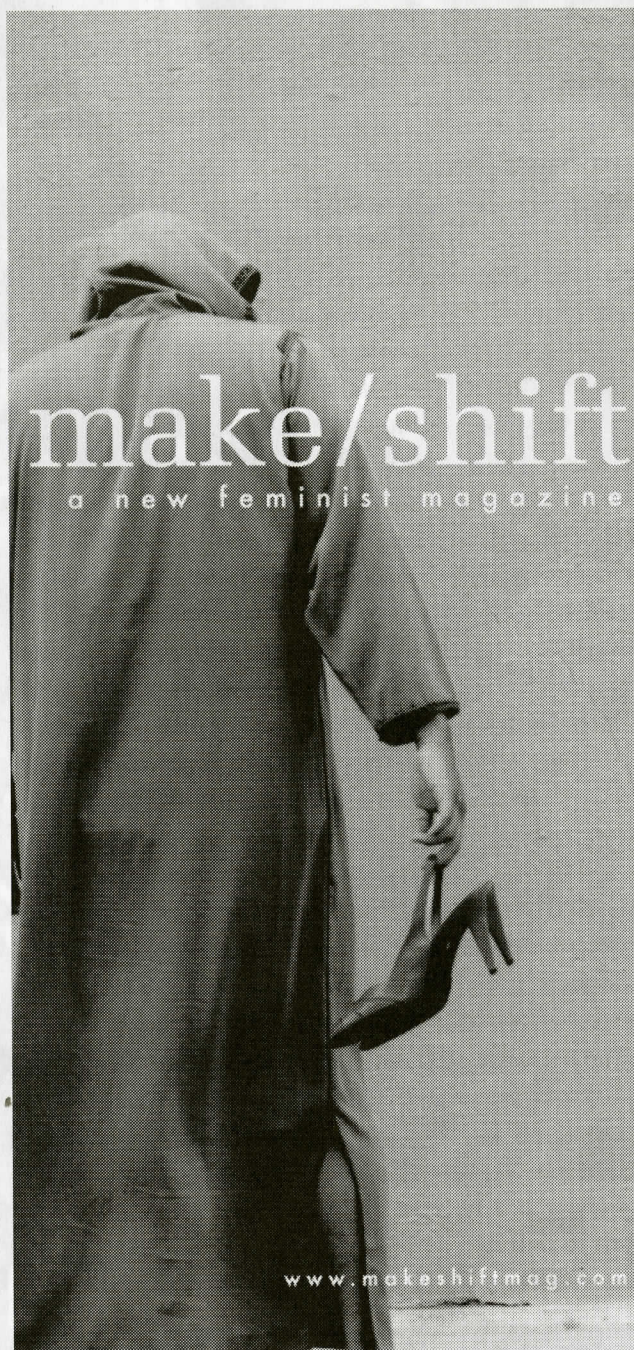
The EZLN created the Good Government Councils to advance indigenous autonomy in rebel territory after the Zedillo administration (1994-2000) refused to implement the San Andres Accords—signed by the administration—and the Fox administration (2000-2006) gutted the indigenous rights law drawn from the San Andres Accords, striking the autonomy provisions and instead further subjecting indigenous peoples to federal control.

"The Good Government Councils constitute the threat of an alternative," said Ledesma, "now even local indigenous PRI members go to [the Zapatista Good Government Council of] La Garrucha to resolve their land and other conflicts in their own languages, according to their customs, and where they find an honest response to their conflicts. The Mexican army, with its elite Special Forces, is trying to fracture the entire project of autonomy and the functions of the Good Government Councils."

It has become somewhat fashionable to criticize the horrors of the PRI regime, and that fashion is made possible by the myth of the democratic transition, the myth that everything changed with the PAN's victory in the 2000 elections. But in 2007, the same pattern prevails: where social movements dare to defend dignity, work, and land, the state unleashes both old and new tactics of repression.

*John Gibling is a human rights media fellow with Global Exchange reporting on Mexican social movements for Left Turn, In These Times, Flashpoints on KPFA, and other alternative media.*

*For more information about resistance in Oaxaca and Chiapas, see: the APPO website at <http://www.asamblea-populardeoxaca.com>; a new documentary on the Oaxaca movement at <http://www.corrugate.org>; the EZLN website at <http://enlacezapatista.ezln.org.mx/>; and the CAPISE website at <http://www.capise.org.mx/>.*



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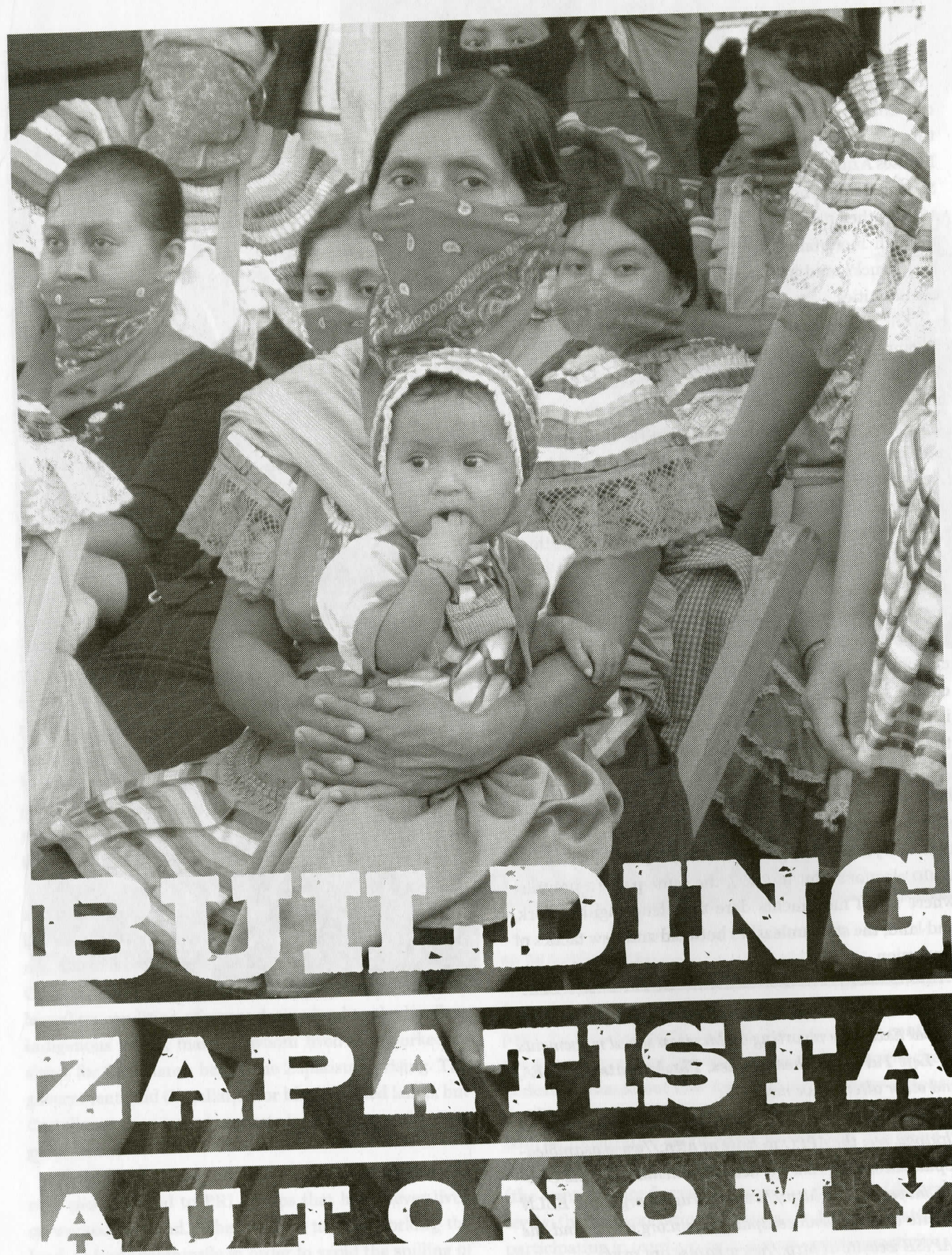


Photo: Jennifer Whitney

# BUILDING ZAPATISTA AUTONOMY

From Below and to the Left

*Oventik, July 21, 2007*—Today I woke up in autonomous rebel territory, to a blast of cheerful cumbia. Unbelievably, I grabbed my flashlight and checked my watch: 5:30 am. Ah, yes. As a guest of an army of farmers, you always get up soon after they do, which is to say, before dawn.

BY JENNIFER WHITNEY

**B**ut to dance music? I peeked out from the tent. The village was enshrouded in pink fog. The sun hung just below the mountainous horizon, with a thick bank of lavender clouds tumbling towards me. A Tzotzil man with a bandanna covering his face appeared from behind another tent; he wore an elaborately embroidered magenta and purple flowered tunic. Two rambunctious youngsters sporting balaclavas clambered up the path behind him. Riotous birdsong exploded from the saplings nearby, where clothing hung, rather optimistically, to dry after last night's downpour.

Mornings are my favorite times in Zapatista territory, with masked indigenous families squatting around campfires heating up tortillas and beans, the mist rendering everything magical, and children poking curiously at high-tech tents and backpacks. Also, the lines are shorter at the coffee stands, so I scrambled to get up and prepare for the long meetings ahead.

I came to Chiapas, México to attend the Second Encuentro of the Zapatista People With the People of the World, along with about 3,000 others. The first encuentro was in December; this summer's was to continue the work of the first. For ten days, in three of the five caracoles (socio-political centers), members of the civilian branch of the organization explained structural details of their autonomous government and social services.

The second encuentro began the previous night, with a presentation by members of Vía Campesina, a global network with branches in over 70 countries, who were invited as special guests of the Zapatistas. Dong Uk Min from the Campesino League of Korea spoke first, of the farmers' new strategies to unite their struggles with those of the urban unions and unemployed. Organizers from Brazil, Madagascar, and the United States followed, with Subcomandante Insurgente Marcos, under the strobe

lights of hundreds of camera flashes, wrapping things up. And then it was over, and people streamed down from the building, enthusiasm burning in everyone's eyes, glittering in the street-lights. This thing had finally begun, and what a beginning!

From there, we spent two days in Oventik before an epic fourteen-hour journey to Morelia, where we spent

five days listening to presentations for up to ten hours a day from the two caracoles not included in the tour, as well as hearing more from Vía Campesina. Then we continued on into the Lacandon Jungle to the caracol at La Realidad.

The presentations took the same form—members of different commissions and governing bodies of each caracol spoke for up to an hour, and then answered written questions from the audience for 15 minutes. Every night there was a cultural event, followed by a dance party, because “dancing and culture are a part of our autonomy too.” Even at 5:30 am.

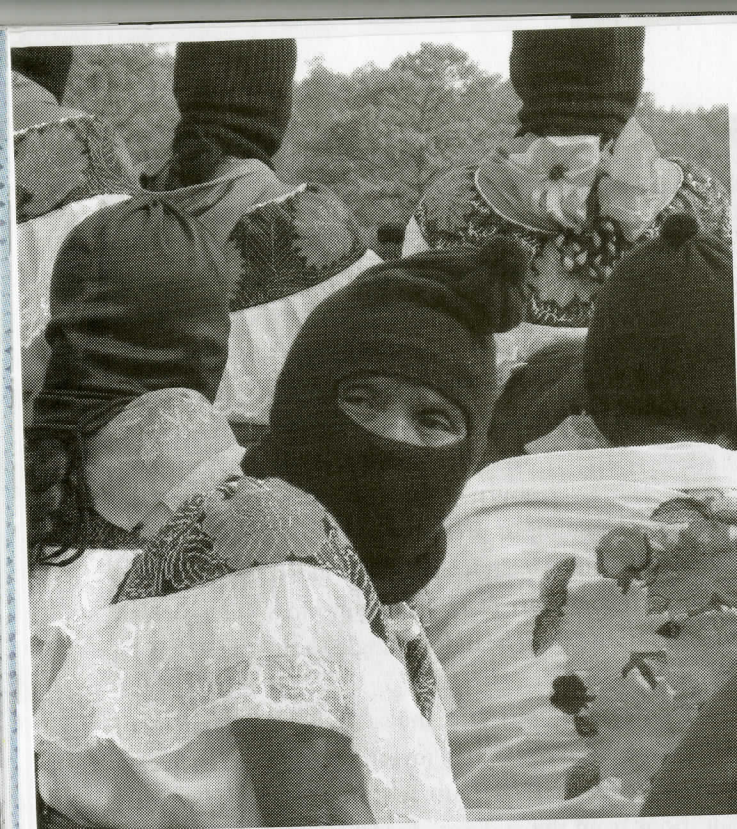
## Everyday autonomy

The autonomy being lived, constructed, and dreamt by the Zapatistas differs greatly from the way it is commonly understood in the US. What we often think of as “autonomy” might more accurately be defined as individual freedom. But autonomy is nothing without connections, without collectivity. To build a true autonomy, our freedom cannot be limited to the realm of the personal. We must bring it into the realm of that which can benefit the community, not just for our survival this week, but for the survival of our grandchildren, and that of those we've never met, but whose dignity and humanity we also must consider.

This is the kind of autonomy the Zapatistas are building—new kinds of relationships, rebellious spaces of freedom to dream, and through which to recognize and respect the autonomy of others. But it isn't only through theory that the Zapatistas are creating “a world in which many worlds can fit.” It also is through solid, concrete initiatives—infrastructure from the ground up—systems of health care, education, justice, trade, commerce, and transportation.

The health centers of each of the three caracoles vary widely in their capabilities and resources. All have at least one vehicle devoted to the transport of patients—a few





have decently equipped ambulances. Oventik, which is the most advanced, has an emergency room, where they sometimes perform minor surgery, as well as ophthalmological, gynecological, and dental clinics. Morelia's clinic is far more modest. All of the autonomous health centers feed patients into the national health service, and the Zapatistas have publicly expressed their support for the workers in the government's public health system, which, like most, is under threat of dissolution and privatization.

A member of Oventik's Good Government Council summed up the autonomous approach to education best: "We don't separate manual work from intellectual work because we need both to be truly human. When we talk of culture, we're talking of our history. The dances, music, how we cultivate crops and protect our mother earth, how we smile, organize, protest, how we struggle—is all culture. How we play is culture. This is the Other Education. It's a means of transforming this unjust society."

A justice system respecting the dignity of those who commit crimes is hard to conceive of, and yet the Honor and Justice Commissions do just that. The name alone offers a clear distinction from what we call "criminal" justice. "We do not charge fines because we are all poor, and we don't wish to profit off the mistakes of our community," explained one compañero from La Garrucha. The most common sentence is collective work, so that serving a sentence is quite literal—it serves the community, without isolating or expelling the individual. Prisons exist,

but are used only in cases of emergencies, and for short terms.

### New world

The 12-hour journey back from the dreams of Reality into the city was arduous, with 21 of us taking shifts standing up in the back of the open cattle truck, (no room to all sit at once) under the blazing tropical sun. But as we rattled along, I felt some of my disjointed swirling thoughts over the last 10 days sliding into place, and provoking many questions about how to bring this Reality, this dream, back into my work at home.

Many have said that zapatismo is a lovely philosophy that wouldn't last a second outside its incredibly specific context—rural, indigenous, poor, armed, mountainous, geographically inaccessible; that its real purpose for the over-developed global North is through the inspiration of its poetry and romance; but, that it can't be applied there. Perhaps we've been wrong all this time—we long-term Zapatista supporters, we who have derived much of our political language and ideology from these southeastern Mexican lands. Maybe we just can't open our minds wide enough to imagine real social change—the development of a new world—in our cities, in our lifetimes.

But how can we ever hope to build a new world of autonomy, of dignity, if we cannot dream it? What if it isn't only through inspiration and hope and the power of a good example that we in the North can benefit from zapatismo?

In Oventik, a member of the Good Government Council remarked that building autonomy is a walk towards utopia. "Walking, we ask questions; walking, we are learning; walking, we are teaching." A week later, from Reality, the Third Encuentro was announced. It will be a women's encuentro, to take place during the 14th anniversary of their uprising. And so, with this generous invitation to return to their rebellious lands, this walking together towards utopia, towards autonomy, will continue.

*Jennifer Whitney lives in New Orleans, where she is co-founder and director of the Latino Health Outreach Project. She's also a co-author/editor of **We Are Everywhere: the irresistible rise of global anticapitalism**, and is working on getting a Spanish translation published within the next year. She is excited to reignite the zapatismo in her heart, and to integrate it more deeply into all of her work. More of her writings can be found on [www.leftturn.org](http://www.leftturn.org).*

Photo: Jennifer Whitney

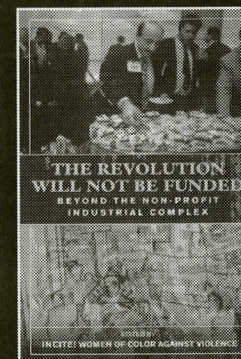
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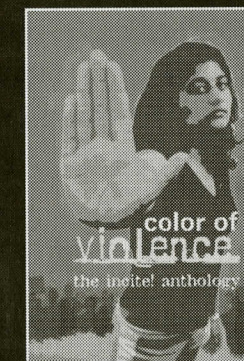


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# A NEW GANG in the Neighborhood



Illustration: Rusty Zimmerman

THE COLLUSIONS OF NEOLIBERALISM AND COLONIALISM IN AFRICA

BY VALENTINE EBEN

The US is following the leadership of hundreds of years of European colonialism in Africa, using the cover of a worldwide "war on terror" as a smokescreen to assert military dominance in the region, while using sophisticated tools like the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank to achieve economic dominance. For US activists, it is important to understand the role of European colonialism in Africa as the US brings its own model to the continent. Below, Valentine Eben brings us a short summary of recent European—and especially French—colonialism in Africa.

## Rwandan genocide

**T**he year is 1994. During a period of 90 days from April to July, the French-supported Hutu Militia went on a killing spree with guns and machetes. By the time it was over, 77 percent of the Tutsi population of Rwanda had been slaughtered by the Hutu militia. Thousands of Hutus who rejected the hateful propaganda from the Hutu Militia were also killed, along with their families.

Contrary to media attempts to blame only the Rwandans, France played a major role in planning and executing the genocide. One of the many French special operations set up to do the job was called "Operation

Insecticide," led by the French gendarmerie officer Paul Barril. With French help, the regime exacerbated tribal differences to full-scale tribal conflict. France provided the funds for the building of the Radio *Mille Collines*—the clearinghouse for the Hutu hate propaganda and for coordination of the genocide. Operation Insecticide provided training for the genocidal militia and coordinated the supply of weapons from abroad. In a 1999 report *Leave None to Tell the Story: Genocide in Rwanda*, Human Rights Watch reported two occasions when French planes re-supplied ammunition to the genocidal regime through a French controlled airport in Goma in neighboring Democratic Republic of Congo.

This arms trade happened right in the middle of the genocide, when the country was under a UN arms embargo. Questioned on this issue, the French consular officer in Goma explained that these weapons had been paid for before the arms embargo.

As public outrage at international inaction increased, the French asked the UN to approve a French Humanitarian operation called "Operation Turquoise." The French used Operation Turquoise to bring heavy weapons into Rwanda to support Operation Insecticide, leading to the massacre in Bisesero. French involvement in the genocide is slowly being unearthed by the grassroots-orga-



## Cameroon for Sale!

**N**eoliberal "reforms," exported to Africa from the US and Europe, have accelerated poverty and helped to ensure domination by the global north. Kangsen Feka Wakai gives one example of the way these policies have worked on the ground.

The government of Cameroon recently embarked on



nized Citizens Commission of Enquiry (CEC) in France.

The media persistently misreported the genocide as a civil war between two ethnic groups. Francois Mitterrand, then president of France, is said to have told one of his staff that a genocide in Africa is nothing serious to worry about, with no political repercussions. Rwanda has no large reserves of mineral deposits. For the French, this colonial exercise seems to have been for the purpose of asserting its power in the region, rather than for profit.

### Congo-Brazzaville

The Congolese pro-democracy uprising of the 1990s swept the French-controlled dictator Denis Sassou Nguesso (president since 1979) out of power. In 1997, on the eve of the second presidential election since the uprising, the Congolese woke to an ambush by a sophisticatedly-armed French gang. The gang was composed of foreign mercenaries recruited by the French enforcer Paul Barril, members of the former genocidal militia from Rwanda, French-trained former soldiers of the Zairian ex-dictator Mobutu, and a French-funded local militia known as "The Cobras."

The democratically elected government was overrun, and the dictator Denis Sassou Nguesso put back in charge. The gang then started indiscriminate assaults on villages and towns believed to have supported president Pascal Lissouba during the days of the first elections. This war of extermination cost more than 10,000 Congolese their lives.

Since seizing power, Sassou has held the country in an undeclared state of emergency. The IMF privatization initiatives so seriously contested by labor unions have expanded. For example, big giants like Hydro-Congo (the

state company responsible for the sale and distribution of petroleum products) have been taken over by the companies Shell and Total. The Sassou regime is eager to satisfy its corporate friends at any cost to the public.

With oil as the driving force of the US-led neoliberal agenda, even a thug like Sassou becomes a US friend. Sassou's control of the oil reserves of Africa's fifth-largest oil producing country makes him a regular guest to the White House. Murphy Oil and Chevron are the two US companies running small oil operations in Congo. But with much of the fields offshore about to be brought online, it is clear that US involvement is going to increase—offshore drilling is a US specialty. Sassou told reporters after his last meeting with Bush at the White House about US oil companies "delight" at their increasing involvement in Africa. Despite all his crimes, the US press talked about Sassou mostly in the context of efforts to bringing peace to Darfur.

### Exploitation overdrive

Since the fall of the Soviet Union, neocolonialists (led by France) and neoliberalists (led by the US and the European Union) have gone into overdrive, seizing territories and natural resources throughout Africa. Sometimes the seizure is so brazen it jars the minds of observers. The corporate media, when not ignoring conflicts in Africa, frame them as tribal conflicts, failed states, and the "war on terror," thereby reinforcing inaccuracies and racist stereotypes.

In the case of Cameroon, neocolonialism and neoliberalism reached a sinister agreement to share the profits of joint exploitation. The year is 1950; all across Cameroon the Union of Cameroon Peoples (UPC) is leading



## THE CORPORATE MEDIA, WHEN NOT IGNORING CONFLICTS IN AFRICA, TURN THEIR COVERAGE TOWARDS REINFORCING RACIST STEREOTYPES

uprisings for independence. With virtually no weapons, the population is achieving spectacular victories against the French. UPC leaders in Cameroon and in Belgium

control of the currency, exploitation of oil and mineral resources, and indiscriminate cutting of trees for lumber.

are assassinated, but the resistance continues.

With the global anti-colonial movement on the march, the French change tactics and begin to build their neo-colonial regimes. On January 1, 1960, the French declare Cameroon's independence with a French collaborator, Amadou Ahidjo, as president. The same day the French sign a military pact with Ahidjo and made Colonel Noiret and Captain Leroy the unofficial assistants to the president. Their job description: "military assistance."

The French then deploy a special crack force to subdue the population with a tank squadron, helicopters, and T26 bombers. In the west of the country where the rebellion is believed to be very popular, 56 villages are razed to the ground with napalm bombs, and 116 classrooms, 3 hospitals, 46 dispensaries, 12 agricultural stations, and 40 bridges are destroyed between February and March 1960. By 1965, when the population is finally pacified, the numbers of deaths range between 400,000 and a million people.

The French still control Cameroon. Their control is asserted through no-bid contacts for most major state supplies,

a transnational campaign tout-ing itself in western eco-politico circles as the Gulf of Guinea's economic and political success story. Its recent "attainment of the HIPC (Heavily Indebted Poor Countries) completion point," exhaustively promoted by the government in investor circles, has been the basis for this expensive

campaign.

The HIPC Completion Point is a set of economic reforms imposed by the western donor institutions on heavily indebted and poor countries, mostly African, to revamp their economies as a prerequisite for debt relief and debt cancellation. "The IMF did not err in classifying Cameroon

among the 35 countries where investments are best protected," said Amadou Ali, Vice Prime Minister and Minister of Justice, a presidential appointee.

In fact, Cameroon now tags itself as an oasis of political stability in an oft-troubled region and continent. In more succinct terms, Cameroon is seeking for-

foreign investment and is paying big money to do so.

This year, the government bought multiple pages of advertisement space in the New York Times Magazine and The Africa Report to officially open the bid for investors in the auctioning of the country's resources to foreign investors. "We are blessed

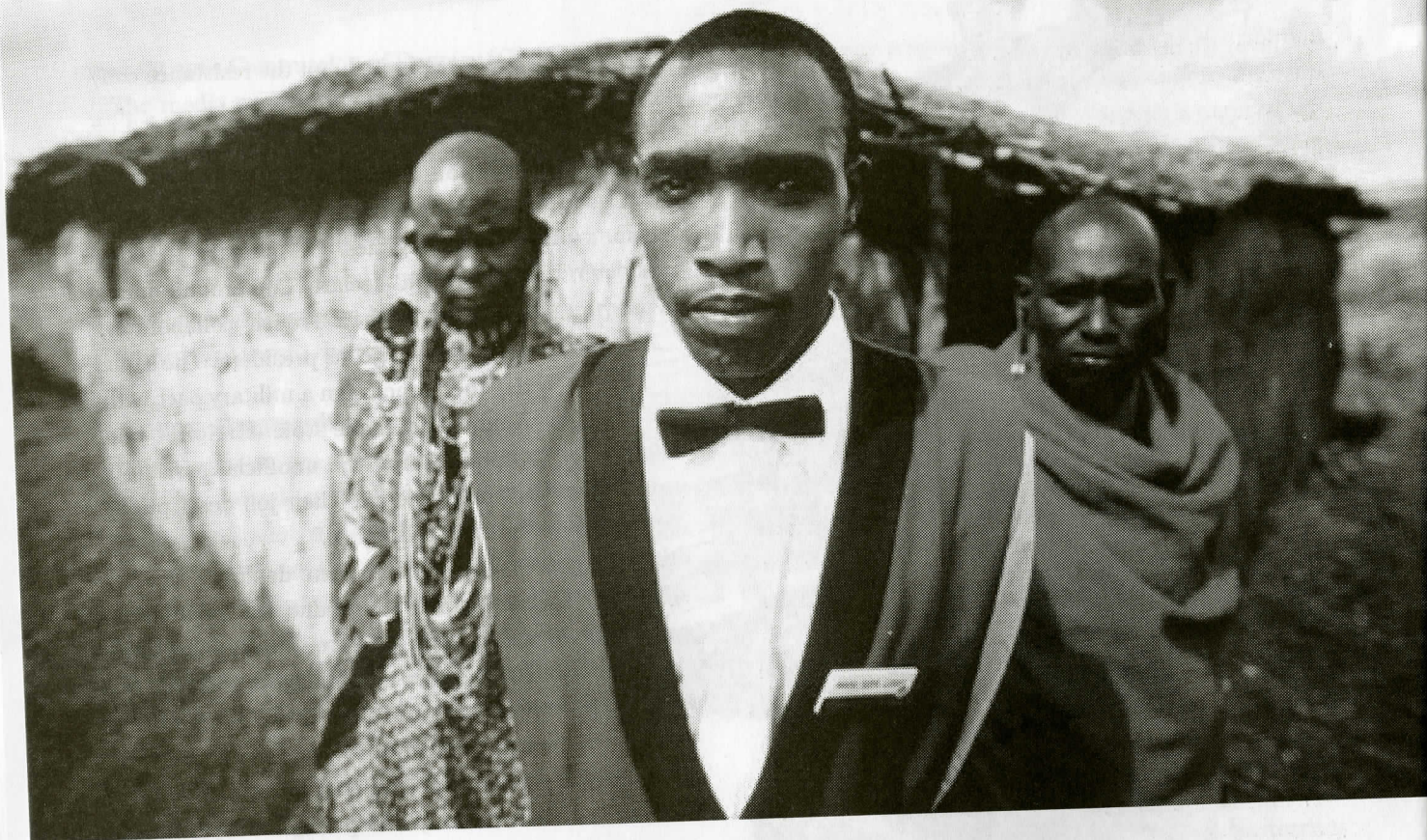
with abundant and diverse natural resources and qualified human resources. There are numerous investment opportunities for the U.S. private sector in Cameroon... my country has enjoyed peace and stability, which are prerequisites for investment. Cameroon is today a modern democracy where fundamental freedoms

and free enterprise are guaranteed," said Paul Biya, Cameroon's head of state since 1982, in the New York Times Magazine advertisement supplement.

### Highest bidder

Cameroon's decision to auction its resources to the highest bidder is not an anomaly for this neocolonial experiment.





Uninterested in the roots of Cameroon's malaise, the IMF and World Bank prescribed privatization of public companies. Efficiency, growth, better services, and modernization are the buzz words.

In 2005, the US company AES Corporation took over the national electricity supply company SONEL. Since then, they have fired 500 of the 4000 employees; the power supply has become *more* unreliable, and electricity bills have gone up 10 percent. For all the excuses AES is giving for their Cameroon adventure, a look at the AES adventure in the Republic of Georgia from 1999 to 2003

clearly makes the Cameroon case a *deja vu*.

In the meantime, a European company, Suez, has taken over the Cameroon national water supply corporation SNEC. As if using an identical script, the results of the water privatization have had the same impact. They have caused an increase in the cost of water, a drop in the quality of services, and the firing of workers. For the French-imposed puppet regime, all that matters is new friends that can support them in maintaining control over the people of Cameroon.

Lurking over this is the huge \$4.2 billion World Bank-

negotiated Chad-Cameroon pipeline, with Exxon at the helm. As the biggest infrastructure project in Africa, it is also the largest US investment in the continent. Exxon will reap a gigantic \$6 billion from the pipeline.

### Neocolonial defeat

For 77 days, from December 16, 2001, to March 3, 2002, Africans followed developments in Madagascar with anxiety. After a long struggle came the December 16, 2001 presidential election. The French were prepared. They came with weapons and the most modern terror gear, and they trained a back-up militia who roamed the country intimidating people.

But Madagascans were not willing to have one more day of a puppet regime, so they came out in full force to vote for the opposition candidate Marc Ravalomanana. Aware of the massive turnout and deep rooted anger, the old President and French lackey Didier Rasiraka decided to split their coup in two stages. That is, give Ravalomanana 46 percent and Rasiraka 41 percent of the votes, to force a second round of voting.

Then, in the next round, Rasiraka could be declared the winner with a slight margin over Ravalomanana. The regime thought no one would protest, especially since the possibility of an election had been unimaginable only a few years before. They were in for a rude surprise.

As soon as the Interior Ministry announced the 46 percent to 41 percent victory and the date for the second round of voting, Ravalomanana supporters poured into the streets to protest the rigging. Within days the country was brought to a complete standstill.

The regime declared a state of emergency and with their militia, raised oppression a notch higher, killing and injuring dozens. For the Madagascans, the train had

left the station.

On February 24, the *New York Times* reported that the United Nations, the US, the Organization of African Unity, and France all condemned Ravalomanana for declaring himself the winner and urged him to resume talks with Rasiraka. The corporate press in the US and Europe reported that the strike had seriously increased hardship, and destroyed a booming economy. Even US companies were supposedly losing money from the clothing business—all the while making every effort to describe the assault on Madagascans as a strictly internal matter.

Ravalomanana's new government was installed as Rasiraka's cabinet members fled. Rasiraka's militia bombed bridges and blocked access into the capitol to starve it of fuel, food and other goods. Ravalomanana and his supporters declared the end of the strike. Madagascans won.

## DESPITE THE MISERY, THE TRUTH IS THAT AFRICANS ARE RESISTING

### Corporate attack

These examples demonstrate the role of French neocolonialism and US neoliberalism in just four countries. French neocolonial interests run rampant through twenty African countries; in Zaire and Angola they work in collaboration with the US. This means that half of the land mass of Africa, more than two-thirds of its population, and more than two-thirds of the natural resources of the continent are under the control of the French neocolonial gang (La FrancAfrique).

Despite the misery, the truth is that Africans are re-

or the formulae chosen, nothing can change this situation of our country, which is an underdeveloped country, a country lacking sufficient capital, a country lacking sufficient technicians," posed president Ahidjo barely a decade after independence to justify the state's economic policies.

Even though Cameroon is en-

dowed with modest oil and natural gas reserves, agriculture still accounts for about 70 percent of the country's economic output. And the consequence of this dependence has triggered dire ecological, sociopolitical and cultural consequences for the indigenous in the areas of exploitation, and the country as a whole.

According to Tatah Mentan, Associate Professor of politics and political science at the University of Yaounde, Cameroon's economic problems began in 1979 at the end of the cocoa and coffee boom. "In the same year, the national budget changed from a balance to a 3 percent deficit and domestic credit expansion was

Photo: Andrew Stern



sisting and have won some great victories: Algeria and South Africa are two important examples, but pro-democracy uprisings have defeated puppet regimes in Mali, Senegal, Madagascar, Benin and even Congo-Brazzaville (for a while). In other countries the populace has succeeded in imposing multi-party politics, opening new fronts for resistance.

But the new US economic assault, led by US corporations, is having a devastating effect on the local struggles. And there is every indication that things will get worse if there is not a coordinated and determined engagement by both US and African activists.

Take the case of Cameroon. In addition to Exxon's Chad-Cameroon pipeline, the second-largest US investment in Africa is a methanol plant in Equatorial Guinea, just a few miles off the south coast of Cameroon. The country is becoming the US coordination center in the Gulf of Guinea. Last year the US completed the building of one of its largest embassies in the world in Cameroon.

Of course, Exxon has a very disturbing record in its activities in Nigeria, Indonesia and other places. Reports on the Chad-Cameroon pipeline show that environmental standards were repeatedly violated in the planning and construction of this pipeline, which has destroyed some of the world's last pristine forests. A mere three years into operation, they had their first oil spill in January, 2007. Exxon's contract with Cameroon relieved Exxon of all liabilities in the case of a major oil disaster.

AES Corporation, kicked out of communities in California and Maine for violation of environmental regulations, today controls Cameroon's electricity and thousands of other energy resources around the world.

reduced, due to overdependence on cash crops whose prices were determined by international buyers," wrote Mentan.

Mentan attributed this disaster to Cameroon's fixed exchange rate and its membership in the CFA Franc zone, imposed by France on its former African colonies, with the exception of

Guinea-Conakry, in the form of cooperation agreements that have kept these former colonies in France's economic and political grip. After almost half a century of independence, Cameroon seems to be reassessing its economic ties with its colonial master and in the process seeking new masters. According to the

government, Cameroon is bent on significantly improving the business climate and improving protection for life and property. "These are primordial for attracting more direct foreign investment in general, and Americans in particular, to Cameroon," said Prime Minister Ephraim Inoni, a presidential appointee.

### The opposition

US corporations, with the support of Washington politicians, are using the IMF and World Bank to bring the resources of communities across Africa under their control, funding oppressive regimes in the process. They are also building new debts for future generations by approving more IMF and World Bank loans tied to these

transactions for corrupt dictators. The despotic regimes also get diplomatic legitimacy in the process. The most powerful press in the world—the US media—is working on the public relations front.

If Africans manage to elect a democratic government that tries to renegotiate IMF privatization or to cancel monopoly contracts, then neocolonialists and US corpo-

The re-branding of Cameroon is one of the many steps the administration has taken to attract the Americans. Even Paul Biya, its president since 1982 is now being portrayed as a benevolent democrat whose obsession for peace and stability has steered this potential hotspot into a beacon of peace. However, this por-

trayal of Cameroon seems confined only within the hollow walls of power. Scholars, journalists, commentators and dissidents alike think otherwise.

Essentially, this altering of the reality of Cameroon for investors is one of many initiatives the government, like so many African governments before it, has taken

to auction the destiny of its people to multinational corporations and their local cohorts.

—Kangsen Feka Wakai

Kangsen Feka Wakai is a writer from Cameroon residing in Houston, Texas. His first collection of poetry *Asphalt Effect* is available on [www.lulu.com](http://www.lulu.com).



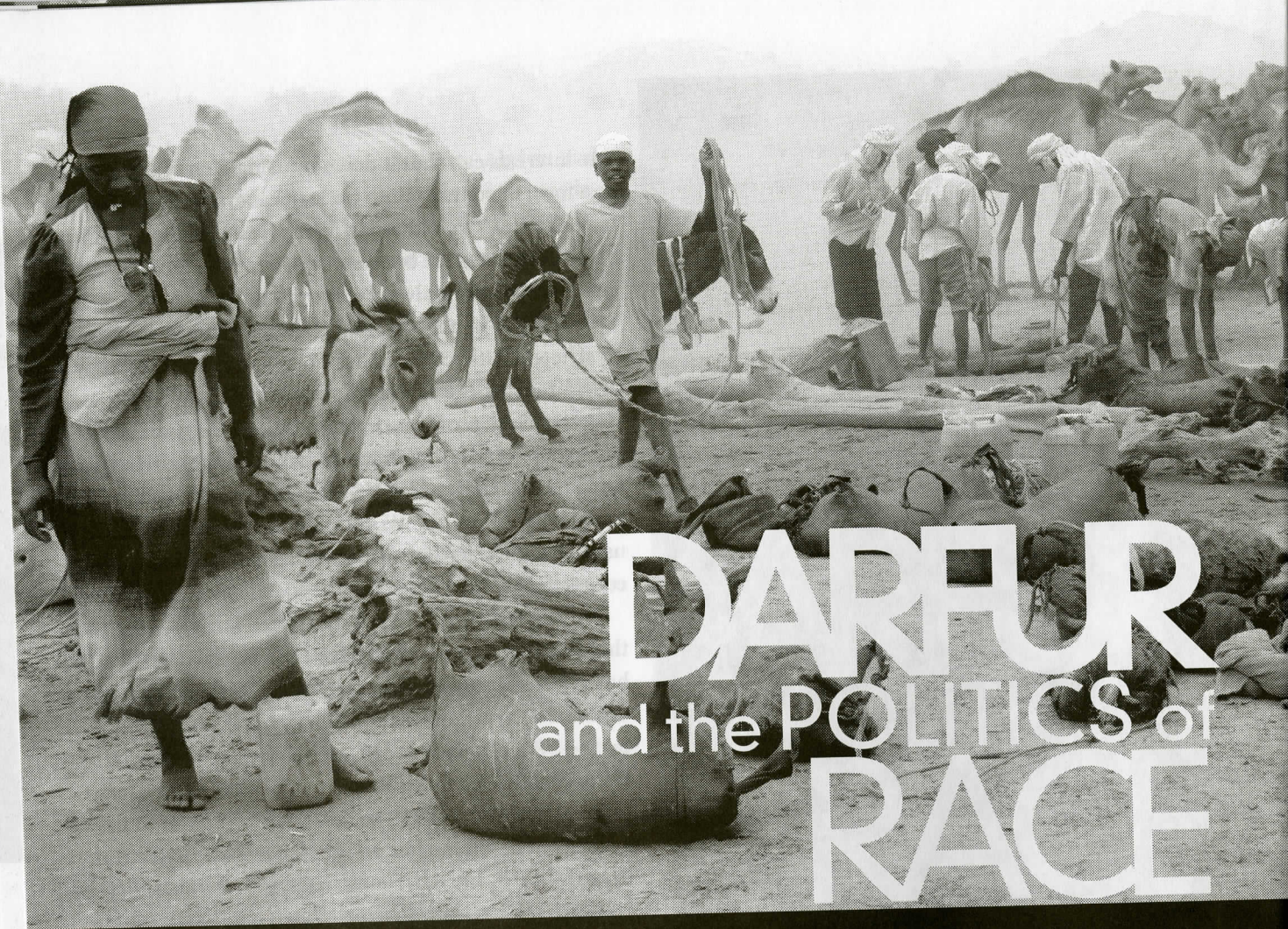
rate interests can shut it down by using debt repayments as a form of control. With no loans and no way to invest in social services and repay debts, it is a matter of time before social unrest breaks out. Under the rules of this game, the Africans always come out the losers.

The fight is not lost, and African activists continue to struggle. US activists have done an important job by delegitimizing the World Bank and IMF as well as putting corporate profiteers in the spotlight. Despite the billions these corporate criminals spend on public relations and image management, US activists are working hard to keep dollars from the World Bank and IMF from being used in these transactions between corrupt dictators and corporations.

To succeed on both fronts in the struggle against these corporations, activists from the US and Africa will have to seriously engage one another. They will have to do some serious information-sharing and work to counter the US media spin in order to take apart the discourse being constructed to legitimize the African adventures of these companies. For US activists, it's important to have a clear public discussion on the issues. Now is the time to begin.

Valentine Eben is an alternative media activist from Amabzon (annexed to French Cameroon in 1961) and Editor of *The IMC a New Model*. He presently coordinates a campaign for justice for students murdered by French Cameroon forces at peaceful protest. For more information, see [www.standingwiththestudents.org](http://www.standingwiththestudents.org).





# DARFUR and the POLITICS of RACE

understanding the save darfur coalition

BY HISHAAM D. AIDI

The save Darfur campaigns are better understood by looking at the post-September 11th US political climate. Unlike other “hot spots” across Africa, the Darfur tragedy reverberates deeply in the US because it is represented as a racial conflict between “Arabs” and “indigenous Africans,” and because the Darfur crisis offers a unique opportunity to unite against the new post-Cold War enemy. While some involved in the campaigns have been seeking genuine ways to support Darfurians—opportunists have racialized the conflict in order to divide Arabs and Africans by playing on historic and manufactured (colonial) divisions in Sudan. Hishaam Aidi looks at the history of race in Sudan and the current misrepresentation of the conflict in Darfur.

Photo: Shane Bauer

**T**he challenge in examining Sudan’s long-running civil war is to understand how, unlike other African civil wars, the conflict came to be “racialized” and not “ethnicized.”

While popular representations of the Sudanese civil war as pitting the “Arab Muslim” north against “African Christian/animist” south may be simplistic, it is equally inaccurate to argue, as do many Arab apologists, that racial distinctions and prejudice were introduced by British colonialists.

Historians have argued that by the sixteenth century, Muslims in the north were claiming Arab ancestry, and the labels one hears today—‘abd or slave for southerners and Fallata for those of Western African origin—derive from the late eighteenth century when the kingdoms of Funj and Fur were raiding the south for slaves and northern Sudanese Muslims “invent[ed] derogatory ethnic and racial categories to refer to non-Muslim groups in the South.”

Centuries before the advent of the British, northern Muslims were claiming a superior Arab identity asserting descent from either the Prophet Muhammad or other distinguished Arabian ancestors, and viewed the peoples of southern Sudan, the Upper Blue Nile and the Nuba mountains as “enslaveable” non-Arabs. These categories, explains one historian, “demarcated and racialized the people of the Sudan. Color in itself became quite irrelevant; many ‘Arab’ Sudanese were and are darker than some Southerners. But descent did and does matter; even conversion to Islam could not fully compensate for the absence of accepted Arab ancestry.”[33]

## (Mis)Representing Sudan

British colonial policy built upon “the existence of these two invented opposing identities.” The British administration carved up the Sudan into an “Arab North” and an “African South,” and divided the peoples into three racial categories—“Arabs,” “Sudanese” for ex-slaves and “Fallata,” and in the 1930s, attempted to develop the south along “indigenous and African lines” through a return to “tribal” law and “indigenous languages.”[34] The idea of an “indigenous south” juxtaposed to an Arab north was thus a British innovation that would have far-reaching political repercussions. In the parts of Africa where colonialists categorized a particular group as a race in-

stead of an ethnicity, that group would be ideologically and “legally constructed” as non-indigenous, and via the “migration hypothesis,” in effect deracinated and depicted as having originated elsewhere.[35]

When Sudan gained independence, the state builders in Khartoum embraced an Arab nationalism based on “a genealogy that stretched into the Islamic Arab past” and

THE BRITISH ADMINISTRATION CARVED UP THE SUDAN INTO AN “ARAB NORTH” AND AN “AFRICAN SOUTH,” AND DIVIDED THE PEOPLES INTO THREE RACIAL CATEGORIES

attempted to impose an Arab identity—and later Islamic law—not only on the north, but also on the southern territories. In consolidating the Sudanese state, the leadership would use a racial language that dated back to the seventeenth century, but they also adopted the racial categories and idea of “indigeneity” introduced by the British. Yet although many in the north self-identify as Arab and claim descent from noble Arabians who supposedly immigrated to Africa, that does not make them non-indigenous.

The “Arab” versus “indigenous African” dichotomy runs through most discussions of the Darfur conflict. Alex de Waal has argued that, “The Arab-African dichotomy is historically and anthropologically bogus. But that doesn’t make the distinction unreal, as long as the perpetrators subscribe to it.” The perpetrators, in this case, the Darfuri Arabs who are attempting to exterminate the “indigenous” people of Darfur, “are ‘Arabs’ in the ancient sense of ‘Bedouin,’ meaning desert nomad.... Darfuriar Arabs, too, are indigenous, black and African. In fact, there are no discernible racial or discernible religious differences between the two: all have lived there for centuries; all are Muslims.”[36]

Ethnic identities and categories have long been fluid in western Sudan, but have recently hardened around the political labels of Arabs and African. In the 1990s, in imitation of the southern Sudan People’s Liberation Army (SPLA) and to gain political traction, leaders of the Darfuri separatist movement embraced the label “African” instead of the alternative “Muslim.” An attempted alliance between Darfuri separatists and the SPLA had failed, but as the SPLA continued to resist the Khartoum regime and “gained a high international standing, [Dar-



furian leaders] too learned to characterize their plight in the simplified terms that had proved so effective in winning foreign sympathy for the south: they were the 'African' victims of an 'Arab' regime." [37]

### Discordant historiographies

The clash between Arab nationalism and African nationalism in Sudan has occurred less violently in a number of North African states. In fact, what has enraged black nationalist opinion in the US is not simply the Sudan war, but the wider Arab world's "conspiracy of silence" about the presence of racialism and slavery in the region, coupled with the arrogance of Arab nationalist and Islamist regimes and movements toward non-Arabs in North and sub-Saharan Africa. Many African and African-American observers note that Arab heads of state will spout a pan-African rhetoric while being deeply contemptuous of Africa. Nasser supported the civil rights movement and spoke passionately of continental solidarity, but also said: "We are in Africa... We will never in any circumstances relinquish our responsibility to support, with all our might, the spread of enlightenment and civilization to the remotest depths of the jungle." [38]

Likewise, Libyan strongman Muammar Qaddafi, another champion of Africa known for his grandiloquent appeals to black America, is the author of *The Green Book*, which holds that blacks have more children than other races because they "are sluggish in a climate that is always hot." Qaddafi has attempted to annex northern Chad, arming groups along the Chadian and Sudanese borders in an effort to build an "Arab belt" across the Sahara. These supremacist attitudes permeate Arab

ism is also an ideological "war of visions." While many sub-Saharan African regimes sought to celebrate their indigenous languages and cultures after independence, many North African regimes that joined the Arab League would embrace their own "migration myth," retroactively tracing their populations' national origin to Arabia (a claim that would provide ammunition for black nationalists and others seeking to portray North Africans as settlers). Most North African states made Arabness ('uruba) the official identity, Arabic the official language and suppressed—or even criminalized—the expression of indigenous, non-Arab languages and identities. The homogenizing historiography of the state builders is now coming under attack by self-described "indigenous" nationalist movements in the Sudan and the Maghrib. In Morocco, the Berberophone movement has successfully pressured the government to change history textbooks that claimed that the country's entire population, Arabic- and Berber-speakers alike, originated in the Middle East.

Unaware of this conflict of historical and political visions, many African-Americans are galled by the Arab nationalist and Islamist disdain for non-Arab and pre-Islamic culture, in particular that Egypt's pharaonic heritage does not figure more prominently in the country's political discourse. African-Americans note that Egyptian intellectuals and officials often refuse to even engage with different Afro-diasporan groups drawn to ancient Egypt's culture—even dismissing them as "pyramidiot." [39]

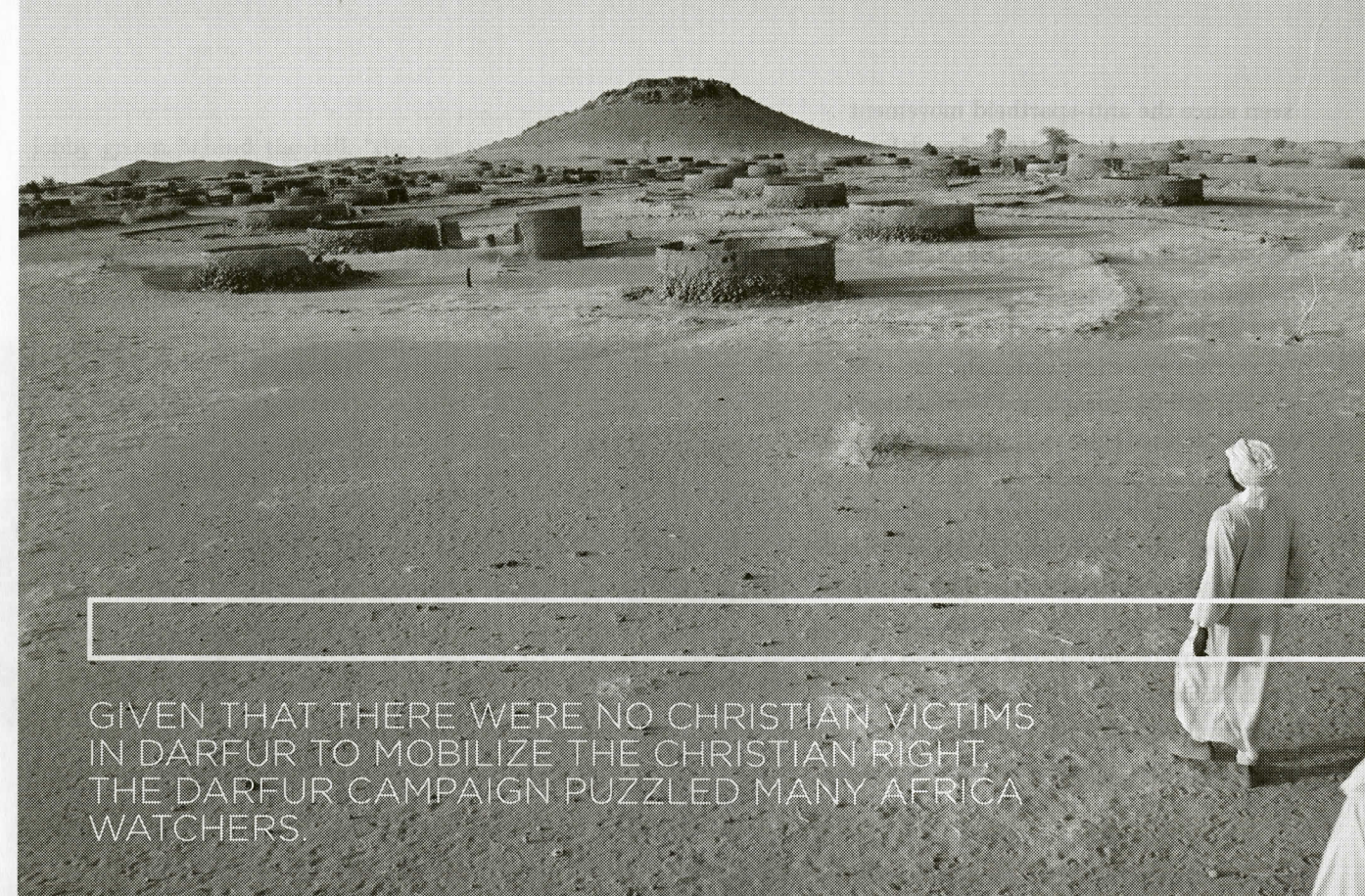
In March 1989, for instance, a controversy arose over an exhibit about Ramses the Great at the Texas State Fairgrounds in Dallas. An urban group called the Blackology Speaking Committee threatened to boycott the exhibit, alleging that the organizers had not placed sufficient emphasis on the blackness of Ramses II. Abdellatif Aboul-Ela, director of the cultural office of the Egyptian embassy in Washington,

responded with an op-ed in the *Washington Post* which captured many Egyptians' attitudes toward race and Africa: "They should not...involve us in this racial problem that I thought was solved and buried a long time ago. We are not in any way related to the original black Africans of the Deep South. Egypt, of course, is a country in Africa, but this doesn't mean it belongs to Africa at large.

LITTLE OR NO CONSIDERATION WAS GIVEN IN THE CANONS OF THIRD WORLDISM TO THE FACT THAT THE TERRITORIAL BOUNDARIES OF WHAT WERE NOW PROCLAIMING "SOVEREIGN STATES" HAD BEEN DRAWN BY THE COLONIZERS

intellectual circles. Egyptian historian Hilmi Shaarawi, arguably the Arab world's most renowned Africanist, has tartly observed that most Arabic-language scholarship on Africa treats the continent as a "cultural vacuum," a "continent without any culture and civilization" waiting to be fecundated by Islam and Arab culture. [39]

The conflict between Arab and African national-



GIVEN THAT THERE WERE NO CHRISTIAN VICTIMS IN DARFUR TO MOBILIZE THE CHRISTIAN RIGHT, THE DARFUR CAMPAIGN PUZZLED MANY AFRICA WATCHERS.

This is an Egyptian heritage, not an African heritage.... We cannot say by any means we are black or white." [40] Groups across Africa and the African diaspora may also reject the labels "African" or "black" in favor of more local identities, but black nationalists see the refusal of North Africans to identify with pan-Africanism as particularly offensive because they are "sitting on" a glorious African heritage.

This background is crucial to understanding why Sudan emerged as a cause after September 11.

### Marketing Darfur

In December 1999, Secretary of State Madeleine Albright declared that, much as she deplored Sudan's suffering, "the human rights situation in Sudan is not marketable to the American people." [41] Less than three years later, on October 7, 2002, Congress passed the Sudan Peace Act by a vote of 359-8, condemning Sudan's human rights record and promising stepped-up US involvement in the peace process. The bill was praised as an "expression of unity" that brought together sundry political interests and leaders. "Republicans and democrats, blacks, whites, Hispanics and Asians, men and women," crowed radio personality and long-time Sudan activist,

Joe "The Black Eagle" Madison, about the diversity of the lobbying effort. Rep. Charles Rangel (D-NY) joked that in his 30 years in Congress he had never before been on the same platform with Texan Republican Dick Armey.

As the Bush administration was attempting to broker an end to the war in the south, the Darfur crisis captured America's imagination. In April 2004, the US Holocaust Memorial Museum issued a "genocide alert" about Darfur—the first in the institution's history. At a Darfur Emergency Summit convened on July 14, 2004 by the American Jewish World Service and the Holocaust Museum, Nobel laureate Elie Wiesel stated, "Sudan has become today's world capital of human pain, suffering and agony." The American Jewish World Service subsequently helped establish the Save Darfur Coalition, comprising more than a hundred American organizations to lobby the US government and the United Nations. Also in July, Secretary of State Colin Powell, speaking before Congress, described the Darfur tragedy as "genocide." As the fall semester began, vigils took place on college campuses across the country, as students attempted to start a Sudan divestment campaign similar to that waged against apartheid-era South Africa. "This is the most impressive and widespread coalition on an African crisis that we've

Photo: Shane Bauer



seen since the anti-apartheid movement in the 1980s and early 1990s," said John Prendergast, a top Africa aide at Clinton White House, now with the Brussels-based International Crisis Group.[42]

Meanwhile, Khartoum's harboring of Osama bin Laden in 1996 made it central to the war on terrorism. The presence of oil, eyed by Europe and China, made Sudan increasingly relevant to a Bush administration looking for alternatives to Persian Gulf oil. To many Americans, moreover, the Sudanese civil war was part of the "clash of civilizations," with southern Sudan a "civilizational fault-line" where Islam bloodily bordered a rival civilization and where it was crucial to contain the expanding Islamic threat.

The conservative Christian lobby, working with Democrats and the Congressional Black Caucus, had helped push through the Sudan Peace Act. What surprised many observers was that Darfur suddenly became a domestic political issue threatening to undermine the administration's peace efforts. Darfur brought together Wiesel and Jimmy Carter, civil rights leaders, human rights activists, entertainers Dick Gregory and Danny Glover, conservative Republicans and liberal Democrats, retired Sen. Jesse Helms and Ben Cohen and Jerry Greenfield of Ben and Jerry's ice cream company. Referring to the "black/white-left/right" "coalition of conscience" for Darfur, evangelical leader Franklin Graham proudly said, "You have groups that don't agree politically, who have a totally different view of world events. Yet when it comes to Sudan, we are working together." [43]

Given that there were no Christian victims in Darfur to mobilize the Christian right, the Darfur campaign puzzled many Africa watchers. In August, the Washington Post observed: "[Darfur] is a tragedy of unimaginable proportions—except that with hardly a turn of the globe, other calamities easily can seize our imagination. For if there were an international misery index, Darfur would have lots of company." The piece contended that Darfur had become "one of the world's hot causes" because the refugee camps are accessible, there is a preexisting network of African-American and Christian activ-



BUT THE SAVE DARFUR CAMPAIGN IS BETTER UNDERSTOOD BY LOOKING AT THE POST-SEPTEMBER 11 DOMESTIC POLITICAL SCENE.

ists and the Rwandan genocide had just turned ten. Two months later, the *Los Angeles Times* similarly inquired why the Ugandan civil war, just south of Sudan, which had displaced two million and caused the rape of tens of thousands of women, went "virtually unnoticed by the outside world." The article theorized that Darfur had won the "lottery of world attention" because it had resonated with an "unusual constellation of interests," namely evangelicals, African-Americans and Jewish American groups "brought in [by] charges of genocide, with their echoes of the Holocaust."

Many African observers were also perplexed by the American public's attention to Darfur. An editorial in the Kenyan daily *The Nation* stated that Darfur was attracting "undue attention" and overshadowing more important "problem areas." [44] After Congress passed a resolution, terming the Darfur crisis a genocide, contradicting the African Union, the European Union and the UN, the respected weekly *Jeune Afrique* wondered how the main

lobby group behind the bill, "the Congressional Black Caucus, came to be persuaded that Sudan was genocide perpetrated by 'whites' on blacks." [45] When Powell and UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan traveled to Darfur, flying over the tortured region of northern Uganda, one prominent African intellectual asked: "Why didn't [Annan] stop here [in Uganda]? And why not in Kigali? And Kinshasa? Should we not apply the same standards to the governments in Kampala and Kigali and elsewhere as we do to the government in Khartoum, even if Kampala and Kigali are America's allies in its global 'war on terror'?" [46] The Arab and Islamic press, suspicious of the attention the Darfur campaign, have seen it as either the Bush administration's prelude to regime change in oil-rich Sudan or a public relations ploy to shift attention away from Palestine and Iraq.

But the Save Darfur campaign is better understood by looking at the post-September 11 domestic political scene. Unlike other "hot spots" across Africa, the Darfur tragedy reverberates deeply in the US because it is represented as a racial conflict between "Arabs" and "indigenous Africans," because Sudan is where the "moral geographies" [47] of black, Jewish and Christian nationalists overlap and because the Darfur crisis offers a unique

opportunity to unite against the new post-Cold War enemy.

*This article is a reprint from Middle East Report 234. This version is only part of the comprehensive piece that Hishaam Aidi originally wrote for Middle East Report and the full article with references can be found at <http://www.merip.org/mer/mer234/aidi.html>. Left Turn decided to reprint part of Aidi's article to provide a deeper understanding of the complex situation in Darfur. We encourage readers to see the full article online (either on [www.merip.org](http://www.merip.org) or on [www.leftturn.org](http://www.leftturn.org)).*

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## US SOCIAL FORUM



# USSF

Held in Atlanta from June 27-July 1, the US Social Forum (USSF) brought together the kind of broad-based, multi-racial and inter-generational cross section of organizers and activist groups that many of us had only heard stories about in dispatches from far-away lands. Many commentators have noted that one of the major successes of the USSF was who organized it and who participated.

The term “grassroots” is often used without qualification, but walking around Atlanta somehow you knew you were among them. Organized primarily through the work of member-based movement organizations grounded in working class communities of color that work to connect their local work to global struggles, the USSF brought together a true cross section of various movements in the US. As Celeste Lacy Davis of the Funding Exchange commented on her blog, “If the Atlanta convening was an accurate reflection of who will comprise the new people’s movement in [the US], it will be heavily multi-racial and multi-national, proudly queer and transgender, bravely indigenous and immigrant, both urban and rural.” There were high school and college students, civil rights veterans, housing organizers and Gulf Coast survivors, domestic workers and low- and no-wage workers, rank-and-file

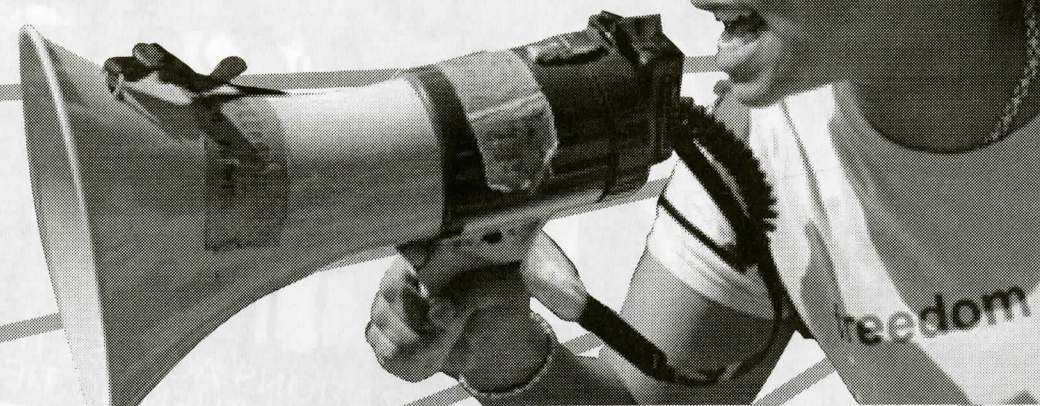
trade unionists, Palestine solidarity activists, anti-violence/anti-prison organizers and more. As one local Atlanta organizer said, “Now see, this is always how I pictured the movement looking like in my head.”

Many people are asking what will come out of this historic gathering. At the closing plenary, several new alliances were announced. On the local level, organizations traveling together seemed to really benefit from the time spent both preparing for and attending the forum.

As a way to further the conversation about “what next,” Left Turn asked members and staff of three organizations who, in addition to representing powerfully at the USSF, used the gathering as an opportunity to build national networks—the Domestic Workers’ Alliance, Southerners On New Ground, and the Right To The City Alliance—to share their stories from the USSF and beyond.



# "Home Is Where the Work is"



BY BRENT PERDUE

## DOMESTIC WORKERS FORM NATIONAL ALLIANCE

During the US Social Forum, New York-based Domestic Workers United (DWU) and over ten other domestic worker organizations from California to Maryland founded a historic national network in an effort to link their struggles and more effectively agitate for change. The US Social Forum boasted 12,000 attendees and over 1,000 workshops over the course of the week in Atlanta, Georgia. The domestic workers were able to carve out meeting times during several of those days to forge the national alliance that looks to be officially launched this fall.

**S**temming from the history of slavery, domestic workers are excluded from most basic labor protections US workers enjoy. The vast majority of the workers are foreign-born, women of color, forced to migrate to the United States in search of viable employment opportunities.

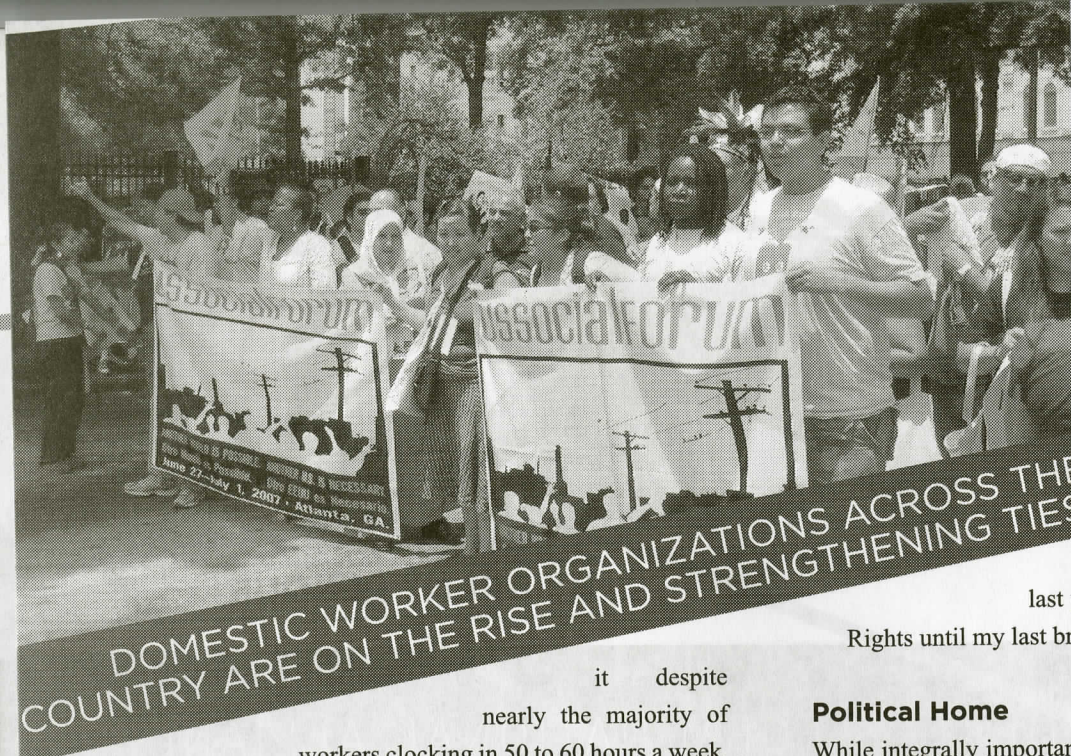
Household workers are excluded from the National Labor Relations Act, which grants workers the right to organize. As "casual" workers, they are not afforded the federal minimum wage mandated in the Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA). Nor

does the FLSA provide live-in household workers the right to overtime. The Occupational Safety and Health Act further excludes domestic workers "as a matter of policy."

### Home Is Where the Work Is

Domestic Workers United 2006 *Home is Where the Work Is* survey, which canvassed over 500 workers, found that 41% of workers receive low wages (between \$8.98 and \$13.46 an hour). According to New York labor law, household workers have the right to overtime, yet 67% of workers do not receive





DOMESTIC WORKER ORGANIZATIONS ACROSS THE COUNTRY ARE ON THE RISE AND STRENGTHENING TIES.

DWU is planning for a major push and hopes for the Bill of Rights passage. Success in New York, for many domestic workers, would mean a strong precedent for nationwide change. The New York Bill of Rights would mandate a livable wage, payment of overtime, and protections from human trafficking. As Campbell

told one state legislator last year, "I will fight for my Bill of Rights until my last breath."

### Political Home

While integrally important to DWU's strategy, the Bill of Rights is just one component of their organizing. DWU represents a workforce of 200,000 hailing from 42 different countries. Much of their role is that of a workers' center. DWU has recovered \$300,000 in unpaid wages, offers an annual nanny training school, holds leadership development and political education sessions, and does extensive street-level outreach. The national network that formed in Atlanta plans to do that work as well at the macro-level. Domestic worker organizations across the country are on the rise and strengthening ties.

During a march through New York City this June, DWU members carried cardboard cut-offs of the City skyline on their backs with the phrase, "We Built This City." As Celeste Escobar, an organizer with DWU stated, "All the behind doors work is sustaining the economy." The lawyers, Wall Street suits, and managers rely on the labor of household workers to maintain their families, have a social life, and work outside the home. Indeed, domestic work is one of the "fluids that keeps this economy running" as work that "enables other work to happen."

At the close of the network's founding in Atlanta, a resounding call and challenge was made: "We intend to organize across the nation until we have one million domestic workers." From the likes of the presence of domestic workers at the US Social Forum, they are up for it—as one domestic worker from Los Angeles declared, "We are workers in the house, but we are not domesticated!"

For more information or to contact DWU, please check out [www.domesticworkersunited.org](http://www.domesticworkersunited.org) or email [domesticworkersunited@gmail.com](mailto:domesticworkersunited@gmail.com)

# building a Queer left

ALEXIS PAULINE GUMBS

On June 26, 2007, 100 beautiful queer grassroots activists representing over 44 organizations from 18 states gathered in Atlanta, Georgia. Leading up to the US Social Forum, this conversation was the start of a renewed phase of intentional queer organizing and the culmination of months of visioning, listening, and planning.



and Durham, North Carolina respectively, headed up the organizing for the meeting.

In preparation for the gathering, QEJ's Susan Raffo conducted twenty-five "listening sessions," which identified that the major obstacle that queer organizers with left politics spoke about was their sense of debilitating isolation. This gathering was designed as a way to build relationships and connections and was specifically targeted at folks grounded in an intersectional social justice framework, rooted in a wide range of communities across the US. Raffo found it important to note that at least 50 potential participants who were interested

in the conversation, but not currently involved in grassroots work, stepped back from this meeting, in an effort to honor the leadership of organizers actively involved in those prioritized communities.

The organizers reminded us that access to resources still shapes the public face of our movement, especially

Queers for Economic Justice (QEJ) and Southerners on New Ground (SONG), queer organizations committed to intersectional approaches that center working class communities and people of color that are based in New York City



when it comes to national meetings and conferences. Paulina Hernandez and Caitlin Breedlove of SONG noted that although the intention was for the majority of participants to be people of color and 70% of the people pre-registered were people of color, that at the beginning of the day the makeup of the space did not reflect those numbers.

Still, the people of color in attendance were integral to the conversation.

Shash Yázhí, a participant from the Movement Strategy Center ignited the hope that filled the room explaining, "I'm here to vision big and dream big: 50 years, 100 years. I know that I may not see liberation in my lifetime, but if my role is to lay a grain for that foundation, then that is my role." Participants spoke to the lived consequences of the "stereotypical mainstream gay activism" which they often see as a rich white male project, something that excludes people of color, immigrants, and poor people.

Specific challenges we face within left movements were also discussed, especially those elements that remain blind to the connections between sexual and gendered oppression and all other forms of oppression. Participants of color mentioned feeling pushed to choose between be-

## YOUNG PEOPLE IN OUR COMMUNITIES REMAIN VULNERABLE TO VIOLENCE IF THERE IS NO VISIBLE MOVEMENT OF QUEER WORKING-CLASS PEOPLE AND PEOPLE OF COLOR TO HAVE THEIR BACKS.

ing isolated either in white spaces with queer politics or in culturally organized spaces where it is hard to be out as queer. At the same time, we noted that it seems to be queer people of color doing a disproportionate amount of work on both of these fronts, while remaining invisible and becoming burnt out.

The disconnection and continued racism, classism, and homophobia that pose barriers to our movement work have serious consequences for our communities generally. One participant mentioned that if prison justice organizations continue to refuse to see the experience of queer and transgender prisoners as a priority, and queer liberation organizations continue to ignore the problem of mass incarceration, then those of us who are

criminalized because of our poverty, race, immigrant status, and queerness have nowhere to turn. More generally, the young people in our communities remain vulnerable to violence if there is no visible movement of queer working-class people and people of color to have their backs.

We agreed that next steps would include: continued regional and national gatherings, translations to broaden the conversation in immigrant communities, additional listening sessions, as well as spreading the word through a media and internet working group. QEJ, with the support of the participants in the forum, is developing a two-year plan based on the priorities we identified at this "historic" gathering.

We invite all of you who were not able to attend to participate in the ongoing conversation by contacting Susan Raffo at [susan@q4ej.org](mailto:susan@q4ej.org).

—Alexis Pauline Gumbs

Alexis Pauline Gumbs wrote this article with the support of Caitlin Breedlove, Paulina Hernandez, Joseph Deflippis and Susan Raffo. Alexis is a member of SONG, UBUNTU and SpiritHouse and is the founder of Broken-Beautiful Press ([www.brokenbeautiful.wordpress.com](http://www.brokenbeautiful.wordpress.com)). Feel free to contact Alexis at [alexispauline@gmail.com](mailto:alexispauline@gmail.com).



## POEM

# about how much i want you\*

BY ALEXIS PAULINE GUMBS

i can't lie to you  
atlanta done laid me down  
heat painted pavement to stay

taught me  
that to be alien  
was to be here  
so to be queer  
must be hip hop  
(beat beaten but beaming still)

atlanta taught me  
music could war  
and if drop-kicked hope  
landed and landed  
in Bankhead  
it would bounce

atlanta remains  
a city brazen enough  
to kill me and keep moving  
but I would STILL tattoo OutKast lyrics on my grave

what I am trying to tell you is  
love is a sin  
that at best trains me up  
in the everyday art of not being a slave

but this is how much i want you

i would cringe into asphalt  
fuck the compromise of sidewalks  
if it meant you could stand in the middle and sing

i would shelter  
the highest pedestrian deathrate  
if it made the craziest among us  
more likely immortal

would drawl down secrets  
melt your sneakers  
and name every pathway after what I can't afford

if it meant you would  
never forget me

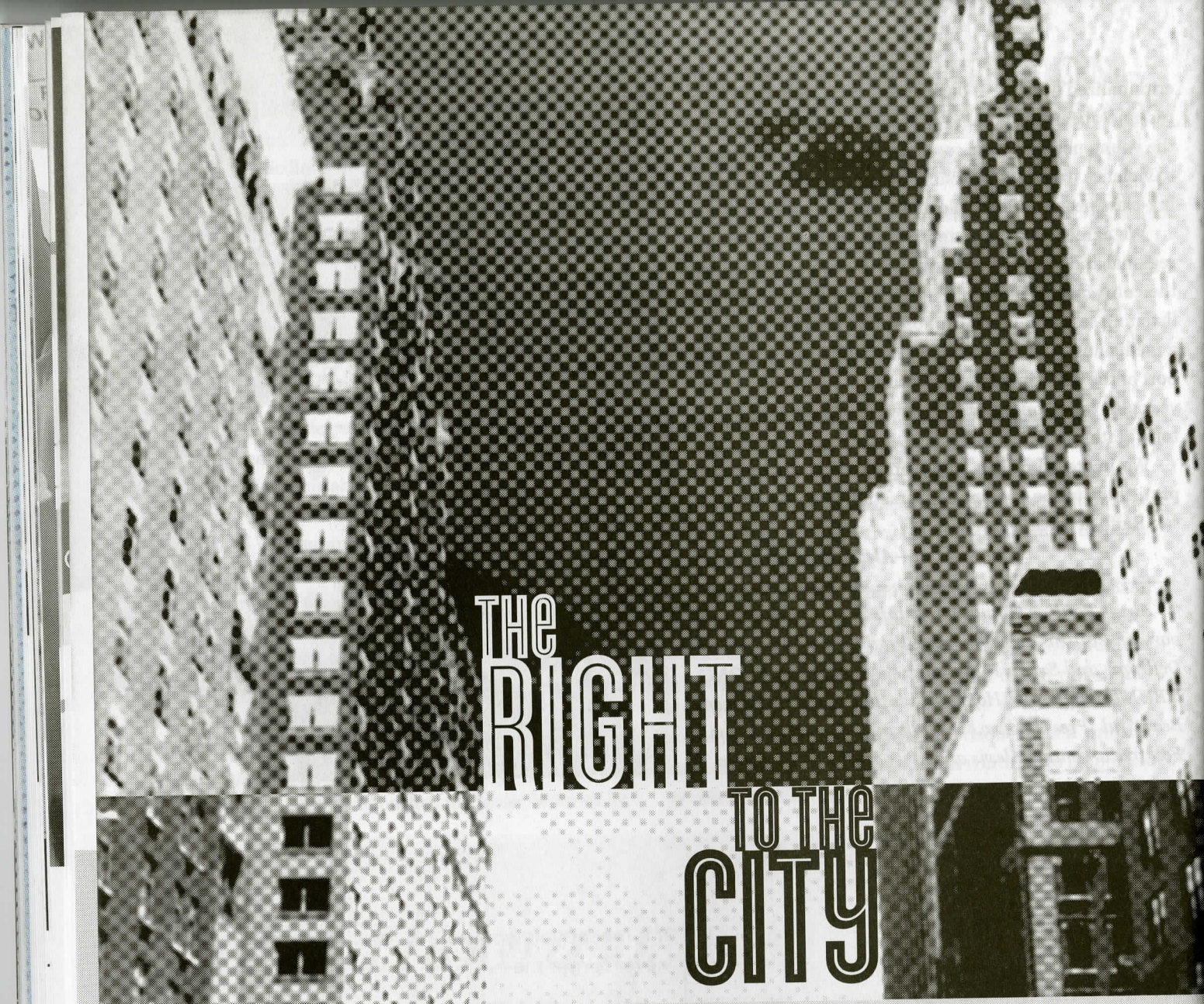
i would be the place  
spread open  
divided  
for the queer and fly to multiply

because this is how much i want you  
and you're here

welcome home.

\* This poem was written the day of the event and presented as a welcome by Alexis Pauline Gumbs.





# THE RIGHT TO THE CITY

Pushing Back on Neo-Liberalism

BY ANDREW WILLIS

## PRINCIPLES OF Unity for the Right to the City Alliance

We believe the right to the city is the right for all people to produce the living conditions that meet their needs. This includes:

- Land for People vs. Land for Speculation  
The right to land and housing that is free from market speculation and that serves the interests of community building, sustainable economies, and cultural and political space.

The Right to the City Alliance came out in a big way at the US Social Forum, with workers, mothers, grandmothers, youth organizers, tenants and activists from across the country taking part in the forum's opening march to **defend the interests of urban working class communities behind a banner declaring "Democracy, Human Rights, Power."**

**C**onvened earlier this year in Los Angeles by base building organizations and their allies, the Right to the City (RTTC) alliance is an attempt to build a national urban movement for housing, education, health, racial justice and democracy. Alliance members spent months preparing for the forum. Member organizations from Los Angeles to Boston mobilized 250 delegates to make the trip to Atlanta. Members and staff of groups like Just Cause Oakland, California; CAAAV: Organizing Asian Communities in New York, New York; and Tenants & Workers United in Alexandria, Virginia collaborated on eight workshops over four days on topics

like "Race, Gender, and Nationality" and "Urban Struggle from the Philippines to South Africa." Most of the workshops were offered with simultaneous translation in three languages.

The alliance also used the forum to announce their twelve principles of unity (see sidebar). The principles were affirmed on the last day of the USSF at the Peoples' Movement Assembly, under a resolution titled "Pushing Back on Neo-Liberalism, Gentrification & Displacement in the US Through a National Urban Movement." Delegates attending an all-day business meeting held during the forum itself formalized the group's political commit-

- Land Ownership

The right to permanent public ownership of urban territories for public use.

- Economic Justice

The right of working class communities of color, women, queer and transgender people to an economy that serves their interests.

- Indigenous Justice

The right of First Nation

indigenous people to their ancestral lands that have historical or spiritual significance, regardless of state borders and urban or rural settings.

- Environmental Justice

The right to sustainable and healthy neighborhoods & workplaces, healing, quality health care, and reparations for the legacy of toxic

abuses such as brown fields, cancer clusters, and superfund sites.

- Freedom from Police & State Harassment

The right to safe neighborhoods and protection from police, INS/ICE, and vigilante repression which has historically targeted communities of color, women, queer, and transgender people.

(continued pg. 50)





# THE REVOLUTION WILL BE FUNDED... ...by readers like you!



ment to New Orleans and residents of the Gulf Coast, reaffirming relationships developed during several delegations to the area earlier this year.

Alliance member groups also led many of their own workshops and panel discussions during the forum. Direct Action for Rights and Equality in Providence, Rhode Island pulled together a session on strategies for building a prisoner-led anti-prisons movement including friends and families of incarcerated people. Latin@ youth leaders of PODER in San Francisco gave forum participants an overview of their innovative campaign for tobacco control and treatment.

For many of us in attendance, the connections made between activists was the highlight of the week, surpassing even the success of our collected presence in jubilant,

overflowing workshops. Shirley Williams, a longtime leader of Organizing Neighborhood Equity (ONE DC) in Washington, DC, summarized the sentiment among the ONE DC delegation following a session on grassroots leadership that closed out the forum. "We didn't realize this was happening everywhere," she said. "To Blacks and Latinos, all of us. It's good we were here together to figure this out."

—Andrew Willis

For more information about The Right to the City Alliance, see [www.righttothecity.org](http://www.righttothecity.org)

Andrew Willis is a community organizer with ONE DC in Washington, DC.

#### • Immigrant Justice

The right of equal access to housing, employment, and public services regardless of race, ethnicity, and immigration status and without the threat of deportation by landlords, ICE, or employers.

#### • Services and Community Institutions

The right of working class communities of color to transportation, infrastructure and services that reflect and support their cultural and social integrity.

#### • Democracy and Participation

The right of community control and decision making over the planning and governance of the cities where we live and work, with full transparency and accountability, including the right to

public information without interrogation.

#### • Reparations

The right of working class communities of color to economic reciprocity and restoration from all local, national, and transnational institutions that have exploited and/or displaced the local economy.

#### • Internationalism

The right to support and build solidarity between cities across national boundaries, without state intervention.

#### • Rural Justice

The right of rural people to economically healthy and stable communities that are protected from environmental degradation and economic pressures that force migration to urban area.

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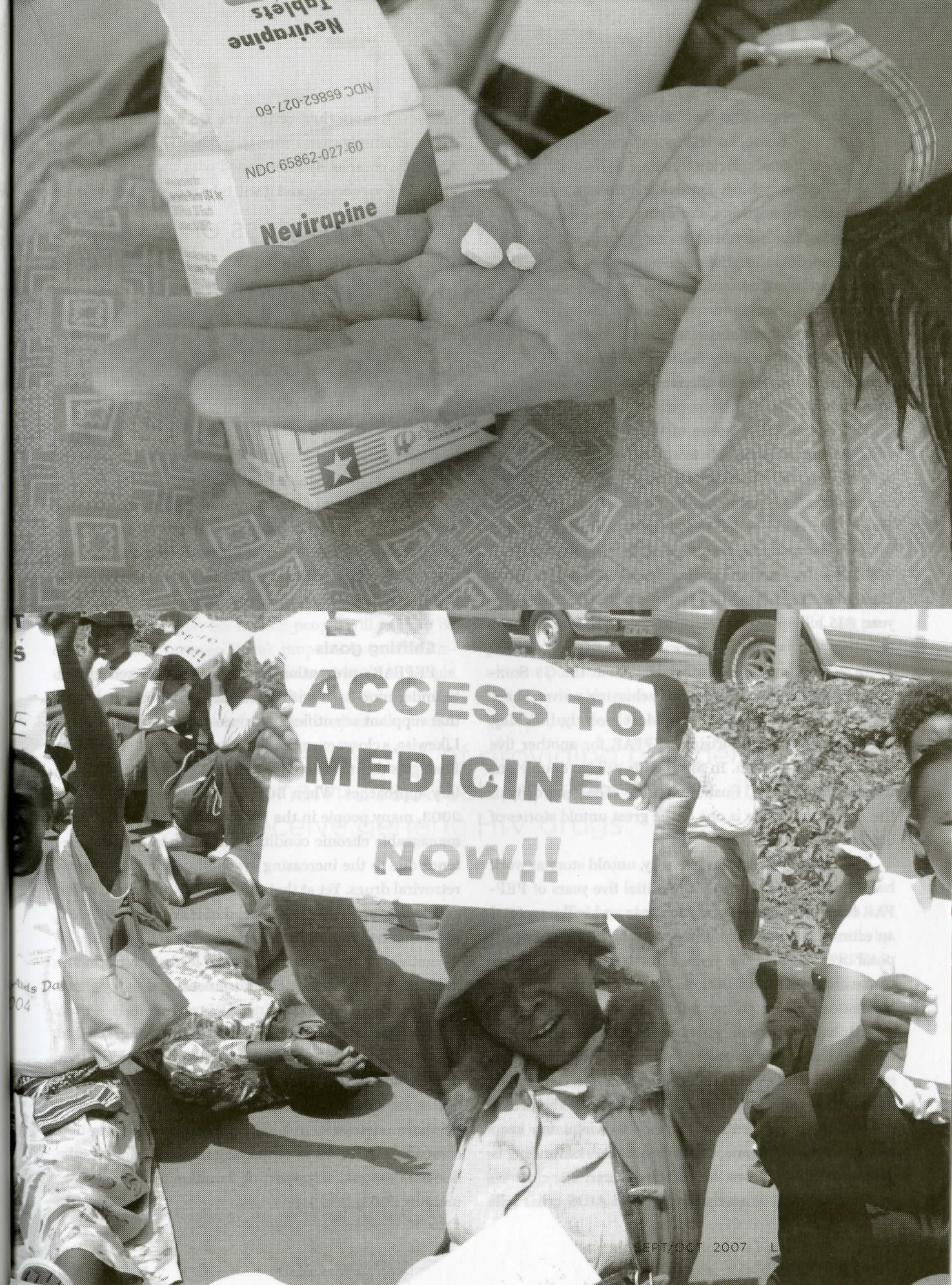


# {Profits over People}

THE UNTOLD STORY OF BUSH'S  
DEALINGS IN THE GLOBAL AIDS CRISIS

**BY AARON BOYLE**

There are nearly 40 million people living with HIV in the world right now. Today alone, about 12,000 more individuals will become infected and 8,000 people with AIDS will die. We are confronting a global pandemic with devastating momentum, but not because life-saving treatments don't exist, not because the necessary resources are impossible to provide, nor because effective prevention methods are unknown.





**T**

ragically, the harrowing words of Vito Russo, an HIV-positive activist of the late 80s, still ring true today: "If I'm dying from anything, I'm dying from homophobia. If

I'm dying from anything, I'm dying from racism. If I'm dying from anything, it's from indifference and red tape." As the AIDS pandemic blazes on today through marginalized communities of people of color, drug users, and women throughout the US and across the globe, it is obvious that what we are facing is a deadly failure of political will, undeniably aligned with the forces of oppression in our society.

Yet, global AIDS is one of the only areas in which George Bush is able to still squeeze political mileage out of his all-but-extinct image as a "compassionate conservative." Listening to the fanfare from the White House, one could be led to believe that Bush is leading us down the road to a world free of the threat of AIDS. In 2003, the Bush administration launched the President's Emergency Plan For AIDS Relief (PEPFAR) with a five year, \$15 billion commitment to fight AIDS in 15 focus countries.

In 2005, Bush joined other leaders at the G8 Summit in Gleneagles in the goal of achieving universal access to HIV treatment by 2010. Most recently, this May, Bush proposed reauthorizing PEPFAR for another five years with \$30 billion. In touting his call "to double our initial commitment," Bush remarked, "The generosity of the American people is one of the great untold stories of our time."

There is a different, far less rosy, untold story at work here though. First, because the initial five years of PEPFAR funding has increased each year and will now total an estimated \$5.95 billion in 2008, the \$30 billion proposal over the next five years actually represents a plan to flat-fund US contributions to fighting global AIDS. When dealing with an expanding pandemic, flat-funding means that the US will progressively fall further and further behind its fair share of funding, and that more and more people with AIDS will needlessly die. In fact, public health experts in fact estimate that to provide the necessary treatment, prevention, and care to adequately keep pace with the pandemic, the US's fair share of funding is at least \$50 billion over the next five years.

Unfortunately however, ending the AIDS crisis will

take much more than getting the US and other governments to simply spend enough money. The challenges of AIDS are completely intertwined with the prevailing injustices of our society, and it will take progress on multiple

it will take progress on multiple fronts of combating racism, sexism, and globalization in order to gain an adequate foothold for overcoming AIDS.

fronts of combating racism, sexism, and globalization in order to gain an adequate foothold for overcoming AIDS. Beneath the veneer of Bush's funding commitments lies a nexus of neo-colonial policies, special interests spending, and judgmental ideology that blatantly detract from his expressed goals for fighting AIDS and reveal the insincerity of his political rhetoric of compassion.

### Shifting goals

PEPFAR's prevention program is widely recognized to undermine itself with ideologically driven conditions that supplant scientifically-proven prevention strategies. Likewise, a closer examination of treatment efforts, where Bush gets the most accolades, shows similarly contradictory approaches. When Bush first proposed PEPFAR in 2003, many people in the US had come to see HIV as a manageable chronic condition rather than a death sentence due to the increasing availability of effective antiretroviral drugs. Yet at that time only 5% of people in the developing world in clinical need of HIV treatment were receiving these medications.

Activists have been able to push leaders to begin addressing these alarming circumstances, and today about 2 million people are receiving HIV treatment. However, over 7 million people living with HIV have progressed to the clinical stage of needing treatment—meaning that present efforts still leave over 70% of individuals without access to the medication that could save their lives. Of those on treatment today, the Bush administration claims that PEPFAR is supporting treatment for 1.1 million with the goal of supporting 2 million people on treatment by 2008.



The major milestone on the horizon is the all-important universal access to HIV treatment by 2010 which Bush and leaders of the G8 finally committed to in 2005. UNAIDS projects that to achieve universal access in 2010, at least 9.8 million people will need to be on treatment. However, Bush's proposal for reauthorizing PEPFAR only aims for an additional 500,000 people on treatment. This would amount to the US supporting a total of 2.5 million people on treatment, and not until

drive down the cost of treating HIV.

Today, for the same cost of providing one person with brand name pharmaceuticals, an average of about five people can receive generic HIV drugs. This has made major international treatment scale-up feasible. Not surprisingly, pharmaceutical corporations scorn these significant public health benefits and try to preserve their highly profitable monopolies by lobbying vigorously to limit the introduction of generic medicines.

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2013. This is nowhere near the fair share of support the US must provide to be serious about the goal of universal access by 2010.

Distressingly, soon after the Bush administration lowered the bar, the G8 followed suit, announcing at its June summit a reworded goal that would aim to support treatment for 5 million people "over the next few years". If this trend of lackluster treatment scale-up and apparent back-tracking in goals continues, the much heralded 2005 commitment to achieving universal treatment access might go down in history as a promise that was dead-on-arrival, with tragic consequences for millions with HIV.

From the beginning, it was clear that the Bush administration's efforts were extensively influenced by pharmaceutical industry motives. For instance, PEPFAR legislation mandates that all medicines purchased must be approved by the US Food and Drug Administration (FDA) instead of the widely-utilized World Health Organization (WHO) pre-qualification program, which includes a broader array of approved generic medicines. Under pressure from activists to increase procurement of more cost-effective generic medicines, the FDA implemented a fast-track approval process for generics. However this still represents an unnecessarily duplicative effort, and the March 2007 Institute of Medicine report

### Brand-name pharmaceuticals

One of the main barriers to increasing the numbers of people on treatment is the high cost of antiretroviral medicines. Treatment regimens produced by brand name pharmaceutical corporations are sold for several thousands of dollars per year, prices nowhere near the realm of affordability in the developing world. The past several years have seen a hopeful shift with the introduction of generic versions of HIV medicines which create market competition and



reviewing PEPFAR stated that the FDA approval provision limits access to generic drugs. The Institute recommended adopting the WHO process to increase the extent and sustainability of treatment efforts.

### Trading away health

The most telling example of Bush's complicity with the profiteering pharmaceutical industry is his willingness to implement trade policies that directly thwart the supposed goal of scaling up access to HIV treatment. In a number of bilateral free trade agreements (FTAs) implemented over the past several years, his administration has inserted intellectual property rights provisions that reshape trading partner nations' laws to bolster the profits of pharmaceutical corporations at the cost of the public health within that country.

This policy completely disregards World Trade Organization agreements which clearly and firmly assert that

a series of clauses in FTAs that systematically delay the entry of affordable generic drugs into the market.

First, the FTAs include requirements for prolonging patents beyond the 20-year monopolies already enjoyed by pharmaceutical corporations in order to offset any vaguely defined administrative delays. The FTAs also impose restrictions on generic companies within the regulatory approval process through a condition called data exclusivity. Normally, generic medicines have to prove "bio-equivalence" to their brand name counterpart, and then the clinical trial data from that original drug is used to finalize approval for the generic version. Completely re-doing a clinical trial would not only be a waste of time and money, it is highly unethical to set up a test where a sizeable control group would receive a placebo instead of a drug with known therapeutic value.

However, the powerful pharmaceutical lobby has succeeded in pushing five years of data exclusivity into the

The most telling example of Bush's complicity with the profiteering pharmaceutical industry is his willingness to implement trade policies that directly thwart access to HIV treatment.



intellectual property protections must not interfere with a country's "right to protect public health and, in particular, to promote access to medicines for all." Nevertheless, the Bush administration has strong-armed trading partner nations into relinquishing those rights by including

FTAs, meaning that generic companies seeking approval for a medicine cannot use the clinical trial data from the original drug. This effectively forces generic companies to wait an additional five years to apply for regulatory approval. During that time, access to life-saving medicines



It is time to institute trade policies that advance the availability of generic medicines and actively promote international public health.

remains needlessly suppressed and high-priced brand name drugs face no competition.

The FTAs also implement a barrier known as patent linkage, which requires regulatory agencies to verify any patent infringement claims by pharmaceutical corporations before they can grant marketing approval on generic medicines. Regulatory agencies are unequipped for such patent enforcement and this provision is easily abused to again delay the introduction of competitive generic medicines. Additionally, FTA provisions can be used to block compulsory licensing, an important flexibility, protected in WTO agreements, which allows governments to secure access to low-cost medications.

Overall, the interference of generic availability created by these provisions protects the business interests of pharmaceutical corporations to the detriment of those in need of life-saving medicines. Indeed, a study released by Oxfam this March that evaluated access to medicines in Jordan in the wake of their 2001 FTA with the US found that Jordanian drug prices have increased an average of 20% and that generic competition has been delayed on 79% of newly introduced medicines.

### Universal access

The arrival of the Democratic majority to Congress was anticipated by many to be the end of the era of neo-colonial FTAs. However, New York City Congressman Charles Rangel as Chairman of the House Ways and Means Committee has taken up an effort to have a few pending agreements re-negotiated, keeping alive the

possibility of their passage. Rangel worked with the Bush administration to craft bipartisan consensus on new texts which rework certain controversial sections of the FTAs.

The new FTAs with Peru and Panama do make some changes to the pro-pharmaceutical industry provisions by allowing but not requiring patent extensions, shifting patent enforcement burdens off regulatory agencies, and providing possibilities to reduce the five-year term of data exclusivity. While these changes reduce trade policy barriers to access to medicines, the new provisions still impose unnecessary restrictions that would threaten the ability of Peru and Panama to protect the public health of their citizens.

As we approach the 2008 elections, the untold story of Bush's global AIDS leadership illustrates the importance of getting candidates who will confront AIDS as a broad, interwoven social justice issue. We must push not only for the commitment for \$50 billion to reauthorizing PEPFAR, but for someone who will boldly empower the marginalized groups most vulnerable to AIDS. We must fulfill the essential goal of universal access to treatment by taking on the structural issue of under-resourced health systems and ending the pro-corporate paradigm dictated by FTAs. It is time to institute trade policies that advance the availability of generic medicines and actively promote international public health. The world cannot afford another President who usurps global AIDS efforts as an attractive package to conceal an oppressive agenda of profits over people.



# NOTHING ABOUT IT IS WITHOUT US

LEROY MOORE INTERVIEWED BY JAMES TRACY

LEROY F. MOORE, JR. IS A RADICAL BLACK ORGANIZER IN THE DISABILITY AND RACIAL JUSTICE MOVEMENTS. HE WORKS WITH DISABILITY ADVOCATES OF MINORITIES ORGANIZATION, POOR MAGAZINE, AND HARAMBEE EDUCATIONAL COUNCIL, AN ORGANIZATION FOR PARENTS, ADVOCATES AND YOUNG ADULTS FOCUSED AFRICAN AMERICANS WITH DISABILITIES. LONG A FIXTURE IN THE ANTI-POLICE BRUTALITY AND HOMELESSNESS EFFORTS NATIONWIDE; HE IS NOW TAKING ON THE HIP-HOP INDUSTRY WITH A GROUNDBREAKING COMPILATION OF DISABLED RAPPERS: KRIP-HOP. HE IS ALSO A MEMBER OF THE MOLOTOV MOUTHS OUTSPOKEN WORD TROUPE.

**LT:** Tell me a little bit about your background, what led to your politicization?

**LM:** I was born with cerebral palsy into a family that was and still are activists. My father was a Black Panther and my mother was an independent thinker. I had no choice but to be an activist.

My experiences in both communities—Black and Disabled, and how they treated, or better yet, not treated both of my identities gave me a real eye-opener on how society treats Blacks and other people of color with disabilities.

Racism in the disability movement and services for people with disabilities became clear when I was mainstreamed from my all Black Special Education class to a majority White non-disabled mainstream class. From that point onward, I had the question of race and disability in my head.

**LT:** You talk about the “intersection of race and disability” How exactly are these entwined? Some present disability as color-blind, something that could happen to anybody.

**LM:** The reality of race and disability has been with us since day one. Disability is a part of our fabric of our being, just like race, all the way back to Moses. People of color have found themselves in situations where the onset of disability is delivered by the oppressive society we live

in. From robbing the land from Native Americans to slavery to the Tuskegee Experiment, to today’s budget cuts in mental health, hospitals, and the violence we seemed to live in at home and abroad, this country’s action and policies have helped increase disability in people of color communities.

**LT:** Let’s talk about your anti-police brutality work. What are some of the larger patterns you see in anti-police brutality work as it pertains to people with disabilities?

**LM:** I’ve been doing anti-police brutality work since I was seventeen-years-old from coast to coast and I’ve seen a larger pattern than what is out there now.

Consciousness around this topic has been increasing throughout this country and world, but there is a lack of avenues to talk and actively work on it. At this point of time there is not an organization taking charge of this issue and pushing it into the mainstream with an organizing, research, a legal arm pushing the Department of Justice to enforce the Americans with Disabilities Act, for example.

Many times the disability is played down or not mentioned because parents are ashamed of it or the investigator has a lack of knowledge of disability factors in cases of police brutality. As for me as a disabled advocate, I see only a few people like myself in this field.

Also there is a notion that police brutality only happens to people who are homeless with mental health disabilities. This type of thinking has created a hierarchy in the disability rights movement. If you look at recent cases of police brutality you will see that people with all types of disabilities—from autism to deafness to my disability, cerebral palsy—are being abused by police. There is also a lack of collaboration with organizations representing people with disabilities. From my point of view, we need a social justice framework in the disabled movement going beyond a civil rights platform. Yes, there are individuals, especially young disabled activists, who are in social justice movements interjecting disability; but as a move-



ment, it is in the infant stages.

**LT:** *Do you think that the existing anti-police brutality networks factor disability issues into their work?*

**LM:** A lot of Copwatch organizations around the country have done amazing things when it comes to the awareness of police brutality against people with disabilities. In Denver, Colorado, Copwatch wrote up a statement of all people with disabilities in 2002 who had been abused by the police and used that statement to get community services.

The October 22<sup>nd</sup> Coalition has added disability into their data collection for their Stolen Lives projects. What is surprising is a lot of national organizations, like the NAACP are writing about police brutality and people with disabilities but are bypassing local advocates like myself. Once again our voices are not heard and our issues are in someone else's hands.

I know that this type of work, anti-police brutality work is never going to have the resources they need to survive not to mention taking on the disability factor be-

However the anti-war movement needs a lot of education when it comes to issues concerning people with disabilities. There is a lack of disabled voices in the current anti-war movement and it shows at their rallies through non-accessible stages to safety issues. At many rallies activists with disabilities are not protected so therefore they are easy targets for the police to harass and be arrested.

This year alone we have read stories of disabled veterans waiting for their checks from the military and a lack of health care of disabled veterans. War has become a multi-million dollar industry, while disabled soldiers return home with broken bodies and broken promises from the military and their country.

**LT:** *You are also a cultural worker. Tell us about your current project, Krip Hop, and why cultural work is important.*

**LM:** Just like Paul Robeson and the Black Arts Movement, I believe that art plays a major role in our activism. We are changing people's attitudes and creating a stage on the street, in city halls, and in the arts arena as people with disabilities. There are two artistic projects I'm

## KRIP-HOP HAS LEAD TO A VISION THAT NOTHING WILL CHANGE IN THE MUSIC INDUSTRY UNTIL THERE IS AN ORGANIZING FORCE MAKING THE MUSIC INDUSTRY MORE ACCESSIBLE IN ALL WAYS.

cause of the system we live in. Capitalism strives on having protection of wealth, property, services and goods; and, in a strange twist, we don't put our trust into the community, we try to protect ourselves from our own community.

When it comes down to it no one can advocate our issues except for us! Yes, we can have allies, but until the disabled community and leaders take on the issue of police brutality at the individual, community and organizational level, it will continue to be overlooked by the broader community.

**LT:** *In your poem, Disabled World Nation, you make the connection between war and disability. Has the rest of the disability rights movement made this connection as well?*

**LM:** Yes, the disability rights movement is clear on the notion that war creates more people with disabilities.

heavily involved in dealing with reclaiming our histories and voices and at the same time healing from verbal and physical violence towards our beings, bodies, and voices.

Krip-Hop is an international CD compilation project whose main goal is to make people aware that from Blues to hip-hop there has always been and still are disabled musicians who have struggled to make a name for themselves and many have changed the music arena as we are now it today, for example Cripple Clarence Lofton, Blind Lemon Jefferson, and DJ Boogie Blind. However their contributions, lifestyles and music continue to be overlooked in all arenas, even in the education system, by today's hip-hop generation.

Unfortunately many publishers, producers, agents, record companies and media still can't see the audience and marketing potential of disabled arts in general, and many Black bookstores, publishers, newspapers and

agents have the same view. Krip-Hop is also raising the question of negative images and hateful language in the hip-hop industry towards us. Currently the N-word is a hot debate in the society in general with the comment of [Don] Imus and in the hip-hop industry, but what about the disabilist language that hip-hop artists [Black-Eyed Peas and Eminem, in particular] and even our so-called Black leaders use constantly?

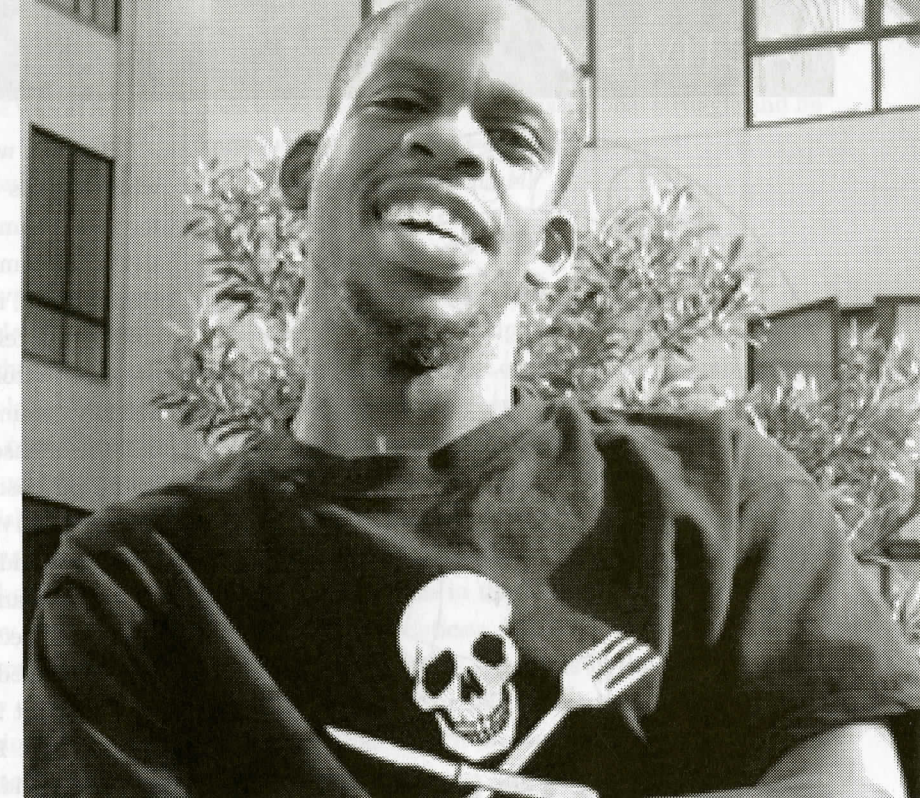
Krip-Hop has lead to a vision that nothing will change in the music industry until there is an organizing force making the music industry more accessible in all ways. This organizing force is a newly establish organization that will educate the music industry about the talent and market potential when it comes to artists with disabilities and will incorporate positive language in the music arena when it comes to people with disabilities.

**LT:** *You sure don't leave any stone unturned as an activist!*

**LM:** In another project we take on sex. Sins Invalid: An Unshamed Claim to Beauty in the Face of Invisibility is another artistic avenue of artists/activists with disabilities reclaiming their voice, art, and body to make a statement that we are beautiful in our disability. Sins Invalid is a performance and video event featuring disabled artists speaking truths about their bodies and stripping taboos off of sexuality and disability. Patty Berne, Co-Director/Performer of Sins Invalid, and I realized that as people who are artists and activists with disabilities there was and still is a lack of visible representation in society, media, and in the art arena of our hot, sexy and fiery sweet disabled brothers and sisters, especially us of color. We can choose to define what's "hot" in a way that supports celebrating the power of the disabled body as beautiful.

**LT:** *What do you think are steps towards a stronger movement?*

**LM:** First of all the days of one leader are over. If we want to use the term "movement", then the movement must lead. Not one person! We have been hypnotized by mainstream media and this individualistic achievement



umbrella the US lives under, causing isolation and falling back to identity politics with our guards up, protecting ourselves from our brothers and sisters, and playing into the role of divide and conquer.

The next step is taking a page from Malcolm X of self-determination but in a social justice framework. First we must regain the philosophy of collectivism then take back our power that we give away too easily to institutions, political leaders, and the media. We must continue to work at the community level with our own programs.

We also need to learn from movements from around the world, for example, parts of Africa's disabled movement have separated from the government to have community control of some their organizations. We can learn from that model. Why can't neighborhood schools be controlled by the community? There are many models of movement building around the world that we can learn from.

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*Leroy's first book **Black Disabled Man With a High IQ** will be released in the fall of 2007. He is currently booking events for his Black & Disabled Tour this winter and you can contact him to get involved or set up an event at [sfdamo@yahoo.com](mailto:sfdamo@yahoo.com). To find out more about Leroy's work, see [www.leroymoore.com](http://www.leroymoore.com) and <http://thedancing-tree.org/sinsinvalid.html>.*





## COMMUTED Death Row Saints: Hip Hop organizing, struggle and self-determination on death row

*i raised my blk fist  
as high as i could  
in the small white cage...*

**H**aramia KiNassor, aka Kenneth Foster, Jr. Poet. Author of two chapbooks. Co-founder of the DRIVE Movement. Organizer. Haramia KiNassor, aka Kenneth Foster, Jr. Number 999232. Former resident of Polunsky Unit, Livingston, Texas. Death Row. Date of Execution set by the state of Texas: Aug. 30, 2007. Current status: Sentence commuted to life in prison by governor 6 hours before execution time.

KiNassor became the second death row commutation since the state's death penalty was reinstituted in 1982. This is due to the tireless efforts of his support campaign and the tens of thousands of people around the world who made their voices heard, from Caracas to Dubai to Rome, and the overwhelming press coverage (from the New York Times to BET News) of this man convicted to die for driving a car.

*...i got hell in polunsky  
fire aint in the flames  
it's on gurney beds...*

Haramia was convicted under Texas' Law of Parties, which details when a person is criminally responsible for an act committed by another: if they promote or assist in the commission OR, and this is how Texas caught Haramia: "If, in the attempt to carry out a conspiracy to commit one felony, another felony is committed by one of the conspirators, all conspirators are guilty of the felony actually committed, though having no intent to commit it, if the offense was committed in furtherance of the unlawful purpose and *was one that should have been anticipated as a result of the carrying out of the conspiracy,*" [emphasis added].

In plain and simple language, Haramia was put on death row because he should have known what might have happened that night.

The night in question: Aug. 15, 1996. Haramia was 19 years old. He and three friends, riding around San Antonio, decided to commit a series of armed robberies. Haramia's role in them was as the driver. After holding up two parties, Haramia asked them to end it, and all agreed.

On the way home, they stopped the car so one of the men, Mauricio Brown, could talk to a woman. An argument that ensued between Brown and the woman's boyfriend ended when Brown shot and killed the boyfriend. Brown, who has already been executed for this crime, admitted to the shooting (claiming it was in self-defense), and freely stated that he acted alone.

In Texas Governor's Rick Perry's statement about the decision, he said "I am concerned about Texas law that allows capital murder defendants to be tried simultaneously and it is an issue I think the Legislature should examine."

This does not directly speak to the Law of Parties, but Haramia feels it should. A few short hours before the decision came down, he told me in what we thought might be our last visit, "Regardless of what happens today, you all have to keep up the struggle. I know this is bigger than one day. The Law of Parties is still on the books and this is going to continue to ruin lives until we stop it."

KiNassor's attorney Keith Hampton estimates there are at least a dozen prisoners on Texas' death row who was convicted under the Law of Parties. KiNassor is hoping to use his moment in the spotlight to shed light on another case, that of Rudy Medrano who is on death row for the Law of Parties. KiNassor says that Medrano was sentenced to die for loaning someone a gun that was used

in a murder without his knowledge when he was at a different location.

*... i was a homemade grenade they wanted to diffuse  
i watched beautiful afroed angels  
refuse me abandonment...*

I met Haramia seven years ago when I was the editor of AWOL Magazine and he a contributor. He also served on the Advisory Council for the Human Rights Coalition, a prisoner family group I am part of. He replaced his and my close comrade Hasan Shakur on the council after Hasan was executed by the state of Texas Aug. 31, 2006.

Fast forward to April 23: I had just finished the first day of visiting, the 4 hours flew by and I was riding high on Haramia's energy heading back to the hotel room to prepare for the next day's visit. I checked my phone messages; one from Claire Dube, Haramia's support coordinator. It was simple and devastating: "They denied Kenneth's appeal. Let him know when you see him tomorrow. Texas will issue a date of execution in the next couple of weeks for him." And they did.

Haramia already knew when he emerged. His full face and bright smile were dimmed as he said, "I was so happy after the visit, and the minute I got back to the block, I saw the news." His eyes dropped and he was silent for a minute. But when they rose, he had the same fire that burned across poems, leaked from pens and stained pages.

*...i call on ji Jaga and Dhoruba  
i need blueprints for liberation  
i'd prefer*

*August 7, 1970*

*over*

*August 30, 2007...*

Organizing focused on the larger goal, using hip hop, poetry, culture and revolutionary politics that hearken to the era of the Black Panthers—that's how Haramia gets down.

His struggle, done from a cell the size of a bathroom, doesn't stop with proving himself innocent, or even challenging the validity of the Orwellian Law of Parties. His eyes don't see the bars in front of him: he sees the others on, to quote Mumia Abu-Jamal, the "bright shining hell" of death row across the country. He sees the over two million in a "6 by 8 cell, alive in the grave," word to rapper Immortal Technique. He sees black and brown and poor communities "living under a barbed wire sky," echoes of Not4Prophet from the Puerto Punx band Ricanstruction. And he knows that as June Jordan said, "we are the

ones we've been waiting for." It is a global struggle and he knows everything is interwoven.

*... growing roots unrootable  
moving slowly, but surely  
branched out like  
Zapatista caracoles...*

This is why Haramia helped found the DRIVE Movement ([www.drivemoment.org](http://www.drivemoment.org)). DRIVE began as an interracial coalition of men on Texas' death row who engage in nonviolent civil disobedience to show their complete opposition and non-compliance with the death system. With the recent addition of a chapter made up of women death row prisoners in Pennsylvania, DRIVE is spreading like a virus in the Matrix. As one of the most marginalized populations, locked down in the heart of the biggest state killing apparatus in the world, DRIVE members reclaim their self determination and serve as an example that though this system tries to convince us of our powerlessness, we have a long legacy of making something out of nothing.

DRIVE has sponsored and supported hunger strikes, the last of which went from October 2006 to January 2007. Haramia told me how difficult it was to see these men turn into walking skeletons.

DRIVE's website includes a memorial to the people 'who refused to "walk"—they rejected participating in the ritual of death: the last meal, the last phone call, the visit with the clergy, the walk to the death chamber, the last words. Haramia said they refuse to be led like cattle to the slaughter; that as human beings, it is an inherent desire to want to continue to live, and that each person who refuses to walk is engaging in an act of civil disobedience.

*... outlaw to the heart  
coz when freedom's outlawed  
outlaws become free...*

Haramia's rebellious outlaw spirit, like many of his generation, has found a home in hip hop, and he has enlisted it as a soldier in his crusade.

He teamed up with New York-based hip hop band and collective The Welfare Poets, who have worked tirelessly on his case. Last year they released a CD, *Cruel and Unusual Punishment*, partially inspired by Haramia, that featured songs against the death penalty from a variety of fierce and grounded artists. One of the songs is by Netherlands hip hop artist Jav'lin, who is also Haramia's wife. "Walk With Me" (and the accompanying video that can be seen on Jav'lin's website) are a testament to the



strength and love of families of the Row.

*... i'm coming straight off death row in  
boots with no laces  
coz it was my wife's favorite...*

We in the movement for Haramia KiNassor, for justice, know that this is a victory. We have won not the war, but a battle. We celebrate, knowing tomorrow we must pick up our armor to fight again. We want him free. But it is not enough to free Haramia—we want an end to the death penalty. We want the prisons demolished. We want the basic necessities of life for every person on this globe: food, shelter, clothing, justice and freedom. It's the least they can give and the most we're going to take. Starting with Haramia's freedom.

*... i keep my fist raised to the roof  
coz poison  
don't run upstream revolutionary arms  
i'm saved through  
the salute!\**

—Walidah Imarisha

\*All poetry is excerpted from Haramia KiNassor's "The Salute."

For more information about organizations listed in this article, see: Haramia's website at [www.freekeneth.com](http://www.freekeneth.com), Drive Movement at [www.drivemovement.org](http://www.drivemovement.org); Jav'lin's page and link to "Walk With Me" video at [www.javlin.nl](http://www.javlin.nl); Jav'lin's myspace at [www.myspace.com/javlinnarez](http://www.myspace.com/javlinnarez); Haramia's myspace at [www.myspace.com/kf999232](http://www.myspace.com/kf999232); Welfare Poets Cruel and unusual Punishment CD at [www.myspace.com/deathpenaltycd](http://www.myspace.com/deathpenaltycd); and the Welfare Poets at [www.welfarepoets.com](http://www.welfarepoets.com).

Walidah Imarisha is a poet, a journalist and an organizer. She works with the Human Rights Coalition, a Pennsylvania coalition of prisoners' families and ex-prisoners dedicated to abolishing the prison system.



## First National COPWATCH CONFERENCE: A Movement Takes Rise

From July 13-15, 2007, nearly 100 individuals gathered in Oakland, California, to discuss and strategize around issues of police abuse. Representing over 20 organizations from around the country, the first National Copwatch Conference achieved its goal of bringing together organizers and activists who directly monitor the police on a local, grassroots level. From New Orleans to Portland, Chicago to Denver, Los Angeles to Winnipeg, organizers met face to face to learn from each other's experiences while retaining a decentralized, grassroots organizing model. The conference made obvious that a movement is spreading across the US—and into Canada—based in the action of videotaping the police.

The first Copwatch organization started in 1990 in Berkeley, California as a response to increased policing of the homeless community, people of color, and activists on Berkeley's famous Telegraph Avenue. Copwatching—based on the organizing of prior revolutionary groups such as the Black Panthers, American Indian Movement, and Brown Berets—is a nonviolent model of directly monitoring the police with video cameras to both deter

Illustration: Berkeley Copwatch

and document police abuse. Nearly 17 years later, over 70 groups around the country—not to mention those in Canada, Australia and France—are actively on the streets monitoring local law enforcement. The need for a conference, a space to bring these groups together, and see the faces of their struggling siblings, has been a long time coming.

After going to police accountability conferences lacking the space to discuss direct police monitoring, Berkeley Copwatch co-founder Andrea Prichett wanted to simply create the space for those invested in copwatching. At Friday night's opening session, she acknowledged the bittersweet truth all of us face in our organizing: the beauty in the emergence of a national police accountability movement is based in the oppressive reality of systemic police abuse. The other keynote speakers, Big Man Howard from the Black Panther Party and New Orleans community organizer Greg Griffiths, spoke to the history and current need for a Copwatch movement.

### Sharing strategies

The bulk of Saturday consisted of over 20 workshops with presenters representing over 25 different organizations. Topics included: immigration and local law enforcement, documenting abuse against women and queer communities, media messaging, video activism, working with natural allies, civilian oversight models, independent investigation, empowering homeless and poor communities, organizational security, copwatching techniques, alternatives to the police, training Know Your Rights workshop trainers, policing of gangs, disability and mental health issues, banning tasers, using technology in organizing, and sustaining a Copwatch organization. The opportunity for organizers to see and discuss how they are not alone in the struggle was monumental.

One of Copwatch's major strengths is its dedication to grassroots organizing. Specific to the members and resources of a given community, no two Copwatch groups are identical. Factors such as communities being urban or rural; cities or towns; their proximity to the US border; the local use of federal law enforcement agencies such as Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE), Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), and Homeland Security; and the existence of civilian oversight all shape the way Copwatch groups function within their community. Despite these and other differences, the gathering provided the space for Copwatch organizers to share techniques and experiences around similarities in national

police trends, for example the growing number of local ICE raids, the role of the police in gentrification, violence against women and queers, and state attacks on civilian review boards.

But the conference did not focus on the outrageous state of police violence as a hopeless reality; it also provided a space to share success stories and give hope to those dedicated to this growing movement. Attended by conference participants as well as members of the community, Saturday night's film festival called upon groups to share footage of their local organizing. Featuring the documentary *Free Ya Hood* from the Brooklyn chapter of the Malcolm X Grassroots Movement, as well as footage from Phoenix, Denver, San Jose, and San Francisco, the night illustrated both the alarming reality of police abuse as well as local victories in ending such brutality. A necessary event for a movement based around video activism, the film fest was simply another moment to share and understand the national impact of police abuse and the need for a network, a movement, creating true safety in its communities.

A movement. A network. Not a national organization. While Sunday's plenary resulted in the creation of a national list-serv and website to be used primarily for contacting other Copwatch groups, the movement building resulted primarily from organizers around the country meeting each other face-to-face, leading and attending workshops, and understanding they are not alone in this struggle to keep their communities safe. The national network created at the conference was meant only to support the work of local community organizing; it is not a national headquarters or national organization creating a top-down model of organizing. Each community has its own specific needs and resources to best organize itself. The network will serve only as a way to share strategies and experiences, as well as create discussion around this decentralized movement known as Copwatch. The First National Copwatch Conference was the first of many to come.

—Alex Fischer

Alex Fischer volunteers with Berkeley Copwatch ([www.berkeleycopwatch.org](http://www.berkeleycopwatch.org)) and was a core organizer for the National Conference. Coming out of the anti-sweatshop and anti-drug war movement, Alex came to Copwatch as a way to support many movements by organizing around ending state violence and creating alternatives to a police state.





## REFLECTIONS on the Allied Media Conference

It was Thursday night, a few short hours before almost 600 visionary media makers, educators, and social justice activists would convene for the 2007 Allied Media Conference, and I was in a nearby living room assembling registration materials. A group of sleep-deprived conference organizers and volunteers formed an assembly line, and I punched out name tags to stuff them into envelopes, noting the familiar names in anticipation of seeing their faces and conversing with them in the days to come. Friday morning Wayne State's campus—usually lifeless during summer weekends—vibrated with excitement as people began filling the conference center. A line formed before we even set up the registration table and large groups of people continued swarming in until well after Grace Lee Boggs' opening keynote talk: *A Paradigm Shift in our Concept of Education*.

As a local, it was interesting to see my neighborhood crawling with out-of-towners. I put myself in their shoes and imagined I was walking these streets for the first time, hearing stories as if they were new and meeting people as if they were strangers. The conference made its big move to Detroit this year after eight years of being housed in the remote college town of Bowling Green, Ohio. Local participation included a dedicated local organizing committee and staff of volunteers and accounted for roughly half of the total attendees. As RJ Maccani noted on his blog *Zapagringo*, "Whereas some conferences can feel like they are taking place on some other planet—totally disconnected from the place where they are being held—

this one was firmly rooted in 'the D.'"

The conference was absolutely site-specific, while remaining relevant and useful for non-Detroiters as well. This was nowhere more evident than the Opening Ceremony, in which veteran Detroit activists Grace Lee Boggs, Elena Herrada, and Charles Simmons wove local movement histories into visions of a new future, with new ways of living, communicating, and relating to each other. During Friday's Popular Education symposium, Detroit's Live Arts Media Project exemplified participatory media in action, and many of the youth involved delivered high-energy, inspirational performances at the Saturday night show.

I was most looking forward to the INCITE! Women and Trans People of Color track of sessions, which Jenny Lee, Susana Adame, and I organized together. It was incredibly rewarding to witness and participate in the culmination of months of hard work, long meetings, and endless emails. It's worth noting that several weeks before the conference, a group of women of color media makers organized a net-based grassroots fundraiser to cover the cost of travel, and each one met their funding goal, allowing us the pleasure of their company.

First thing on Saturday morning, after a last minute meeting, a flurry of zine assembly, and about four hours of sleep, Noemi Martinez, Johanna Eeva, and I led a session on "Women of Color & Zines." We addressed logistical concerns of zine construction, described some obstacles we had encountered, and emphasized why this medium is useful for us as women of color. In the process, our own interest and belief in the power of the written and cheaply photocopied word was refreshed and reinvigorated. Our session, along with subsequent conversations with women of color zinesters, made me reconsider all the assumptions I had about zine-making and the frustrations I had with the "zine community." I realized that I was sitting in a room full of people who could be my community.

### Shifting demographics

In 2006, The Women of Color Bloggers Caucus inspired myself and several others to begin blogging. This year, being in the physical presence of women whose words are a daily source of knowledge and comfort for me, and realizing that there is such strong and powerful support for what we are doing, has inspired me to keep blogging. These feelings of community support cannot be underestimated—as women of color making media that directly mingles our personal lives with the political

issues we speak on, we face daily racialized, sexualized intimidation, but facing it in isolation from each other is more dangerous. Knowing that we are not alone is vital to our survival as media makers.

In many ways this was the biggest lesson I left the conference with: I'm not alone. I was not the only person of color, the only woman of color, the only Arab, the only Muslim, the only Palestinian, the only one who looked like me—and we were not the only ones who deeply cared about our communities. Originating as a zine conference largely populated by a specific demographic of white zinesters, there were two sessions on zines at this year's AMC, both centering women of color as zine-makers. The end of tokenism is a wonderful thing.

We did not just talk about media-making and popular education; at each turn there were people creating and using multimedia for information sharing. Diana Nucera created a stunning video in the three intense days preceding the conference that, when shown at the Opening Ceremony and later posted on YouTube, concisely represented the energy and popular mood of the attendees. A variety of media about, inspired by, and taking place at the AMC was spread via the internet; animation, audio, video, photos, poetry, and downloadable print media.

The participants in "Wrong is Not My Name: Poetic Healing as a Response to Sexual Violence," presented by Serena Sebring and Alexis Pauline Gumbs, created a zine together in just one short hour. While there was not one open copy shop for miles, the zine soon found a home on Alexis' *BrokenBeautiful Press* website as a downloadable PDF. Bloggers populated the internet with their thoughts, providing personal reflections, detailed summaries of workshops and presentations, and spaces for further discussion.

Presenters used the AlliedMediaConference.org blog to share information with those in attendance at their sessions. All of this documentation has been (and continues to be) archived at AlliedMediaConference.org/documentation. Interactive and independent media allowed for the inspiration resulting from the conference to be spread throughout multiple spheres, embracing media makers and activists all over the world and exemplifying media's usefulness as a tool for education and organizing.

—Nadia Abou-Karr

Nadia Abou-Karr is an artist, writer, and Allied Media Conference organizer. Check [nadiaaboukarr.com](http://nadiaaboukarr.com) for more information.



## STUDENTS for a DEMOCRATIC SOCIETY National Convention & Action Camp Reports

Following a year that witnessed a new generation of young organizers adopt the name and legacy of Students for a Democratic Society (SDS), chapter members from around the country converged upon Detroit for our second national convention. The convention was to deliver upon the commitment made at last year's inaugural convention in Chicago—the new SDS would become a real live organization. The modest task at hand: agree on a vision, officially endorse national actions and campaigns, and start instituting a viable national structure.

Since its inception in early 2006, SDS has grown to more than 100 active chapters and thousands of members at high school and college campuses all across the US. The organizations' founding tenets of participatory democracy and multi-issue youth organizing has caught the imagination of activists from coast to coast.

Heading into Detroit, organizational structures have primarily been defined on the local chapter level, with varying degrees of communication between different regions. The second national convention would bring together over 50 SDS chapters, representing a multitude of political philosophies and ideas for the best ways of moving forward. We learned that at times decision making would be tedious and tense, but always lively. Principled compromise would be the order of the day.

Photo: Andrew Lynn

Photo: Jonathan McIntosh



## Long-term vision

As a new, broad organization on the left, SDS seeks to root itself in a solid anti-oppression framework. We prioritized this at the convention by spending much of the first full day in five caucus sessions organized along race, sexuality, class, gender, and age lines. Each was paired with its corresponding privilege working group. Caucuses reported back to the larger assembly and outlined some specific cultural, and political changes needed within the structure of SDS to ensure its continued growth and effectiveness.

The initial vision documents adopted by the delegates affirmed the need for SDS to be relevant to a larger audience, learn from past social movements, and be accountable to the communities we organize in or are otherwise a part of.

At the heart of the organizational structure debate was how much power any national body should hold and how to keep that power accountable. We finally decided on a (provisional) federated structure with a national delegate system. This national body will have a mostly "soft" power, such as oversight of working groups, dealing with emergencies and vetting proposals for ratification to each individual chapter.

It is now up to the chapters to choose whether to ratify the decisions made at the convention. A foundation for our organization was put in place, and it was created entirely by us. We left the convention with a strong sense that we had accomplished something to be proud of—the creation of a national organization from the ground up.

## Action camps

Two weeks later, from August 13-16, SDS held its first "Action Camp" in Lancaster, Pennsylvania. The four-day camp was designed to provide SDS chapter members with the skills needed to be effective organizers for the long haul.

The camp curriculum focused on grounding ourselves in organizing frameworks and an analysis of collective liberation. Workshops ranged from chapter development to media skills, meeting facilitation and movement strategy. A special emphasis was put on the role of SDS in doing anti-racist work. Trainers from organizations such as Movement for Justice in El Barrio, The Catalyst Project, Beyond the Choir, RANT, the War Resisters League, Rainforest Action Network, and of course SDS, led workshops. In shared tents, around campfires, and over late

night snacks in the barn, bonding and networking among the 50 SDS participants created even stronger links as we prepare for the fall semester.

At the camp, there was lively debate regarding the process of designing the curriculum and level of participant input. In the absence of a national structure, national organizing has been initiated and carried out largely by individuals and chapters. Limited experience and capacity continue to be challenges. Informal leadership, accountability, and participation are always hot topics in SDS. The camp gave us an excellent jumping off point for an honest discussion about the wide variety of needs in SDS given the wide array of experience levels and opinions. Most of us are new to organizing—we are making mistakes, learning, and growing.

Attendees observed a need for more training on direct action skills. Local trainings with chapters will be continuing throughout the fall. In addition to student mobilization for national actions, chapter level campaigns will focus on anti-war, tuition freezes/accessibility of higher education, and labor solidarity to name a few.

Though both of our national summer projects were ambitious to say the least—SDS is nothing, if not ambitious. Changing the world is always an ambitious task and we wouldn't be in this business if we didn't intend to win. The time for action approaches as the semester begins. SDS is clearly emerging from the summer stronger, and poised for the months ahead.

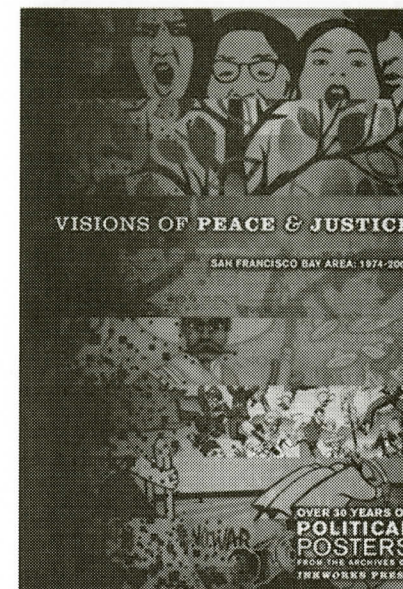
—Nick Martin (Lancaster SDS),

Madeline Gardner (University of Minnesota SDS),

Daniel Tasripin (Hunter College SDS) and

Beth Blum (Philadelphia SDS).

For more information about SDS, see <http://www.studentsforademocraticsociety.org>.



## RED HOT EMBERS

**VISIONS OF PEACE AND JUSTICE: SAN FRANCISCO BAY AREA: 1974-2007. OVER 30 YEARS OF POLITICAL POSTERS FROM THE ARCHIVES OF INKWORKS PRESS**  
Inkworks Press, 2007

Hidden among the over 400 posters presented in *Visions of Peace and Justice* is a rare gem: a simple two-color poster by Lincoln Cushing announcing "The Fiftieth National Bourgeois Art Exhibit: from the personal collection of the Fortune 500, a display of high art which perpetuates the dominance of form over content and reduces artistic creativity to marketable commodities."

Unfortunately, art reduced to "form," and thus, to marketable commodities, is still the rule at most of our art schools, as well as most mainstream galleries. Content lies hidden beneath thick conceptual veneers, requiring degrees in literary criticism and rhetoric to inter-

pret. This new book proves that art, where content and form work hand in hand toward goals far deeper than marketability, is still being produced in the US.

*Visions* presents over thirty years of political posters from the archives of Bay Area-based movement press Inkworks. This is working art, posters for the streets, for placards, for demonstrations. Sometimes these posters don't just reflect reality, but have served, as Bertholt Brecht exhorted, as hammers with which to shape reality. These images are calls to action for struggles that have sometimes escalated into battles, and that have sometimes even changed the relations of power. The International Hotel posters by the SF Poster Brigade—several of which are included in this book—come to mind. They are testament to a moment in history that altered people's perceptions of housing and development struggles in San Francisco.

Later, the posters become the documented history of our evolving movement when we rarely have time to otherwise write our histories. This visual history represents thirty years of ephemeral art meant for the streets. There is poetry in these images, and in the fragments of text, spread out across the walls and windows of our cities. It is surprising, looking back on this thirty-year history, how many of these familiar posters were printed at Inkworks. It is also surprising to look back and see the things that haven't changed: how many pleading for the end to the bombing of this or that country, or, for example, a 1979 poster to "stop forced drugging of psychiatric inmates."

The short introductory essays,

by Cushing, Carol Wells and others, point to the continuing need for independent movement institutions. We notice how few movement presses remain, and how critical those that remain are. Wells points out that in the 1980's there were sixteen women-owned progressive presses; now there are none.

Inkworks has faced its own challenges over its thirty years. It is a business, after all, struggling to compete with other small presses, some unionized, some not. The success (and struggles) of Inkworks lies in having a business model that puts clear political points of unity at its center. With all the current talk in liberal circles of "social enterprises" and "socially-responsible businesses," this is a living example of a real social enterprise, with points of unity based on deep political principles of international solidarity, support for workers' struggles, the environment, racial justice, and women's and queer liberation written clearly into the business plan. The struggle for Inkworks has been balancing the work that pays, so they can continue to do work at cost for the movement, and still make a living for their workers.

## Visual impact

An interesting aspect of Inkworks' model has been having an organization that is both a worker-owned cooperative and a union-shop. While the book doesn't go into details of how this works in practice, it is clear that Inkworks is both an alternative model for how economic institutions can be organized, and one that it is intimately linked to the traditional labor movement. If there is something I wish the book had stressed, it is delving deeper



into these challenges. But that is for another book—this one is about the exuberance of the work.

As an artist and sometime art-teacher, the book is beautiful to hold and to share with students. I would hope that it would become more than just a book to keep on coffee tables to display one's political allegiances, but something to study and learn from. As organizers and activists, we are constantly called upon to create flyers and announcements, and this book gives one much to think about in terms of making a visual impact and creating visual teaching tools. We can't all be designers, of course, and the book hints at the issues Inkworks has faced between being simply a press, and becoming a publisher and design house. Many of the recent posters are the work of Design Action, a design spinoff from Inkworks, part of a relatively recent constellation of Bay Area designers for the movement, along with Tumis, i-arte, and others also represented here.

The book's organization follows Inkworks' political points of unity, covering the breadth of movement issues, with introductory essays by movement activists. But the posters aren't always easy to pin down into one category or another, highlighting the intersections of our struggles: a beautiful 1981 poster, for example, with "Libertad/Freedom" written across the top is credited to "Gay people in support of the Nicaraguan revolution."

In these images we see the beauty of original linocuts, silkscreens, and paintings, mass-produced as offset prints in Inkworks' presses, to be shared in walls across the country. The images represent the range of the power of political protest: from

the one-color rawness of the images by Emory Douglas or Rachael Romero and the SF Poster Brigade in the 70's, to the accessible line drawings of Cushing, Nancy Hom, Jos Sances, Juan Fuentes, and Lisa Kokin, on to the silkscreen artistry of Malquias Montoya, Doug Minkler, Elly Simmons, and Rupert Garcia. The text of the posters, also, bears beautiful phrases if you look carefully.

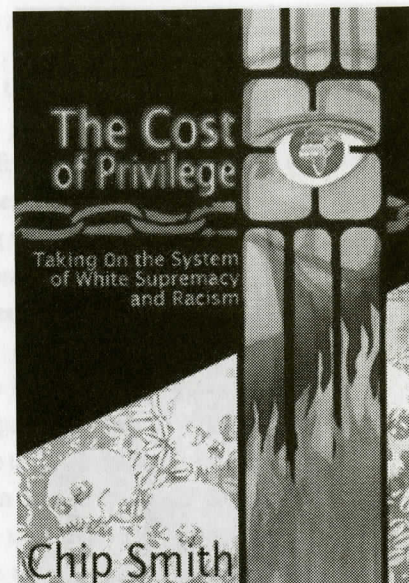
A poster supporting FRELIMO, the Mozambique Liberation Front, bears a poem from Jorge Rebelo: "forge simple words / that even our children can understand / words which will enter every house / like the wind / and fall like red hot embers / on our people's souls / (for) in our land, bullets are beginning / to flower."

—Fernando Marti

## FUNDAMENTAL TEXT

**THE COST OF PRIVILEGE:  
TAKING ON THE SYSTEMS  
OF WHITE SUPREMACY  
AND RACISM**  
BY CHIP SMITH  
Camino Press, 2007

When it comes to books written towards white activists struggling to be anti-racist, the options are limited at best. *The Cost of Privilege* provides a comprehensive framework for white anti-racist activists that attempts to highlight the intricate ways racism works as a complex system that grants white people undeserved benefits. Part history, part theory, part organizing manual, the book is refreshingly useful for all anti-racist organizers trying to gain a better historical understanding of the formation and past challenges to white supremacy in the US. It is not



only concerned with history, but also pushes for new strategies for white folks to take on in the struggle to end racism today.

Smith traces the development of racial formation in the US showing how whiteness has been created and maintained at the expense of people of color's oppression. Starting with the 1600's, he shows how the US is built on a white supremacist foundation and has actively worked against the liberation of people of color. Smith does not fall into the trap of portraying people of color as only oppressed victims, but outlines the tremendous resistance that African Americans, Latin@s, Asian/Pacific Americans, and Native Americans have waged against white supremacy. It is from such resistance movements that anti-racist white folks must learn from and follow if we hope to truly be "allies in the struggle" against racism.

A main difference between *The Cost of Privilege* and other books written on whiteness and anti-racism is its attention to connecting capitalism in relation to white supremacy. Writing from a socialist

viewpoint, Smith especially points to how both white supremacy and capitalism must be considered to understand the struggles of working class people in the US and how white working class people have benefited at the expenses of working class people of color. By critically looking at the history of labor movements, Smith points to the moments organized labor failed to take on racism as a fundamental aspect in the struggle of dismantling capitalism in the hopes that today's labor organizers will commit to an anti-racist politic. Furthermore, Smith's centering of a class analysis challenges many white anti-racists who have failed to see that the struggle of anti-racism is interconnected to anti-capitalism. This push is crucial, as one of the downfalls of white anti-racism has been its inability to really understand and commit to the struggles of working class whites and people of color.

### Additive approach

While Smith recognizes the need for anti-racists movements to apply an intersectional analysis to their organizing in order to effectively eradicate the whole system of white supremacist capitalist heteropatriarchy, he at times falls into the traps of an additive approach when considering gender and sexuality. This is evident in his lack of attention to the particularly gendered ways that racism operates in the lives of women of color. Without understanding the different manifestations of white supremacy, how can white anti-racist truly be able to be in solidarity with women of color, queers of color, and trans people of color? By failing to integrate an analysis that fully incorporates gender and sexuality

throughout his own text, Smith falls short in completely unpacking the multiple ways racism intersects with other systems of oppression, even as he calls for others to apply an intersectional analysis.

While I do not agree with Smith that a national revolutionary party is the answer to eradicating white supremacist capitalist heteropatriarchy, his call for prefigurative politics and a more cohesive strategy among anti-racist white folks in our work for racial justice is fundamental. He argues for an anti-racist politic that is grounded in the self-determination of people of color and other oppressed peoples, an international framework that takes into consideration the ways racism and imperialism ravages both people at home and abroad, and an intersectional framework that truly takes into account multiple forms of oppression. Such clarity in vision is necessary for us to truly build movements for justice.

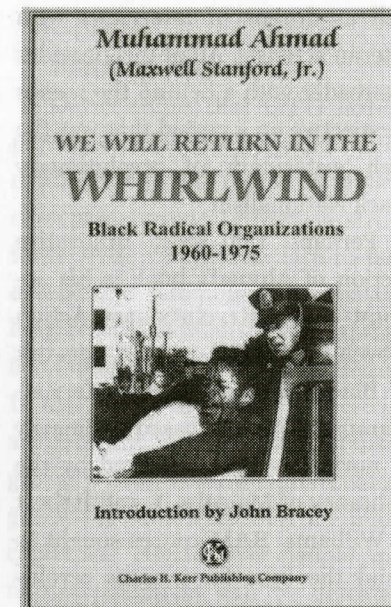
Despite its weaknesses, *The Cost of Privilege* is an incredibly useful organizing tool for all white activists striving to be anti-racist. Its thoughtful analysis combined with its attention to day-to-day organizing practices makes it a fundamental text for white anti-racist organizers.

—Lydia Pelot-Hobbs

## IMPORTANT LESSONS

**WE WILL RETURN IN THE  
WHIRLWIND: BLACK RADICAL  
ORGANIZATIONS, 1960-1975**  
BY MUHAMMAD AHMAD  
(MAXWELL STANFORD, JR.)  
Charles H. Kerr, 2007

While numerous books about the struggle for Black Liberation have



emerged over the past several years, most have focused on key figures, organizations, or tactical debates in isolation. Few of these studies have tried to place particular developments in a broader context, shedding light on the relationship between the grassroots organizing and movement leaders, activism in the North and in the South or how international politics effected domestic developments. Only rarely do we get a sense of how the movements of the Civil Rights and Black Power eras related to each other, much less how they built on the lessons of the past in ways that can be brought to bear on the future.

*We Will Return* is one of these rare books, examining the politics of the 1960's and 70's through a critical review of four major black radical organizations. Part academic study, part personal memoir, Dr. Ahmad's book relies heavily on his personal connection to groups like the Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee (SNCC), the Black Panther Party (BPP), and the League of Revolutionary Black Workers (LRBW) as



well as dozens of interviews with veteran activists. All of this provides the reader with a behind the scenes perspective on a period that was the high watermark of revolutionary Black Nationalism.

Perhaps the most innovative section of Ahmad's book is his account of the Revolutionary Action Movement (RAM), a secret network of Black Nationalist and Marxist-Leninist activists based primarily in northern cities. Inspired by the militancy of Malcolm X and Robert F. Williams, RAM cadres sought to build the base for a mass revolutionary movement among African-Americans by combining direct action and self-defense.

Initially established in 1962, RAM grew from a Philadelphia-based study/action group to a network of cadres organized in tight-knit cell structure within a few short years. Members of RAM, many of them students, published a regular newsletter, infiltrated mainstream organizations, established rifle clubs and taught armed and unarmed self-defense classes to its youth wing.

According to Ahmad, who served as the National Field Chairman and now teaches at Temple University, RAM had about 4,000 members spread across the country. Though an underground organization, RAM was connected to other groups, from the Harlem-based Organization of Afro-American Unity to Mississippi's Deacons for Defense.

### Sowing the wind

While these organizations all suffered from infiltration and political repression, this book also points out key strategic mistakes. The radicalization of SNCC, for instance, drew activists further away from its base in

the South, raising the call for Black Power in the North without continuing the day-to-day task of organizing on the ground. Both RAM and the LRBW sought to build power in the North but faltered because of a lack of ideological unity among its organizers as well as discipline among the rank-and-file.

Ahmad also illustrates how the first Black Panther Party in New York in the summer of 1966 became a radical vehicle for black community activism and electoral participation. Though it spread to other cities, the Oakland's Black Panther Party for Self-Defense soon came to overshadow its namesake. While the BPP grew into the largest Black Nationalist organization, its structure did not allow for a separation of military and political activities. It also failed to build on the "successful military experience" of groups that had consistently practiced armed self-defense.

In spite of these strategic failures, these organizations were able to make great strides because of their links an older generation of activists. With short biographies of movement elders like Queen Mother Audley Moore and Ella Baker, Ahmad shows how young activists learned under the tutelage of those more experienced and in turn mentored a younger generation. Woven throughout the book, this focus on intergenerational organizing is probably the most useful lesson for today's activists.

With an eye to the present, Ahmad suggests that the crack cocaine epidemic and the War on Drugs have both cut into "the potential recruitment base for revolutionary political activity" and created "an ideological and organizational gen-

eration gap between the young hip-hop generation and the 'old school' generation of movement leaders." Where students played a key role in earlier movements, Ahmad argues that it is their absence that has led to the stagnation of groups like the National Black United Front and the Black Radical Congress. According to Ahmad, it is the youth who will have to carry forward the struggle, most likely through the movement for reparations.

Though this book offers a number of compelling historical lessons, sloppy editing hinders the clarity of its analysis. Organized thematically, the book too often repeats events in later chapters, rather than providing a smooth chronology. In spite of these rough edges, Ahmad's text is accessible and the story he tells offers many important lessons for the future.

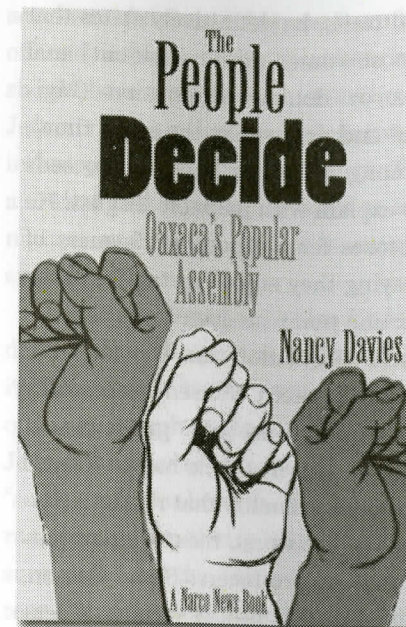
—Toussaint Losier

## DIRECT DEMOCRACY

**THE PEOPLE DECIDE:  
OAXACA'S POPULAR  
ASSEMBLY**  
BY NANCY DAVIES  
Narco News Books, 2007

For five months a little corner of the globe called Oaxaca was free. A non-violent movement rose up, deposed the local tyrannical government, and replaced it with a popular assembly—all without firing a single shot.

What happened in Oaxaca in 2006 and how the APPO's continuing struggle plays out is crucial to revolutionary anticapitalists everywhere because it is an example of what could be. Governments have



more firepower than those "below and to the left" could ever hope for, and still Oaxacans managed to take their lives back from a brutally repressive regime for five months. *The People Decide* tells how they did it, armed only with sticks, stones, the occasional Molotov cocktail, and a participatory decision-making process.

While the corporate media chased street battles, Davies followed the real story: how a striking teachers' encampment transformed into a popular assembly that governed much of the state by direct democracy. Her articles are republished as they ran in Narco News during the uprising, giving the reader the feeling of being there as it happened.

Declaring that "no leader is ever going to solve our problems," the APPO encouraged the formation of popular assemblies at all levels of society: neighborhoods, street blocks, unions, and towns. The assemblies function by indigenous "uses and customs," traditional consensus-based governing mechanisms. As with the Zapatistas, leaders govern

by obeying the will of the people. Any leader who fails to do so is quickly removed, as has happened to a few APPO members.

Above all, the APPO is a lesson in solidarity. Whereas after four days of struggle in Seattle during the WTO protests some leaders and spokespeople of various organizations publicly denounced one another's tactics, the APPO stands strong and has never taken the focus off of its goals, no matter how ugly the situation has become. The assembly consistently declares its solidarity with Oaxacans in the struggle, its dedication to continue its civil and peaceful struggle, and its condemnation of violent police and paramilitary attacks against them. It also counts every disappeared, murdered, and arrested person and never allows them to be forgotten.

For such a diverse organization, it's amazing that the APPO never devolved into splitting hairs over the definition of a "peaceful" struggle, an obsession over tactics that is divisive and often distracts from social movements' true aims. While young people filled bottles to make Molotov cocktails and old ladies piled stones into shopping carts to defend against police and paramilitary attacks, the APPO has never threatened violence against its enemies and therefore is not an armed struggle. On the contrary, it has practiced commendable restraint in the face of disappearances, torture, and murder. However, adherents are not afraid to defend themselves and their barricades. When discussing violence in Oaxaca, the APPO always condemns the heavily-armed police and paramilitaries' disproportionately violent responses to peaceful APPO marches.

### Election day

Davies argues that APPO participants are united not by issues but by methods, by their desire to replace corrupt hierarchical governing structures with traditional face-to-face democratic assemblies that existed long before colonialism and capitalism forced themselves upon Oaxaca. In this sense, the APPO represents a significant threat to neoliberalism globally. After all, if the hierarchical governing structures that maintain capitalists' control over people and natural resources can be defeated and replaced by truly democratic assemblies in one state, why not the rest of the world?

Alternative media has played an essential role in Oaxaca, which is why some of the most critical battles between APPO supporters and the police and paramilitaries have occurred at independent media centers. When the teachers' radio station Radio Planton was lost to a police attack, students took over their university radio station to keep the struggle on the airwaves. APPO members used it to broadcast meet-up points for marches, it was the best source of rumor control, and it coordinated transportation services after the governor shut down public transport.

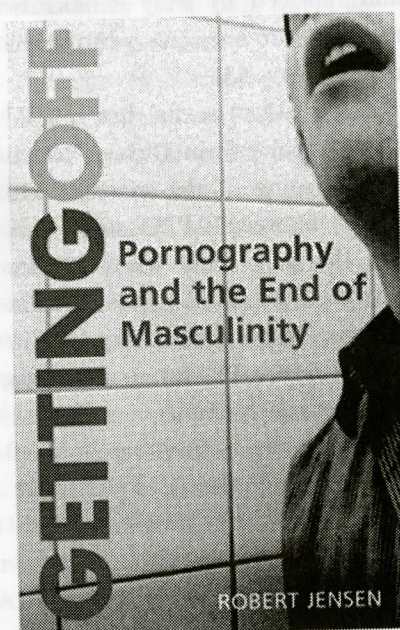
On election day in Oaxaca, people called Radio Universidad with reports of election fraud. In response, crowds quickly surrounded the contested polling places, effectively preventing attempted ballot-stuffing by state police and refusing to allow ballots to leave until observers from all parties were present. Rather than attempting to influence the elections (the APPO rejects electoral politics), they used the fraud as a rallying cry



and a show of strength so that Gov. Ruiz could not deliver his promised million votes to his party's presidential candidate.

The APPO's struggle should be carefully studied and fiercely defended because of its global ramifications. As George Salzman states in the Appendix, "The *form* of the struggle and the *form* of organizing social life...is the key that the indigenous peoples of Oaxaca and the APPO offer the world. It is not a struggle for power over others, but one to end power relationships."

—Kristin Bricker



## DIFFERENT DISGUISE

**GETTING OFF:  
PORNOGRAPHY AND THE  
END OF MASCULINITY**  
BY ROBERT JENSEN  
South End Press, 2007

This book gave me a stomachache. For about 50 pages, I almost believed the man was making pow-

erful connections for me. And then I kept reading.

Jensen, who is a white male academic and the author of the recent book *The Heart of Whiteness* begins by placing pornography in the context of patriarchy, racism and systemic violence. Jensen honors the feminist tradition of connecting the personal to the political with vulnerable stories of his attempts at being an "alpha-male" and his reflections on his life as a man in a woman-hating culture. He implores other men to stop struggling to be "King of the Hill" and let go of their dominance, crediting feminist women such as Catharine MacKinnon and Andrea Dworkin as inspirations. He critiques patterns of violence and imbalance in heterosexual relationships and sexualities. And then, Jensen descends into the worst of the worst of anti-porn, anti-sex criticism.

*Getting Off* proports to focus on the "commercial heterosexual pornography industry," but proceeds to make sweeping statements and tough indictments of all pornography and of "the pornographers," as Jensen frequently calls porn producers. The middle section, entitled "Pornography" expends a significant word count recounting scenes from mainstream porn featuring acts such as double penetration and anal sex, as well as verbal abuse and some physical pressure. He quotes the women acting out fantasies that he sees as degrading, and points out the reflection of mainstream misogyny in the films, imploring men to "look in the mirror."

As Jensen buries himself in rhetoric claiming that he does not want to control or objectify women, nor to judge them based on their exter-

nal traits, he definitively states that "most women do not seek out" anal sex or double penetration (vaginal and anal sex at the same time), among other sex acts he proceeds to explain with palpable disgust. He accuses female porn performers of "saying they enjoy" certain sex acts. At one point he even hints that female ejaculation may or may not be real (ouch). Jensen successfully manages to use his "pro-feminist" pages to insert subtle hatred toward women's sexuality that rivals the hatred of the worst, most woman-hating porn producers. Same demon, different disguise. I wonder if Jensen needs his own long look in the mirror.

He also doesn't mince words regarding male sexuality. According to Jensen, "men typically consume pornography specifically to avoid love and affection" (one of many assumptions he draws based on limited objective information) and, to quote one of his chapter titles, "We are what we masturbate to."

### Transsexual menace

Here are some questions Jensen might have taken on, but doesn't: Why do so many men fantasize about power play? What about when women want to play with power? What is the role of sexual repression in encouraging a misogynistic porn industry to thrive? What about consensual fantasy and BDSM as valid aspects of healthy sexuality? How does anti-porn activism affect queer and feminist pornographers and feed into conservative movements against us? As he critiques the misogynistic ways that women are depicted as "sluts" and "whores," Jensen also implies his belief that women who would want to engage in certain sex

acts are "sluts" and "whores"—and offers no critique of why those words should have a negative connotation. Jensen's criticisms of an exploitative industry fall short in the absence of a critical look at sexuality itself as a natural and varied part of human experience.

A chapter towards the end addresses what the purpose of sexuality itself might be—a pretty daring question to explore, if not a wise one. Jensen takes issue with the idea that "sexual acts can be detached from a real person" or that physical pleasure could be the thing that matters about sex, claiming that these ideas feed into patriarchy. He also concedes "there are psychoanalytic theories about fetishes" that he finds too complicated to comprehend, and anyhow, he finds "something sad about it." The sex educator in me is completely through with Robert Jensen at this point, though the feminist boy may still be willing to listen.

In conclusion, *Getting Off* suggests working for an end to masculinity and to male identity entirely—a clever idea, if only he had managed to mention even once the transgender activists and gender justice movements who have long been developing nuanced analyses of masculinity, men, and the concept of an "end of gender." It never ceases to amaze me how so many people who study gender still manage to avoid the "transsexual menace" in their writing and analysis.

Jensen is a clever writer and his book is an easy read with some shining moments. He speaks lucidly about the deep interest men have in undoing a system that dehumanizes them by making them into well-trained oppressors in ways that can

extend into the intimate and sexual. He attempts a look at racism in pornography, an aspect of the debate many shy away from. In a favorite tangent of mine towards the end, he suggests that perhaps "patriarchy is not a successful adaptation in evolutionary terms and will lead to the extinction of the species." That's pretty juicy stuff.

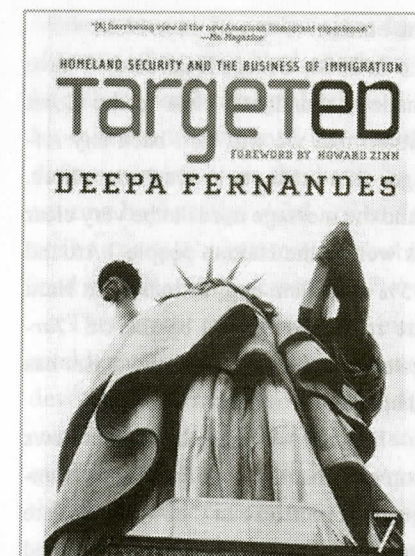
Still, I couldn't help but question what, after years of women's debate on the issue, this particular book taking down pornography has to offer that is different and new? Is it just another case of a member of a privileged group capitalizing on an oppressed group's struggle? For all his talk about ending manhood, is Jensen's own manhood the whole reason this book matters? My transgender shoulders shudder to think.

—Lewis Wallace

## VOICES OF IMMIGRANTS

**TARGETED: NATIONAL  
SECURITY AND THE  
BUSINESS OF IMMIGRATION**  
BY DEEPA FERNANDES  
Seven Stories Press, 2006

This book finds Fernandes (host of WBAI's radio show Wakeup Call) taking on the topic of immigration policy. It's one that she has explored in some depth in her work as a radio journalist. *Targeted* reveals historical patterns that have shaped policies in the US today, along with the ways immigrant lives are impacted by these policies. It examines how capitalism and white supremacist thought mingle to create a world where people gain political and financial power by criminalizing and terrorizing immigrant communities.



Fernandes explores many facets of immigration, threading together excerpted interviews, statistics, historical background on immigration policy, anecdotes of her travels, and additional research. She divides the book into two parts. Part one looks at "immigration tracks," while part two explores "primary forces driving immigration policy in the United States."

In a passage from part one, the author relates the story of a Haitian-born man who enlisted to fight in the Iraq War after having been promised citizenship. He is later betrayed by his supervisors and eventually deported to a prison in Haiti. Each immigration track reveals its labyrinthine qualities. Many immigrants end up in prison indefinitely or deported back to circumstances that they previously had tried to flee. Promised trials get deferred, minimal convictions (fishing without a license is one example) halt the path to documentation, and bosses turn on the people upon whose work their wealth depends. Other accounts relate how student and worker programs let universities and companies profit while placing restrictions on immigrants' daily lives, and how Customs and Border patrol officials terrorize those crossing



the border.

In 2004, George Bush said, "I have made it abundantly clear to the Coast Guard that we will turn back any refugee that attempts to reach our shore. And the message needs to be very clear as well to the Haitian people." Around 95% of asylum applications from Haiti are routinely rejected by the US. *Targeted* examines closely how racism has shaped these trends.

Fernandes's research and interviews convey what the cold and abstract language of policies can't: how families are torn apart and how people are exploited by a system with no accountability to those impacted the most.

In part two, the author takes her investigative journalist skills to the topic of the immigration industrial complex. She excels at providing details to illustrate its machinery, showing how prisons and detention centers, new and complicated surveillance gadgets, and deals cut between DHS and corporations all connect with each other, held aloft by talk of "security." Her chilling research on white supremacists and their ties to Congresspeople, like Tom Tancredo (Republican—Colorado) proves an upsetting and engaging read.

### Social justice

*Targeted* also relates specific instances where technology serves racist ideology. In one example, a white supremacist vigilante in California develops a twenty-pound wooden robotic flying machine meant to roam the border regions, detecting through heat sensors the movement of people crossing. Fernandes points out that these vehicles echo a model of unmanned drones developed by the Israeli military, prompting the reader to consider how the targeting of immigrants in the US border regions reflects violent policing of

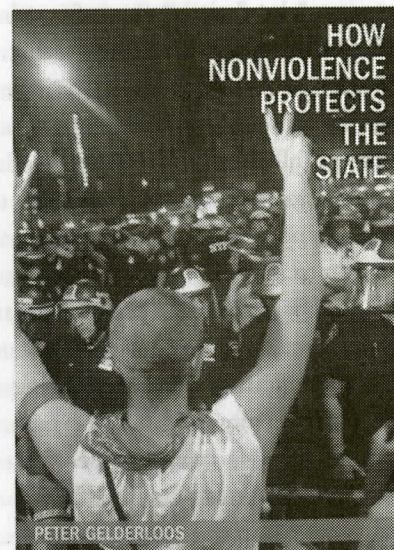
borders around the world.

The sheer number of facts and narratives, as well as "on location" places cited, make this book dizzying to read, yet well-organized. In providing details of her own life, the author shares her processes of self-education, as well as her struggles as an immigrant all too familiar with secondary inspection rooms. She debunks the idea that journalists must remain detached, neutral, and dispassionate. She does not hesitate to describe instances where her own preconceptions are unlearned, and where she becomes politicized from listening to people's stories. This makes the book especially engaging.

As Fernandes touches on how border policies have affected indigenous communities in North America, both in the south and north, it would be helpful to find out more. Also, though the book does not look at movements for immigrant rights, some writing on what immigrant-led organizing has focused on throughout US history and in recent years would add to the impact of the book.

In *Targeted*, Fernandes does away with the idea that immigration is a single, isolated issue. This book shows us that a vision of social justice should fully prioritize the voices of immigrants and make clear the connections between systems of oppression so that they can truly be fought.

—Vani Natarajan



## POOR ANALYSIS

**HOW NONVIOLENCE PROTECTS THE STATE**  
BY PETER GELDERLOOS  
South End Press, 2007

Gelderloos first published *How Nonviolence Protects the State* in 2005, and recently it was reissued. A short read at only 143 pages, he does make some interesting points. Gelderloos calls to task pacifists for their protest etiquette, specifically for serving as arms of the police and for mandating demonstration codes of conduct. He has scathing critiques for what he terms the "anti-war movement" as well as for the work to shut down the School of the Americas, the US military base training Latin American torturers. He also talks about strategy vs. tactics, something sorely missing in many discussions.

His thesis is 1) pacifists have a limited view of violence, 2) the terms violence and nonviolence only work to limit tactics and therefore effectiveness, and 3) without using the full range of tactics, victory isn't possible. In the introduction, Gelderloos immediately puts for-

ward that the idea of nonviolence is so pervasive that a real discussion of strategy and tactics is cut off. He further argues this cut off is necessary because pacifists don't have a good argument for nonviolence and only have hegemony due to falsified history and state complicity. Each chapter is titled after a supporting argument (e.g. Nonviolence is Ineffective, Nonviolence is Racist, etc.), and the last chapter is devoted to an alternative.

It is hard to argue against Gelderloos's main thesis. The contradictions, even hypocrisy seen at modern protests is undeniable. We are to believe the smashing of a Niketown in Seattle in 1999 was violent and therefore horrific. However, Medea Benjamin's statement subjecting not just anarchists, but all those arrested to the violence of the police was OK. There are simply countless stories like this from all kinds of protests. This is more than a source of anger for Gelderloos; it's a stumbling block for change in the US.

Gelderloos's anger is clear, however his analysis isn't. In none of the preceding chapters does he make the case. The problems start in the introduction with his definitions. He defines revolution as "a social upheaval with widespread transformative effects." World War II was a social upheaval, but I'm thinking Che talked about something different. He makes nonviolence a synonym for pacifism by defining both as, "a way of life or a method of social activism that avoids, transforms, or excludes violence...." There is a difference between a method and a way of life, but Gelderloos ignores this and therefore hamstringing his historical analysis.

Gelderloos does have a historical

section, but again the analysis doesn't hold up. In his look at the modern civil rights movement, he focuses on Martin Luther King, Jr. and then later the Black Panther Party, but doesn't mention the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC). King's religious coalition—the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC), founded in 1957—viewed nonviolence as a lifestyle to be adhered to religiously (no pun intended). SNCC, founded in 1960, was a contemporary of SCLC and viewed nonviolence as a strategy to be used as long as it worked. Both organizations were working in the same region, at the same time, in the same movement. What better opportunity to evaluate effectiveness. Gelderloos misses this. He merely mentions a 1970 poll showing Black pride in the Black Panthers.

### Bad taste

Unable to critically examine the history, Gelderloos opts for the paternalistic argument that the civil rights movement didn't win anything. He doesn't differentiate between the modern civil rights movement, which demanded equality, and the Black power movement, which demanded liberation. He simply says there was one civil rights movement that demanded equality and liberation, but didn't win it. He acknowledges the ending of legal segregation (Jim Crow), but de facto segregation exists so that's a wash.

In the same section, Gelderloos correctly points out that the current "anti-war movement" has been powerless despite everything it has done to affect the occupation of Iraq in any way. He places the blame on the reliance on nonviolence. He doesn't ask an obvious question, at least

obvious to me: If a movement isn't able to affect any kind of change, let alone reach its goal, should it be called a movement? He doesn't define movement in the book, so I assume he uses the word not to describe a societal phenomenon, but to lend importance to activity.

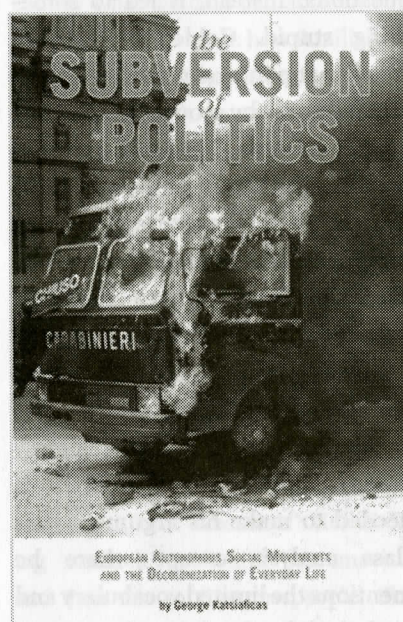
The most disappointing, even maddening, section of the book was devoted to patriarchy. I hoped for some interesting observations and questions. Instead, it led to something stupid. Gelderloos actually states that patriarchy can be "gradually overcome by groups that work to destroy it." A page later, he unintentionally explains that nearly every tactical or strategic discussion he's participated in was dominated by men. Now it makes sense. He's surrounded by men who (surprise!) are taking a "gradual" approach to gender liberation.

In the end, Gelderloos simply doesn't have the analytical tools needed to make his argument. His class analysis—except where he mentions the limited vocabulary and analytical development of poor people—is absent. When he does compare histories, he undermines his own argument. Gelderloos makes a good case that the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW) were mistaken to denounce sabotage and not speak out against WWI, since they were destroyed anyway. However, in comparing the union with the Galleanist, a group of Italian anarchists that conducted several bombings and other actions against the war, Gelderloos writes that they "did not fold as quickly as the Wobblies." It's just not enough to say we need to diversify tactics because it will take the government a few more weeks to destroy us.



Neither does Gelderloos effectively make a case for what should be. Even though the last section of the book is titled, "The Alternative," he doesn't mention one. He spends a sentence on community centers and gardens, but it's cotton candy without the sweetness. It's fluffy, insubstantial, and leaves a bad taste in one's mouth. In the end, that describes the book as well.

—Dan Horowitz de Garcia



## AGAIN THEY RISE

**THE SUBVERSION OF POLITICS: EUROPEAN AUTONOMOUS SOCIAL MOVEMENTS AND THE DECOLONIZATION OF EVERYDAY LIFE (UPDATED EDITION)**  
BY GEORGY KATSIAFICAS  
AK Press, 2006

Tony Judt, a well-regarded and reasonably liberal English academic, published a big, highly praised book two years ago entitled *Postwar: A History of Europe Since 1945*. Por-

ing through it, I found no mention of one of the most important political-cultural developments of the past 40 years: the rise and fall and rise of what are loosely grouped together as the European autonomous social movements. How could he have missed it?

From the late 1960s, the "autonomen" and related groups played a crucial role in the anti-nuclear movement, the women's movement, environmentalism, the struggle against skinheads and other racist and quasi-fascists groups, the fight for decent housing for workers and immigrants, the movement against corporate globalization, and perhaps a dozen other major struggles. Their characteristic methods of organizing—nonhierarchical, anti-authoritarian, often centered in squats and reclaimed community centers—explicitly rejected both the capitalist state and the Soviet Communist models. This third way spawned new autonomist movements in the US, informed the anti-globalization struggle identified with Seattle in 1999, and created the space for alliances with social movements of the poor and landless in developing countries that continue to this day.

Because they don't fit neatly into the usual oppositions—West vs. East, American vs. European brands of capitalism—mainstream historians like Judt tend to slice-and-dice the autonomists, allowing parts of their story to be represented by "Paris '68," the Red Brigades, and the anti-nuke movement. Their own story gets lost, seemingly confirming Margaret Thatcher's pronouncement that "there is no alternative" to the global capitalist monoculture that Washington and its corporate overlords are busily constructing.

Fortunately, Katsiaficas has just updated his 1997 book, *The Subversion of Politics*. It's still a flawed and partial telling of the social movements' story. But it brings them to life, situates them properly in their historical context, and spells out their accomplishments in detail. Anyone who wants to understand the foundations of the non-state politics that millions of activists have been practicing around the world in the decades since the autonomen's high-point will have to read it, because it's still the only work of its kind.

### Shock absorbers

How could all this have come out of "old Europe," the "dying" culture of the post-World War II years? Katsiaficas locates the autonomen's genesis in the crisis of identity that Europeans experienced at that time, from immigration; integration into the common market, and later, the European Union; and, in the 1970's, economic stagnation.

Philosophically, he sees the social movements stemming from personal opposition to the one-dimensional society rapidly taking the place of cultural diversity and what Habermas called the "colonization of the life-world." And he shows how these and other circumstances drove younger activists to create new, grassroots ways of organizing that neither the state nor the Eurocommunists of the time could understand or control.

"Autonomy is the political form appropriate to postmodern societies," Katsiaficas writes. Tactically, the social movements worked to create a new model of street-level activism that didn't fall into the traps of either narrowly defined nonviolent civil disobedience or urban terror-

ism. In part, this was necessary to create a common basis for action by women, youth, and minorities—increasingly, the "shock absorbers" of the new, precarious economy. But it also set the social movements apart from Germany's Green Party, which proposed to work for change from within the system, but many of whose members first became politically active in the context of the movements.

Katsiaficas doesn't ignore the problems that often tore the movements apart and which mirrored issues in the society at large: persistent sexism, racism, outbursts of violence. He criticizes the various autonomist clusters for failing to grasp how their different agendas could fit together, and for often allowing the more violent elements to take control in moments of crisis.

The downside of Katsiaficas's work is his somewhat narrow focus on the social movements in just two countries, Italy and Germany. The first was where they began, the second where they gained their most spectacular notoriety. But France, Denmark, the Netherlands, the UK, and other countries had significant movements as well, which deserve the same excellent treatment he gives the other two. And too much of his book is consumed in fighting unnecessary ideological battles. I strongly disagree with his argument that anarchism has nothing to do with the origins and development of the social movements, and with his wishful identification of them with a nebulous kind of autonomist Marxism. I could also do without the lengthy critiques of Antonio Negri and Seyla Benhabib that weigh down the later sections of the book. The space could have been better

used for, say, a deeper discussion of the actual street tactics of the autonomen, which get very little attention here.

But Katsiaficas has identified and given back to us the first 20 years of a movement that's still in the midst of creating a new relationship between the individual and community. "The goal of autonomous social movements is the subversion of politics, the decolonization of everyday life and civil society, not the conquest of state power," he writes. Mainstream historians may continue to deny their existence, but his book makes it impossible.

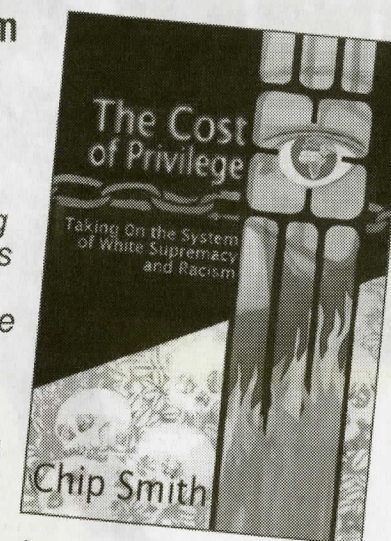
—Eric Laursen

## THE COST OF PRIVILEGE

**Taking on the System of White Supremacy and Racism**

By Chip Smith

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—Komozi Woodard

Professor of History, Public Policy and Africana Studies, Sarah Lawrence College

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