

# REVOLUTIONARY WORKER

Voice of the Revolutionary Communist Party, USA

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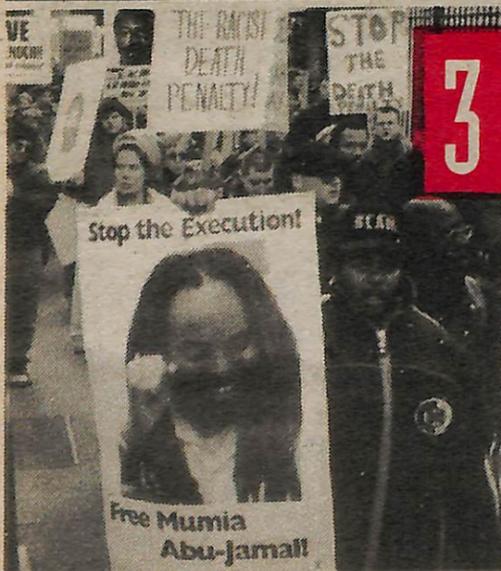
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The Truth About Right-Wing Conspiracy . . .



. . . And Why Clinton and the Democrats Are No Answer

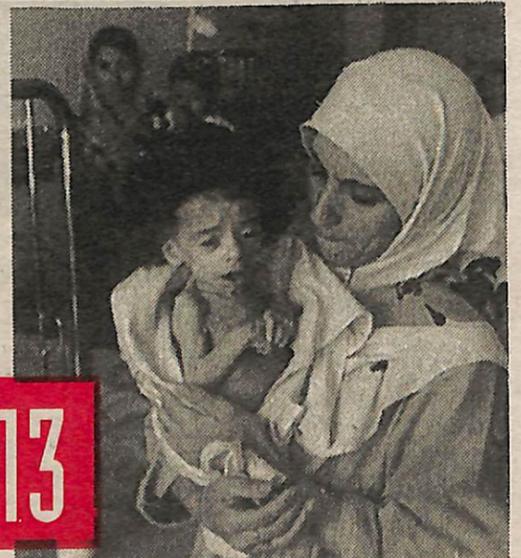
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Stop the Sanctions!

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As of November 15, 1998 Chairman Gonzalo (Abimael Guzmán) has been held in isolation for...

## 6 Years, 32 Days

In October 1992, Chairman Gonzalo—leader of the Maoist Communist Party of Peru—was sentenced to life imprisonment by hooded military judges of the U.S.-backed regime in Peru. The fascist regime in Peru is holding this revolutionary leader of the Peruvian people under very brutal conditions in an underground concrete dungeon at a naval base. He is being denied visits by lawyers, doctors and relatives and deprived of proper medical care and reading materials. Peru's President Fujimori has publicly threatened to execute Chairman Gonzalo and boasted of applying psychological torture on him. Fujimori changed Peru's constitution to legalize the death penalty, which could be used against Chairman Gonzalo and other revolutionary prisoners. The Peruvian regime must be prevented from killing Chairman Gonzalo through the death penalty or by other means.

Fujimori has repeatedly claimed that Chairman Gonzalo has made a call for negotiations from prison. In this situation, what possible excuse can Fujimori now offer for continuing to deny Comrade Gonzalo independent contact with lawyers, doctors and friendly and neutral visitors from outside the prison in a way that meets the basic international standards for treatment of political prisoners and prisoners of war? It is vitally important for people in Peru and around the world to hear what Chairman Gonzalo's views are from Chairman Gonzalo himself—directly and unimpeded. This heightens the urgency of the fight to create an international political climate which compels the Peruvian government to grant access to Comrade Gonzalo by his legal representatives and other friends who can meet and talk directly with him.

Support the People's War in Peru!

Support the Communist Party of Peru!

Defend the Life of Chairman Gonzalo,  
Fight to Break the Isolation!



# Chicago Youth Battle Eviction at Cabrini Green

AS WE GO TO PRESS—On Monday, November 16, a hearing is scheduled in court at which the City of Chicago will be pressing their case to set a date for the destruction of the Chicago Brigade House next to the Cabrini Green housing projects.

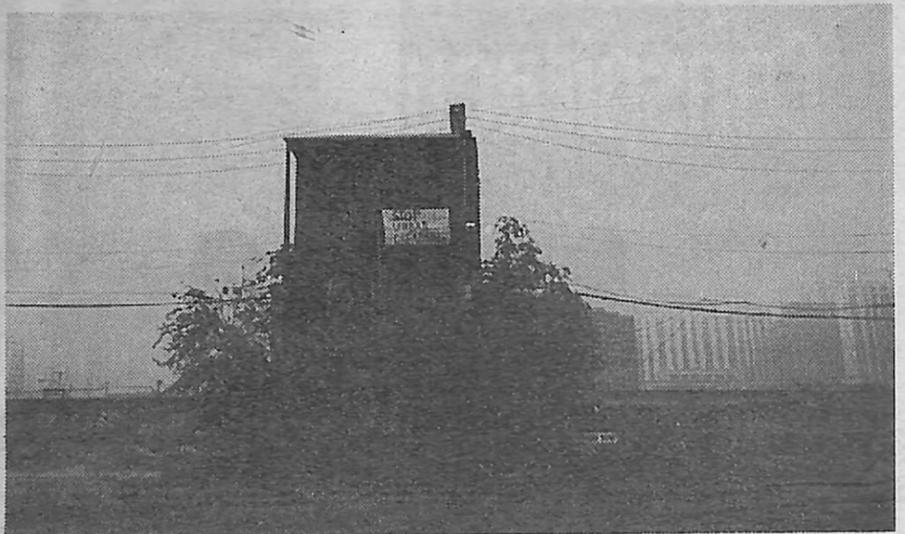
AK Small of the Chicago Revolutionary Communist Youth Brigade said: "This whole community is under attack. And the destruction of Cabrini is being used as a national model—a pattern for removing and dispersing oppressed people and offering up their communities to real estate developers and banks. The whole process puts profits first, and the people a distant second. We have seen them attack the projects here, but also small Black property owners and immigrant merchants. And now they are coming to destroy our Brigade House. This house is part of the people's resistance. And the fight to save this house has become a way people are taking on the oppressor now—not letting them just beat everyone down and drive everyone out."

Over 200 people in Cabrini have signed a statement of support for the Brigade House. (Please note: There was a typo in last week's RW #982. Our article on the Brigade House mistakenly reported that "20 people" had signed the statement of support. The correct number is 200.)

A press release of the "Ad Hoc Committee to Stop Police Brutality and the Displacement of Public Housing Residents" said: "This could be the last hearing before the City tries to move in the bulldozers!"

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Watch the RW for future developments in this important struggle. □



Chicago RCYB House.

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### Correction

In the "Future Is Ours" article (RW #982) two quotes were mislabeled. The remarks attributed to "Tershan, volunteer at Global exchange" were actually made by the "spoken-word artist, with Prophets of Rage." The remarks attributed to the "spoken-word artist, with Prophets of Rage" were actually told to the RW by a homeless man carrying the Coalition on Homelessness banner. □

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## Three Main Points

by Bob Avakian  
Chairman of the RCP, USA

What do we in the Revolutionary Communist Party want people to learn from all that is exposed and revealed in this newspaper? Mainly, three things:

1) The whole system we now live under is based on exploitation—here and all over the world. It is completely worthless and no basic change for the better can come about until this system is overthrown.

2) Many different groups will protest and rebel against things this system does, and these protests and rebellions should be supported and strengthened. Yet it is only those with nothing to lose but their chains who can be the backbone of a struggle to actually overthrow this system and create a new system that will put an end to exploitation and help pave the way to a whole new world.

3) Such a revolutionary struggle is possible. There is a political Party that can lead such a struggle, a political Party that speaks and acts for those with nothing to lose but their chains: The Revolutionary Communist Party, USA.

This Party has the vision, the program, the leadership, and the organizational principles to unite those who must be united and enable them to do what must be done. There is a challenge for all those who would like to see such a revolution, those with a burning desire to see a drastic change for the better, all those who dare to dream and to act to bring about a completely new and better world: Support this Party, join this Party, spread its message and its organized strength, and prepare the ground for a revolutionary rising that has a solid basis and a real chance of winning.

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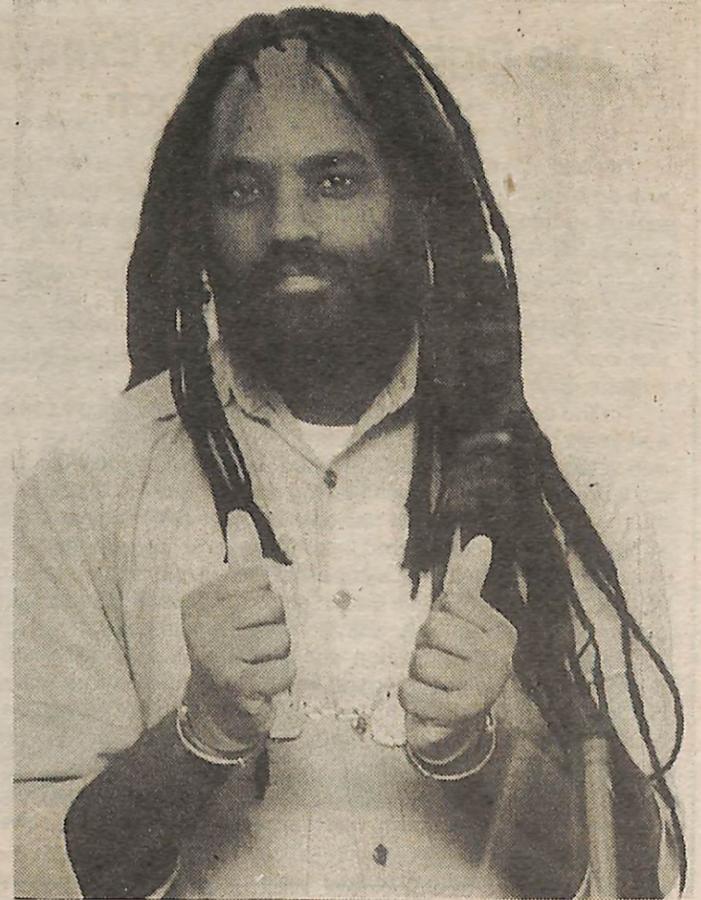
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## November 7th Actions Denounce Pennsylvania Court Decision

# In the Streets for Mumia Abu-Jamal



Mumia Abu-Jamal

Photo: C.O.C. Productions

On November 7, 2,500 people demonstrated in Philadelphia to protest the Pennsylvania Supreme Court's denial of political prisoner Mumia Abu-Jamal's appeal. Contingents were organized by students and youth from many places, including the University of Pennsylvania; anarchists from Philadelphia; Antioch College; Richmond, Virginia; Maine and New Hampshire. There were large contingents from Refuse & Resist! and the December 12th Movement. MOVE members carried a banner with a quote from their founder, John Africa. There were also members of Pro Libertad, an organization fighting to free Puerto Rican political prisoners; Academics for Mumia Abu-Jamal; the October 22nd Coalition to Stop Police Brutality; the Eddie Conway Support Committee; the Black Panther Collective; a number of groups who oppose the death penalty; and Worker's World Party. The International Action Center made hundreds of signs with Mumia's picture which were carried in a march that wound through the streets of downtown Philadelphia.

In the San Francisco Bay Area, 1,000 people took to the streets on November 7 in an action organized by the Mobilization to Free Mumia Abu-Jamal coalition. The urgency of Mumia's case drew a diverse crowd of youth, revolutionaries, activists and others. A high school teacher brought her class of 30 from an Oakland high school; people from the nearby projects joined in the march; carpools from Santa Cruz, San Jose, Fresno came. Speakers on this day included: Angela Davis; a member of Third Eye who read a statement from Assata Shakur; Amira Baraka (LeRoi Jones); Walter Johnson, secretary treasurer of the San Francisco AFL-CIO who is proposing a work stoppage for Mumia; Anna Brown, from Academics for Mumia Abu-Jamal; Jeff Mackler, Socialist Action; Campaign to End the Death Penalty; a representative of the Black Radical Congress; International Socialist Organization; Richard Becker (Workers World); statements were read from the Irish Socialist Party in Ireland and poet Adrienne Rich.

Demonstrations for Mumia took place on November 7 in many other cities including: Chicago IL, Ann Arbor MI, Austin TX, Bangor ME, Bloomington IN, Burlington VT, Gainesville FL, Louisville KY, Los Angeles CA, Madison WI, Missoula MT, Nashville TN, Portland OR, San Diego CA, San Francisco CA, Seattle WA, Calgary (Canada), Volta Redonda (Brazil), Amsterdam (Holland), Besangon (France), Hamburg (Germany), Marseille (France), Paris (France), Rome (Italy), Oslo (Norway), Strasbourg (France) and Cape Town (South Africa).

The following are excerpts from statements given at the rally in Philadelphia:

"I want to tell you first the good news. On the eve of this demonstration, and probably because of it, we heard yesterday from the governor's office that despite his public statements that he will sign a warrant for Mumia's execution as



RWOR photo

Philadelphia,  
November 7

soon as the Supreme Court rules he's now stating that he's really in no hurry. And that warrant will not be signed, we feel, immediately. But then there's the bad news and the bad news is this. Back in 1995 as we were about to go into court to seek a new trial, the governor's office contacted us and said they would not sign a warrant for Mumia's execution so long as we go into court. And on our way to court, Governor Ridge signed a warrant for his execution. So we can't trust the word of this governor. We can't believe whatever they're saying in Mumia's case and we have to remain vigilant...

"Where we go now—we will wait for the Supreme Court of Pennsylvania to reconsider their decision. We've asked them to take another look at it, that it is so obviously wrong they must re-examine the record and they will do that this month. And we will have a new decision before the end of November. And if they reject our position now, then we believe the governor very well might issue a warrant for Mumia's execution. If that happens, we will go into federal court and we will seek a stay of that warrant until we litigate in the federal courts of the United States.

"These courts have overturned 35 percent of all of the death cases coming out of the states in the United States. There would be over 5,000 awaiting execution in the United States instead of 3,500. And the pro-death penalty forces knew this and in 1996 after the Oklahoma City bombing case they restricted these federal judges. So now they can't conduct the independent review that Mumia's case needs. And we're going to argue that that law is unconstitutional. And we're going to wait and see what a federal court will do.

"But your presence, your strength, your outcry is going to be very critical to what happens when we're in federal court. Don't think you don't matter. In 1972, the United States Supreme Court threw out

the death penalty and 600 people who were waiting for execution were freed from death row. Why did it happen in '72? It happened in '72 because the civil rights movement was strong, the anti-war movement was strong, the women's movement was strong, the environmental movement was strong and the Native People's movement was strong.

"Your voice in the case of Mumia is going to be a very critical voice in the '90s as we seek once again to stop the insanity of the state killing and halt the executions not just of Mumia, but all 3,500 on death row. And we should be mindful today as we stand with Mumia that Brother [Tyrone] Gilliam in Delaware faces execution within the next 10 days and he, like Mumia, never received a fair process. His execution must be stopped as well. So it's important that we come together. It's important that our strength grow. It's important that we remain united. And it's important, above all, that we free Mumia. Thanks for your support."

Leonard Weinglass, Attorney  
for Mumia Abu-Jamal

"As long as the people have not accepted defeat, neither will we. So I would like to encourage you to stay strong and to continue the fight until Mumia is victorious. It is an outrage that the courts continue to ignore blatant evidence, continue to play legal games with our lives. This insanity is a huge insult not only to those of us who remain unjustly imprisoned but to all of you who dedicate your life to our freedom and are ignored by the corporate owned justice system and media.

"I want to encourage supporters to intensify the struggle for Mumia's life. I know that you can stop this execution because no matter how evil a government may be, they cannot defeat the power of the people. Your work and help is needed more than ever. We must now live and breathe Mumia's case 24 hours a day. If we are able in unity to stop the execution of Mumia Abu-Jamal, we are not only saving the life of a man who speaks for those who are not often heard and whose stories are rarely told, but you are saving all of us who remain unjustly behind bars

Continued on page 4



Philadelphia, November 7

Photo: Y.K. Lum

## The Fight to Stop the Execution of Willie Enoch

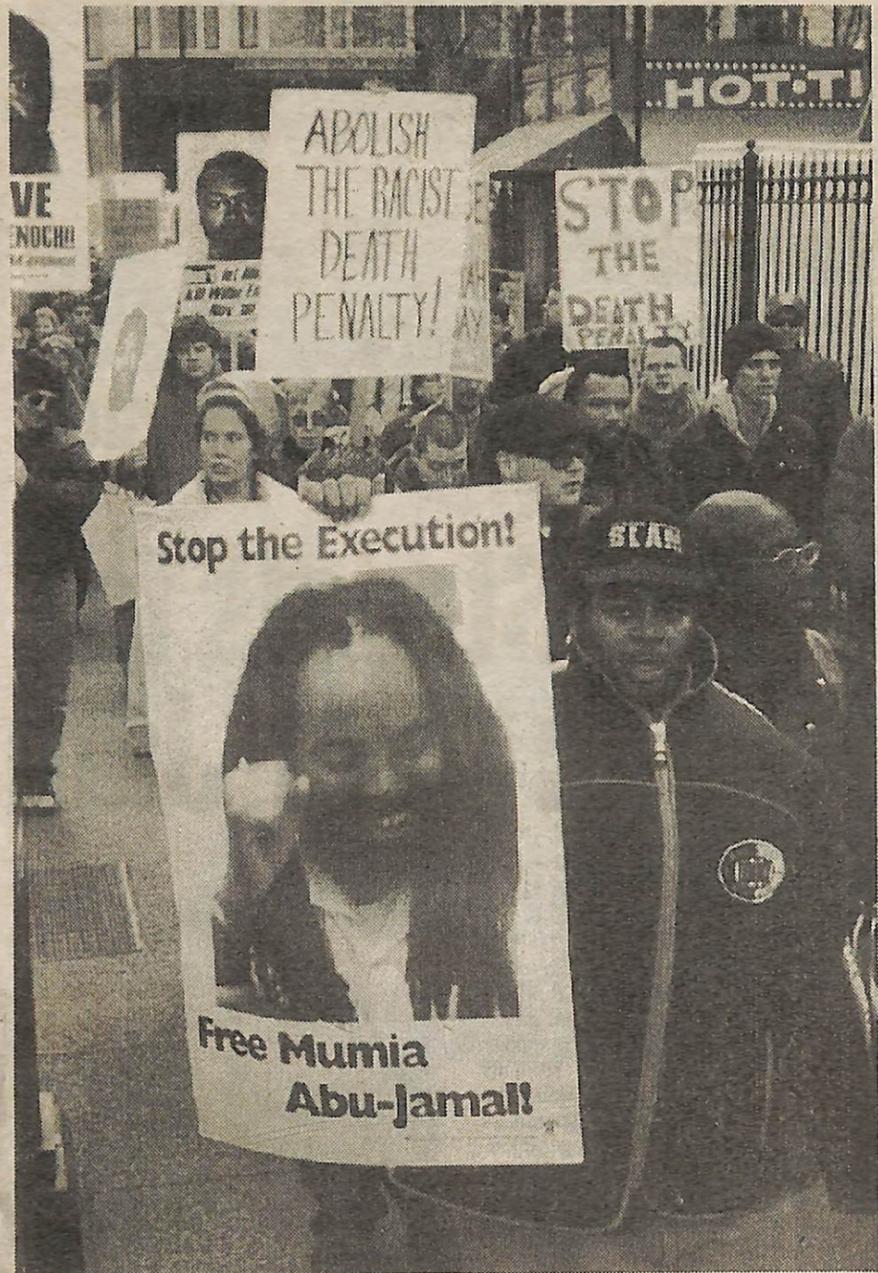
"If I told you that a fellow was about to be executed who had a lawyer with no capital experience. If I told you that, that lawyer failed to file a motion so that his appeal was rendered useless, you would say that's an outrage. That's the case of Willie Enoch.

"If I told you that no appellate court ever listened to Willie's claims of innocence, you would say that's an outrage. And that's the case of Willie Enoch. If I told you that the Chief Justice of the U.S. Supreme Court says that innocence is not a constitutional issue, you would say that's an outrage. But that's the case of Willie Enoch."

"In the case of Willie Enoch, the state, after dragging its heels for years and years, finally agreed to perform DNA testing, to determine if the blood and sweat on the shirt was the blood and sweat of Willie Enoch, and they did it in secret. They wouldn't let the defense see the test. They wouldn't share with the defense the raw data from the test. They announced the test in an inquisitorial chambered hearing that is so contrary to due process and justice. And it is on that evidence that the citizens of the state of Illinois will witness the death of Willie Enoch unless, unless we rise up and say to the governor and say to the courts, do not kill on the basis of secret science..."

"I can't stop this execution with all the papers and lawyering in the world if you don't tell the governor and you don't tell the justices of the court there is no secret science. You have the power to stop this execution and you have the power to do justice. I am only a lawyer, you are the people. And the people can make justice."

Jed Stone, speaking at the Chicago November 7 Rally for Mumia Attorney for Willie Enoch, who is scheduled to be executed November 18, 1998



Chicago, November 7

RWOR photo

## In the Streets for Mumia

Continued from page 3 from the depths of hopelessness.

**"Free Mumia Abu-Jamal In the Spirit of Crazy Horse, Leonard Peltier"**  
Political Prisoner Leonard Peltier

"We're going past the site where police brutality happened to Mumia. And like Mumia says, the only reason why he's on death row now is because he survived. The only reason why my sister Ramona Africa did seven years in jail is because she survived. The only reason why I've got brothers and sisters doing 30 to 100 years in jail is because they survived. But what we're here to say to this government, you ain't surviving... We are organizing, and again, you ain't got enough goddamn jails. You ain't got enough darned graveyards to stop this movement."

Pam Africa, MOVE and International Concerned Family and Friends of Mumia Abu-Jamal

"The fact that the state will once again seek to take your life sickens me. I remember the descriptions of the terrible treatment prisoners receive when placed in Phase II. Amnesty International will be calling upon its members worldwide, a million of them, to campaign to stop your execution."

From a letter to Mumia written by Pierre Sanfje of Amnesty International, read by Julia Wright

"I watched you gazing pensively a few months ago through the bars of President Mandela's former political prisoner's cell... Mr. Clinton, there is a man in your shadow, a man past your quality, a leader as beloved as Martin Luther King, as beloved as Malcolm X. He stands in the same cell, only it is not on Robben Island, it is here. That man was presumed guilty

simply because he was of color, because color is the open sesame for death row."

Julia Wright, daughter of author Richard Wright

"It was a political decision, a political decision made at the highest levels in this country to attempt to carry through the execution of Mumia Abu-Jamal. And we have to seriously understand that. They have thrown the gauntlet down. They are saying we are going for it. And therefore that means that our movement has to go to a new and higher level... In the words of the late Mario Savio, who led the Free



San Francisco, November 7

RWOR photo

Speech Movement in Berkeley in the 1960s, sometimes the operation of this system becomes so odious to people of conscience that they have no choice but to throw their bodies into the gears of the machinery and bring it to a halt!"

Clark Kissinger, Refuse & Resist!, contributing writer for *Revolutionary Worker*

"Mumia's been on death row since 1981 but he hasn't stopped struggling. Mumia has continued to give voice to the people who are under attack from this system. Mumia has continued to speak out against police brutality, against racism, against homelessness, against people being impoverished under this system. We need Mumia out here with us helping to organize people to resist the abuses of this system. Look at how much Mumia has accomplished from under the bowels of death row. Look at how he continues to speak out. Think of how much more he can do when we get him out here with us, when we free our brother from jail, when we stop this execution and when we bring Mumia back out on the streets... Sisters and brothers, we have a responsibility here. This system has signaled its determination to try to go ahead and murder Mumia. We have to be just as determined that we ain't gonna let 'em get away with that because that would be another crime by this criminal system. So I say to you sisters and brothers, Mumia ain't criminal. It's this system that's criminal. Free Mumia! The system is the problem and revolution is the solution!"

Carl Dix, National Spokesperson, Revolutionary Communist Party

"I am the father of the 13-year-old boy who was shot and killed by a housing police officer. He was playing with a toy gun. I am here today to support free Mumia. And it's important that we organize and get ourselves together. I have been fighting and struggling for my son for the last four years. There is no justice in this system. There is none at all. The justice that is in this system is between us ourselves. We have to fight ourselves for justice for our children and for our families... It is important that we get this brother Mumia free because he has a powerful voice in society today and his voice is nothing but truth. And truth is power and that's why they are refusing to release this man."

Nicholas Heyward, Parents Against Police Brutality and October 22nd Coalition Against Police Brutality, Repression and the Criminalization of a Generation

"This man has spent his life fighting for us. Since before many of us were even born, Mumia Abu-Jamal has been speaking for us, fighting for us, looking out for us, and people deserve to know that. And people deserve to know that there's a highly organized, well financed movement that's trying to take this man's life from us. They deserve to know this because most of all they deserve to have a say in this. They deserve to have a chance to fight for Mumia Abu-Jamal like we've already seen so many young people do once they find out what he's about. They need to know that this man stood for them and that his face is the true face of justice."

Jana, Refuse & Resist! Youth Network

"I bring with me the demand of the Honorable Louis Farrakhan that Mumia Abu-Jamal get a fair trial, that Mumia Abu-Jamal be freed today because to keep him in the jail only points out the real criminals that you and I are dealing with today."

Representative from Nation of Islam in Philadelphia

"I was fortunate enough to go up to the prison on last Sunday to see Mumia and he is strong. He is strong because he knows that you're here. He's strong because he knows that you'll carry on the struggle for him when he cannot... The family is here that can be here. We're here to walk with you and march with you, but we couldn't do it without you. We appreciate you. We respect you. Thank you."

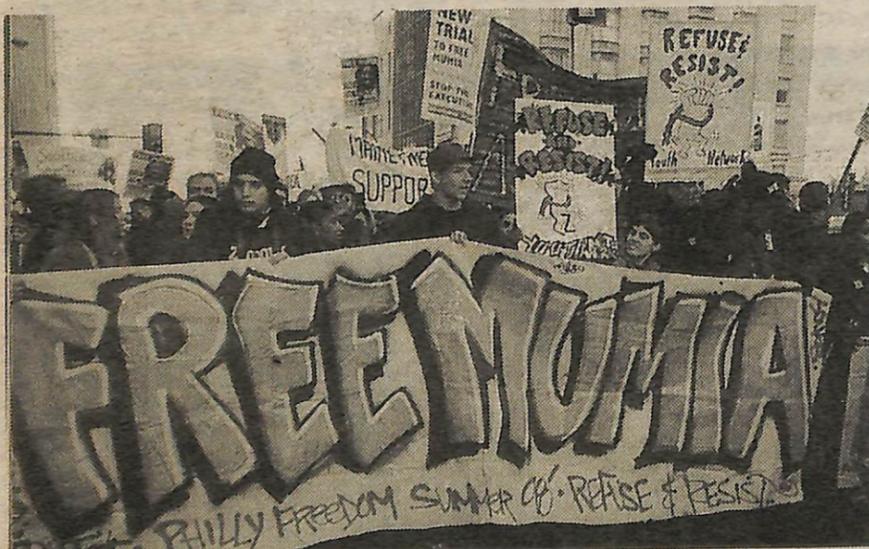
Lydia Barashanga, Mumia's sister

"All we're asking is justice. If we can't get justice, we gonna do what we gotta do to get it."

Lateefa, Mumia's daughter

"We have to close the door on executions in this country. We have to close the door on their moves to execute Mumia Abu-Jamal. And we can't just continue to just talk about it, we must do something about it. And we're going to make it heard and understood clearly that this will not happen. That they will not execute Mumia Abu-Jamal. And they need to think before they do something that they cannot undo. Justice has to be served, the death penalty has to be fought and Mumia Abu-Jamal has to be freed!"

Safiyeh Bukhari, co-chair, New York Coalition to Free Mumia Abu-Jamal



Philadelphia, November 7

RWOR photo

50 cents when sold separately

# The Truth About Right-Wing Conspiracy . . . . And Why Clinton and the Democrats Are No Answer



There is in fact a right-wing conspiracy. There is a concerted effort by the Christian Right and those allied with it to "get" Clinton—to force him from office. But more essentially and more importantly, there is a determined, many-sided effort by powerful forces within American society to put into effect an aggressively reactionary and repressive political and social agenda. Despite its fervent condemnations of "Big Government," this program actually involves a broad extension of Big Brother intrusion into people's everyday lives and a police-state battering ram smashing down supposed Constitutional rights and protections. All this has been justified—and "sanctified"—through a highly orchestrated crusade for traditional values and a professed moral righteousness represented by old-time religion.

While, on the one hand, Clinton has been a target of the most undisguised and vociferous right-wing forces—and in particular those associated with "The Religious Right"—the truth is that, to a large degree, the Clinton Presidency has been about promoting, and implementing, much of this program and its "moral-religious" rationalizations. And, even where they have had real differences—and at times bitter conflicts—with the self-proclaimed Right, Clinton and the Democrats have continually given ground to the Right and increasingly accepted the terms set by the Right as the "common ground" on which to differ and contend.

This is not because of the much-discussed "realities of electoral politics." Nor is it merely because all mainstream politicians are beholden to powerful financial interests. More fundamentally, it is because those who occupy seats of political

power must, and can only, serve the economic and social system of which that political power is an extension. And, in the present period and the present "global environment," the requirements of the capitalist economic and social system not only demand that the lords of capital be able to carry out their supreme commandment, "let us prey," in a more unrestrained and more "mobile" way, on a world scale. They also demand, within American society itself, a slashing of major social programs and a heightening of the repressive powers of government, along with the fostering of a repressive social atmosphere. They demand what the organization Refuse and Resist! has called the politics of cruelty, or the politics of poverty, punishment, and patriarchy.

On this, the mainstream of the bourgeois body politic is in agreement, even while they differ and at times battle sharply over some of the terms, over the pace and the specific forms, with which to implement this politics—and the extremes to which it should be carried at any given time.

This whole politics can be opposed—very powerful opposition to it can be built—but it can only be done by refusing to be bound by the terms set by this system and the political framework within which all of its political representatives think and act. It can be done, not by trying to rely on Clinton and the Democrats, but by relying on and rallying the truly vast numbers of people who have a real interest in opposing this whole program—vast numbers of people among whom there is a stirring and a growing sense, if still largely undeveloped and untapped, that there is a need to stand up against and defeat this program.

## The Truth About Right-Wing Conspiracy

# A Presidency Under Fire from the Beginning

In the early stages of the "Monica Lewinsky scandal," Hillary Clinton made a foray into the media to proclaim that there was "a vast right-wing conspiracy"—which was not only behind the attacks on her husband then but which had targeted his Presidency from the start. This idea has been widely subjected to ridicule and criticism—including, not surprisingly, by those she was speaking of as the conspirators. And, as the "Lewinsky scandal" and the overall "Presidential crisis" has unfolded, the growing chorus from the powerful and influential has been that there should be more repentance and less accusation from the Clinton camp. But the question remains: Is there such a conspiracy? On one level, the answer could be given in single word: "Duh!" But it is necessary to get more deeply into what is represented by the contending political forces in the current "Presidential crisis" and where the interests of the people lie in relation to all this.

To begin with, it is worthwhile recalling the remarks of Jesse Helms, "Senior Senator from North Carolina"—and long-time father figure for southern lynch mob-ism—shortly after Clinton took office. Helms made statements to the general effect that Clinton was unworthy to be commander-in-chief of the armed forces; and Helms explicitly warned the President that he was so unpopular on the military bases in North Carolina that "Mr. Clinton better watch out if he comes down here. He'd better have a body guard." This was actually quite extraordinary, but what is very significant is that it was treated, by the mainstream media and the political establishment, as rather ordinary. Not only did Helms "get away" with this (and, after all, if such a public statement had been made by an "ordinary citizen," it would almost certainly have been pursued by the authorities as a criminal threat on the life of the President), but, in the aftermath of this, there was no reduction whatever in Helms's power or "prestige"—if anything just the opposite.

On the part of powerful forces grouped in and around the Republican Party, there has all along been not just intense opposition but seemingly visceral animosity toward Clinton and his Presidency—and a willingness to diminish the "stature of the Presidency" overall in order to go after the particular President—which has no parallel in contemporary U.S. history. (Even the crisis that brought down Richard Nixon did not involve, on the part of his establishment opponents, the kind of public displays of contempt for the President—and a certain delight in dragging the President, and the Presidency along with him, through the mud—as has been exhibited by Clinton's most fervent adversaries.) From the beginning of the Clinton administration, and not just in the latest crisis, the basic stance of these forces has been that Clinton is unfit for the office of President and the Clinton Presidency is "illegitimate." In short, there has been, on the part of these forces, a continuing attempt to "get Clinton"—to discredit him within ruling class circles and in his public image—aiming, at a minimum, to deprive him of political clout and initiative, and if possible to force him from office.

For a number of years now, and particularly over the past year, the Starr investigation has been a main vehicle for this effort—leading up to the present crisis, where the question of impeachment (or resignation to head off impeachment) has come directly and immediately on the agenda. Besides the obvious and well-documented connections between various "conservative" (or "ultra-conservative")

**EDITOR'S NOTE:** As pointed out in the following article, "In the aftermath of the recent elections...there seems to be an increased likelihood that Clinton will be able to finish out his term, that some resolution will be found which leaves him in office." A prominent "spin" that has been put on the elections is that they constituted a victory for the "moderate center"—as represented by the Republican Bush Brothers (governors of Texas and Florida) as well as Clinton.

This article examines the actual program that Clinton has advocated, and implemented, which in fact has much in common with the conservatives who are now being portrayed as "moderate." The article also examines the whole process in which the "center" of "mainstream politics" is continually being moved to the Right. It speaks to the issues involved in the very real conflicts "among those vying to run things" and why "these conflicts erupted into an acute and bitter confrontation" centering on the Clinton Presidency. It analyzes the dynamics underlying all this and the broader framework within which it is taking place—including major changes within American society and in world economics and geopolitics. Most importantly, the focus is brought back to the key question: "where the interests of the people lie in relation to all this."

forces driving the effort to oust Clinton, Starr himself has ties with a number of these forces, including not only Jesse Helms (and his colleague Lauch Faircloth) but also those linked closely with Linda Tripp and her agent Lucianne Goldberg, and with the Paula Jones lawsuit against Clinton. (The *NYT Magazine* article by Andrew Sullivan, mentioned below, describes a number of the links among the various "conservatives" who have taken aim at Clinton. Also extensively tracing many of these connections is "The Young Person's Guide to Vast Right-Wing Conspiracy," which appeared recently in a Chicago anarchist publication, the *Lumpen Times*.)

The Starr report itself, while it made legal arguments, was mainly, and rather overtly, crafted to "get" Clinton by embarrassing him politically (as well as personally). As noted by Clinton's defenders (and others as well), the Starr report—and its immediate dissemination through the various mass media—with all its "lurid and lascivious" detail, was aimed at creating a situation in which Clinton would be so discredited (or "disgraced") that he could no longer continue as President. (The reasons why Clinton's enemies were able to proceed in this way, and to get as far as they have, goes beyond and goes deeper than the fact that the Republicans have a majority in both houses of Congress—this is a question that will be returned to later.)

## What Is the Right Really After?

On one level, it might seem somewhat curious—or simply demented—that these forces have made Clinton a target in this way. As pointed out in a major article in the *New York Times Magazine*: "Bill Clinton, arguably the most conservative Democratic President since Truman, becomes, for these conservatives, the apex of 1960s liberalism. The fact that he balanced the budget, signed welfare-reform legislation, has shredded many civil liberties in the war against terrorism, is in favor of the death penalty and signed the Defense of Marriage Act is immaterial to his conservative enemies." ("The Scolds," *NYT Magazine*, October 11, 1998. As an indication of his own stance, the author of this article, Andrew Sullivan, not only makes a point of saying that "I still think [Clinton] should resign" but goes on to profusely praise Ronald Reagan and to contrast Reagan's "good" conservatism with the "bad" conservatism of those now seeking to "get" Clinton.)

To this list of "achievements" of the Clinton Presidency cited by Sullivan must be added, among other things, the escalation of the war on immigrants, including a further leap in militarizing the border with Mexico, a move to dismantle public housing, and aggressive support for an "anti-crime" policy that involves rampant police brutality and murder and the criminalization of a whole generation of young Black males (and increasingly females) as well as Latinos and others in the inner cities. Sullivan's article further elaborates: Clinton is "a President whose economic policy is designed to please bond traders, who bombs Sudan and Afghanistan without warning [and, it should be added, who continues the combination of 'economic sanctions' and the use as well as the threat of military attack against Iraq, which results in the deaths of thousands and thousands of Iraqis, especially children, every year] and who declares that the era of big government is over." And yet, as Sullivan puts it: in the view of his "conservative" adversaries, Clinton serves as "simply a cover for liberal radicalism." Again, and more sharply, the questions have to be posed: Why? And what are those leading this attack really after?

To get into this, let's return to the circumstances surrounding Jesse Helms's attack on Clinton at the start of his Presidency. This was the time when, right after assuming office, Clinton announced his "gays in the military" policy—which, for the first time, would have explicitly allowed same-sex rela-

tions among people in the military (a policy from which, before long, Clinton retreated, adopting instead the current "don't ask/don't tell" standard). Clinton not only appointed unprecedented numbers of Black people and other "minorities" and women to positions of prominence within his administration and to posts in the federal government overall; he not only made Maya Angelou the keynote poet of his first Inauguration; Clinton also appointed an unprecedented number of gay people to White House staff posts and nominated an openly gay person for an ambassadorship. And, reversing the stand of the two previous Presidents, the Clinton administration has opposed attempts to make abortion illegal, even while conceding considerable ground—in moral as well as political terms—to those determined to have abortion treated as a sin as well as a crime (about this, more later). Along with that, during the 1992 election campaign, while making clear his support for the mass slaughter in Iraq carried out by the Bush administration, Clinton did not repudiate his opposition to the Vietnam war, and in some aspects he has identified himself with cultural expressions that are broadly seen as an outgrowth of the '60s (as manifested in a number of ways during Clinton's inauguration and, in a lighter but not insignificant symbolism, Clinton's appearance on the Arsenio Hall show, playing the saxophone, during that Presidential campaign).

All this makes Clinton a symbol—as well as a foil—for the political leaders and forces who insist that "traditional morality," as embodied in the patriarchal family as well as "right or wrong" patriotism—and rationalized in terms of fundamentalist Christianity—must be the basis for maintaining the cohesion and solidity of American capitalist society and the dominant position of imperial America in the world arena. In the vision these people profess, contemporary America—not just the government but the society as a whole—is in cultural and moral decline. More, it is in danger of disintegration and destruction. It is an America that, as formulated in the title of a recent book by Robert Bork, is "Slouching towards Gomorrah."

As Andrew Sullivan characterizes it, the viewpoint of Bork—whose nomination for the Supreme Court touched off sharp controversy in Congressional hearings, with the result that Bork did not get the Supreme Court seat—has evolved from that of being "the prophet of judicial restraint" to the point where "The only hope, Bork posits, is 'the rise of an energetic, optimistic and politically sophisticated religious conservatism.'" Bork, and others like him, invoke the imagery and tone of Old Testament Prophets warning God's favored nation that, because it has deviated from the way of the Lord, it is incurring the Lord's wrath and stands on the precipice of devastation as the price of its sins. They argue that only a "moral revival"—based on what is proclaimed as a literalist-absolutist reading of the Bible and public policy dictated by such "biblical truth"—can save America from decline and damnation and preserve its position as the preeminent power in the world.

These people are deadly serious—and they are very powerful. During most of the current "Presidential crisis," they have had the initiative within the ranks of the conservatives and within the mainstream vehicle of openly conservative politics in America, the Republican Party. In the words of Andrew Sullivan: "even those conservative thinkers who still argue for a low-tax, small-government philosophy have been unable to make headway with their peers without cloaking their case in the austerity of moral revival." And while the very latest "conventional wisdom" is that this may no longer be the case—that, in the wake of the recent elections, "fiscal conservatism" is "in," as opposed to an emphasis on "social" conservatism and "morality"—a more sweeping analysis, looking beyond the pragmatic "spins" accompanying any immediate turn of events, shows that the advocates of "moral revival" have gained considerable ground over the past two decades, that they have succeeded to a considerable degree in setting the terms of the current "Presidential crisis," and that they continue to be a formidable force, highly connected and highly financed.

Starr's report on Clinton arriving on Capitol Hill in dozens of sealed boxes.



# Deeper, More Decisive Contradictions

Why have these forces—and why has “conservatism” generally—gained so much influence and initiative within the dominant structures and institutions of American politics? The Chairman of our Party, Bob Avakian, has spoken to this in some recent writings on morality:

“It is not surprising that, in the face of changes which tend to undermine or cause upheaval within [the prevailing capitalist] system—to say nothing of direct challenges to it—the ruling class of this society more aggressively asserts the authority of its ‘traditional morality’ along with sharpening and more ruthlessly wielding its swords of repression. Thus, it is not only William Bennett and other ‘Conservatives’ who are waging a holy crusade for ‘The Family’ and ‘Family Values,’ but they are joined and rivaled in this by the Democrats and ‘Liberals’ of the ruling class.

“The fact is, however, that in this crusade, and more generally these days, the ‘Conservatives’ have the initiative over the ‘Liberals.’ Why? There are a number of underlying factors: major geopolitical changes, in particular the disintegration of the Soviet bloc and the Soviet Union; changes in the world economy—involving the further internationalization of production and of speculative and other parasitic activity by capital—along with changes in the U.S. economy, including significant shifts in the composition of the work force away from ‘blue-collar’ jobs; and a huge increase in debt associated with the unprecedented U.S. military build-up during the 1980s (the cost of ‘winning the cold war’).

“So the waning of liberalism must be seen against a broad canvas. On the one hand, economic and social shifts—like ‘downsizing’ of industry and the decline of unions, suburbanization and the fracturing of the old-line urban political coalitions—have weakened the traditional social props of New Deal politics. On the other hand, intense global economic pressures and looming fiscal crisis are forcing drastic restructuring of government spending and social programs—this following years of restructuring in the private sector. This is an era of ‘lean and mean’ and ever more mobile capitalism. It is about cheapening production, depressing wages and benefit levels, and creating a more flexible and ‘disposable’ labor force. And it is about massively slashing New Deal/Great Society-type social spending—now decried as ‘unproductive cost burdens.’ (Wasn’t it the Democrat Clinton who coined the phrase, ‘end welfare as we know it’?) These and related factors have cut the ground from under the ‘New Deal consensus’ and the concessionary programs (‘war on poverty,’ etc.) which have been the basis for Democratic Party administration of capitalist rule in the U.S.

“At the same time, many of these same factors, together with the struggle waged by the women’s movement, have resulted in a situation where large numbers of women have not only the necessity but also the possibility of working outside the home. All this has been accompanied by a great deal of turmoil and upheaval, and one of its most important consequences has been that, from a number of angles and among various sectors of the population in the U.S., the basis of the traditional patriarchal family and the ‘traditional family values’ associated with it has been significantly eroded. And yet all these changes are taking place within the confines of the same system—on the same foundation of capitalist economic relations.

“This is potentially a very explosive contradiction, and in many aspects this explosiveness is already erupting....

“The polarization and bitter struggle around the right to abortion has been a concentrated expression of this. Clearly, the essence of the anti-abortion ‘movement’—which from its inception has been led and orchestrated from ‘on high’ (I am referring to the role of powerful ruling class figures, not the alleged inspiration from god)—has been to assert patriarchal control over women, including to insist on the defining role of women as breeders of children.” (From “Preaching From A Pulpit Of Bones: The Reality Beneath William Bennett’s ‘Virtues,’ Or We Need Morality, But Not Traditional Morality.”)

Clinton represents an attempt to deal with these acute and potentially explosive contradictions by giving a certain expression to “inclusiveness”—to “diversity” and “multi-culturalism”—while retaining and fortifying the white supremacist and male supremacist relations that are an integral and indispensable part of the structure of U.S. capitalism-imperialism. In line with this, Clinton

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has promoted a less absolutist version of the “traditional values” and the “Judeo-Christian tradition” which has justified and reinforced the exploitative and oppressive relations on which this system is built.

But, in the view of Clinton’s conservative and particularly his fundamentalist opponents, Clinton’s program will not work and will only undermine the historically established girdings of the system, both in its economic base and in the superstructure of politics, culture and ideology—it will lead to the unraveling of the legitimating social “consensus” and social “cohesion” necessary to maintain this system. And the fact is that there are today in the U.S. broad numbers of people who, yes, participated in or were influenced by the movements of the ‘60s and have a corresponding commitment to social justice and equality, and who are unwilling to go along with the notion that America has some inherent moral right and obligation to bully its way around the world and impose a world order under its domination. At the same time, there is the phenomenon that, in some important aspects, the

mentalism”—to resurrect a situation where worldwide exploitation that is unsurpassed in its brutality is at the same time “veiled by religious and political illusions.”

In this regard, there is a very interesting—and in some ways provocative—article, “The Erosion of American National Interests,” in *Foreign Affairs* magazine (September/October 1997), by Samuel P. Huntington, a “conservative” who criticizes Clinton particularly for his promotion of “multiculturalism” and “diversity.” Huntington warns that the “disintegrative effects” of the end of the Cold War (in particular, the “loss” of the Soviet Union as a powerful enemy and serious rival for world domination), compounded by multiculturalism and ethnic particularity within the U.S. itself, could lead to a lack of unity around “national interest” and undermine the necessary projection of American imperial power internationally. Huntington even goes so far as to say: “If multiculturalism prevails and if the consensus on liberal democracy disintegrates, the United States could join the Soviet Union on the ash heap of history.” Clinton’s Presi-



The memorial march for Matthew Shepard down Fifth Avenue, which was repeatedly attacked by NYC cops, October 19.

“recovery” of the U.S. economy that has taken place during the Clinton administration, and the more highly “globalized” and “flexible” production that has been a marked feature of this “recovery,” has also contributed to “undermining the traditional family.” And it has fostered the florescence of an outlook, particularly (though not exclusively) among more highly paid professionals, that involves no small amount of self-indulgence and, related to that, a weakening of some “traditional values,” including old-style patriotism and the willingness to sacrifice for the officially defined and proclaimed “national interest.”

In some significant ways, what was written 150 years ago in the *Communist Manifesto*, concerning the consequences of unfettered bourgeois commodity relations, is assuming a pronounced expression among sections of the U.S. population in the context of today’s “post-Cold War” world capitalism. The following phrases from the *Manifesto* have a particular and powerful resonance: “the bourgeoisie, wherever it has gotten the upper hand...has left remaining no other nexus between man and man than naked self-interest, than callous ‘cash payment.’ It has drowned the most heavenly ecstasies of religious fervor, of chivalrous enthusiasm, of Philistine sentimentalism in the icy water of egotistical calculation. It has resolved personal worth into exchange value.... In a word, for exploitation, veiled by religious and political illusions, it has substituted naked, shameless, direct, brutal exploitation.” There is a great irony here: the very “triumph” and “triumphalism” of capitalism in today’s circumstances has produced effects and sentiments which tend to undermine, among significant sections of the U.S. population, the willingness to make personal sacrifices for “god and country”—that is, for the interests and requirements of the imperial ruling class, within the U.S. itself and in the world arena. In reaction to this, the “conservatives,” with the Christian Right playing a decisive role, are attempting to revive and impose precisely “the most heavenly ecstasies of religious fervor, of chivalrous enthusiasm, of Philistine senti-

mentality is contributing to this, Huntington argues, because Clinton “is almost certainly the first president to promote the diversity rather than the unity of the country he leads.”

Andrew Sullivan points out that, in the view of Robert Bork and other like-minded “conservatives,” what is needed in order to bind together American society and prevent its disintegration or destruction “is either a fundamentalist religious revival, or a sobering great depression. (Bork seems to welcome both possibilities.)” And, adds Sullivan, another influential “conservative” writer, David Frum, advocates limiting government “not to expand personal freedom, but to so rob the middle class of financial security that they would have little choice but to return to the social mores of the 1950’s.”

*The words of the “Communist Manifesto” have a particular and powerful resonance: “the bourgeoisie, wherever it has gotten the upper hand...has left remaining no other nexus between man and man than naked self-interest, than callous ‘cash payment.’... In a word, for exploitation, veiled by religious and political illusions, it has substituted naked, shameless, direct, brutal exploitation.” Today, the conservatives are attempting to revive and impose “the most heavenly ecstasies of religious fervor, of chivalrous enthusiasm, of Philistine sentimentalism”—to resurrect a situation where worldwide exploitation that is unsurpassed in its brutality is at the same time “veiled by religious and political illusions.”*

NAT'L INTERESTS

## The Truth About Right-Wing Conspiracy

RIGHT WING NUTS

# A Lunatic Yet "Legitimate" — and Deadly Serious—Fascism

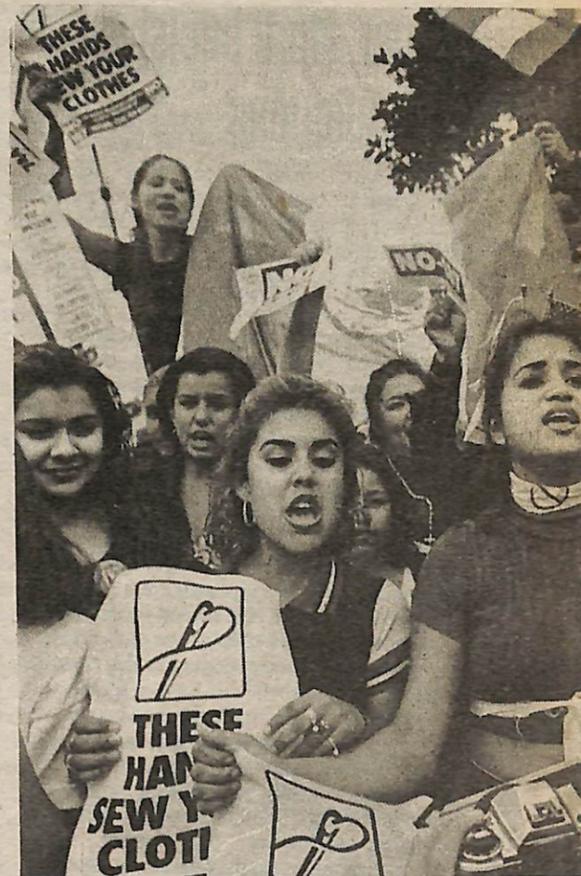
Not only are the politics and ideology of such people obviously reactionary, but in some cases they express ideas and advocate positions which, by contemporary standards of rationality, might well constitute certifiable insanity. (See, for example, any of the writings of Pat Robertson.) In one book, *Answers to 200 of Life's Most Probing Questions*, Robertson declares that Satan is responsible for most of the suffering in the world and that much, if not most, of the disease in the world is caused by sin. He insists that Karl Marx was "demonized" and a "satanic priest." Robertson also writes that "It is possible that a demon prince is in charge of New York, Detroit, St. Louis, or any other city." He argues that not only "satanists" but also "fortune tellers, spiritists, witches, warlocks" are "themselves consumed by satan"; that seances, ouija boards, transcendental meditation (and invocation of "names of Hindu gods") and even the game "Dungeons and Dragons" are all "potential sources of demon possession." Robertson also recalls that at one occasion, while in the Seattle-Tacoma area, an "awful depression seized me" and "I realized I was under demonic attack"—although, Robertson relates, he was able to defeat this attack by declaring: "Satan, in the name of Jesus, I cast you forth." This is the same Pat Robertson who writes: "When you look at the holy books of other religions, you find fantasy and bizarre supernatural events that do not commend themselves to reasonable people. But the Bible is actually authenticated by history." And it is the same Pat Robertson who attacks the well-established scientific fact of evolution—which even the Pope has come around to accepting, while attempting to "reconcile" it with "biblical truth.")

Yet people like Pat Robertson and others with the

slowly codified into a new ideology, usually known as "multiculturalism" or "political correctness," that is in essence Marxism translated from economic into social and cultural terms." Ricks goes on to observe that this "reads like fairly standard right-wing American rhetoric of the nineties," such as might be expected from Robertson or Pat Buchanan, but its significance lies in the fact that its authors were two Marine reservists and William S. Lind, "a military analyst who has been influential on the doctrinal thinking of the Marines"; and, as Ricks expresses it, their "startling conclusion" is that "the next real war we fight is likely to be on American soil."

It must also be understood that, within the overall program of these forces, there is not only a repressive social and political agenda in general but, towards the masses in the inner cities, there is an outright genocidal element. And this is true despite the efforts of such forces to "clean up their image" in terms of racism—"apologizing" for a record of racism over a number of years, and declaring that they are opposed to racist oppression...as it took form in the past (for example, Jerry Falwell saying he was wrong in his vigorous opposition to the Civil Rights movement in the 1950s and '60s)—all the while continuing to aggressively champion a program that is not only extremely oppressive but, again, actually genocidal in its implications. This comes across, for example, in the discussion by Pat Robertson of crime and punishment, in particular capital punishment, in his book *Answers to 200 of Life's Most Probing Questions*. In that book—and, significantly, in a section of the book entitled "Christians and Government"—Robertson argues, in effect, for scrapping the current approach to the penal system in America and replacing it with one that applies "the biblical model" of ancient Israel—where "there were no prisons" and "public whippings were also administered to criminals." It is worth quoting Robertson at some length here:

"Today we place criminals in penitentiaries—places of confinement in which the offender is supposed to become penitent or sorry for his sins [note: not just crimes but 'sins']. In truth, these places are breeding



Students in Long Beach, California, demonstrate against the anti-

Robertson himself points out: "the same law that included the Ten Commandments also had clear provision for capital punishment for specific offenses." But, also very significantly, Robertson avoids saying what those offenses were. For they included not only murder but also the alleged crimes of homosexuality, practicing witchcraft and magic, worshipping idols and gods other than the god of Israel, adultery and fornication—which, for women, meant any sex outside marriage—and rebelliousness, or even disrespect, on the part of children toward their parents. As shown in these examples (and many others that could be cited), in ancient Israel capital punishment was meted out for a number of things which, according to long-established standards of bourgeois society, are not even crimes, or certainly are not crimes deserving capital punishment.

By phrasing things as he does—by what he says and does not say—Robertson leaves the opening to include not only those convicted of things like first-degree murder, but many others as well, in a very broad and "elastic" category of people who should be executed because, in the judgment of reactionary theocrats like Robertson, they somehow "defiled the land" through "unseemly acts" that turned god against his favored nation or "destroyed the fabric of society." And it is necessary to place this in the context of American society today, in which, through conscious government policy as well as the "normal operation" of the laws of capitalist accumulation and competition, whole sections of people are being consigned to the ranks of "unemployables," people for whom the only viable alternative within this system may be participation in the underground economy. With this in mind, we cannot avoid recognizing that the logic of Robertson's call for applying "the biblical model" for crime and punishment involves an unmistakable suggestion of a "final solution" against the masses of people in the inner cities as well as preparation for the use of extreme repression, and even execution, to punish a broad array of activities which today are treated as minor offenses or as no crime at all.

Here, too, the question must be posed: however much things might be framed in terms of "crime" and "criminals," given the reality that it is increasingly Black people, along with Latinos, who make up the prison population in the U.S., and given the whole reality of white supremacy and all the atrocities that have accompanied it throughout the history of the U.S., is it possible to believe that policies of mass extermination—through state-sponsored execution and/or in other forms—would be limited to those sections of Black people, and other peoples of color, who have actually committed what today are regarded as serious crimes? It is relevant to reflect on the implications of the statement by a speaker at a "conservative conference" in 1997 who, as Andrew Sullivan reports, not only denounced abortion and birth control but also "bemoaned that nonprocreative trends among white Europeans was leading to 'race death.'" This blatant white supremacy—and the view that white women are breeders for the "white race"—is consistent with: the logic of race war openly preached by Christian paramilitary forces and Nazi skinheads. And (to borrow Richard Pryor's phrasing) "the logical conclusion of the logic" of race war is genocide. In thinking about all this, it is worth keeping in mind that the "legitimate"—and prominent—fascists in America today include not only theocrats like Pat Robertson but also old-line, unreconstructed and unrepentant southern white supremacists, such as Jesse Helms.



Students in the street to oppose attacks on affirmative action, New York City, March 1996.

same basic viewpoint and program have not been pushed to the margin of social and political life in America. They are not only treated as legitimate participants in the political process, they are seriously contending for the predominant position in the political power structure and the running of society. Robertson himself made a bid for the Presidential nomination of the Republican Party in 1988.

At the least, the rise of people like Robertson signals that, in the corridors of finance and power, at this point there is not a well defined and broadly accepted consensus on the specific forms and means for exercising control in this period—which our Party has characterized as one of major transition with the potential for great upheaval. But there clearly is a fairly broad consensus among the ruling class that the social and political program of the fundamentalist reactionaries is an important element now in the "political mix." And, beyond the "hard-core" of the fundamentalist forces themselves, there are clearly powerful groupings who share the view that circumstances could arise which might call for the implementation of the fundamentalist program on a much more sweeping basis than at present.

What is also important to recognize is that within the armed forces there has been, for some time now, the development and cultivation of a situation in which the outlook of the fundamentalist reactionaries occupies a prominent place, including among higher level officers. In the book *Making the Corps* (which, as the title suggests, focuses on the Marine Corps but also discusses other branches of the American military) the author, Thomas E. Ricks, notes that "the military increasingly appears to lean toward partisan conservatism." Ricks cites a number of statements from people in the military illustrating this viewpoint, and he quotes a typical denunciation of "cultural radicals, people who hate our Judeo-Christian culture...[whose] agenda has

grounds for crime. In even the best of them, 85 percent of the inmates will be incarcerated again.

"Society must pay for the anguish suffered by the victims of crime, then pay again each year to hold the criminal in prison, a cost equivalent to an Ivy League college education. The biblical model is far wiser. The perpetrator of lesser crimes was returned to society where he was made to make restitution to his victim. The hard-core, habitual criminal was permanently removed from society through capital punishment. In neither case was society doubly victimized as we are today."

What might be lost in reading this—but is highly significant—is that, while Robertson says capital punishment is "a necessary corrective to violent crime," he does not limit himself to saying that people who commit crimes such as premeditated murder should be subject to capital punishment. Instead he uses the phrase "the hard-core, habitual criminal." And, in this discussion of capital punishment, Robertson writes the following in praise of the "biblical model":

"In ancient Israel, it was believed that blood shed in murder would defile the land and that shedding the blood of a killer was restitution to the land.

"Those who were considered incorrigible, who had committed unseemly acts that turned Israel against God or destroyed the fabric of society, had only one alternative—capital punishment. Through capital punishment, society was rid of that offense, and the land was cleansed of evil."

Here Robertson begins by speaking of murder, and he never specifically identifies any crime other than murder, but the fact is—and obviously this is well known to Robertson—in ancient Israel many acts besides murder brought the death penalty. As

Special to the RW/WR



Immigrant Proposition 187, November 1994.

posed war against poverty—along with an equally aggressive and mean-spirited crusade to promote and enforce ‘old-fashioned values’ of patriarchy and patriotism as well as good old white chauvinism (racism).

“One after another, all kinds of ‘theories’ and ‘studies’—claiming to show that there are innate and unchangeable differences between races and genders and other groupings in society which explain why some have and really should have a privileged and dominant positions over others—are spread and legitimized throughout the mass media. This, it is claimed, provides the ‘scientific explanation’ for why programs that purport to overcome such inequalities are doomed to failure and must be gutted. What it actually provides further scientific proof of is the utter bankruptcy of a system and a ruling class that is abandoning even the pretense of overcoming profound inequalities and instead is inventing ‘profound reasons’ why they cannot be overcome. And in all this, while the ‘liberals’ have a role to play, the initiative belongs to the ‘conservatives.’”

Along with the fact that the Clinton administration has moved to implement much of the actual program of poverty, punishment, and patriarchy—including the gutting of concessionary social programs—where Clinton and the Democrats have differed with the “conservatives,” they have offered lukewarm defenses while back-pedaling, as in the case of affirmative action. And, again, on the issue of abortion, they have taken positions which cede the moral and political initiative to the other

to others. One of the main expressions of this has been the formulation that Clinton has repeatedly used in speeches, press conferences, etc.: “If you abide by the law.”

In this formulation we can see the exclusion in Clinton’s “inclusiveness.” If you abide by the law—and only if you abide by the law—then you have the right to compete for a place in the virtual bright new world that lies ahead, over that “bridge to the 21st century” of which Clinton also continually speaks. In this, subtly and insidiously, Clinton is installing a criterion which in practice reverses the supposed principle of “innocent until proven guilty”—applying instead the principle that it is only on the basis of proving that you are “innocent” that you are entitled to certain basic rights, such as due process. And, as all this is actually applied, there are whole groups of people—in particular the youth but also the masses more broadly in the inner cities—toward whom the “presumption of guilt” is in effect and for whom due process and related “Constitutional protections” do not hold. This is illustrated by such things as court decisions exercising “prior restraint” against inner-city youth, prohibiting them from doing things like hanging out together on the corner because they have been identified by law enforcement as “gang members.” And in cities all over America there are “gang indexes,” compiled by police, which establish the basis for treating youth as criminals merely because they are Black (or Latino) and may associate with “known gang members” or even may be declared “potential gang members.” (Further exposure of this—including the fact that, in some cities, the police have admitted that such a “gang index” includes a majority of Black youth in certain age groups—is found in a series of articles in the *RW*: “Black Youth and the Criminalization of a Generation,” *RW* Nos. 971-974, August 30, September 6, 13, 20, 1998. These articles are also available as a pamphlet.)

A graphic illustration of all this is the fact that, going beyond “three strikes laws,” the Clinton administration has instituted a policy towards people in public housing which has been called “one strike and you’re out” because it stipulates that people may be evicted from public housing if *anyone* in their household (or even a guest) is accused—not convicted but accused—of committing a ‘violent or drug-related’ crime! This is part of an overall move to force people out of public housing and ultimately to dismantle public housing altogether. But, beyond that, it is part of the larger program of casting whole groups of people—and, above all, masses of proletarians who cannot even be profitably exploited through the “regular functioning” of capitalist society in this period of history—into a category of “criminals unless and until they can prove otherwise”...without due process...people who are destined for concentration camp life in prison—where they may be profitably exploited and/or face execution. And, given the whole history and essential nature of capitalist society in America, which has institutionalized white supremacy and cannot survive without it, it is hardly surprising that those who are being cast into this “criminal” category are largely, and increasingly, people of color.

To justify all this, Clinton has joined in the preaching about “personal responsibility.” As utilized by Clinton as well as the “conservatives,” this theme of “personal responsibility” is an ideological weapon which serves the function of blaming the people for the failure of bourgeois society to live up to principles and promises it proclaims, and in particular blaming those in the inner cities for the impoverished and oppressed conditions into which they have been cast and confined. It seeks to locate the cause of this situation—and the actions of people forcibly maintained in these conditions—in some alleged “moral failing” on the part of the people themselves, and to deny and obscure the real cause: the workings of the system itself and the policies of the powers-that-be. (Did the people in the ghettos and barrios “de-industrialize” the cities and forcibly segregate housing, or for that matter did the people in the rural areas bring about the

Pro-choice demo, 1989. Clinton’s “legal, but rare” policy on abortion is right in line with increasing attacks on abortion rights.



RWOR photo

**In the sphere of repression and police-state measures, Clinton has refused to be outdone by his conservative opposition. He has presided over the criminalization of whole sections of people, in particular the youth in the inner cities, and the situation where increasingly funds are going to prisons instead of schools and, for growing numbers of inner-city youth, prisons instead of schools are the formative institutions and the face of the “future,” if they have a future at all.**

## The Theocrats and the Democrats—More in Common than in Conflict

Based on a serious examination—not only of their approach to crime and punishment but their overall politics and ideology—our Party has identified the fundamentalist theocrats like Robertson as Christian fascists. Their ideology and program, without exaggeration, amount to NAZI-ism dressed in religious robes and tailored to contemporary American society in the present world context. Today they are sharply at odds with Clinton and some aspects of the program he is advancing.

But in recognizing the horrific nature of these Christian fascist forces and what they are aiming to impose on society and the world, it would be a grievous error to overlook or underestimate the degree to which Clinton and the Democrats in general not only have agreement with but are actually implementing significant aspects of the same program and, where they are not actually taking the lead in this, are following, or giving way to, the initiative of the self-proclaimed Right. This stands out very sharply with regard to policies most directly affecting the masses of proletarians, and particularly those concentrated in the inner cities. To quote again from the essays on morality by Bob Avakian:

“The changes in the U.S. and in world economics and geopolitics have meant that millions of people on the bottom of American society, particularly those in the inner city ghettos and barrios, face the prospect of being more or less permanently ‘locked out’ of any meaningful, or gainful, employment—except in the ‘underground economy,’ centering largely around drugs, which has become a major economic factor and a major employer in every major urban area (and many smaller cities and towns and even rural areas as well).

“Here again, the need of the powers-that-be is to contain and maintain ultimate control over this situation—and over the masses of people on the bottom of society—and to erect and fortify barriers between them and other sections of society (‘the middle class’). This explains the continuing increase in funds and forces devoted to crime and punishment—the police and prisons, the wars against these masses in the name of ‘war on drugs’ and ‘war on crime’—on the one hand; and, on the other hand, the fact that these wars are never ‘won’ but are always ongoing.

“All this sets the framework and the ‘tone’ for ruling class politics in the U.S. It demands that the ‘leading edge’ of this be an aggressive, mean-spirited assault on those on the bottom of society and the slashing of concessions to them—a war on the poor in place of a sup-

side (abortion should be “legal but rare”—which implies that it is, at best, some kind of necessary evil). At the same time the Clinton administration has taken no real initiative to reverse the situation in which increasingly, for very large numbers of women, particularly poor women, young women, and those in rural areas, abortion is effectively unavailable even if still legal.

And if there is one area in which Clinton has boldly taken the initiative and refused to be outdone by his “conservative” opposition, it is in the sphere of repression and police-state measures. No leading political figure in America today—not even Rudolph Giuliani, Republican mayor of New York City, whose draconian and murderous police-state measures have provoked outrage among the masses and criticism from prestigious human rights organizations but have been profusely praised and put forward as a model by the political power structure and mainstream media—none has outdone Clinton. Clinton has consistently and aggressively supported and presided over the increasing use of the death penalty. He has (to recall Andrew Sullivan’s formulation) “gutted civil liberties” in the name of “the war against terrorism.” He has intensified the war against immigrants and the militarization of the border with Mexico. He has presided over a continuation, and even an escalation, of the criminalization of whole sections of people, in particular the youth in the inner cities, and the situation where increasingly funds are going to prisons instead of schools and, for growing numbers of inner-city youth, prisons instead of schools are the formative institutions and the face of the “future,” if they have a future at all.

As one police chief recently observed, “never before has local law enforcement had such a powerful voice in Washington.” And what does this mean “on the street” and in the neighborhoods where the people who are the targets of this “enforcement” are concentrated? It means unbridled harassment and insult, brutality and murder at the hands of the police. The Stolen Lives Project (a project of the Anthony Baez Foundation, the National Lawyers Guild, and the October 22nd Coalition Against Police Brutality, Repression, and the Criminalization of a Generation) has so far brought to light over 1000 cases, just since 1990, where people were killed by the police, prison guards and the border patrol. The majority of these people were unarmed, murdered in cold blood, or in circumstances which were, at the least, highly suspicious—and in almost none of these cases have the killers been indicted for any crime. All this has become so flagrant that, for the first time in its history, Amnesty International has launched a major campaign focused on a Western country—the U.S., where, in the words of Amnesty International, police forces and the criminal and legal systems have engaged in “a persistent and widespread pattern of human rights violations.”

Along with all this, Clinton has actually put forward a political standard and rationale for treating whole groups of people as second-class citizens who do not have the same rights that are promised

## The Truth About Right-Wing Conspiracy

Clinton and Georgia Senator Sam Nunn at the Stone Mountain Correctional Facility. Under Clinton there has been a continuation, and even an escalation, of the criminalization of whole sections of people, especially youth.

domination of corporate and banking capital over the farm economy?) "Personal responsibility" adds insult to injury—and, more than that, "personal responsibility" serves as the "moral sermonizing" to accompany the politics of punishment, the pious words pronounced by the executioners.

## False Friends—and Well-Laid Traps

To quote one writer, a self-described "old-school fan of the public sector," it has "become difficult to feel any enthusiasm for a government whose activism seems to consist mainly of harassing and jailing citizens. Those who hoped that a Clinton administration might slow or reverse this trend have been bitterly disappointed." (William Finnegan, *Cold New World: Growing Up in a Harder Country*) Yet, in the face of the mounting onslaught from The Right—both in general and more specifically in the current "Presidential crisis"—there are a number of people who might share a sense of bitter disappointment with the Clinton administration and the Democrats generally, yet are nonetheless rallying behind them. In the context of the recent elections, this support has largely been channeled into the electoral arena. In the days leading into the election, Clinton made a concerted effort to mobilize Black voters in particular. As he put it, in an appeal to Black clergy: "If you feel in your heart that you are part of my Presidency, then I ask you just one thing: Realize this is an important election." And, indeed, among Black people, including some influential figures in the arts and other fields, the sentiment has been voiced that Black people do have a special stake in Clinton's Presidency.

Of course, Clinton is not the first president about whom the claim has been made: he has shown some real commitment to the concerns of Black people. (This was also said about previous presidents, such as John F. Kennedy and Franklin Roosevelt, and even Lyndon Johnson.) But beyond this, it is argued that Clinton is intimately familiar with Black culture and comfortable with Black people. And more, the argument has been made (for example, in an article by Toni Morrison in *The New Yorker*) that Clinton is "our first black president"—"Blacker than any actual black person who could ever be elected in our children's lifetime"—because "Clinton displays almost every trope of blackness: single-parent household, born poor, working-class, saxophone-playing, McDonald's-and-junk-food-loving boy from Arkansas" and is being persecuted and "put in his place" on precisely this basis. Now, it is true that Clinton, who after all is a consummate bourgeois politician, has exhibited the ability, when he has found it expedient, to affect a certain affinity for aspects of Black culture. At the same time, when he has found it personally expedient or politically important for larger reasons, Clinton has indulged in symbolism designed to appeal, subtly or none too subtly, to white racism—such as his deliberate distancing of Jesse Jackson; his gratuitous attack on Sista Souljah during the 1992 campaign; his treatment of his own nominees and aides like Lani Guinier and Joycelyn Elders; and, very significantly, his seizing on photo opportunities to express support for the re-institution of chain gangs in southern prisons.

But even if Clinton were Black—"culturally" or actually—the fundamental point would still be this: If you take a cold, hard look at the reality of what the Clinton administration has done with regard to the masses of Black people and other oppressed people, including youth, poor women and others at the base of society, the only reasonable conclusion is that Clinton and his program represent a vicious and many-sided attack. As the saying goes, with friends like this, who needs enemies? And, in some impor-

tant ways, Clinton has made a more effective enemy—has played a more effective role for the ruling class in its attacks on the masses of people—by posing as a friend. Many people have pointed out, for example, that had a Republican president signed into law the "welfare reform bill," it would likely have given rise to much more widespread and determined resistance. But much of this resistance was paralyzed because, as far as parties with their hands on the levers of political power in the present society, the alternative to Clinton and the Democrats is the Republicans, who are well-known and in many cases unabashed and openly belligerent enemies of progress for Black people, as well as for women and for oppressed people generally. Within the confines of bourgeois politics, there is no way out of this well-laid trap.

This trap has also ensnared a number of feminists who criticize some aspects of Clinton's "record for women's rights" but still see in Clinton not only "an ally in the White House" but "the first president elected by women," as a statement by the Feminist Majority puts it. Clinton's position of opposing attempts to outlaw abortion is often cited as an indication of how important his Presidency is for women. And it is true that abortion is hardly a question of secondary importance. In fact, in the present circumstances in the U.S., it is a concentration of the battle against patriarchal oppression and tradition's chains. This is definitely recognized, from their side, by the Christian fascists and those allied with them—as indicated, for example, in the comments of William Kristol, a leading figure among these "conservatives" (who not only appears regularly in the mainstream media but who also edits *The Weekly Standard*, a magazine founded by none other than media monopolizer Rupert Murdoch). Kristol is quoted as follows in the Andrew Sullivan *NYT* article: "Roe and abortion are the test. For if Republicans are incapable of grappling with this moral and political challenge; if they cannot earn a mandate to overturn Roe and move toward a post-abortion America, then in truth, there will be no conservative future."

Sullivan also cites the remarks of a "conservative" who, along with Kristol, spoke at a conference in Washington, DC in 1997. As Sullivan describes it, this speaker not only denounced abortion but also birth control "as the 'homosexualization of heterosexual sex.'" Here, in this one statement, we see a concentrated expression of a number of key things: the connection between these people's opposition to abortion and to homosexuality; why opposition to abortion is so pivotal to their whole reactionary outlook and program; and why the basis on which they oppose abortion logically extends to birth control and generally to reproductive freedom for women. And, more than that, the underlying basis for all this comes through: the patriarchal family is above all a *property relation*—a crucial part of bourgeois property relations overall—in which the wife is in effect the possession of the husband, and her essential role is that of a breeder of children, above all male children, who can continue the lineage of the man and in particular inherit his property; and, in all this, the overriding and quintessential purpose of sex—"in the marriage bed"—is procreation. (It is also worth underlining that these remarks denouncing birth control as well as abortion as "the homosexualization of heterosexual sex" were made by the same speaker who "bemoaned that nonprocreative trends among white Europeans was leading to 'race death.'")

But what have been the dynamics of the struggle around abortion, particularly during the time that the Clinton administration has been in office? The forces striving for "a post-abortion America" have, through a combination of tactics—including unrelenting harassment of abortion clinics and providers, and arson, bombings and other attacks, as well as outright murder—made tremendous gains in effectively denying abortion to large numbers of women and in undercutting the training of new

generations of potential providers. Beyond that, they have gone a long way in gaining the political and moral initiative and in setting the terms of the debate and struggle. And, it must be frankly admitted, they have succeeded in confusing and disorienting significant numbers of people, including many young women. (They have even made some headway in deflecting identification with the Nazis from themselves and onto abortion providers, through the perverted claim that abortions amount to a "holocaust.")

As pointed out in Bob Avakian's writings on morality: "It is one of the most outrageous ironies of the battle around abortion that the anti-abortionists have raised the specter of the Holocaust to characterize the abortion of fetuses, when their agenda, with regard to women and more generally, parallels very closely that of the Hitler fascists, who in fact attacked abortion—and restricted and criminalized it—as something contrary to the essential 'motherhood' role of women." Meanwhile, the effect of having a "pro-choice" President (and Vice-President)—or, more accurately, the effect of falling into the notion that defending the right to abortion should essentially be reduced to dependence on Clinton (and Gore)—has been to render many of the forces in the women's movement passive and defensive, largely immobilized and paralyzed, in terms of mounting any mass mobilization in support of the right to abortion and in opposition to the attacks of the anti-abortion storm-troopers, and in terms of taking the moral and political offensive.

## Real Opposition and a Real Alternative

There is no question whatever that the program and actions of the Christian fascists and those allied with them is something that must be decisively and urgently opposed. This is true not only in general but also specifically with regard to how they have framed the terms of the latest "Presidential crisis." Without overlooking the sexually exploitative indulgences for which Clinton has become notorious, the fact remains that, in terms of bourgeois politicians—including Presidents who have been made into virtual icons (think of Kennedy, for example)—there is nothing new about all this... *except* that the President's enemies within the ruling class have decided to make this—and have been successful in making this—a public scandal and the pivot of a political crisis. As pointed out in a previous article in the *RW* on this crisis: "Talk of defaming the hallowed halls of the White House with sex is laughable—as the whole history of the U.S. power structure shows. Even more so when the great critics of lying under oath are the very people who supported the likes of Oliver North and the entire Reagan administration which lied to Congress and broke the law in the Iran/Contra affair." ("Scandal as Power Struggle in the U.S. Ruling Class: The Starr Report," by Redwing, September 20, 1998).

That these forces have succeeded to the degree they have in creating and shaping this crisis seems to be due not only to their own efforts but also to other factors, including an apparent feeling among other sections of the ruling class (for example, those whose voice is the *New York Times*) that Clinton has acted recklessly and has violated some principle of accountability to ruling class structures and procedures and has damaged the larger interests of system and empire that above all the President is supposed to uphold. There also seems to be, at this point, an absence of a "patrician force" within the ruling class capable of "rising above sectarian and partisan disputes" and acting as a "cohering center" upholding the larger interests—an absence that was lamented in a commentary, "Lack of Wise Men leaves the nation wanting," in *USA Today* (October 15, 1998). Although there have been a few efforts by some prominent people to at least partially play the role of such "Wise Men" in this crisis, none has so far succeeded in exerting sufficient influence to bring about a resolution that will be accepted by all sides. As this article is being written, the situation is still in flux.

In the aftermath of the recent elections—which have been presented as a serious setback for the Republicans and, more specifically, a decisive failure to get a "popular mandate" to oust Clinton (with this setback, in turn, being a significant factor in the "downfall" of Newt Gingrich)—there seems to be an increased likelihood that Clinton will be able to finish out his term, that some resolution will be found which leaves him in office. But, even if this proves to be the case, it will not eliminate the fact that, among those vying to run things, there are some very serious contradictions; it will not erase the fact that these conflicts erupted into an acute and bitter confrontation; it certainly will not change the sentiments of those who consider that Clinton is, and always has been, unfit to be President. Nor, despite the fact that these elections are now being portrayed as a victory for the "moderate center," will it change the fact that The Right—and in particular the Christian fascists and their allies—have been able to seize a great deal of initiative and to have a significant impact in defining the terms of



**The theme of "personal responsibility" is an ideological weapon which serves the function of blaming the people for the failure of bourgeois society to live up to principles and promises it proclaims, and in particular blaming those in the inner cities for the impoverished and oppressed conditions into which they have been cast and confined. Did the people in the ghettos and barrios "de-industrialize" the cities and forcibly segregate housing, or for that matter did the people in the rural areas bring about the domination of corporate and banking capital over the farm economy?**

not only the immediate "Presidential crisis" but bourgeois politics generally. (The very fact that politicians like the Bush Brothers are now being presented as representatives of the "moderate center" is itself an indication of how the "center" of "mainstream politics" is being continually moved to the Right in these times—and the fact that Clinton can be grouped together with Republicans like the Bush Brothers as part of the present "moderate center" is very telling.)

In relation to the current "Presidential crisis," the forces openly identified as "Far Right" have been able, for a considerable period of time, to act as a driving force in an Inquisition which, among other things, aims to enshrine reactionary fundamentalist morality as a political standard—with powerful figures, like Senate majority leader Trent Lott, giving voice to that morality. This Inquisition has utilized and attempted to legitimize procedures and precedents, legal and otherwise, which involve spying on and prying into the personal lives of people and persecuting and legally prosecuting them on that basis, and generally trampling on supposed constitutional rights and protections in the process—and, as we (and others) have pointed out, if this can be done to the President what protection will ordinary people have?

This Inquisition, and the ideology and politics bound up with it, is profoundly opposed to the interests of the people and should be resolutely resisted and repudiated. But, here again, even in seeking to defeat the attempt to oust him from office, Clinton in large part takes up the terms of his opponents. He makes a point of publicly declaring, "I have sinned"—which can only have the effect of strengthening the notion that Christian fundamentalist principles are a legitimate basis on which to judge political leaders and political programs and a legitimate basis for political decision-making. And, again, as we and others have pointed out, one of the great ironies of the effort to oust Clinton is that his enemies have used against him many of the civil-liberties-gutting laws and precedents he himself has aggressively established and enacted. If opposition to this Inquisition is reduced to the terms set, or accepted, by Clinton—and if it is primarily channeled into, or even limited to, the electoral arena and voting for Democrats (or, what is the same thing, voting against Republicans)—then the effect will be to weaken the resistance to the whole repressive and reactionary program which Clinton and the Democrats, and not only the Christian fascists and other "conservatives," have played a major part in promoting and implementing.

As to participation in the bourgeois electoral process, our Party has made clear our understanding that this process is an instrument of capitalist rule—an instrument of what is in fact bourgeois dictatorship. Which candidates are to be regarded as "serious contenders" and, more importantly, the terms of debate and contention and the "political alternatives" that are treated as legitimate and "realistic"—all this is determined within the ranks of the ruling class itself. Elections only offer the people the opportunity to choose among those alternatives. And one of the primary purposes of such elections is to give the appearance of a "popular mandate" to whatever reactionary policies are implemented by the ruling class through its governmental structures.

This understanding not only puts the dynamics of bourgeois politics in their true light but also highlights what is wrong with the notion—which is generally propagated around election time and has been put forward with particular intensity in relation to the recent election, including by some people who might be expected to know better—that if you don't vote, then you have no right to complain, or even no right to have a voice, in regard to how the country is run. This amounts to arguing that, if you have come to see that the bourgeois electoral process is part of the apparatus of oppressing the people, and that one of its main purposes is to politically misdirect people and dissipate their political energies in order to more effectively oppress them, then you have no right to oppose that oppression! What kind of logic is that, and whom does such logic serve?

It is also important to reject and refute the much-propagated notion that what shapes political decisions is that politicians are motivated primarily by the ambition to get elected (or re-elected) and they make political decisions on the basis of "reading the pulse of the electorate." This turns things upside-down and inside-out and in effect blames the people for the reactionary policies that are adopted by the government.

The truth is that political decision-making in a country like the U.S. is dominated by a class, the

capitalist class, whose economically dominant position enables it to monopolize political power as well as the mass media and other means of disseminating ideas and culture. Of course, politicians in a bourgeois political system are motivated to a significant degree by personal ambitions, and they do seek to pursue those ambitions through the political structures and processes of that system. But even in this regard, getting elected and advancing your personal career as a bourgeois politician depends above all on getting big money support and getting favorable treatment in the mass media which, again, are controlled by the same big money interests.

In actuality, political decisions and government policies are arrived at through contention as well as collaboration within the ranks of the ruling class and its representatives. Through all this a general consensus is forged (and when necessary reformed on new terms) in regard to major questions and major developments in society and the world, including revolutionary wars and other struggles against the system—and, in fact, the inability to achieve such a consensus through the "normal" functioning and channels of the system is an indication of a serious crisis. In conformity with this process of decision-making and the consensus that is reached, orchestrated and many-sided propaganda campaigns are carried out through the mass media to shape public opinion around all important issues. (This includes the entertainment as well as the "news" media. For example, notice how repeatedly the need to be "tough on crime and criminals," and to use all necessary measures to "defeat terrorists," is dramatized, and how "family values" has recently become a major theme, not only on television but also in movies produced by that "Sodom of liberal decadence," Hollywood).

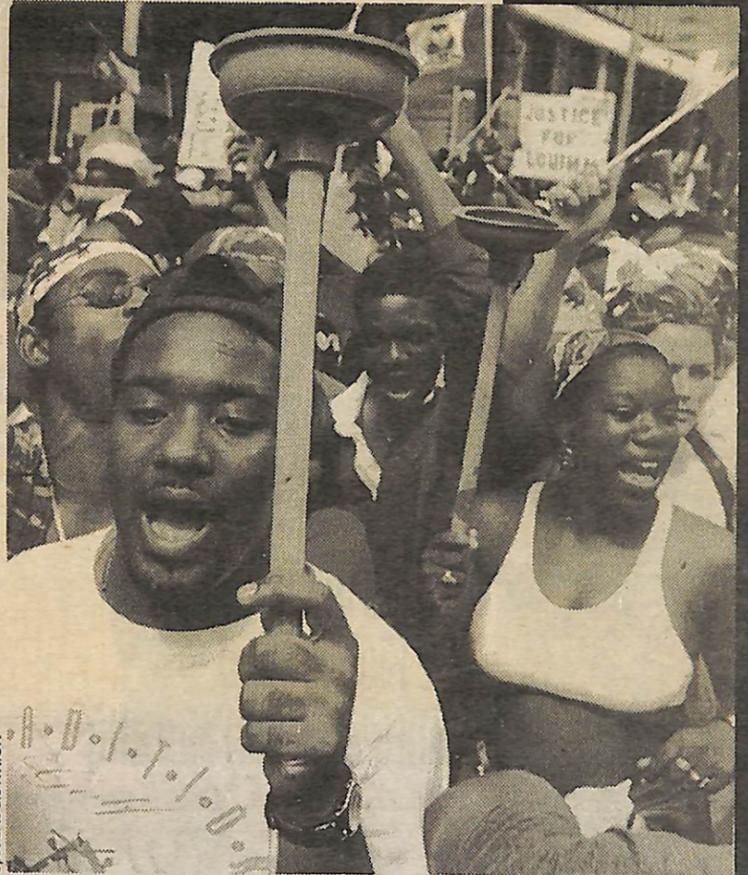
These dynamics of class rule and class struggle, rooted in the underlying economic compulsions and social relations of the system, are the basis for all government policy. This is the basis on which the New Deal was adopted by the American government in the context of the 1930s Great Depression. It is the basis on which the "war on poverty" became government policy during the upheavals of the 1960s. And it is the basis on which the New Deal and the "war on poverty" have now been abandoned, as discussed earlier in this article. It is the basis on which concessions were made to the struggle of Black people in the 1960s and the basis on which the government has backed away from and undercut many of these concessions. This is also the basis on which the U.S. got into the Vietnam war—and the basis on which it got out. It is the basis on which laws were changed (or the Constitution interpreted) in ways that vitally affect women, including particularly around abortion—and the basis on which the right to abortion is now under attack from powerful forces, in and out of government, and why even those in government who claim to "defend" this right have cast it in a defensive and negative light (as expressed in the formula: "legal but rare"). In none of these cases—nor in countless others that could be cited—has the bourgeois electoral process been the decisive and determining thing.

It has been widely acclaimed that, in the recent elections, "minorities, women, and union members made the difference." It may be true that these votes made a difference in determining that the Democratic Party gained a few seats in Congress, but such votes did not and *could not* "make the difference" in determining the overall direction of government policy or in derailing the whole program of poverty, punishment, and patriarchy, on which the Democrats as well as the Republicans are fundamentally united. Once again, the range of programs and policies that all politicians must conform to, if they wish to remain in office, is determined not in the voting booths but within the ranks of the ruling class. And the result is, first of all, that the "choices" people have in voting have been "pre-selected" for them by those with the real power in society and, regardless of the outcome of any particular election, those with the real power will determine among themselves what political decisions will be made and what policies will be carried out on all important issues. This, more than anything else, explains why politicians consistently lie and go back on election promises. It also explains why reality never conforms to the notion that if oppressed people vote overwhelmingly for one bourgeois political party, then that party must somehow "deliver to them." How many times, for example, have Black people voted overwhelmingly for Democrats only to have the Democrats betray campaign "promises" made to get those votes; and, within the confines of bourgeois electoral politics, what can Black people do to "punish" the

Democrats for this repeated betrayal—vote for the Republicans?!

All this does not mean that the masses of people can have no effect on politics. They can have a great effect, even while the society is still ruled by the capitalist class—to say nothing of the profound effect they can achieve through the revolutionary overthrow of the capitalist system and the radical transformation of society as a whole. But they can only have the most powerful effect by refusing to be confined within the framework set by the bourgeois electoral process and by mobilizing in political struggle that breaks out of the terms and limits set by those who dominate that electoral process.

A dramatic illustration of the reality and the principles involved here is provided by looking at two Presidential elections during the Vietnam war—one near the beginning and the other toward the end of that war. First, in 1964, a major theme of the campaign of Lyndon Johnson was that it was crucial to re-elect him as President because his Republican opponent, Barry Goldwater, had made clear that he would dramatically escalate the war in Vietnam. Johnson won in a "landslide," and no sooner was



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he re-elected than he himself presided over a massive escalation in the war. Meanwhile, the Vietnamese people, north and south, continued to wage a revolutionary war of resistance against U.S. aggression, and within the U.S. itself (as well as other countries) opposition to this aggression was mobilized on a greater and greater scale. After nearly a decade of U.S. attempts to impose its will on Vietnam and of increasing resistance to this, in 1972 the American Presidential election was said to involve a decisive choice between the "hawk" Richard Nixon and the "dove" George McGovern (many even argued that in order to end the war it was necessary to elect McGovern). Nixon won the election, with a huge margin of victory, and yet within a short time after this election, the U.S. government was forced to accept defeat and make a retreat out of Vietnam. The decisive thing in all this was obviously not the U.S. presidential elections but the heroic struggle of the Vietnamese people against U.S. aggression and an increasingly powerful anti-war movement in the U.S., in the context of other major developments in the U.S. and internationally, including powerful revolutionary movements, struggles, and wars. Clearly, had the masses of people who opposed U.S. aggression in Vietnam based their political vision and involvement on the terms and "choices" offered by the American electoral process, they would have had a far less powerful effect on crucial events in Vietnam, in the U.S. itself, and in the world as a whole.

We recognize that, under the present circumstances, many people—including many who are disgusted by the whole politics of poverty, punishment, and patriarchy and want to defeat it—do vote in these bourgeois elections. Once more, it is important to emphasize that the decisive question now, in terms of taking on this whole reactionary offensive, is not whether people vote or refuse to take part in this electoral process but whether we accept, or refuse to accept, the terms set by the ruling political parties and the interests they serve.

It is extremely important to step back from the immediate situation and the terms in which things are presented to us, and ask: How did we get to the situation where the choices, the framework and limits we are supposed to accept are marked at one end by outright fascists and at the other end by

\*Footnote: For a fuller discussion of the role of elections in capitalist society, see *Democracy, Can't We Do Better Than That*, by Bob Avakian.

Clinton has presided over an aggressive intensification of repression and police-state measures. Here, thousands march in New York City to denounce the police rape of Abner Louima, September 1997.

## The Truth About Right-Wing Conspiracy

**How do we GET OUT of this situation? The answer is that it must and can only be done by mobilizing broad ranks of people, uniting people from many different strata and walks of life, to build determined resistance to this whole reactionary program and to transform the whole terms of political contention and struggle, the whole "political terrain"—resistance that is not limited to and does not rely on the very political structures, institutions and processes that are the means through which this reactionary offensive is being carried out and given "legitimacy."**

someone who, as even a mainstream columnist describes him, is the most conservative Democratic President since Truman, who heads a Democratic administration that has served as an aggressive and effective instrument in a many-sided reactionary offensive against the basic masses and broader sections of people? Where will we be, before long, and what will the future look like, if people, especially those who see the need to oppose this reactionary offensive, nevertheless are convinced to confine their political objectives and activity within the logic and dynamic that has led us to the present situation? And, most importantly, how do we get out of this situation? The answer is that it must and can only be done by mobilizing broad ranks of people, uniting people from many different strata and walks of life, to build determined resistance to this whole reactionary program and to transform the

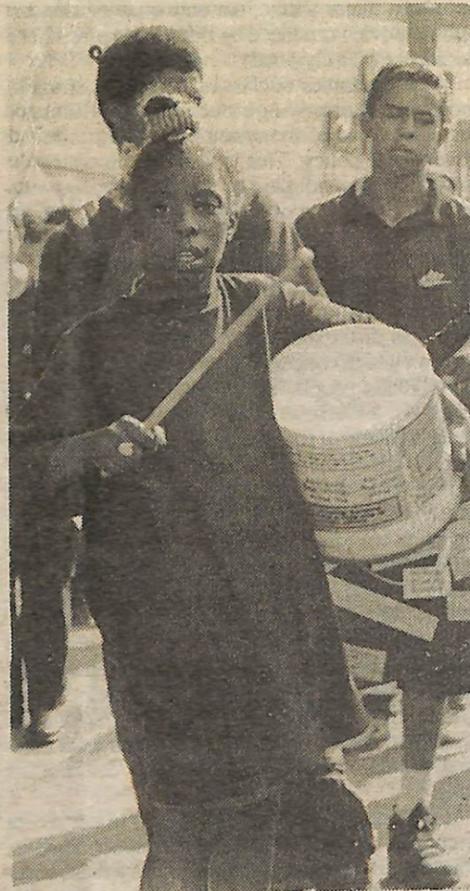
## Taking Back the High Ground — Politically and Morally

A crucial part of doing this is, in fact, to directly and uncompromisingly take on the theocratic Christian fascists and those allied with them—not only in their political program but also in their ideological-religious rationalizations—and to pose a powerful positive alternative to this. These people attempt to seize the "moral high ground" by portraying themselves as the upholders of a tradition-steeped moral certainty, in opposition to moral relativism and self-indulgent degeneracy. They proclaim that they stand for a literal and absolute interpretation of "biblical truth" and adherence to biblically based commandments and law. But the truth is that the moral and ideological principles they proclaim are wildly in conflict even with what can be accepted in bourgeois-democratic society, to say nothing of a communist society in which all relations of exploitation and oppression have been eliminated and uprooted. And for that reason, the leading figures among them, who are above all conscious and calculating political operatives, do not and cannot insist on a literal and absolute application of biblical laws and commandments. To do that would actually undermine their political objectives. Instead, they "pick and choose" themselves which of these laws and commandments to insist on, and which to avoid or "explain away," according to the circumstances.

To cite one of many examples, in a full-page ad in the *USA Today* (August 26, 1998) a group of Christian fundamentalists praised the Southern Baptists for their stand on marriage: "Southern Baptists...you are right!" According to this ad, these Southern baptists were "right" because they insisted that wives must "graciously submit to their husband's sacrificial leadership" (!) and because they recognized that "the family was God's idea, not man's, and that marriage is a covenant between one man and one woman for a lifetime.... Most importantly, you are right because your statement is based on biblical truth!" But the "biblical truth"—what is actually put forth in the bible—is that many, if not all, of the great patriarchs of ancient Israel had more than one wife (leaving aside the instances where such patriarchs slept with a wife's slave-maid in order to produce children, specifically male children, for the patriarch); and the great monarchs of that nation, such as David and Solomon, had

scores of wives and concubines; and moreover, in the "Mosaic law" that is set down in the bible, provision is made for husbands to have more than one wife; and provision is made for the husband, though *not* the wife, to get rid of a spouse through divorce. So, we see that these Christian fundamentalists have not in actuality applied a literal and absolute reading of the Bible. Instead, they have "reinterpreted" such "biblical truth" to suit their objective of promoting monogamous patriarchal family bonds which correspond, not to the oppressive social relations enshrined in the Bible, but to those of contemporary capitalist society.

In the same way, someone such as Pat Robertson, or the heads of the Christian Coalition, do not insist today that, in accordance with "biblical truth," homosexuals as well as adulterers, fornicators, and rebellious children, along with fortune-tellers, witches, and so on, must be put to death. They do not insist that if a man accuses his wife of not being a virgin when they marry, her parents must provide physical evidence of her virginity (a blood-stained cloth) before the male elders of the town—and if they cannot provide such proof, the men of the town shall stone the women to death. They do not insist that, if a man rapes an unmarried woman, he must pay recompense—to her father—and must marry the woman he has raped. They do not insist that anyone who calls for worshipping any god other than the god of Israel (or who secretly conspires to promote such worship of "false gods") shall be put to death. They do not openly declare that it is not only permissible but glorious for god's chosen people, when they wage war on their enemies, to wipe out whole cities, to rape women and carry off any virgins they desire as war prizes, and to bash in the heads of the babies (although people like Pat Robertson, Jerry Falwell, and the rest have consistently supported the military of the U.S. and those allied with it when they have committed such atrocities). Yet all the practices, procedures, and punishments mentioned here are part of the "Mosaic laws and commandments"; and (we are told in Deuteronomy as well as elsewhere in the Old Testament) these laws and commandments are to be followed diligently and exactly, without the



Watts drum corps, National Day of Protest to Stop Police Brutality, Repression and the Criminalization of a Generation, Los Angeles, October 22, 1997.

slightest deviation.

Once again, the leading Christian fascists do not insist on applying these and many other biblical laws and commandments because, under present circumstances, it would not be politically expedient for them to do so—it would be seen as barbarous by the great majority of people, even in bourgeois society, and it would actually undercut their political objectives. (However, if at any given time, they should decide that calling for, or even carrying out, such barbarous acts would be politically expedient, they would not hesitate to do so—as indicated by the fact that, at one point not long ago, William Bennett openly called for the beheading of drug dealers.) What they do is to set themselves up as the authorities, the "interpreters" and the "arbiters" of

"biblical truth," who can and should decide, not only for themselves but for society as a whole, what in "god's absolute laws and commandments" and "absolute moral principles" can and must be applied and what must be ignored or explained away at any given time. This is why it is correct and necessary to identify them as theocrats: they do, in fact, seek a form of rule which is based on religious, and more specifically Christian, authority—as represented by people like themselves—in the service of the American capitalist-imperialist system. It is not necessary to be atheists, as we revolutionary communists are, in order to recognize the atrociously reactionary nature of such a political program and the need to vigorously oppose it.

But the opposition to these theocratic Christian fascists must go beyond merely insisting that they have no right to impose their particular interpretation of "biblical truth" on others and on society as a whole. Nor is it realistic, or correct, to make it a principle that people should keep their "private" or "personal" beliefs to themselves and not bring them into the public and particularly the political arena. People's political views will naturally be influenced by their ideological outlook. The essential question, with regard to all political programs, policies, and actions—and all beliefs and ideologies—is what is their *content*, what interests do they uphold and further, what effect do they have on society and the people? The world outlook and the political views and actions of the Christian fascists must be opposed because they serve to uphold and fortify horrendous oppression, exploitation, and plunder, of women, of whole peoples and nations, and of the masses of working people throughout the world. And, for that matter, the same applies to the political views and actions of Clinton and others who are in contention with the Christian fascists for predominance within the ruling structures of the American capitalist imperium.

At the same time, as necessary as it is to expose and oppose the whole reactionary political offensive, and its various ideological rationalizations, it is also necessary to bring forth political principles and values and culture which represent a real alternative to this reactionary onslaught.

As for our Party, our goal is the radical transformation of society, and of the world, to eliminate all oppressive and exploitative relations among people and to abolish all class distinctions and national antagonisms and barriers, to bring about, as the final goal, a freely associating community of human beings, worldwide. The morals and ideology we uphold and strive to apply are in accordance with that objective and are, at any given point, an expression of the link between the current struggle and the final goal. In this way, our outlook and principles, as well as our political program and actions, are in the most fundamental opposition to the Christian fascists and at the same time to all forms and expressions of bourgeois rule and bourgeois ideology. But we also recognize, consistent with our outlook and principles, that there is a need, and a basis, for building a broad unity in struggle against what has been referred to as the politics of poverty, punishment, and patriarchy and in general against the ways in which the masses of people, in the U.S. and throughout the world, are subjected to exploitation, oppression and plunder.

And we believe that, together with building this political unity in struggle, there is also a need and a basis to forge broad unity, among diverse forces, around values and cultural expressions that promote and celebrate equality, between men and women, and between peoples and nations; that stand against oppression and against violence which furthers and enforces such oppression; that oppose imperial domination by one nation over others and military bludgeoning to impose that domination; that foster relations among people based on an appreciation for diversity but also for community, values and culture that prize cooperation among people in place of cut-throat competition, that put the needs of people above the drive to accumulate wealth, that actually promote the global interests of humanity as opposed to narrow national antagonisms and great-power domination.

The development of unity around such values and cultural expressions, like the furthering of political unity in struggle, will be an ongoing process. Building this unity is a challenge that must be taken up by all those who recognize the horror of what is represented by the fundamentalist reactionaries and the implications of this for the masses of people; who refuse to accept that the only "alternative" to this is one which shares essential things in common with it; who recognize the need to confront—and to offer a positive alternative to—the whole politics of poverty, punishment, and patriarchy and the ideological rationalizations for this politics. It is a challenge that must be boldly and urgently taken up. □

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# NOVEMBER 1998: U.S. HANDS OFF IRAQ! STOP THE SANCTIONS!



A U.S. B-52 bomber stationed at the Diego Garcia base in the Indian Ocean.

On November 15, President Clinton announced that the U.S. had pulled back from an imminent military attack on Iraq. He declared that the threat of U.S. bombings had forced the Iraqi government to accept the "unconditional" return of UN weapons inspectors into Iraq. Clinton said that he would once again order war on Iraq if Saddam Hussein challenged the inspectors again.

Leading up to this development, the U.S. had been sending more bomber planes, warships, missiles and troops to the Persian Gulf to bolster the large offensive force already in the area. U.S. officials in suits calmly discussed how this strike, if carried out, would be the most "significant" since the 1991 Gulf War. These cold-blooded monsters were talking about dropping *more* bombs and missiles on a devastated country—where many hundreds of thousands have already died from the 1991 Gulf War and years of economic sanctions.

Everyone remembers the video of the L.A. cops mercilessly beating Rodney King as he lay helpless on the ground. The U.S. imperialists are brutalizing a whole country and its people.

The U.S. war makers justify the threat of force against Iraq by saying that Saddam Hussein and his "weapons of mass destruction" are a danger to the world. There is a danger from "weapons of mass destruction"—but this danger comes from the U.S. It's the U.S. that uses its huge high-

tech war machine to bully its way around the world. It's the U.S. that has built up an arsenal of thousands of nuclear warheads, each capable of destroying a city. It's the U.S. that sends billions of dollars of arms exports to "friendly" regimes who follow orders from Washington.

Gen. Shelton, the head of the U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff, said that Saddam Hussein poses a threat to an area of "vital national interest" to the U.S. and a threat to the U.S. military forces in the region. Why does the U.S. have "vital interests" and station tens of thousands of troops halfway around the world in the Persian Gulf? Because it is an imperialist power, acting on imperialist interests. What the U.S. is doing in the Persian Gulf has nothing to do with "protecting the people of the world from weapons of mass destruction" or any other phony justification.

As Bob Avakian, Chairman of the RCP/USA, says: "Why do we call them imperialists? Because they exploit and oppress people all over the world. They have developed an empire and they will do anything to try and preserve it. It is the same people robbing and exploiting, degrading and humiliating us every day that are doing that same thing, and want to do more of it, to people all around the world. That's why we call it imperialism, because that's what it is."

Even if a new series of bombings is not carried out this time, the U.S. is already

committing murder on a mass scale in Iraq. For almost eight years, economic sanctions imposed by the U.S. and its allies have deprived the Iraqi people of food, medicine, and other vital supplies. Denis Halliday, a former UN aid coordinator stationed in Iraq, said that "4,000 to 5,000 children [are] dying unnecessarily every month due to the impact of sanctions because of the breakdown of water and sanitation, inadequate diet and the bad internal health situation." Overall more than 1.2 million Iraqis, including 750,000 children below the age of five, have died because of the shortages of food and medicine.

The U.S. has repeatedly blocked any move to lighten the sanctions. In the last couple of months, the Iraqi government stopped cooperating with the inspections and declared that cooperation would resume only if there was some real assurance that economic sanctions will be eventually lifted. Since the end of the Gulf War, Iraq has been forced to submit to humiliating searches by the arms inspectors who snoop around factories, government offices and military sites all over the country. The inspectors are supposed to be "independent," but in fact they are closely tied to the U.S. A November 11 report by NBC and other recent news reports reveal that the arms inspectors have briefed U.S. officials on sensitive information such as Iraqi military deployments. In other words, they are spies for the U.S.

The U.S. has cynically used the weapons inspections as a *weapon against Iraq*. The Iraqi government was quite justified in refusing to cooperate and demanding that the sanctions come to an end. In his November 15 announcement, Clinton did not even talk about lifting the sanctions. And he openly threatened to overthrow the current government of Iraq.

The majority of people here in the U.S. have no common interests with the imperialist rulers—and much in common with the people of Iraq. The people of Iraq are our sisters and brothers, not our enemy. Our enemy is right at home—those in power who brutalize and steal the lives of ordinary people here and around the world.

In February of this year, the last time that the U.S. threatened to bomb Iraq, the Clinton administration tried to gather public support by sending Secretary of State Albright and Secretary of Defense Cohen to a nationally televised "town meeting" at Ohio State University. But these imperialist spokespeople were shut up by righteous opposition from the audience, and this sparked protests around the country. Any new war moves against Iraq by the U.S.—and the sanctions that continue to kill thousands of Iraqi people every month—must be met with broad and determined protest. □



Baghdad resident standing in the rubble of his house shows pictures of his family who were killed by the U.S. bombing in 1991.



Iraqi child suffering from malnutrition.

# NY, NJ: Hunger Strike at INS Detention Centers

*It was a foggy Saturday night in late May when the Oops II, a 28-foot powerboat, got beached off the exclusive ocean front town of Bay Head, New Jersey. The small boat—one in a relay of powerboats, sailboats, freighters and planes stretching back to China's Fujian province—carried 23 young men. With nowhere else to go but ashore, they waded through the cold waters to the beach. On land they wandered through the shrubbery and back yards of the million-dollar houses, hoping to make a getaway. But the authorities had been alerted, and the young men were quickly rounded up by the INS (Immigration and Naturalization Service). These immigrants had paid tens of thousands of dollars and traveled many thousands of miles in search of what they thought would be a better life. But they were locked up in the federal detention center at Elizabeth, New Jersey—treated as criminals in a crowded facility, subject to brutal and inhumane conditions. Welcome to America.*

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The immigrants from the Oops II are among the thousands of people currently held in INS detention centers. According to a recent report by Human Rights Watch, there are now about 15,000 people under INS detention—a 70 percent increase from just two years earlier. The INS estimates that by 2001, they will have more than 23,000 men, women, and children under detention. It is an outrage that so many thousands of people are held in jail for the "crime" of trying to enter the U.S. in search of work or political asylum.

As the number of immigrants held in detention soars, there is also increasing resistance inside the INS jails. In recent months, there have been reports of a series of hunger strikes and other protests in detention centers around the country.

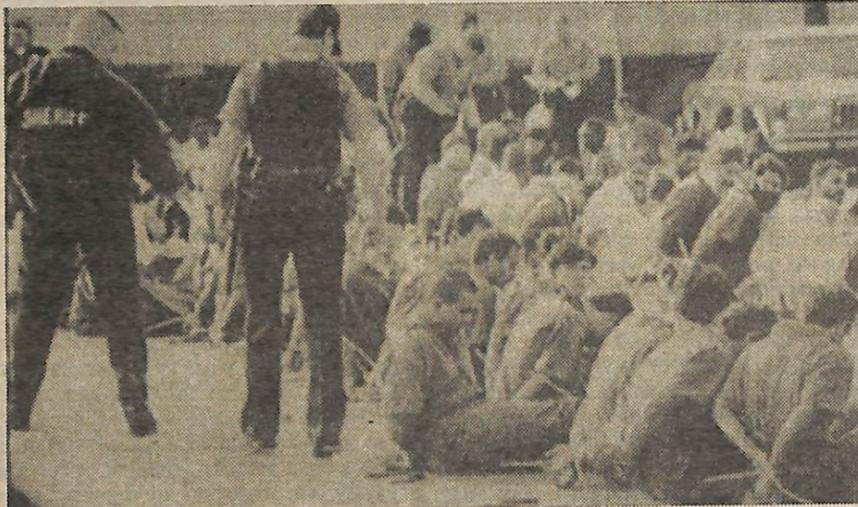
In late September and early October, there were two hunger strikes in INS detention facilities in the New York area. The first hunger strike took place in Elizabeth, New Jersey.

The Elizabeth detention center is run by a for-profit company, the Correction Corporation of America. It mainly holds people seeking asylum and those rounded up in workplace raids. (The New York area has the second largest number of asylum claims in the U.S., following Los Angeles.) The strike began because of harsh treatment and abuse by guards, insufficient food, court delays and New Jersey's decision to suspend parole for INS detainees—meaning immigrants have to remain in custody while awaiting the dispensation of their cases.

The Elizabeth facility is the site of the former Esmor detention center, where prisoners rebelled against intolerable conditions in June 1995. During the rebellion, a group of immigrants took over and forced guards to flee the building. After a few hours a police SWAT team surrounded the detention center, used tear gas, and took back the prison. About two dozen immigrants from various parts of the world were taken to the nearby county jail. For three days, these immigrants were beaten, forced to remain naked, made to crawl on their hands and knees through a gauntlet of jail officers, and ordered to chant "America

is number one."

The spirit of resistance at Elizabeth was rekindled with the hunger strike at the end of this September. At its peak, the strike involved 90 people in a facility that holds 350. The authorities responded by accusing four people of being organizers, putting them in isolation and subjecting them to



Immigrants being held in handcuffs after the June 1995 rebellion at the Elizabeth, New Jersey detention center.

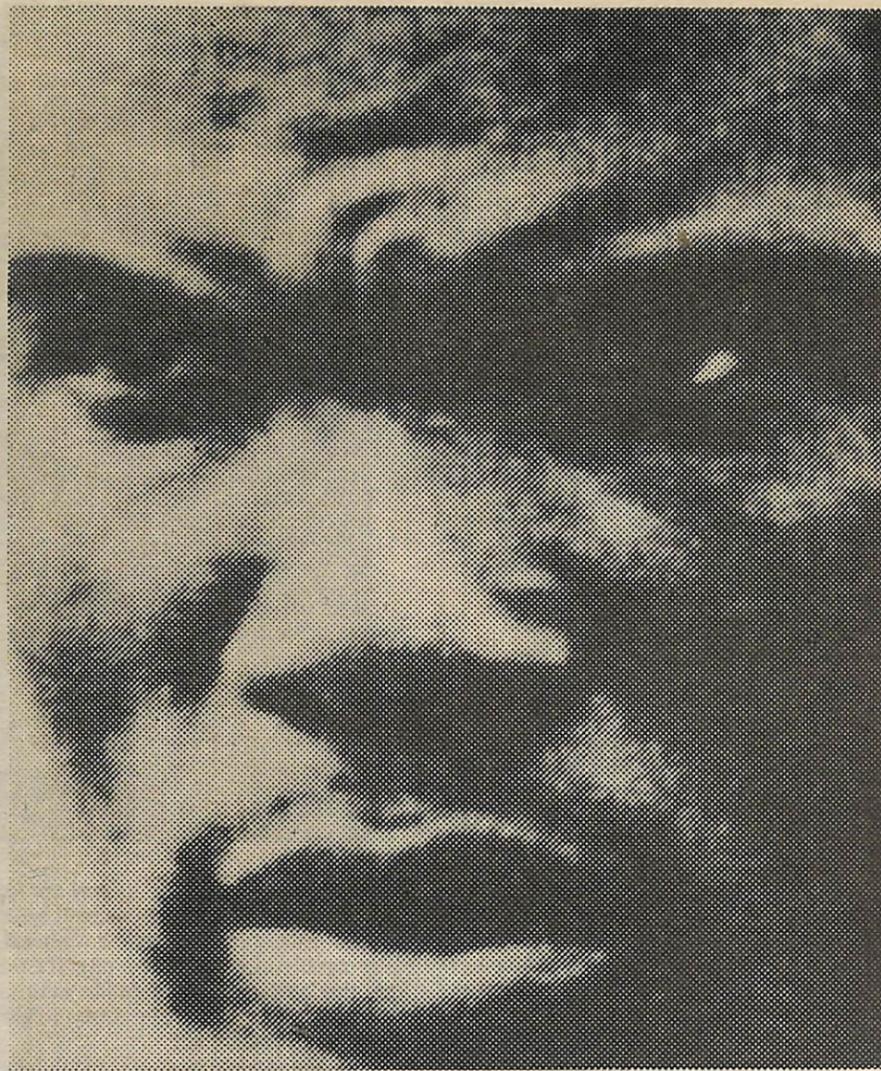
disciplinary hearings. In an attempt to justify this blatant political persecution, the director of the Newark INS said, "There were charges that the protest organizers were intimidating people, inciting them not to eat, and intimidating others not to eat. Those were people fueling the flames and we had to separate them."

Abayade Oluwole, one of the four accused of being protest organizers, explained his story to a local paper. "The main thing we said was that this must be peaceful. People were told that they didn't have to be in the hunger strike if they didn't want to, or felt physically that they couldn't do it. We told people they could still show support for the causes even if they chose to eat. That was very clear. I was translating [into French], and they said I was trying to incite because I was reading to the other people about the strike. They said they'd bring charges against me as a ringleader. I'm not a ringleader." Oluwole came to the U.S. to seek asylum from political persecution in Nigeria.

In early October another hunger strike occurred in Jamaica, Queens, at the INS detention center run by the Wackenhut Correction Corp. This site holds people seeking political asylum. At its peak 96 out of the 177 people held in detention participated in the strike.

Again, the INS isolated those they suspected of being the leaders. In a telephone interview with National Public Radio, Dominick Nunu talked about how he and three others were targeted by the authorities: "We were taken from among the general population and brought in here for [being] the 'brains' of the strike, and we were found guilty. We are to be here for 30 days, in a kind of closed and confined area they call 'segregation.' We cannot go out and take a fresh air now." Nunu has been held in detention for 13 months, and he says he could face death if deported back to Liberia.

The hunger strikes in Elizabeth and



U.S. were subject to expedited removal. Almost half (29,000) of those people withdrew their applications. The other 31,000 were placed in expedited removal proceedings. By the end of six months, all but 2,000 had been "removed"—deported out of the U.S.

Expedited removal also means that immigrants seeking asylum are detained for months or even years while their cases are reviewed. Even if these immigrants pass through all the hoops and prove that they have a "credible fear" of persecution if they are deported (the official criterion for asylum) they can only be released at the discretion of the INS.

The INS has assembled a patchwork of jails and detention centers to hold increasing number of immigrants. There are four different types of detention facilities: "service processing centers" run by the INS itself; "contracted centers" run by private prison companies; 19 Bureau of Prison facilities; and local jails. The largest number of immigrants, 60 percent, are held in these local jails with regular prisoners. As of February 1998, the INS had contracts with 1,041 local jails to hold immigrant detainees.

## Detainee Stories

National Public Radio recently reported on what happened to Lynette Onateria, who came from Nigeria. After her student visa expired, Onateria stayed in the U.S. while she tried to switch her status to permanent resident. Then she got a call from the INS telling her to come and take a citizenship exam. "So I went. When I finished the exam they were supposed to give me a date for swearing me in. Instead of me getting a date, I got handcuffs on my hands." The INS put her into detention awaiting deportation.

This September, Human Rights Watch released a report on the conditions in the INS detention centers. The report includes letters from detainees describing the cruelty and brutality they face. A Cuban immigrant, being held in California, wrote, "I don't know what to think, maybe they want me to die in this place... I already paid my time in state prison and now they put me again in prison far away where [my family] can't visit me because it is an eight-hour journey. Also, they no longer let us send letters so I had to send this letter out with some county prisoner detained here..."

One man from the Congo, held in Virginia, said, "Let me inform you that I was violently beaten today... It was time for me to 'check down' and an officer told me to put my hands on the wall. It's because I asked him to be more gentle that he beat me up. He hit my head into the wall many times and threw me forcefully on the floor. To hold me down, one officer put his foot on my head... Here it is normal for officers to beat detainees without reason..."

Jamaica were righteous actions by people who are unjustly held in jail. In both cases, the INS moved quickly to isolate the alleged leaders—revealing their fear of mounting resistance and worry that it will spread.

## New Laws Lead to Many More Detainees

The recent explosion in the numbers of detained immigrants is linked to repressive laws passed by Congress. The Anti-Terrorism and Effective Death Penalty Act of 1996 (AEDPA) and the Illegal Immigration Reform and Immigrant Responsibility Act of 1996 (IIRIRA) created new mandatory detention laws for certain immigrants and increased the number of crimes for which non-citizens can lose their legal status and be deported. The government labels such people as "criminal aliens."

According to Human Rights Watch, "Prior to the 1996 legislation, crimes resulting in deportation were limited to murder, rape, and other serious felonies. With IIRIRA, minor drug offenses, some cases of drunk driving, shoplifting, and any conviction carrying a sentence of one year or longer, whether or not the sentence was suspended or actually served, require deportation." The law applies retroactively, so that someone arrested years ago, who has already served their sentence, is now considered a "criminal alien" and subject to detention and deportation.

The new laws also created a process called "expedited removal," aimed at severely limiting the numbers of people allowed into the U.S. for political asylum. Now low-level INS employees have the authority to decide whether an immigrant's claim for political asylum should even be considered, or whether they should be deported immediately. In the six months between August 1997 and January 1998, 60,000 people who tried to come into the

# BURYING THE LIVING AT TAMMS SUPERMAX

Supermax. The word sounds like some flashy new corporate product. In reality, Supermax prisons are brutal and high-tech dungeons whose function is to break a human being down through various forms of physical and psychological torment. One of the newest Supermax prisons is the Tamms Correctional Center in Illinois.

Recently, the *Revolutionary Worker* received a copy of a letter from Michael (Hasani Jabari) Johnson. Earlier this year, Johnson was transferred from Menard prison into Tamms. We also spoke with his mother, Mary L. Johnson, a long-time activist against police brutality and for prisoners' rights since Michael was beaten up by cops at age 17. It was Mary L.'s outspoken stand against police brutality and the notorious torturer Lt. Jon Burge that led to Michael's persecution by the authorities. He was railroaded on two murder charges, the second after he was incarcerated. The following is drawn largely from the information and insight provided by Mary L. and Michael Johnson.

## Day One

On the morning of April 1, Michael Johnson and three other inmates—feet and hand chained “like wild animals”—were taken by van from Menard prison to Tamms. The hour-long trip was made under tight security: four C/Os (correctional officers) in the van and two more following in the car behind, armed with shotguns and pistols. At Tamms, there was a “welcoming committee” of dozens of guards, officers and nurses. Eight guards in bullet-proof vests took Michael and the others one at a time from the van and brought them to the glass doors of a concrete building.

Michael writes: “When the control booth officer opened the doors, we were escorted in, to where we could see four cells. Inside these cells are concrete stools, weighing approximately 500 lbs. each with a chain ring, used to chain you down. Once you're inside, they tell you, ‘We're going to count to three and take you down to your knees.’ When they do this they take the ankle cuff off, count to three and bring you to your feet again. Then they tell you to step into this cell, never taking their hands off you. The steel doors close, and a little chuck hole locks around your hands. Then they take the cuff off and tell you to drop.

“As soon as a man walks through these glass doors, the psychological torture

begins. You are made to get on your knees, then you are stripped of everything—your underwear, socks...they search you, fingers through your hair, open your mouth, lift your tongue, top lip, bottom lip, behind the ears, lift your arms, wiggle your fingers, turn around, raise your left foot, your right foot, bend over, spread 'em!”

Day one at Tamms.

## Fortress in an Economically Depressed Town

Tamms Correctional Center was built to be a small fortress—a 23-acre compound surrounded by double rows of 12-foot-high cyclone fencing and razor ribbon, designed to hold 500 prisoners. It's even got its own courtroom and execution chamber.

The prison sits in the small, predominantly white town of Tamms, at the far southern end of Illinois, in one of the state's poorest counties. Typical for the area, the local economy has long since taken a nosedive. Industry reduced to a lone factory, a big chunk of the town's population dependent on government assistance. Then the local officials won the state-wide bidding for a new prison. \$73 million dollars later, the Tamms Supermax was born. Its work force is drawn from the impoverished town and a neighboring prison work camp.

## Burying the Living

At Tamms, your world is reduced to an 8' x 10' prison cell—stark, barren, devoid of anything human. “EVERYTHING IS GRAY CONCRETE!” writes Michael Johnson. “You can hear voices, but you NEVER SEE ANYONE!”

“When you try to sleep at night...they turn the light on every 30 minutes, all night long.”

“They search our cells at least every seven days, and each time we have to submit to this humiliating strip search. You're put down on your knees, and taken downstairs, where you're chained to an iron loop that's embedded in the concrete floor.”

“I get to take a shower two times a week. During my first 30 days at Tamms, I couldn't even go to the shower without being cuffed behind the back and led by two C/Os in black, bullet-proof vests.”

Human contact is almost non-existent. For “exercise,” a prisoner is left alone in the yard—an empty 12' x 30' mesh-covered concrete box. Newcomers get only one hour of exercise time a week. After seven months, an inmate may earn the “privilege” of one hour a day. Visitors—if and when allowed—must be seen behind glass doors, and the conversations are monitored. Phone calls are not permitted.

“This is what you do to human beings,” said Mary L., “when you want to dehumanize them and take their last bit of dignity they have away from them.”

“I see all Supermaxes, not just Tamms, as a way to introduce the death penalty by burying the living. As far as life is concerned, they dead. You can even touch a corpse—but you can't touch these people.”

## “Some People May Never Leave”

“Tamms is not about rehabilitation, it's about punishment... Some people may never leave.” These are the words of George Welbourne, the current warden of Tamms. Welbourne was a consultant on the construction of Tamms, and he toured the infamous Special Housing Unit of California's Pelican Bay State Prison for inspiration. Various other minds went into

creating Tamms. One such person wrote: “I have attached a paper explaining my ideas, but if I could boil them down into one word it would be ‘deprivation’...The key is to construct a soundproof barrier between the cell and the gallery...solidly isolating each inmate and depriving him of all human contact.” The writer of these words was the chaplain of Menard prison.

Prisoners who are transferred to Tamms must stay there for at least a year—there is no maximum length of stay. In the words of prison and government officials, those sent to Tamms are the “most violent and troublesome” prisoners. Some inmates are classified as “disciplinary segregation” for violating prison rules. Others are considered “administrative detainees”—punished not for anything they've done, but just for what the authorities suspect they might do.

Who actually ends up at Tamms is another story. In a letter to the Prison Action Committee newsletter, one Tamms inmate says that before his transfer, he was listed as a “medium security/moderate escape risk.” He was even working in the prison kitchen, where he helped prepare meals for the prison officers. The prisoner believes the real reason for his transfer to Tamms is his law suit against the warden of his previous prison.

Michael Johnson is at Tamms under administrative detention—for alleged gang affiliation and drug dealing while at Menard prison. Michael writes: “I've never bought, sold or solicited anyone else to buy or sell any drugs (for myself or anyone else). I've never turned down a drug test or any other test. I went to school the entire time that I was there, made good grades, and would have still been in school, if the IDOC [Illinois Department of Corrections] hadn't decided that education was too much of a luxury for men in prison.”

“I'm still trying to find out why I'm here,” Michael writes, “being subjected to these mind games, plus the psychological and physical torture. If I wasn't a problem to the IDOC for 11 years, why did you suddenly come and get me in the wee hours of the morning, chain me up like a wild animal, lock me in a dungeon and then say all those negative things about me—things that you KNOW aren't true? I'm STILL trying to get ANSWERS, so in the meantime, I'll continue to exercise my mind, body and spirit...”

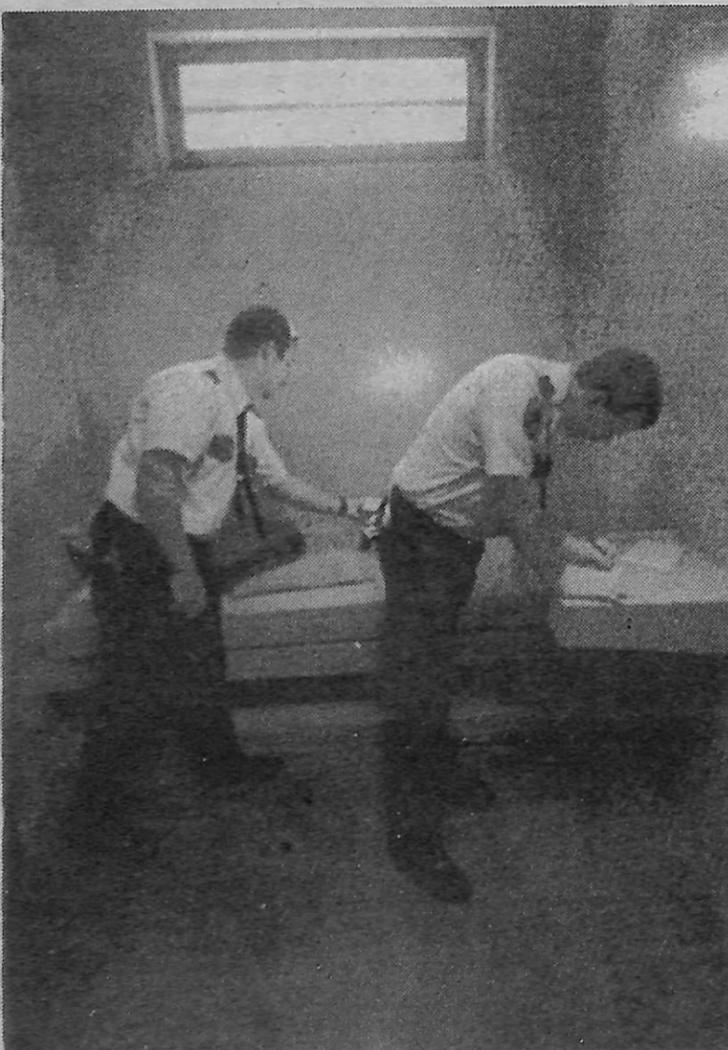
## Fighting for What's Right

If the authorities intended to intimidate and silence Mary L., Michael and others who dare to stand up, they have failed. Michael continues to strongly declare his innocence and to speak out against the inhuman conditions behind the prison walls. And Mary L. is determined to fight for her son and all others victimized by the system. She says, “If they trying to stop me cause I'm fighting for justice, that's a hopeless cause there. Cause I won't never do that...I can't stop fighting for what is right.” □

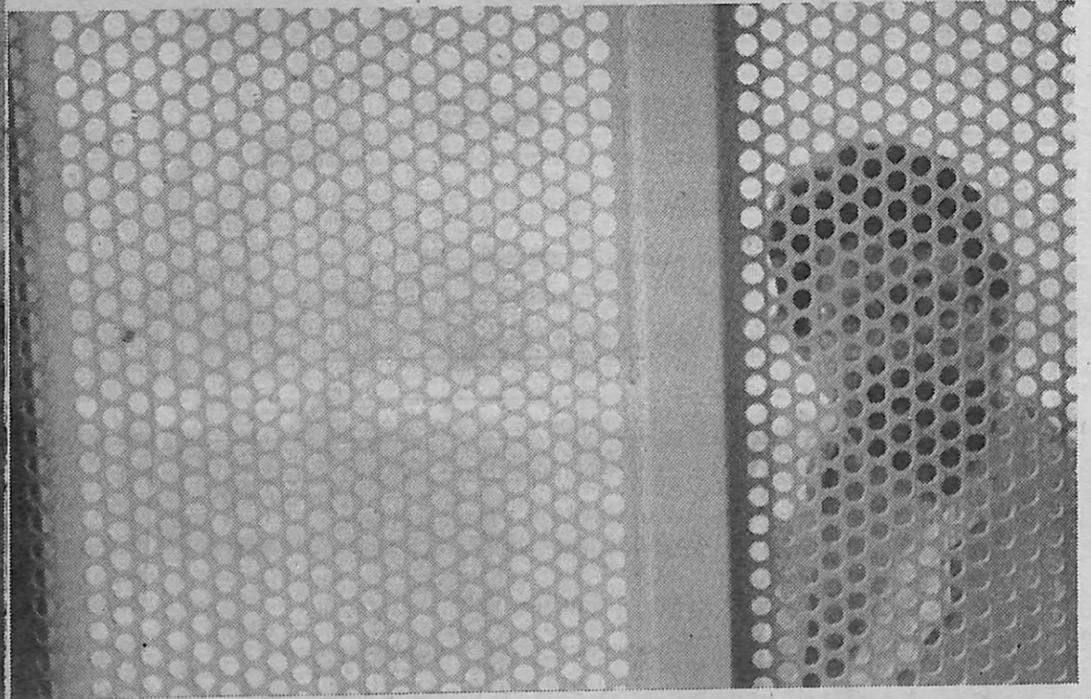
Mary L. and Michael Johnson



Special to the RWOR



Guards checking out a cell at Tamms.



A prisoner in his cell at Tamms.

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October 22, 1996—San Francisco

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