

Symposium Call: “Black Political Imprisonment, Here and Now!”

The April 23, 2011 Symposium: “Black Political Imprisonment, Here and Now!” recognizes that repression and resistance appear on the same path. Within the United States, millions of Black people are ensnared—in foster care, juvenile detention, prisons, jails, half-way houses, wearing ankle bracelets, on parole. Incarceration itself is political and its constituent element, *the truth though not the totality of incarceration*, is anti-Black racism and gendered violence. We recognize that debates abound among activists and intellectuals, inside and outside the “prison industrial complex (PIC),” about political prisoners and social prisoners, as well as reformist and radical responses to the PIC’s racial-sexual bias. There is also an international aspect to discussions of mass incarceration; yet rarely do these discussions and strategies adequately address anti-black violence in democracies such as Brazil and the United States, and the importance of international coalitions that seek more than reformist policies to address suffering in the black diaspora.

This symposium participates in those debates, and supports our focusing on that sector of the Black incarcerated population imprisoned for its deliberate, organized, opposition to state violence; and those incarcerated who were and are politicized to become progressive activists. We hope to address both the mobilizations and resistance dating from the 1970s and the social and anti-family violence that dictate today’s mobilizations for justice. We seek a constructive critique that animates the activism and scholarship around political prisoners, in order to address the plight of Black political prisoners and the levels of anti-black, anti-female, anti-queer, anti-child violence faced in a democracy.

We need to think the “unthought”; to move beyond the museum of political imprisonment in order to ask “**Why?**” Why is Black political incarceration so unchallenged? What is its meaning in our relation to violence from and within a democracy shaped by poverty, racism and (hetero)sexism?

The “Black Political Imprisonment, Here & Now!” symposium is unique not only because of its topic, but also because of its approach. First, this symposium presents an opportunity for international connections and dialogue between Brazilian intellectuals and activists and their African American counterparts organizing to end racist violence and exclusion in their respective nations. Second, it devotes a sizable portion of its program specifically to the intersections between political imprisonment and sexist, homophobic and domestic/anti-family violence, and resistance to these violations. Third, its closing session on sustainable commitments, with no formal presentations, seeks an open dialogue through skype and conference calls as a planning stage for future endeavors.

You can participate through skype (address: costavargas); conference telephone (512 471 4411); the Harriet Tubman Literary Circle (HTLC) blog <http://sites.tdl.org/htlc/> or by reviewing or submitting to the HTLC digital repository <http://repositories.lib.utexas.edu/handle/2152/7828>

Agenda: Black Political Imprisonment, Here & Now!
John L. Warfield Center for African & African American Studies
Jester Center, A232A, UT Austin

8:30am *Gather & Breakfast*

9:00am *Welcome and Screening*

A Power Sun (11 minute excerpt of docu-drama on the black panther party and political imprisonment) with director Dawn McGhee, Field Up Productions

9:30am “*Why?*”: *Planning Committee*

Joao Costa Vargas (UT Austin), Joy James (Williams College), Frank Wilderson III (UC, Irvine)

10:00am Roundtable 1

Exiting the Museum of Political Incarceration

Robert Hilary King (former political prisoner), Ana Flauzina (Brazilian attorney/American University), *Marshall Eddie Conway (political prisoner, conference call), Douglas Belchior (UNEAFFRO BRASIL, skype), Jaime Alves (UT Austin), Vargas (facilitator)

11:30am Lunch

12:30 Roundtable 2

Gender/Sexual Violence, Political Imprisonment & Self Defense

Readings from political prisoners: * Sundiata Acoli, Mumia Abu-Jamal. Kenyon Farrow (*TheGrio*/South End Press), Kara Lynch (Hampshire College), Railda Alves (AMPARAR, skype), Luciane Rocha (UT Austin), James (facilitator)

2:30 Roundtable 3

Political Violence & the State's Response

Reading from political prisoner*: Jalil Muntaqim. *Mutulu Shakur (political prisoner, skype). Lumumba Akinwole-Bandele (NAACP LDF), Patrice Douglass (UC Riverside), Wilderson (facilitator)

4:15-5:30pm Open Dialogue: Sustainable Commitments

*Prison authorities determine if the incarcerated can participate in this symposium. We do not control the exact time of any conference call, however, we plan to dialogue with political prisoners and we recognize their need for donations to offset the financial costs they bear for their calls into the outside world.

Writings by Marshall Eddie Conway, Mutulu Shakur, Sundiata Acoli, Jalil Muntaqim, *Mumia Abu-Jamal and Safiyah Bukhari for this symposium—and social justice advocates in Brazil and the United States—can be viewed on the Harriet Tubman Literary Circle digital repository or the HTLC blog <http://sites.tdl.org/htlc/>

Bios

Mumia Abu-Jamal <http://www.prisonradio.org/mumia.htm>

Sundiata Acoli <http://www.sundiataacoli.org/>

Lumumba Akinwole-Bande, is a father, husband, author, university lecturer, deejay, concert producer and community organizer from Central Brooklyn. He is the Senior Community Engagement Advocate in the Criminal Justice Practice for the NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund. A member of the Malcolm X Grassroots Movement, he co-founded the Black August Hip Hop Project. In 2005, Lumumba Bande, Dasaw Floyd, and Djibril Toure (MXG3) were falsely arrested while conducting one of the Malcolm X Grassroots Movement's Cop Watch patrols. In 2006, the state dismissed all charges against them. In 2008, MXG3 won their civil lawsuit against the New York Police Department. Today, MXG3's cop watch patrol continues to organize the community to combat all forms of state violence. Lumumba's essay "Baba" appears in *Be A Father To Your Child* (Soft Skull Press, 2008). Lumumba Akinwole-Bande currently teaches community organizing at Lehman College/CUNY. Lbandele@gmail.com

Jaime Alves is a doctoral student in the African Diaspora program in Anthropology, UT-Austin. He is also a journalist who has monitored human rights in prison, taught in colleges in Brazil, and worked with various Brazilian human rights organizations. Alves's "Geographies of Death: An Intersectional Analysis of Police Lethality in the City of São Paulo," co-authored with Joao Costa Vargas, is forthcoming in *The Journal of Ethnic and Racial Studies*.

Railda Alves is a member of AMPARAR (Associacao de Maes de Presos e Presas). Her work with Douglas Belchior and UNEAFRO BRASIL focuses on "Dispatches from a war zone: Black youth, mass incarceration and death in Brazil". She has organized against police brutality and the politicization of the Brazilian criminal justice system, and engaged in radical alternatives for social justice within slum communities in Sao Paulo. Mostly composed of black women who live in favelas, AMPARAR has used their own bodies to protect relatives incarcerated in Sao Paulo's infamous prison facilities.

Douglas Belchior is a member of UNEAFRO BRASIL (Uniao de Nucleos Populares de Educacao e Resistencia Negra). UNEAFRO BRASIL has begun a new campaign against the genocide of black Brazilian youth. Its most recent publication details, in 300+ pages (excerpts can be found on the HTLC digital repository), the use of systematic police killings and incarceration as part of the Brazilian government's war on the urban poor. With Railda Alves and AMPARAR, Belchior has focused on Brazilian mass incarceration and genocide within the African Diaspora, and organizing in favelas against police brutality and bias and violence in policing and incarceration.

Marshall Eddie Conway http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Marshall_%22Eddie%22_Conway

Patrice Douglass is a doctoral student in ethnic studies at the University of California-Riverside.

Kenyon Farrow <http://kenyonfarrow.com/>

Ana Luiza Flauzina, a Brazilian attorney who specializes in criminal law, is currently enrolled in the S.J.D (PhD) Program at American University Washington College of Law. She is a black activist who participated in the implementation of affirmative action in the University of Brasilia, Brazil. From 2005 to 2009, she served as a columnist for the Afro-Brazilian newspaper *Irohin*, writing about law and racism. Ana is the author of *Corpo Negro caído no Chão: O Sistema penal e o projeto genocida do Estado Brasileiro* ([*Black body on the floor: The criminal system and the genocide project of the Brazilian State*] 2008).

Joy James is a Professor of Humanities at Williams College
<<http://humanities.williams.edu/joy-james/>> and the editor of *Imprisoned Intellectuals*
<<http://repositories.lib.utexas.edu/handle/2152/7098>> and *Warfare in the American Homeland*.

Robert Hillary King http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Robert_Hillary_King

http://books.google.com/books?id=6BX_qDtaLF0C&prints ec=frontcover&dq=Robert+Hillary+King&cd=1#v=onepage&q&f=false

Kara Lynch <http://www.hampshire.edu/faculty/klynch.htm>

Dawn McGee http://www.fieldup.com/the_team.htm#dmcgee

Jalil Muntaqim <http://freejalil.com/>

Luciane O. Rocha, a doctoral student in the African Diaspora program in Anthropology, UT-Austin, studies state violence against Black communities in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, and Black women's strategies of resistance. Since 2006, Luciane has worked with the Black women's organization, *Criola*, in the empowerment of Black women to face violence.

Mutulu Shakur <http://www.mutulushakur.com/>

Joao Costa Vargas is an Associate Professor in Anthropology at UT-Austin, co-editor of *State of White Supremacy* and author of *Catching Hell in the City of Angels*, and *Never Meant to Survive: Genocide and Utopias in Black Diaspora Communities*

<[http://www.rowmanlittlefield.com/Catalog/SingleBook.shtml?command=Search&db=^DB/CATALOG.db&eqSKUdata=0742541010&thepassedurl=\[thepassedurl\]](http://www.rowmanlittlefield.com/Catalog/SingleBook.shtml?command=Search&db=^DB/CATALOG.db&eqSKUdata=0742541010&thepassedurl=[thepassedurl])>.

Frank Wilderson, III is Associate Professor of African American Studies and Drama at UC Irvine, and author of *Incognegro: A Memoir of Exile and Apartheid* and *Red, White, & Black: Cinema and the Structure of U.S. Antagonisms*. <http://incognegro.org/index.html>