

An Appeal From Prison: REVOLUTIONARY ACTION ON CAMPUS AND COMMUNITY

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*The Black Scholar*

## *An Appeal From Prison*

# REVOLUTIONARY ACTION ON CAMPUS AND COMMUNITY

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by BOBBY SEALE

**I** AM A POLITICAL PRISONER; in fact, I have been kidnapped and that's a crime committed against me.

For black students the significance of this lies in understanding the difference between a political prisoner and a criminal, and to understand this difference is to understand an important aspect of the history of black people in this country.

Generally the political prisoner's ideas relate to the need for freedom of the people at large and demand an end to their oppression and exploitation. A political prisoner's ideas then challenge the very premises of the state itself; in this case, the function and purposes of capitalist America. The state — all its institutions and structures — is the instrument whereby the ruling class maintains its economic power, which is its power to oppress the people, all people — blacks, Latinos, orientals, poor whites, Indians, what have you.

A political prisoner challenges these very foundations of the state itself. And that is why he is arrested. He is arrested because his ideas and actions challenge the state at its roots, challenge its power to repress, exploit and murder.

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Bobby Seale is Chairman of the Black Panther Party. He has been arrested on a number of political charges. He was handcuffed, shackled and gagged in the courtroom during the Chicago conspiracy trial. Upon his return to San Francisco, he was beaten and thrust into solitary confinement. *The Black Scholar* was able to secure this article from Bobby Seale during his confinement.

If you look over the history of America you find its political prisoners have been arrested and persecuted because they have supported and led the people's struggle — Nat Turner, Toussaint L'Ouverture (who liberated Haiti and rotted in a French prison), Indian chiefs who were locked up on reservations and brothers like Huey P. Newton, David Hilliard, and Eldridge Cleaver.

**A**MERICA is a capitalist country, which is to say it is built on the idea of a handful of individuals exploiting the people for profit, owning the properties, the goods, the resources which belong to the people themselves and from whom they were stolen. To struggle against capitalist exploitation and its racism and class oppression is to be a revolutionary.

To be a revolutionary is to be an enemy of the state.

To be arrested for this struggle is to be a political prisoner.

A so-called "criminal" on the other hand is different from a political prisoner. A man becomes a so-called criminal because the state has not met his needs but oppressed, exploited and brutalized him from the very beginning: no jobs, no food, no clothing, no land, no housing, no freedom, no power to determine his own existence.

The difference is that the criminal does not understand that his enemy is the state itself, despite his lurking revolutionary consciousness. Instead, he attacks individual

people in the state, and too often they're poor and oppressed people like himself. In other words, he attacks society, not the state.

A capitalist is just a grand scale criminal, a super gangster who robs countries, peoples, whole populations, instead of liquor stores.

But because the capitalists in America own, control and regulate the laws and machineries of the state, they can't be arrested, they can't be tried, they can't be brought to justice, even though they are the real criminals and their crimes against the people are enormous, their thefts and murders running into the millions each year.

So a political prisoner is a revolutionary who has been captured by the state because he challenges its crimes against his people — its wholesale robbery, rape, and murder and oppression of the people.

Capitalist America is not responsible to the people, it is the enemy of the people. Its theory and practice are criminal, its theory and practice are *lawless*, because all it's interested in is theft and oppression, and that's why it does not obey its own laws. That's why the fascist rulers in this country do not obey the Constitution or enforce it. Instead, they violate it.

My being kidnapped and held a political prisoner is a violation of the people's Constitutional rights. It shows most significantly the open oppression that the people suffer. When the state and government move to a position of open kidnap and political arrest, then this action is no different from the fascist operations in Germany or South Africa and the semi-fascist operations of the Ku Klux Klan, in lynching a man on a tree.

This Constitutional violation is really what is entailed by kidnapping, taking a prisoner illegally and against his will from one place to another, as I was and have been here. It was, in fact, actually illegal for the United States Federal Government to take me from California to the Chicago trial in order to railroad me.

So, I think the laws of this country and their history in relation to black people must be understood by black students. Black students must understand the Dred Scott Decision in 1857, one hundred and twelve years ago. They must know the reasons for black people being railroaded in courts—the Scottsboro case and just numerous brothers, Huey P. Newton, myself, Black Panther Party members who are being railroaded in court nowadays.

These so-called trials are nothing but a tantamount form of racism that has developed into an art of terror and murder and intimidation, of downright fascism here in America. So, I think the significance of this, as it relates to black students, is that black students must understand the need to move out and be more a part of the community, to educate the masses of people of the need to end the fascist, brutal war that has been going on against black people for hundreds of years. Students must understand what fascism is and must educate our community to the fact that this is a fascist state and the fact that our community is significantly related to the world people's struggle. Students must put these two facts together in the minds of the people so that they can move and rise like a mighty storm.

Let's get to a definition of fascism.

**F**ASCISM occurs when the capitalist state is in deep economic, political and racial trouble. In economic terms, fascism is the conversion of the economy to a warfare state, developing an enormous military machine to keep capitalism from collapsing. This war machine keeps the white proletarian masses employed. And, its propaganda and practice keeps them agitated with racism. This constant racist agitation justifies the racist war machinery the fascist state uses abroad on non-white people and justifies the use of that same war machine for race wars on non-white people at home. Fascism is a racist, military machine that works both internally and abroad — at the same time.

Fascism brutalizes the masses, castrates

the so-called "liberal" middle class and crushes people of color. Its plan is to brutalize the white masses and replace whatever class consciousness and sense of class struggle they might have had with racism, race hatred, and race war. Thus the white proletariat sees people of color as its enemy and identifies, supports and honors the police, the green berets, the FBI, all the fascists as they oppress black people.

The terrorized middle class of bourgeois liberal pretensions keeps its mouth shut and more shut. Because as we become more and more oppressed by the machinery of racist oppression, they become more and more intimidated by it.

So the fascist state's plan is to be at perpetual war — internally and around the world — to keep its capitalist economy going. To do that, it gets the white proletariat on its side with jobs provided by a racist war machine and makes the systematic elimination of non-white peoples an official policy of the state. To keep the masses and the petty bourgeoisie from developing revolutionary consciousness, fascism reduces the amount of education available—especially college education—in order to increase its supply of exploited, racist workers. Having this large surplus of workers, fascist capital moves to fascisize the labor force. Since many workers are employed making war machinery for race wars, they are easy prey to racist propaganda, and once persuaded that fascism is in their interests, they will support fascist capital. Once fascist capital has fascisized labor, the two move together for the systematic destruction of blacks, browns, orientals, Jews, etc. Fascist capital and fascist labor form the upper and lower jaws of a racist dog. That is fascism and that is what's happening here.

The duty on the part of the black students is to work to educate the masses, to be one-in-one with the masses and not to just isolate themselves on the campuses. Students must understand that when people are made political prisoners like Huey and myself and many others, that we have to move forward and not backward; we

have to move positively and not be intimidated by the fascist system, but to move forward and amass the people to smash it.

What I have just finished saying is, in essence, the direction that Black Students' Unions and black studies programs on college campuses throughout the country should take. David Hilliard, Black Panther Chief of Staff, puts it in a very correct form: "Black students, BSU's and Black Studies programs must understand that the only way to get a clear understanding of what the ideology of the revolutionary movement is today is to understand the history of the Black Panther Party, the history of the BSU, the history of black people, all historical experience; all of this, the history of the party, the history of the struggle, the movement, presently in terms of the Black Panther Party, of the historical events of black people being translated by way of Marxist-Leninism."

Using this philosophy that the Chinese are using, using this same philosophy that the African Liberation Front in Mozambique and Angola and other places are using, is the direction that I see here for us.

This same philosophy must be used as a means to translate our overall historical experience here in the exploitative decadent system of America.

**B**LACK STUDIES must be seen in this fashion, but not limited to non-participation and non-action. There has to be action, so that the philosophies and theories that are brought forth, the understanding of them and their ideas, are implemented. To understand the historical experience of black people translated by way of Marxist-Leninism is the direction that BSU's and black studies must take on college campuses.

BSU's and black studies programs on college campuses should understand that when we place revolutionary political programs in the community on a "for real" level, when there's breakfast for children, free clothing programs, free health clinic programs, community control of police—which is very primary—that when we place these programs in the community, that they

are *real* programs, and these types of programs change the community, identify the historical experience of black people.

It's not enough for students to just sit down and be able to articulate an idea or a principle. The thing is to be able to implement it into a program and try to make it for real for the people, and in turn defend it, even when it is unjustly attacked, as many times it will be. We have to defend it. In this respect, I think it's high time a lot of BSU students stop playing with guns—some of them, not all of them. I think they must understand that the gun is for self-defense, which is a right and a human revolutionary necessity.

**I** THINK that cultural nationalism will never really give forth a precise understanding of the historical experience of black people. The historical experience of black people dictates that there must be revolutionary change. And cultural nationalism is not a changing operation. To try to customize some particular types of artifacts or symbols is to really stagnate a people's political and revolutionary development. That is why Huey P. Newton says that the only culture we are holding on to is the revolutionary culture — a culture that changes in direct relation to the revolu-

tionary advance and progress that the people make against the exploiting, racist capitalist system.

It is necessary that the black studies departments and BSU's understand the need for revolutionary culture and relate as revolutionaries and place forth the revolutionary ideology by putting it into practice in the communities. For example, there are many writers needed for the Black Panther Party paper, but many of them just won't even send in a little article. We know a lot of black writers are scared of guns and things like that, but it's not necessary to run around in fear of the fact that to relate to the people in this manner means to defend the struggle and the people's struggle and one's self.

What you have to do is not let any fear overcome you, nor any intimidation of the pig power structure. Many of you students have demonstrated on campuses. But you must relate to the community more. The campus is not separable from the community. BSU's and black studies programs have to function both from an ideological level and from a very practical, practicing level. You are in the community and part and parcel of the community and never separate yourself from the community.

Power to the people!

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