

Statement of the African National Prison Organization Solidarity Organization

In August 1971, George Jackson was murdered at San Quentin prison. On August 1 of this year, Khatari Gaulden was killed in the same bloodsoaked institution. Countless black freedom fighters remain in the dungeons of this country, imprisoned for fighting for the liberation of their people. The prisons and jails are overflowing with people whose crime is being black and trying to survive. One out of four African men will go to prison in his lifetime. 70% of women in prison are African. Right now the prisons are exploding and the prison movement is rising again. Within just one month there have been major outbursts at Reidsville, Georgia; Pontiac, Illinois; and at Folsom prison here in California. And on August 19, prisoners at San Quentin are staging a one-day strike in commemoration of George Jackson, while African people outside demonstrate their support.

The prisons in this country are concentration camps and holding cells for colonized people who have tried to fight in whatever way they could against the brutal conditions of their lives. It is critical that we, as North American (white) people begin to understand the real reasons that this situation exists.

COLONIALISM

Colonialism has a particular meaning for African people - it means that they are oppressed as a whole people, not just as individuals or as part of a class - but as Africans who were brought here as a people in chains - and they are still in chains!

As colonized people they are dominated and exploited by an illegitimate U.S. colonial state power which controls every political, economic and cultural aspect of their lives. They have the worst housing, health care, education and the worst and most dangerous jobs, the highest unemployment. This domination and control is maintained through the criminal justice system and by the military/police occupation of their communities. It is reinforced by genocidal, full-scale attacks of terror, not only by the State, but by North American people who have been convinced that it is in their interests to maintain this situation in order to survive themselves.

The tremendous wealth of the U.S. empire was built upon and rests on the land, labor and resources of colonized people around the world. But the colonial foundations are collapsing as these peoples and nations rise up and take back what is theirs - in Vietnam, in South Africa, in the Middle East, in Latin America, wars of national liberation are having serious impact on the ability of this system to maintain itself. Thus, it becomes even more vicious as it attempts to resolve its crisis by intensifying attacks on colonized peoples in order to prevent their struggles from succeeding.

The Black Liberation Movement in this country is part of this struggle for national liberation. As it became increasingly successful in the 60's the U.S. government moved to murder and jail its leaders and to ideologically undermine its base. An important part of this intensive campaign against African liberation in this country is aimed at winning white people to actively support these attacks.

Proposition 13 and Bakke encourage us as white people to get more for ourselves by taking away the little margin that exists for colonized people. The Briggs Initiative to reinstate the death penalty gives Californians an active choice about supporting the genocide of African people. Over 60% of the people on death row are black. The media lies to us about the prison uprisings and says they are caused by overcrowding in order to justify building even more concentration camps for African people. But we can understand the situation as it really is and stand to oppose it.

Right now the anti-colonial movement is the keystone in the fight against the capitalist/imperialist system which controls our lives as well. The system tells us that colonized people are our enemies and offers us many material advantages in exchange for our collaboration in keeping this insane order intact. Yet what this system really offers us as working people and as women is the right to sell ourselves, to send our children to schools to be trained as robots and soldiers for the system, and the right to fight with each other over crumbs. This system is destroying our physical world and all the living beings in it because its only interest is profit.

We have forged alliances with colonized peoples in the context of waging struggle against our own oppression as white working people and as women. However, these alliances have not been based on a united fight against colonialism, so that the State has been able to win our collaboration by offering us real gains stolen from colonized peoples. Therefore, our stake in maintaining the colonial-relationship is reinforced, and ultimately the system is not changed.

We must build an understanding of our antagonism to this system and fight to build a world based on human needs rather than profit. Imperialism is being defeated all over the world. As North American people, we must choose a side. Do we stand with the KKK, the Nazis and the Aryan Brotherhood who move with the sanction of the State to carry out terror against colonized people in the prisons, as well as in their communities? Do we sanction a criminal justice system that continues to label colonized people the "criminals" for fighting back, which places the victims in prison and lets the criminals go free? Collaboration includes outrage at the treatment of political prisoners in other countries while ignoring those held by the U.S. state; it also means supporting the struggles for independence of African people in Zimbabwe while refusing to support the struggles for independence of African people here. Collaboration includes fighting hard against our own oppression as working people, as women, as exploited people, but refusing to support the anti-colonial struggle as central to liberation for us all.

We are just beginning to learn the depths of the vicious COINTELPRO strategy, which continues to this day. COINTELPRO is an FBI program specifically set up to destroy national liberation movements. Its past and present attacks on the Black Panther Party, the African People's Socialist Party, the Republic of New Africa, the African People's Party, the American Indian Movement, and the leadership of the Mexicano-Chicano movement make it clear what a threat these movements pose to the U.S. colonial state. Because of the incredible strength and unity that the Black movement was developing in the late 60's and early 70's, the state moved militarily to smash that movement. That is the reason that there are 1000's of political prisoners in the U.S. jails right now; revolutionary leaders like Assata Shakur, Sundiata Acoli, Geronimo Pratt, and Khatari Gauden, who was killed at San Quentin in early August.

But we know that they cannot smash a revolutionary movement by killing or jailing its leaders. The Black Liberation Movement and the movements of other colonized peoples in the U.S. are reemerging and reasserting themselves. Recent events in prisons across this country are a clear demonstration that the African liberation struggle is alive and growing stronger, in spite of genocidal attacks, in spite of being locked down.

WHY AN AFRICAN NATIONAL PRISON ORGANIZATION?

The African National Prison Organization is an all-African formation building under the leadership of the African People's Socialist Party, to organize African people around their relationship to the prison system in this country. Virtually every African person in the U.S. has either done time, will go to prison, or has someone close to them in prison today. This overwhelming involvement with the prison system makes ANPO a potentially enormously powerful weapon for revealing to African people their colonial relationship to the U.S. state and in building a very broad mass base in the African community for anti-colonial struggle. Many leading forces in the African liberation movement here have recognized the centrality of the prison struggle; therefore, ANPO sees that it may also provide a forum for unifying the overall African independence movement.

WHY AN ANPO SOLIDARITY COMMITTEE?

The ANPO Solidarity Committee is a group of North American (white) people who have taken a working class stance in solidarity with the struggles of African people for national liberation. We are building material and political support for ANPO. "Don't Mourn - Organize!" is a slogan we can apply today - we can be part of the problem or part of the solution. ANPO-SC urges all progressive people to stand up and be counted among the growing forces who refuse to be deceived about who the real criminals are.

We must actively contribute to the efforts to build ANPO. We must help to make it impossible for them to ever kill another George Jackson or Khatari Gauden, impossible to hold captive African freedom fighters such as Assata Shakur, Geronimo Pratt, Dessie Woods, Sundiata Acoli, the RNA 11, and impossible for the state to reinstate the death penalty and execute Ernest Graham and Eugene Allen. There are many ways people can support the efforts to build ANPO Sign our mailing lists, send contributions, come to our fundraisers, give your labor and useful items to our garage sales and bake sales. Send letters of protest to the warden at Folsom, San Wuentin, Reidsville and other concentration camps where prisoners are locked down.

The ANPO National Office needs many things in order to begin their work in the next few months. Money is needed for office space, phones, desks, chairs, filing cabinets, typewriters, and to produce and distribute literature.

But material aid is not enough. Raising money means engaging in the struggle to build political support for ANPO among North American people.

JOIN THE AFRICAN NATIONAL PRISON ORGANIZATION SOLIDARITY COMMITTEE!
HELP BUILD THE WORK! Contact us at PO Box 921, S.F., Ca. 94101