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## Domestic Genocide

Ivan Kilgore

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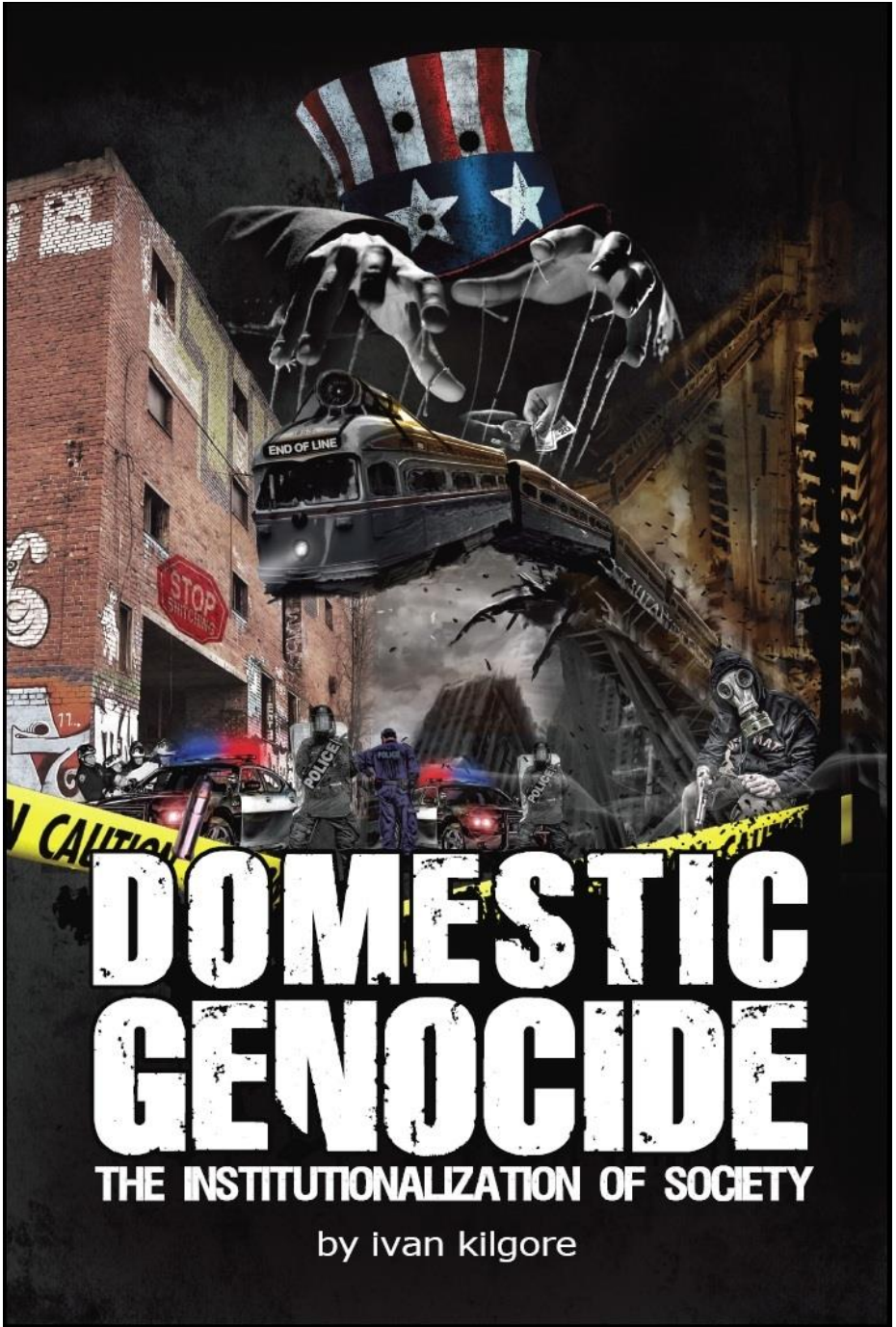
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# DOMESTIC GENOCIDE

THE INSTITUTIONALIZATION OF SOCIETY

by ivan kilgore

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Edited by Jalea Shuff

Domestic Genocide: The Institutionalization of Society

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## INTRODUCTION

During the last few months of 2006 I received a letter from reporter Meredith May of the *San Francisco Chronicle Newspaper*. She explained that after having reviewed over one hundred murder convictions in Oakland, California, my case was one of several that appealed to the *Chronicle's* interest for a story that would capture the voice of those who had endured the gutter dwellings of Oakland's murderous streets as gangstas, pimps, dope-dealers and killas. The setting for these characters, Meredith would later report, was responsible for some 557 homicides within the five years prior to the publication's release; making Oakland the state's second-most murderous city, behind Compton.

The ensuing interview would come close to a year of both telephone and in-person interviews at New Folsom State Prison. Of the many questions that were put to me during the course of the interview, the one that stuck with me the most was: "What would you suggest to the mayor of Oakland to reduce the violence? It was a rhetorical question. Nonetheless, I explained to Meredith that there was no simple answer. Nor was it a question that I thought she would care to hear my response to. Yet, she prodded. Thereafter, I would spend the whole of a year explaining "my" take on the violence in the 'hood and its causes. Of the various subjects we discussed they would eventually become the inspiration for this book.

Surely, Meredith would not be able to fit all this into an article. Indeed, when the story was published the editor cutout a significant portion so as it would fit the allotted pages and be more suitable for the *Chronicle's* audience. Despite it being a two-page front cover spread, four pages altogether, I explained that the problems before the youth in the ghetto could not simply be fitted for a summary article or a book for that much. Nonetheless, an effort had to be made.

About this time I had began to take an interest in writing thanks to a fellow prisoner and friend, Ameer Weaver, who would ever encourage me to write a book having entertained a many of my country boy tales and escapades in the dope-game. So I signed up for a creative writing class here at Folsom taught by the renowned prisoner Spoon Jackson.

Spoon was a "classic" convict who had spent the past thirty years crafting his penmanship and getting published from behind prison walls. His poetry has brought him the sort of following that has traveled from around the world. He was someone I most definitely was to absorb *Game*.

For five years I would convene with him and others he had brought together to orchestrate visiting groups of college professors to media professionals who taught and entertained society's forgotten captives. The misfits who accompanied me in this class were an assortment of writers ranging from convicted actors to accomplished authors of screen-plays, books, poetry, and other forms of literary work. They greatly and to great pains labored with me to develop the ideas that went into this book.

There were many times while sitting in class that the fear of becoming "institutionalized" would appear in our writings. We often wrote about how the mannerisms and behaviors of prison life had worked their way into our hearts, minds, and souls. Many of us reflected on the rules that had been put to us both behind brick walls and on the bricks. Go foul of them and there are consequences to pay that, at times, are life threatening. A lot of times our writings reflected how some of these rules were B.S. We also wrote of how they are designed to maintain the status quo;

to whip the powerless; and how most people in society fail to give them serious consideration.

Putting our thoughts to paper really began to change our perception in many ways. In other ways it fortified them. For me personally, writing and studying all that went into this book began the process of questioning and challenging everything, every idea, every label, every feeling that had been set before me to absorb. Quickly, I came to discover that a lot of the thoughts and feelings I held were the product of deception and manipulation. What I came to discover can be simply stated as “trained incapacity,” where ignorance and its poverty of the mind were my true enemies.

All this got me to thinking that if prisoners could so easily become institutionalized—that is, adapt to the setting, its rules, etc.—then so too people in the free-world, particularly those in the ghetto. This unavoidably forced me to question why it is that people in the *so-called* “free” world assume they are free to make choices and live a life independent of the circumstances in which they are raised? Are not we all products of our respective environments? There are exceptions, however, the majority of us are simply prisoners of an environment that we truly do not understand. These environments, very much like prison, shape our views, beliefs, reality, conscious, and conscience. They are controlled by those who, unlike us, understand the inner-workings of the social sciences. Because we are ignorant of these *applied* sciences, like puppets we get our strings pulled unknowingly by the forces and circumstances they create.

Personally, I’m tired of being a puppet. So long before Meredith came along I had been engrossed in learning something of these sciences and how the puppet master pulls our strings with the various institutional structures of racism, education, culture, polity, law, economics, etc. What I was to gain would, in time, cut the strings to the puppet I had become and thus allowed for me to explain to Meredith the causes of violence, poverty, and instability in the ghetto. Moreover, I began to understand how reality was created; how it is exploited; how it controls; and more importantly, how it is designed to kill.

It would take me some seven years to complete this book. It required of me to do my homework to support my thesis. When attempting to write it I immediately noted that the questions and issues I sought to address were going to be a challenging search for information due to my incarceration and limited resources. So I had to get creative.

Though, there was one advantage I had—I was all too familiar with the outcome of the science at the heart of telling my story. I knew all too well the destruction, the disorganization, the oppression, the institutionalization, the violence of the mind and body caused by instable families and community structure because I grew up in one.

Here, I have employed various works and insights ranging from college professors to accused criminals from around the nation. *Domestic Genocide* is constructed around nine chapters that at first reading seem to stand independently of each other. Indeed, each chapter is a book in itself. It would thus be impossible to attempt to squeeze so much in so few pages. Therefore, I have painted with a broad brush and, consequently, many important issues have not received the attention they deserve.

Part autobiography, part semi-academic, poetry, prose, spoken word, urban non-fiction, etc., *Domestic Genocide* attempts to capture the voice of those afflicted by



the blowback of capitalism—racism, distorted educational processes, drug economies, a culture of violence, and injustice.

In the pages that follow, we shall explore just how it is that capitalism operates to create oppressive institutions so as to maintain social and economic divides between the haves and have-nots. Said differently, these pages speak to the *Blueprint*, which socially and economically engineers the train incapacity that causes destruction in poor, Black and oppressed communities.

Lastly, the final chapter speaks to *Improving Their Reality* with the intent of getting to the source of the problems we face and breaking the cycle of social disorganization in our families and communities.

# CHAPTER 1

## “PRODUCT OF THE GHETTO” [THE INSTITUTIONALIZATION OF SOCIETY I]

*An isolated area of people that is dying or dead/  
Deprived of its growth obstructed by government heads/  
Predetermined education to keep the American Dream at bay/  
Us fighting for our own life means others' lives at stake.*

*Necessities of life are at the expense of blood/  
Secretly, drugs were brought into the 'hood/  
As jobs for thugs.*

*Experiments on our community fell on us like plagues/  
Placing liquor stores and gun shops on every corner/  
Just to count the dead.*

*Projects weren't the name we chose, but given as  
A contrived means of the Ghetto studies/  
By nature we had no choice but to become “HOGGS.”*

**INNER CITY**  
—Devon Davis

Imagine for just a moment that you spent your entire life confined to a room the size of a cargo container. Inside it is colorless and without window or decoration. At the center of the ceiling there's a light bulb that provides your only light. Yet, you have no control of when it comes on or goes off. In this room you also have your basic fixtures: sink, toilet, shower, etc. Though, you have been denied insight on the proper use of them, which has left them virtually unused. Like an untrained dog, you've defecated where you pleased. However, the stench goes undetected because you have become accustomed to the smell.

Mysteriously, like the light going on-and-off, you awake one morning to the sounds of voices coming from a rectangular object mounted on one of the walls. How it got there is not important. What is, is the moment you recognize the images on the screen are reflections of you. Fascinated, this becomes your window of enlightenment. Thereafter, you begin to imitate these images to the best of your ability. Displayed before your deprived conscious is an arrangement of programming. You have been provided a HOW TO SELF-DESTRUCT GUIDE. The program has been well informing yet has failed to provide you with the necessary information to prevent the disaster you are being set up for. You've been programmed with the “*Rules of the GAME*” (environment).

As the days pass your eyes have remained glued to the theatrics ceremoniously displayed on the screen. You've absorbed a mixture of programming ranging from a

101 on gun-play (how to destroy your community and maintain chaos) to drugs (how to use, manufacture, distribute and traffic). This instruction has set aflame the passions of hate and anger within you. They seem to be manipulated by people of your own complexion, who steal from you, assault you and feed you poison causing both mental and physical anguish. Paranoia proliferates in your mind, as an image, is constantly played, in intervals, of your naked body stretched out on the county coroner's stainless steel examination table. Death is vivid and eternal life has been forsaken due to the atheist projections of society's behavior.

The program has taught you of creation. A mother who has spoon-fed you cocaine before birth and denied maternal care. A father, who's M.I.A and thus forsaken you respect for authority. The lack of maternal and paternal care has created within you an emotional void.

Sitting in this room, your mind begins to wonder where these images hail from. Curiosity has urged you to get active. The day finally arrives that the opportunity presents itself for you to get in the *Game*. A door opens leading to a game-board existence—the GHETTO. Here, a force you are unlikely to ever checkmate will manipulate your moves. As you approach the door, the invisible hand of capitalism mysteriously places in your right hand a 357-magnum revolver; in your left, a bundle of poison. Then, with a hint of sarcasm it whispers: "Survive best you can."

At this point curiosity has drawn you to the threshold of a new reality. A reality that becomes vivid as you look down to see the 357 that your programming has taught symbolizes a six-member chamber of police officers, judges, a jury, and an attorney to facilitate arbitration and survival. The bundle, you've been taught, symbolizes nourishment for the pains of poverty you are to experience once beyond the doorway. How you choose to use them I will leave to the reader to decide. Either you are going to rob, steal and kill to numb the pain or you are going to get money and protect yourself from the hyenas and rats sure to come.

The foregoing narrative is not simply a figment of the imagination. It is the subject matter of *Product of the Ghetto*, which tells of the social and economic manipulation that transforms humanity into the androids that we become. Tapered from my life experiences and studies of the ghetto's infrastructure, this chapter seeks to explore the question of just how it is the poor, the Black and the oppressed have become the glove puppets of capitalism. It tells of how America's ghettos were created and, more importantly, how they are maintained. This, of course, leads us to subsequent chapters, which go more in depth on the inner-workings of America's institutions of social and economic caste control.

### ***PRODUCT OF THE GHETTO***

I WAS BORN INTO A PRISON CALLED POVERTY that for many years held my conscious captive very much like the walls and concertina wire surrounding a penitentiary. It's been said those cages that physically hold men were the building blocks of my conscious. That the violence, drugs, gangs, and criminality found within them influenced me and led to destruction.

Yet, what influenced what is questionable provided the fact that my conscious/conscience developed from *Projects-2-Prison* and not the other way around. In any event, both the *projects* and *prison* are the by-products of a *Blueprint*—a socially engineered design aimed at destroying, oppressing and exploiting people.

To “oppress” is a concept that I find many people truly do not understand until it is explained to them what causes them to do and feel that certain actions must be taken irrespective of risk or concern of others. This is how oppression works. It is the trap that we cannot see. It blinds the possibilities of opportunity and it disregards others.

Personally, I’ve succumbed to the traps laid about to blind and pin down. I’ve sought solace through violence, drugs and crime. Like many, I’d been trapped by ignorance. Through it all, however, I’ve come to reason that the wrong I’d done was a reaction to feelings of being powerless and trapped by poverty, then taunted by the American Dream only to rattle the bars of the oppressive cage I was confined to. Never did it occur to me before being convicted of first-degree murder that in all the wrong I’d been accused of—I was innocent! For hindsight provides people are motivated by external events—things in the environment that persuade powerful and pulling affects on the conscience (Chapter 2—*Afflicted Deliberations*). Thus, just as the rattling of a tail signals the bite of a venomous snake, so too does the mask-gunman signal the same danger. To survive this America’s culture of violence (Chapter 4—*Culture of a Murderer*) has been well observed in the ghetto and teaches us we must react accordingly or perish just as quickly as we have failed to act.

Seemingly, everyone in the world functions within the mental framework of a single ideology that tends to be a product of his or her social and economic environment. It matters little that we are the descendants of African slaves acculturated in communist Cuba or capitalist America. We see what we have been manipulated to see. And the way we perceive things is affected largely by what we do or do not know of the world before us. Of course, what we know or do not know is a process of indoctrinating meanings, values and beliefs that shape our interpretation of the events and experiences prescribed to the environments we are exposed to.

To this end, it has been said that life is like a series of rooms and the people we get stuck in these rooms with are the people we usually become. They rub off on us like wet paint on a door jam. Like a sponge, we absorb their beliefs and values, and to a great extent—their character.

For those who grow up poor in America’s ghettos, our parents were too tied down by bills to concern themselves with morals that did not put food on the table. A “shut-off notice” hangs on the door of every house or apartment in the ‘hood at some point of our childhood—if not often. The lights are going to be cut-off. Or it’s the water or gas. As children, my little sisters and I really didn’t sweat it because Momma had *Game*—the key to the water main. Yet when the water department got up on her moves and removed the entire meter, like pack mules we carried water from Grandma Rachael’s or it was the neighbor’s hydrant to fill our tub so we could share a bath. We fill our sinks, pots and pans too. When the gas got cut-off, Moms had electric blankets, heaters and skilletts. When the lights went out, we froze in the Oklahoma winter breeze. So at times, as children, we were not so carefree.

Our struggles inevitably beckoned drugs. *What started as a hustle ended with addiction*. I stood on one end of the pipe—my mother eventually the other. Nonetheless, this was our African Queen. Despite poverty’s discordance, she taught us how to get through hard times and stay warm in those cold winter nights as we lay bundled together in Grandma’s old quilts. Government cheese, beans and canned

meat kept our stomachs full. And the hugs this fiend would give, along with the ass-whippings, assured us that she cared. She handled her business given what she had to work with despite opinions. Rain, sleet or snow, if she had to “ho up”—Mr. Hood got a show. If she had to slang blow, she did-it-moving and indeed went all-the-way-out—schizo—tryin’ to feed her crumb snatchers.

Trapped in a world of disparity, I witnessed it riddled with drugs, violence and insanity. All too which would have its affect on my ghetto perspective. Yet, my ghetto was unique, nonetheless, the same. Though, there were no plywood covers littering project windows or other features that immediately come to mind when reflecting on the scenery common to the inner-city ghetto. Nor was it the reality I’ve encountered in other countries where more extreme definitions of poverty exist. Yet and still, being poor is universal and embodies the same oppressive elements.

My ghetto was one of illusions all the same. Here, cats came up stankin’ floating in the lake underestimating my country settings. I was raised for the most part in Seminole County, Oklahoma. At the heart of this racially intolerant stretch of land sat the county seat—Wewoka, my birthright. Yet, I resided here and there throughout the state. In thirteen years of school I attended thirteen different schools. My mother and stepfather often jumped from town-to-town, city-to-city looking for rare employment opportunities as our family grew. Most of the towns we lived in were small populations (800 to 25,000), with exception of Oklahoma City (OKC, hereafter) and Norman. These towns were just as insulating as the inner-city. They all were trapped in the cultural bubble of racism, drugs, poverty, and violence.

From jump my real father had checked-out. Though he abandoned my mother and I, his departure was not by choice. Three bullets caught him in the back of the head. I was told he was murdered by a coward stepping to a hogg behind a “juice box” (a.k.a. some pussy). At the tender age of three, I vividly recall holding my sobbing mother’s hand as we approached... I was confused not realizing the impact of that day as we drew near the sky-blue box my father was lying in. Looking to my mother for answers, I recall asking: “What’s wrong?” “Why is Daddy just lying there?” “Daddy get up!” “Let’s play cowboy and ride my horse Big Red!” Daddy just stayed there as if he was playing sleep. As I continued to tug on my Mom’s dress tears flowed from her eyes as if a river as she attempted to explain my father was gone forever. “No he’s not! He’s right there,” I insisted not understanding the meaning of “gone forever.”

The murder of my father would be the first of many life-altering events during childhood that would harden my soul. Something inside of me would turn-off. Death and insanity seemed to ever claim those I cared for most. So I just stopped caring.

Sadly, the only memory of my father I would grow to have would be the man in the casket who, as my mother and family would tell, brought joy to the world around him, including mine as the kid cowboy wanting to be like pops.

Pops was a real cowboy—boots and the whole nine! He was raised, along with seven other siblings, in an era when Boley, Oklahoma, his hometown, was one of the most prominent Black communities in the United States. Pa Pa Daddy and Grandma Skippy—his parents, were industrial people who had managed to acquire a sizeable ranch in the backwoods of Boley. They were bi-racial people with a background that span from a father who was a former slave master in Georgia and, Grandma, the daughter of a beautiful mix between Cherokee and African from Alabama. Pops had

inherited all this. He was handsome man of fair complexion that loved “fire-water,” beautiful women and a good dice game. He had a fierce reputation for pounding a cat into the sand for getting out-of-pocket with him. My mother would tell of how he was such a beautiful and proud man who swept her off her feet with his charm. He was a sharp dresser, a dandy, who took care of her and loved spending time with his only son.

As the years passed after his murder, it seemed as if my life was nothing but a hole akinning where my father should have been. I would grow-up with only remnants of his profound affect gleaming in the cloudiness of my mother’s pain spoken eyes when he was spoke of. “His favorite words,” she would encourage me with hopes that his death would not hinder me in life, was: “Ain’t no step to high for a stepper.” These were the words that I’d grow to live by.

As for the man my mother would later marry and attempt to fill the void caused by my father’s death, our relationship would sour from jump. Vividly, I recall moving with the newly weds to Cherry Street in Ada, Oklahoma. The prospects of a new dad were bright for the six-year-old kid. I was willing to give him a chance. That was until he found me with a porn magazine of his I had dug out from Mom’s and his closet. I guess he thought I was slow when it came to recognizing the “juice box.” Because he asked with a smirk... I provided the slang... and Momma knocked sparks from my ass.

Like that! No sooner that my stepdad and I were to begin what was supposed to be a male bonding experience, he had betrayed my trust and lost cool points for diming-me-out to Mom’s wrath. I would also lose my respect for male authority that day. From that day forth with no respect for the general male-kind my Grandpa Willis and the prospect of his violence would be the only exception I found fit to fill a man’s shoes.

Both my Grandpa Willis and Grandma Jean were my rock. They were my mother’s parents who, along with my Grandma Skippy and Pa Pa Daddy, spoiled me with love and attention. When times got hard at Mom’s spot I’d be sent to stay with them periodically. Most of which was with my grandparents Jean and Willis. At their homes there was lots of freedom, hot water and plenty of ice cream and cake. And with my grandparents *Jean* and *Willis*, as long as I told them the truth, which was a good lie most of the time, I didn’t have to worry about getting the strap too often. They were easy to convince, especially during my early years when they seemed to love that “Bumpy face” gin more than they loved each other. Grandpa, being half Seminole Indian, loved that “fire-water” too. He was a good-natured man, but a violent drunk. I can honesty say, however, he never laid a hand on anyone he considered family. Trust, there were several occasions that someone got hit with a straight razor for messing with his grandson(s).

With Grandma Skippy, however, there were a many of times I was made to go get a switch off the tree. Though, I wouldn’t be the one in for it “most” of the time even though I was the guilty party. Instead, she’d whip my older cousins for allowing me to get into trouble. So, when I was sent off to the tree I’d get a “branch” because I wanted to make sure she beat the fight out of them before they retaliated by enticing my cousin Marvelus to *try* and beat-me-up. As the years passed, Marvelus and I became the main event when visiting our grandparents’ ranch. We would punch on

each other as if we were punching bags up until we were about twenty years old. And our cousins would be on the sidelines taking bets and agitating us on every time.

Grandpa Willis was a military man. He had served in the Navy during the Second World War and received an honorable discharge after suffering an injury related to the July 17, 1944, explosion of the *Quinalt Victory* battleship at Port Chicago, California. Often he would tell of the events of that horrible day. The crane operators were inexperienced soldiers who learned on the job. Consequently, there were many incidents where the ordnance loaded onto the ships was carelessly handled. They were told that the bombs had been deactivated. So they were lead to believe there wasn't anything to fear with regards to an explosion. This proved otherwise on that fatal day of July.

Grandpa would tell of how he and many other soldiers suspected the cause of the explosion was due to one of the crane operators accidentally dropping a warhead into the hull of the ship. At the time of the explosion he was a good distance away from the loading-dock. Yet, was sent flying twenty feet into the air from the impact of the explosion alone. When he hit the ground he landed on his "feet like a happy cat on a hot tin roof running and shouting 'Them goddam Japs done bombed us again!'" Like many soldiers, he honestly believed they were under attack. That was just how significant the explosion was. When things finally settled down and he realized that they were not under attack, it was then that he noticed he had lost the good portion of his foot—his big-toe, which had been hanging by the skin all the time the was shouting and cussing trying to escape what he initially thought was an attack.

In the aftermath of the explosion, Grandpa would tell of having set eyes on the most gruesome sight of carnage he had ever seen. Some 300 soldiers were blown to pieces and their body parts were scattered about for miles. Notably, this incident has been recorded as the largest of military disasters in America.

Grandpa, being a military man, surprisingly wasn't strict. Though, once he told you to do something it would be hell to pay if he had to tell you again. It was during these times that my cousin, Elrather, would be my fall guy and took my ass-whippings like a champ. We had been sent to live with our grandparents when I was about nine years old. Since birth, Elrather and I had pretty much been their orphans and grew up like brothers. Of course, by this time they had given-up the "Bumpy face." They were church folks now who had settled on a two-hundred acre ranch on the outskirts of Seminole.

Here, my cousin and I would flourish. In the country we had no curfew. We camped-out in the woods; skinny-dipped in the pond; rode horses, bulls and even the neighbor's Great Dane.

Our neighbors, the Brinsfield family, lived down the road a ways. Old man Bill Brinsfield was a true racist who never shied away from the occasion to crack "nigger jokes." "Ke ke, huh huh," we'd laugh; then take our frustrations out on his grandsons David and Dale. They were our playmates. And our favorite game was "WAR." We treated them as if the "enemy" unloading on them with our b-b guns and using them for karate-dummies. Elrather was the sniper up in the tree and I was the ground platoon in the trenches. We'd light-they-ass-up every time and off they'd run in tears to cry to their daddy, Jerry—another racist from Missouri—who would come to their defense. We'd call in reinforcements—Grandpa!

The only rule we had as kids was we had to attend Sunday school. It was at church that our grandparents would encourage us to become junior deacons. They taught us how to facilitate the services, orate and attempted to instill Christian values. Years later they would co-found the St. Mark Missionary Baptist Church in Wewoka. This too was another one of those learning experiences. We were able to discern how people could get together and build an institution to better the lives of others.

Grandpa also taught us how to live off the land. He taught us how to butcher and process the livestock, hunt, fish, and grow gardens of corn, green beans, okra, and just about any fruit or vegetable that would germinate in the soil—even the marijuana seeds I'd occasionally swipe from my Mom's house.

Grandpa was an industrialist with a tool shed full of electrical saws, handsaws, welders, hammers, and all kinds of wrenches from pipe wrenches to monkey wrenches. He would always encourage us to build our own bikes, boats, go-carts, etc. You name it, we built it. He also had his own business—a small landscaping company. Most of his employees were his old drinking buddies. Of course they weren't the most reliable bunch. So Elrather and I would pick up the slack and make a little pocket change. We were hard hustlas mostly because it made us proud to hear Grandpa brag about how his grandsons "get the job done and do a better job than them grown-ass men."

When I was about eleven years old, Elrather was forced to move back with his mom, who was now living in Richmond, California. That was the saddest day of our lives. My little bro was gone and I was left to face David and Dale by myself. Yet, I quickly found another fall guy and trusted comrade in my ole dog Spike.

Spike was a mix of Doberman pinscher and the neighbor's Great Dane. He was a fine looking specimen. Tan colored with a white patch on his chest, he had the body of a Doberman and the head of the Great Dane. Before Elrather had left for California, Grandpa had taught us how to train him. Spike would tree a raccoon, jump in a pond to retrieve a duck, sit, roll-over, and attack anyone or anything we sicced him on—even David and Dale! There were also a many of times I'd be due for a strapping and Grandpa would have to catch me before I made it out the house where Spike would be ready to kill. Grandpa would quickly retreat into the house vowing to get his gun and shoot that "goddam damn dog!"

Grandma Jean was full of excitement too. Riding with her anywhere was like a roller-coaster ride. She drove like the Duke Boys and that ole Chevy truck ran like the *General Lee*. Boy! Would she make them glasspacks bark. The wheels of that Chevy would squeal as we bent a corner sideways. "Get-on-it Granny," I'd entice her. She'd smile that beautiful smile of her's and never let me down. Needless to say, I got my whip-game from her.

She was a hellcat too during her drinking days. Better not rub her the wrong way or you were in for a tongue-lashing. Like Grandpa, she had a streak of Indian in her too that loved that "fire-water." And boy could she drink! They would go on weeklong binges and sparks would fly. I recall one time Grandpa had drunk the last of the gin on a Sunday—when the liquor store was closed—and Grandma didn't find that very gentlemanly like to leave a lady without a taste. The argument ensued and Grandpa was all kinds of "no good sap-suckers!" By the time she had finished, he had jumped in the Chevy, mobbed to the liquor store, did a smash-and-grab—driving the Chevy through the window—just to shut-her-up. He would eventually find



himself in jail for that one, but it was a testament to Grandma's effectiveness to motivate people that they would laugh about until their dying days.

My grandparents had lived the whole Jim Crow experience. They attended segregated schools and the whole nine. Grandpa didn't care too much for white folks due to his experiences with racism. Though, there were several of his old white-drinking buddies that he made an exception for.

Grandma, on the other hand, was one of those Dr. King types who treated everyone with respect and compassion. She was a very kind and caring person to everyone who crossed her path. There were times when she would make me give up my bed so those in need could have a roof over their head. I hated it! Grandpa did too when it was stinky white folks. Yet he and I were forced to go along with it because Grandma was having none of that discrimination in her house.

She was most definitely a positive force in my life, who impacted more lives than just mine. She was also a strong advocate for the underdog. Even if you were the neighborhood wino, she'd go to bat for you, make sure you were straight and made you feel good about yourself. She was my rock, who always encouraged me. Her words live with me to this day: "Don't you ever half-ass do nothing. Always do your best or don't do it at all."

Grandma was also an industrialist. In 1948 she graduated from Douglas High School in Wewoka. Thereafter, she packed-up and headed for the "Chocolate City"—Chicago, Illinois. There she sought escape from the racist south. Chicago during the 1950s offered promise to a many Black folk. There, Black professionals found great success since the city's founding by Black pioneer Jean Baptiste Point Sable (Point du Sable) in the 1770s. Grandma took to Chicago not only because of the promise it offered to Blacks, but also because it was one of the few places where Blacks could attend college. To which she would attend embalming school at Worshums College. This was a well-paying profession for Black folks, especially considering the fact that white funeral parlors did not cater too much to Black folks. It was probably the one business that we had a monopoly on up until the early years of my life. Looking back, I never thought it odd of Grandma's profession when she would occasionally moonlight at Keller's Funeral Home in Wewoka. This was one of many side hustles she had.

Grandma was a hustler. She sold fresh produce from our gardens, poultry products and the occasional side of beef or pork from our livestock. Both her and Grandpa were a good team. They taught Elrather and I how to hustle from a young age. While many of our childhood friends over in Wewoka thought they spoiled us with bikes, etc., what they didn't know was we were hard hustling sun-up to sundown during the summer months riding that lawnmower while they'd be playing at the park.

Since we were able to walk, Elrather and I would jump behind that Chevy, as our grandparents crept down a dirt road, throwing cans and bottles into the bed of the truck until it was full. And we'd push and ride those lawnmowers until the blades were dull. By the end of the month we'd have "phat pockets" to buy whatever we wanted. Because of this we both had a bike for each day of the week and Adidas on our feet.

Sadly, by the time I was thirteen years old my grandparents began to experience health complications. Grandma was diagnosed with Alzheimers and her mental health would rapidly deteriorate thereafter. Grandpa was to suffer several strokes that would

leave him permanently paralyzed on his entire left side. This devastated me so to say the least. They were my heroes who I had spent my entire life looking up to. Up until then, all I wanted to be was like Grandpa. I had planned to follow in his footsteps and enlist in the Navy; become a minister at our church. Yet, as they grew infirm so too would the positive influence in my life.

For the next year I did everything I could to keep my perfect world together. I was a thirteen-year-old kid waking up at 4:30 a.m. preparing their meals, assisting Grandpa to shave and bath, and seeing to it they had their medications. I would tend to the livestock then jump in the Chevy and mob to school in New Lima. After school I'd drive over to Moore's IGA Grocery in Wewoka, pick-up the rotten produce and then to Seminole State College in Seminole for the food they threw-out, which was fed to our cows and pigs. Then it was back to the farm to tend to my grandparents, the livestock and homework.

Eventually, the decision was made to place Grandma in a nursing home in Wewoka. Grandpa was to live with my Aunt LaVonna in Shawnee for a brief period. Shawnee was about a thirty-minute drive from Wewoka. In due time, Grandpa was to move to California so Elrather's mother could care for him.

The decision to split up my grandparents made me an angry kid. By now I was again living with my Mom and stepdad. Grandma was in the nursing home up the street, so I would often go visit her with a bag of her favorite candies to extort the silence of her beautiful smile. However, as if a jailhouse visit, I'd be in-and-out in ten to fifteen minutes. It was just too much to bear seeing her locked-up in that place.

Every Friday like clockwork the crew I fell in with was good for a "G-Ride." Shawnee was our usual pit stop to steal another car after a night in OKC. Often, I'd just stay over the weekend at my Aunt's to visit with Grandpa then I'd either catch a ride back to Wewoka or "snap-up" another G-Ride to get back home.

Between Mom and my grandparent's other kids, they had managed to "cluck-off" the farm and all the landscaping business equipment. They were so busy fighting over who was going to get what that none of them thought about me or the significance of the business and church being vital to providing me structure. All they seemed to care about was getting their hands on the proceeds that came of the sale of the farm and business. Keeping them or assisting me to run the business never crossed their mind.

What made matters worse was the fact that after having placed Grandma in the nursing home, her siblings were to assume power-of-attorney over her assets and thus as the years passed three-hundred-thousand dollars of the family's land, which had been in our family since the Oklahoma Land Rush, would go-up in a cloud of "coke-smoke." Indeed, I was a mad kid.

Living with Mom and stepdad didn't make things any better. Their house was drama central. They fought like cats and dogs. Domestic violence spoiled the tranquility of the home at least three nights a week. Their disputes were always about a lack of money, which also went up in a cloud of "coke-smoke." The one thing I have to say is that I give my stepdad credit for putting up with my Mom's shit for close to twenty years. For twenty years he fought with that woman with hopes that she would "get-back." Like clockwork the drama in my parents' house went on for years. So much so, I'd be ready with a bag of popcorn anticipating the main event—"Sticky vs. Ricky!" I betted on Mom every time because she was always the aggressor

who got-off first and got the advantage of the “element of surprise.” My sisters and I—occasionally the police too—were the cheering and tearing crowd of fans. Ironically, I found comfort in their squabbles because it was not my sisters’ or my ass getting whipped on for a change. Like Rocky and Mr. T, fist flew and bullets too. It was a miracle she didn’t kill that man.

The other four nights of the week that my Mom and Ricky weren’t fighting the community was like a clip from a mob movie. We lived on or about Cedar Street most of my life. Cedar Street was Wewoka’s own little version of Crenshaw Boulevard in Los Angeles or San Pablo Avenue in Oakland, California. All sorts of illegal business vibed on this small strip from prostitution to murder. Even the police got lead-checked a time or two. Far as the Black community was concerned they were the enemy. It was here, on Cedar Street, that I first saw a man get his brains blown-out. My reaction was mild. By the time I was fourteen years old my senses had been assaulted so by violence they had grown callous. Violence was so commonplace in my life I had long learn to repress the emotion it once aroused. The following morning I would walk over to where Bobby Asberry was standing at the time he was shot in the head shooting dice. Maggots had begun to infest what was left of his brain matter.

During the 1970s up to about the mid ‘80s, I’d accompany Grandpa to a dice game or a game of pool at *Momma Dolly’s*, *Sam’s Place* or one of the other water holes that were on Cedar Street. As a boy I was fascinated standing in the mix of hustlas who patiently awaited a haircut at *Clyde’s Barber Shop*. Clyde’s sat dead in the middle of all the commotion on Cedar Street. It was probably the only place a Black man could get a haircut. And Cedar Street was the only place in Wewoka that a Black man could see some serious cash.

By the ‘90s, *Momma Dolly’s* and *Sam’s Place* had been torn down along with many of the old structures that littered the block. However, my cousin Pooch had relocated a rather large one-story home and had remodeled it into a makeshift club. There were a many nights that I’d fall asleep and awake to the sounds of Bobby Womack, The Whispers, Heavy D and many many others that played loud from the jukebox in his club.

Of all the clubs that once littered Cedar Street, Pooch’s was the one that got raided by the police the most. It had more foot-traffic and dope being sold out of it than the Carter (as in the movie *New Jack City*). Between all that had gone on at *Momma Dolly’s*, *Sam’s Place* and *Pooch’s*, Wewoka had earned the nickname lil’ Chicago.

By the time I was fifteen years old, I was in full “G-Mode.” Mark, Conan and I were deemed the leaders of the pack. We had taken to the streets of Wewoka like a flame. Mark was a distant cousin I’d grown up with from the sandbox. He was constantly back-and-forth between OKC, LA and Wewoka. His father was struggling to keep him out of juvenile lock-up. Yet, Mark was a card or two shy of a full deck. He suffered from what doctors today call A.D.D., which made for a bad trip anytime he got behind the wheel of a G-Ride or got hyphy with a pistol in his possession. After a few stints in juve and a bid up state, Mark went federal.

Within a few months of Mark’s release he was hittin’ switches in a candy tangerine ‘64 Impala and ballin’ out-of-control. His uncle, Greg Gordon (a.k.a. “GG”), had put him on with a few kicks (kilos of cocaine). But what Mark didn’t realize at the time was, GG had been under investigation by the feds for months and

had on prior occasion informed me of his suspicions of such. When he informed me of this I had suggested to him to close-shop. Yet as he would put it, he “didn’t give a fuck about going to the penitentiary for making \$30,000 a week at the trap-house.”

GG owned about twenty properties within a two-block radius. All of them were fortified dope and prostitution houses with surveillance, lookouts and the whole nine. He also had an assortment of vehicles ranging from Mercedes Benzes to old school Chevy trucks.

Within six months of Marks release both GG and he, along with about thirty of our homeboys, were indicted by the feds for conspiracy to distribute cocaine, possession of cocaine, possession of a firearm(s) (AK-47s) while in the commission of a crime, illegal use of a communication device (CB radios and police scanners), and a slew of other charges that eventually landed Mark a 35 year sentence due to his priors. Conan and I managed to dodge the indictment. However, it was not by any sure genius or luck on our behalf. Rather, it was because Conan was dead and I was in the county lock-up facing a capital murder charge for killing him.

Conan was a notorious “Pony Down” gang member from Detroit, Michigan. He was a street-wise kid by age twelve. His family and he had moved to Wewoka about this time after he had allegedly killed a rival gang member. Whether this was true or not, the one thing that was, he indeed was ruthless. At age 12 he had knockouts like Mike Tyson and the gift to think fast on his feet. He absorbed punches like a punching bag.

By the time Conan was 21 years old he was a 6-0 first round knockout professional boxer sparring with up-and-comer Roy Jones Jr. Often, I’d accompany him as assistant trainer and manager to the gym on the southwest side of OKC. There, I’d set ringside and watch, for the most part, him methodically take his victims apart with a series of quick and powerful jabs and combinations.

Yet, it wasn’t in the boxing gym that Conan had developed his skill. It was on the streets of Detroit and Wewoka. As kids we’d dog any cat—young and old alike—who got out-of-pocket with the crew. Most of the time it was Conan and I puttin’ in the work. This was our way of blowing off some steam. We were mad kids. And Conan seemed to be the maddest of us all. He was always looking for a victim and I was always looking for a buck.

When I took to selling dope we would eventually go our separate ways—though we remained close—because his temperament and shifty behavior was bad for business. Several times I’d front him a count and the knocks (dope-fiends) would complain he was selling bunk-dope. I’d check the count and sure enough it would be just that—bunk-dope! Eventually, I was to discover that another homie and he were experimenting with “premos” then in an effort to get my money back he’d whip-up a concoction of wax, baking soda and Oragel to sell to the fiends. He’d become notorious for that, which pretty much forced me to cut my ties and recognize he wasn’t cutout for the *Dope-Game*. There were also times when he would post-up with me at Pooch’s and I’d be more than happy to see him go elsewhere because it was pretty much guaranteed some unsuspecting fool was going to get knocked-the-fuck-out and pissed on, if not strong-armed, for nothing more than complaining about the size of our crack-rocks.

Between Mark, Conan and I we pretty much knew how to do it all by the age fifteen. We had studied our HOW TO SELF-DESTRUCT GUIDE well and could

steal a car in under 60 seconds, cook dope and wasn't afraid to let the pistol smoke. This was our way of coping with the stigmas of poverty and the emasculation of racism.

\* \* \*

As I have struggled with the negative influences in my life and the destruction they have given birth to, I have been forced to enter the garden of the mind and attempt to weed-out those pits of anger, inferiority and other conditioned complexes that cultivated the sterile soil I've treaded upon.

For the past thirteen years that I have been incarcerated I've spent countless days and hours reflecting on my upbringing and analyzing the affect of the people and environments I have been exposed to. There were many questions that came of this process: How was it that those negative influences prevailed over the positive that my grandparents had taught me? Why was there so much chaos and disorder in my life? Why was there so much chaos and disorder in the 'hood? Why was I poor? Why were they rich? And so on and so forth the questions went. There were so many that I have sought answers to. Of them all, the one that was the most important was: Why is it that most people never achieve a level of consciousness to become creators of their environments instead of their environments creating them?

Eventually, it began to dawn on me that the answers to my questions all pointed in one direction—people are purposefully put to sleep, distracted by the events that play-out in our lives; that we do not really slow down enough to reflect on the decisions we make or how they are greatly influenced by the social structures and institutions that shape our values, beliefs, etc. It's an easy concept to grasp. Though, I find it takes years of reflection to truly understand how these structures and institutions affect human behavior. Hell! It took me having to sit down all these years in prison just to get a grip on it myself. And, unlike a lot of prisoners who spend the majority of their time distracted with the cards, dice, etc., I've been digging through volumes of books and all the distortions that the 'hood clouded my conscious with.

What I was to eventually discover was something my grandparents exposed me to some thirty years ago—social structures and social institutions affect people in both positive and negative ways. This was a lesson that was muddled in the drama filled events of my life that I allowed to control me.

For years after my grandparents were no longer there to provide me structure and encouragement to partake in the church, which notably is a social institution, I allowed what people taught me in the streets of Wewoka to control me. I allowed what people taught me in America's racist school system to control me. I allowed what people taught me in prison to control me. I allowed this and more to construct my conscious and distort my conscience. Then, slowly, the more I dug the more I began to realize that maybe, just maybe, it was time for me to teach myself; that I needed to think for myself and analyze what the world had put to me with the social structures and institutions that I was brought up in.

Moreover, I needed to understand why? Why had all this been put to me to absorb. It was when I started asking myself these questions and digging for answers I began to understand *why* it was that Mark, Conan and I were given HOW TO SELF-DESTRUCT GUIDES; that I began to understand how the *Blueprint* read.

**THE BLUEPRINT I: THE MAKING OF THE GHETTO**

*Much like a fabric, any social reality—a town, a university, a revolution, a war—has a pattern and a texture. No fact is an island; each one is rich with implications that reach out, so to speak, toward the wider area of surrounding facts. When some of these facts are confirmed, they begin to reveal the pattern and texture in question.*

—*The Nation*  
Rick Turse, 2013

The term ghetto was first used in English during the seventeenth century segregation of Jews. By the nineteenth century these enclaves had become thriving *shtetls* (Jewish towns) in Eastern Europe. They were composed of professionals of all sorts ranging from artisans to merchants, as well as Talmudic scholars. Notably, they were self-governing states that ran their own political, social and economic affairs. They were organized through religious and secular councils with little to no interference by the European government.<sup>1</sup>

The ghettos that were to develop in America were also the product of racial segregation. That they remain, is a testament to current racial and economic divides in this nation.

Beginning with the emancipation of African slaves onto the late 1800s, Black Americans and other people of color were forced by law, by violence, and by discriminatory government housing practices to live in underdeveloped segregated communities. From approximately 1870 to the early years of the 1920s, these communities were a mixture of slums and aspiring townships. The more successful communities were obviously full of autonomy and professionals of all sorts very much like Jewish *shtetls*. These Black establishments radiated of Black pride and accomplishment. Successful Black communities like Boley and Black Wall Street in Tulsa, Oklahoma where popping up all around the nation. Needless to say, they rivaled neighboring white communities in commerce and social progress.

However, by the turn of the nineteenth century many Black communities began to suffer periodic race riots. They were pillaged, burned to the ground by racist white folks who envied their exponential success. These riots would continue to devastate the economy in Black communities well into the 1960s.

When Black Americans began to migrate North and to other regions throughout the country in an attempt to escape white violence and find economic opportunity, white Americans established written and unwritten laws that created *Sundown towns* and communities<sup>2</sup> across America that contained Blacks and others to underdeveloped areas that were taxed, then starved of economic development.

From Jim Crow, to disparaging government social programs, the white establishment purposefully sought to repress the social and economic progress of communities of color. In Jill Quadagno's *The Color of Welfare* a detailed account is provided which explains just how it was that the American government and other private financial institutions operated collectively from the 1930s to the 1960s to contain people of color to the ghetto, and maintain racial inequality between Blacks and whites.

From the New Deal<sup>3</sup> to the 1960s, federal housing policy encouraged private home ownership for white families but not black families. Instead,

federal policy reinforced barriers to residential choice erected by barriers, to racially segregated housing but also virtually ensured that the quality of housing open to them was inferior.

In the post-World War II era, black families migrated from rural areas to towns and cities in the South and from the South to the North. Private builders, lenders, and real estate brokers conspired with local officials to keep them confined to black neighborhoods. Zoning ordinances specifying where people could live and restrictive covenants—private agreements to exclude designated minority groups—created separate black and white neighborhoods....

By 1962 the [Veteran's Administration] and [Federal Housing Administration] had financed more than \$120 billion in new housing. Less than 2 percent was available to non-white families and most of that on a segregated basis....

Public housing, the ugly stepsister of federal housing policy, got a boost with the Housing Act of 1949... The Act authorized the construction of 810,000 public housing units... and provided funds for massive urban redevelopment... In city after city, local authorities used urban-renewal funds to demolish the homes of the poor. Instead of building public housing in their place, they developed "enterprise" zones of office buildings, hotels, and shops. By 1960 more than 400,000 homes had been destroyed but only 10,760 low-rent units built. Much of the destroyed housing was owned or rented by black families. Critics of federal housing policy caustically noted that urban renewal was a synonym for Negro removal.

The public housing that *was* built was racially segregated and confined almost entirely to central cities. And every city had its projects....

Indirectly, other government agencies reinforced housing segregation, in the process locking African Americans out of opportunities for good jobs....

[H]ousing segregation was at the heart of racial inequality. Between 1954-1965 more than half of the new industrial building, stores, hospitals and schools were built outside the central city. During the same period costs of public transportation was time consuming, expensive, and often unavailable....

...Postponing action on housing [discrimination] until after the 1962 congressional elections [so as to avoid the political blowback building up around the issue of integrated public housing], [President] Kennedy then issued a limited order prohibiting federally supported housing projects from selecting tenants by race. The Public Housing Authority narrowly interpreted the order as referring only to housing built after 1962 and as applying only to the selection of tenants, not to the selection of sites. As a result, public housing—massive, ugly, concrete-slab buildings that squeezed hundreds of families into a few city blocks—was still built in the inner cities.

[During the tumultuous years of 1965-67, in response to the Watts, Newark and Detroit riots in the Black community] the National Committee

Against Discrimination in Housing, a conglomeration of labor and civil rights groups, focused its attack on federal housing policy [after concluding]: “The federal government is primarily responsible for building a ghetto system that has created racial alienation and tensions so explosive that the crisis in our cities now borders on catastrophe.”<sup>4</sup>

The racially segregated, poverty-stricken ghettos that exist in inner-city communities across America would not exist today but for these racially biased government policies for which there has never been meaningful redress.<sup>5</sup> As if American ghettos were rogue nations, the United States government and other collaborated institutional (racist) structures have used politically lax zoning laws, covenants, housing programs, and other legislative enactments to impose social and economic sanctions on those who reside in the ghetto. By design the United States government and its cohorts have purposefully sought to undermine urban infrastructure with the intent of destroying not only the local economy, but so too the lives of those who reside there. Ironically, former U.S. Congressman and Dr. King’s right hand man, Andrew Young, would write of the matter:

[The resulting] psychological condition of alienation and despair almost defined what was being called in the sixties the “black ghetto.” The original meaning of the term “ghetto” evoked a place where people were gathered so that they could be exterminated. The activists who began referring to black slums as “ghettos” intended to evoke the horror of genocide. A “ghetto” was inhabited by people society [i.e., white people] had designed superfluous.<sup>6</sup> The “ghetto” was marked by high unemployment, costly but rundown housing, a declining public education system due to the absence of a strong inner-city tax base, lack of strong black businesses that would invest in the community, inadequate health facilities and higher rates of disease, and the ugly manifestations of bitter, violent turning of the community on itself by its most trapped, most hopeless, most desperate, and most ignorant inhabitants.<sup>7</sup>

Unquestionably, there is a straightforward correlation between the activities of the United States government and other institutional forces such as racism that affect the quality of life people in the ghetto attain. Where crime and poverty have come to depreciate these residential areas we can look to the prevailing social and economic policies implemented by government as their cause.

Take for example, zoning laws. In the ghetto, where poverty and crime have depreciated the lives of its residents, such laws require little in the area of strictness as to quality and uniformity in appearance of the rickety structures that are built here. In addition, there’s little, if any, environmental concern. Thus, the erecting of eyesores—projects, chemical factories, liquor stores, cannabis and gun shops, and other known precursors fostering disastrous social and ecological conditions—get the green-light to sow their poison here.

Moreover, as Young has pointed, the way tax legislation is devised permits little to tax in these areas *made* destitute of sources of taxation. Business owners do not usually look to these areas as prospective sites due to exorbitant crime rates. Those



that do (e.g., factories and warehouse operations) receive significant tax breaks; so too the property owners, who usually are not residents of the community. Notably, financing for community projects such as paving streets, school and community center budgets come out of a ponderous system of special taxes on the abutting land known as property taxes. Thus, the taxes paid into local and state coffers by business and property owners are little in the way of monies generated to support community infrastructure—namely, school budgets.

If crime is the product of a poor education, then the manner to which the ghetto's infrastructure has been purposefully structured to provide little tax support for school budgets, clearly indicates a malignant design intent on fostering a caste system. It is in this way that the physical and mentally deteriorating conditions of the ghetto extend themselves for generations and often, though not always, dictate how ghetto residents are to fair socially, politically and economically. For education is to the modern world the equivalent of the parable in the Bible pertaining to giving a man lessons in how to fish opposed to giving him a fish. When people in American society do not provide adequate tools for education, nothing can be said of their intent other than to limit these people.

### ***THE BLUEPRINT II: THE MAINTAINING OF THE GHETTO***

*Some say life is a game. For those raised within the confines of the ghetto, life is the Game. Here, the invisible hand of capitalism plays Game God with the authority to prescribe conditions that invoke feelings of hope and desperation. With its enormous and tutelary power it becomes puppeteer to the fate of those who reside here. It assures the conditions vital to transforming humanity into the androids that we become.*

—*Ivan Kilgore*

It was once said of E.V. Walter: “The masses are not ephemeral but durable and that they need not be spontaneous; but be constructed by design.”<sup>8</sup> That said, I do not believe it can be stressed enough that America's ghettoes are the creation of design and not happenstance; that they are the product of a web of complex political and economic factors that give way to the ghetto's subpar infrastructure. It's a social and economic structure that manifests consequently to institutions designed with the intent of controlling people, exploiting people, oppressing people, and destroying those who do not fall in suit with the rest. It is a design (i.e., a *Blueprint*) that aims to reduce human beings to mere objects; pawns in a grandeur scheme to capitalize upon the struggles created within them.

When reflecting on the social structures in the ghetto and the political and economic factors that go into creating them, we must remain mindful of the fact that they define boundaries, making it likely that those located within them will or will not have relations with particular kinds of resources. As we have observed, social structures affect the likelihood that people will or will not develop particular kinds of selves, learn particular kinds of motivations, and have particular symbolic resources for defining situations they enter.<sup>9</sup>

Social structures, or the environment to say, result from institutional forces that affect people in both positive and negative ways. Take for example, America's penal institution (Chapter 8—*The Zo*). Arguably, the positive aspect of prisons in American society has been said to remove presumably criminal elements from the community.

The down side, however, is that mass incarceration of Black males, for example, destabilizes family and other social networks in the community.

Here, I borrow from Professor Todd Clear's *Imprisoning Communities: How Mass Incarceration Makes Disadvantaged Neighborhoods Worse*.<sup>10</sup> Clear provides a "coercive mobility theory" that states: "... high rates of incarceration, concentrated in poor communities, destabilizes social networks in these communities, thereby undermining informal social controls,<sup>11</sup> economic prosperity, and stability."<sup>12</sup>

It is important that we observe that social networks are composed of "human" and "social" capital. Both human and social capital are the building blocks of a community's social and economic progress. *Human Capital* refers to the personal resources an individual brings to the social and economic marketplace. A typical example of human capital is education or a particular skill-set like experience in sales and marketing. Others include the ability to pickup on things fast (intellect) and ease in social situations.<sup>13</sup> For the most part, many of those who wind up in prison do not posses these qualities. However, there are exceptions.

"Social Capital," as defined by Clear, "is the capacity of a person to call upon personal ties (usually within social networks) in order to advance some personal interest. Social capital and social networks are related. Social networks define the underlying structure of interpersonal relationships that hold the capacity for providing social capital; social capital is the capacity of networks to provide goods for people within these networks."<sup>14</sup> What Clear's has put to us to absorb can simply be summed up as "networking."

Social capital is a relatively new concept in the social sciences. It has come to indicate that networks of social relationships represent a "resource" for both the individual and the community, since they provide support for the individual and facilitate collective action. Although this is not an entirely new idea, the more systematic way in which capital captures such an intuition has created a new theoretical paradigm and has assisted to develop a series of innovative research programs in politics, economics and the study of human progress—or, in the case of the ghetto, the destabilization of communities. As this suggests, the systematic approach to manipulating social capital has gained currency beyond mere academic rhetoric and has for ages extended itself to the various social policing measures which influence the ghetto.

When reflecting on the prevailing social policy of incarcerating vast members of poor communities, we must note how this policy of mass incarceration in itself creates crimogenic conditions in the ghetto. Here, Clear further provides the

...[r]enewal of young residents for imprisonment is a mobility process that affects crime. It changes the density and spread... [of] secondary relational networks. This reduces the capacity of those networks to link to resources outside the neighborhood and bring them to bear on problems of people in the neighborhood. It weakens attachment to the neighborhood and ties to neighbors, and thereby erodes the collective efficacy that serves as a foundation for informal social control. The social stresses [e.g., unemployment and income inequality] are increased stresses on the high economically stressed communities, it generates the parental dysfunctions that lead to delinquency. In short, high rates of removal of parent-aged

residents from poor communities sets off a series of efforts that destabilize the capacity of those communities to provide informal social control.<sup>15</sup>

What Clear has provided here with his coercive mobility theory is the deteriorating social and economic impact Black families and communities are to experience as a consequence of incarcerating young, productive Black males.

As a young hustler out there peddling death to feed my family, again, I did not realize the traps that were awaiting my downfall. Nor did I realize the gravity of my responsibility to my family and how it was I was vital to their future progress. Despite the fact that I sold drugs, the financial and emotional security that I provided to them kept the lights on and plenty of food in the 'frig. That's not to mention the Nikes I put on my sisters' feet. Notably, Professor Clear stresses that such activities, irrespective of their being criminal, tie into the coercive mobility theory.

As a M.A.N., my incarceration has forced me to reckon with my greatest shame. This comes not on account of any stigma associated with being in prison. Rather, I'm ashamed because I now realize how I allowed my environment and the activities it influenced me with to deprive me of not accomplishing my goals in life and fulfilling my responsibilities to my family, which has always been my greatest source of pride and joy.

As the years have passed and I've come to recognize the destruction and its causes, the burden this has set upon my shoulders has been heavy yet embraced. I am to my family and community the fountainhead of stability, provider of economic opportunities, teacher, and emotional soundboard. When I slipped and was incarcerated the first time for three years, then for a second time with a life sentence, the impact this had on my peers and family was devastating.

My lil' sisters depended on "Big Bruh" to make life good for them and provide the direction our vice ridden parents had not. Without my financial and emotional support my daughter's mother would find it with another man. So too would my sisters eventually. From this grew a perverse dependence on not only other men, which of course has been problematic over the years, but so too the state. My wife, like many single mothers, came to rely heavily on welfare. Fortunately, unlike the welfare queens of the Reagan era, she was motivated enough not to allow herself to become systematized by the welfare system.

My lil' sisters, on the other hand, have struggled with the disparaging affect that came of the periodic welfare our mother received when we were kids. Needless to say, this for our parents was yet another drug; torpid and systematic like the old plantation system that created the African slaves' subservient mentality.

Aside of what was to come of our mother's motivation to "*Get up, Get out and Get something ... instead of spending all [her] days Getting high,*" Ricky was made to feel less than a man any time the case worker came snooping around. If he wasn't hiding in the closet, eventually these visits would drive him from the home due to an ensuing argument to save-face, a separation, and eventually a divorce.

The dysfunction that came of the lack of initiative in our parents' house haunts my sisters to this day. It hindered their ability to realize their potential to be independent of the system. Notably, they were not exposed to the environment that I was exposed to living with my grandparents. Unfortunately, they did not even have the brief period of stability and encouragement that I was to receive from being sent

to live with them. Thus, they weren't raised in a constructive setting that allowed for them to develop the *self* and its ability to provide independently of the state or working for others.

In addition, there has been a greater impact on my community with my incarceration. Sure, me poisoning it with dope and lead was of no benefit. My activities were simply a means to an end that I believed at the time would better situate my family and I.

During the course of my incarceration I've noted how many of my friends and associates have fallen out with each other. Homies have killed and robbed homies out of greed and envy. Some have turned-state; became addicted to hard drugs; and not handled their business as fathers. Many have remained "stuck"—having not advanced beyond the illegal activity we were engaged in as young hustlas tyrin' to get a buck. Consequently, I feel this has occurred due to my absence in influencing block affairs, which has caused things to get outright messy. No longer is there any integrity; principle guiding better judgment. Moreover, there is no solidarity.

Growing up, I observed how my Southside Posse O.G.s had held frequent get-togethers that made for community solidarity. I took the *Game* and ran with it. Up until I was incarcerated, I sponsored a number of weekly events ranging from BBQs to house parties that allowed for the 'hood to come together and address issues. In addition, I encouraged the homies to attend the local NAACP community meetings, which I often partook in an effort to facilitate solace between the young hustlas and the old heads that complained of our activities. Often during these meetings I had to remind the old heads that before they jumped to call the police on us that they too, when in their prime, were in the trap-house grinding to get their construction and real estate companies.

From this, Professor Clear paints a larger picture. Where I have drawn on the negative impact of my incarceration, Clear magnifies the impact by urging us to consider the deteriorating impact on poor communities around the nation where millions have been incarcerated. Using the metaphor "death by a thousand little cuts," which represents the instability caused by the removal and return of a significant number of individuals for prison, Clear points to the fact that "communities that provide large numbers of prisoners to the state and federal prison system struggle in a variety of ways. The laundry list of social and economic problems which ensue are extensive and beyond the mere examples that I have provided. Ultimately, they lead to a complete breakdown of "collective efficacy."<sup>16</sup>

Take for example how in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina countless poor Black Americans were without the necessary "collective efficacy" to aid themselves or others. The high level of social disorganization witnessed in the New Orleans crisis not only spoke to the gravity to which America's penal institution has devastated the collective efficacy in poor Black communities, it also speaks this nation's disdain for its poor and Black citizens in light of the Bush Administration's lack of immediate response. It is this contempt that makes cities like New Orleans repositories of surplus population that are incarcerated at disproportionate rates.

When we look to other American institutions it's pretty much the same scenario. America's educational institutions purposefully create scores of poorly functioning ghetto youth. In terms of political gamesmanship, the *school-2-prison* pipeline has been highly effective. Without meaningful *education* ghetto youth are *trained* with

useless information that fails to equip them with the necessary insight to address the problems uniquely before their communities. By design they are left to pretty much raise themselves without proper guidance, structure and education enough to live reverently and make decisions with justice.

That said, we really have to slow down to observe what Dr. Na'im Akbar put to us in distinguishing *education* from *training* (Chapter 5—*The Unorthodox Teacher*). For those of us who are not familiar with his philosophies, to provide a brief description, *training* is measured by one's retained knowledge about other people, places, and things. *Education*, on the other hand, is measured by the knowledge one possesses about his or her unconditional inner power and the ability to bring forth the greater expression of that which is already possessed by the individual intuition. To be *trained* is to be made dependent on an environment of another's making, which effectively trains the individual to download a conventional or systematic approach to achieve some end—be it destructive or otherwise. This taken into consideration, have we begun to understand or recognize the *Blueprint* which shapes America's ghettos?

Without question, America's institutions have a profound affect on the social and economic structures that tend to take shape in our respective environments. In a perfect world these structures are the “building blocks” of prosperous communities that accomplish, for example, our socialization, production and distribution of economic goods, informal and formal social controls, regulation and reproduction of wealth, and organization of religion and other value systems. However, in the ghetto it's an entirely different story. Our social structures are designed to “dismantle blocks”; to reproduce poverty generation after generation. The only goods we produce and distribute are the drugs government officials allow into our communities; the prostitution our mothers and sisters are forced into to feed and cloth their crumb snatchers and habits; and the other crimes we commit just to get our piece of the American Dream. Consequently, our informal social controls are weakened because daddy either dead or locked-up. And the only religion we practice is “self-preservation”—kill or be killed!

Moreover, our respective social and economic structures make for the sort of political gamesmanship that creates opportunities for one sector of society while creating barriers to opportunity for others. It is in this way that the ghetto becomes a repository, a surplus population, of individuals deemed as mere objects to be exploited for their human resource. This I stress due to the fact that the political agenda of prosperous communities can easily be argued as feeding on—that is, to capitalize on—and thus thriving off the social and economic conditions designed to bring about the disorganization and lack of collective efficacy in the ghetto. Therefore, the prosperity that is enjoyed by other sectors of society, we must credit to a design that seeks not only to drain the ghetto of its human and social capital, but so too to hold in tact the social and economic structures that perpetuate this exploitation. To this end, I barrow from Daniel R. Fusfeld and Timothy Bates' *The Political Economy of the Urban Ghetto*, which illustrates the point in context:

The urban ghetto is a depressed and underdeveloped enclave within a prosperous and progressive economy. It produces little that can be sold outside the ghetto other than low-wage labor. Underdevelopment is

preserved by a continuous drain of income and resources that keeps the ghetto poor. The pool of low-wage labor is preserved by barriers that make exit difficult, while other social and economic forces provide recruits from outside the ghetto. These flows of income, resources, and people interact with conditions of poverty and underdevelopment in a system of circular causation that maintains the ghetto as a characteristic feature of the national economy.

\* \* \* \*

One of the most striking characteristics of the urban poverty area is a continual drain of resources out of the area and into other sectors of the economy [e.g., the *school-2-prison* pipeline that provides jobs for law enforcement]. The drain includes savings, physical capital, human resources, and income. As a result, urban poverty areas are left without the most important resource [“collective efficacy”] needed for development and improvement, and economic infrastructure of supporting institutions is seriously deficient.

...Programs that enable some individuals to escape the ghetto serve to preserve ghettoization for many more. The best and brightest are drawn out of the ghetto to serve themselves and contribute the further advancement of the progressive sector of society outside the ghetto.

The drain of capital is equally striking. A substantial portion of the savings of the urban ghetto goes into financial institutions whose investment policies draw funds out of the area and into business loans, mortgages, and other investments elsewhere.<sup>17</sup>

As Fusfeld and Bates have pointed out, the ghetto is drained of its resources—human and social capital—much needed for future development and improvement of its social and economic condition. In addition, they note the fact that the ghetto not only suffers from deficient economic infrastructure—for reasons previously noted in the segment entitled *The Blueprint I*—but also lack “supporting” institutions. Here, I have emphasized “supporting” for reasons noted earlier, which pertain to the fact that America’s institutions, that is to say—White institutions, strive to uphold the capitalist system that has given way to institutional racism. This, undoubtedly, has had an increasingly retrogressive effect on Black social and economic progress.

In the coming chapters we shall explore further the inner-workings of several of America’s institutions and gain a profound understanding just how it is that they operate to create the androids, the puppets and the oppressed people that we become. Suffice for the moment that these institutions safeguard the ideology and interests of America’s predominantly white ruling class. This observation has been noted for ages by many political scientist and philosophers like German philosopher Karl Marx (1818-83) who stated: “... the ideology best expressing the interests of the ruling class always prevails in a society’s morality, legal system, education, politics, and economic life. Ideologies legitimate and perpetuate the rule of a dominant class, which must convince its own members as well as the rest of society that its social hegemony is justified.”<sup>18</sup> Said differently, these institutions get in our head; prescribe particular beliefs and values that shape our worldview and thus the acceptance of the conditions we exist in.

It was once said of African freedom fighter Steve Biko (1946-77): “The mind of the oppressed is the most potent weapon in the arsenal of the oppressor.”<sup>19</sup> Biko understood that in order for white South Africans to maintain their hegemony over the natives, who outnumbered their adversary, the oppressor and his institutions must eventually attempt to manipulate the thinking of the target group (i.e., the oppressed) to accept their oppression as their natural lot in life.<sup>20</sup> Nothing more can be said truer as in the case of ghetto residents in America. The institutions that prevail here have effectively manipulated our thinking and conditioned us to exist in an environment of extreme poverty where drugs and guns are sprinkled about as if parade candies. Here, we are manipulated as if lab rats.

Nothing better serves to illustrate to point in context like Amos Wilson’s analogy between the methods providing for the learned behavior of the Skinner Rat<sup>21</sup> and those providing for the behavior of people in the ghetto. In *The Falsification of the Afrikan Consciousness*, Wilson urges us to view our experimental livelihood as the result of an imbalance between Black and white political power relations.<sup>22</sup> He illustrates the point in context by drawing on the psychology of learning posited by behavioral scientist B. F. Skinner’s laboratory experiments with rats.

The rat is placed in a box (or as the narrative at the beginning of the chapter has provided, a room the size of a cargo container) and can only eat if it performs a particular behavior. So if it pushes a lever—it is only as result of pushing that lever—it is allowed to eat. The experimenter determines when this rat is going to eat, when it is going to drink; he determines the living conditions under which the rat must survive. The rat thus becomes a conditioned rat and changes as a result of the fact that the experimenter has control of vital things in its life.

The rat adapts to the conditions under which it is forced to survive as a result of a set of power relations. Thus, a socially conditioned rat is created. Its personality is a social creation. What it learns is the result of a power differential between the rat and the experimenter, because the experimenter has power over the rat and uses that power to transform and create something new in it.

As a result of the experiment the rat is different from other unconditioned rats. It shows the effects of its conditioning. The experimenter is able to do this because he has control over the rat’s circumstances. Wilson goes on to point out that if we go further and identify with the rat we then begin to learn something about ourselves, our social structures and the impact of America’s institutions on our lives.

He drives the point home by noting the fact that we have no control of our food. No control of our electricity. No control of our water; our jobs; what to wear when we go to work; when to come to work... when to leave... when to go to lunch; how to speak and write how to do this... how to do that. “And how are these things taught, and how are they conditioned,” Wilson asks? It is by reward and punishment. You do this and you get paid; you don’t do this you don’t get paid; you get a raise, you get docked.<sup>23</sup>

“What do we have here,” Wilson asks? The same basic situation and the same basic principles for conditioning rats are now transferred to life and reality itself! Thus, to live in the ghetto under the power of another people is to be created by those people. To be rewarded or punished by that people is to be created by that people.<sup>24</sup>

Here, I must digress to say our value systems of “reward” and “punishment” have been distorted. Indeed, both provide us drive and motive—“drive” being an

inner urge that stimulates a response inciting or repressing action; “motive” being something external that prompts a person to act in a certain way or that determines a person’s will—however, we are driven to sell dope, for example, because there aren’t any jobs or they do not pay enough. Thus *Dope-Boy Magic* motivates us and like GG said, we do not give a fuck about going to prison for making \$30,000 a week at the trap-house!

Here, we must observe how both external and internal factors interact and are a product of an environment designed to destroy, oppress and exploit us. On that, behavioral scientist often argue that if a particular set of circumstances are present in one’s social environment, then human behavior pretty much becomes predictable.

As the foregoing has demonstrated, social structures take shape provided the level of political activity and influence patterned across persons and over time. The quality of life people attain in their respective environments rests greatly on the way political power is exercised through the prevailing social and economic institutions. For example, economic decisions effecting employment opportunities are made by capitalists whose primary concern is profits not jobs for the poor. Need I explain further the *Blueprint* used to manage corporate downsizing, globalization of capital, and unemployment? Or how all this goes hand-and-glove with creating a dependence on government, drugs, and crime in the ghetto?

### **THE BLUEPRINT III: THE MAKING OF A DRUG ECONOMY**

*They call it cocaine, cocaína, yayo/ Coca, cheese, whatever you wanna say, bro/ Cocaine is a helluva drug, it ain't humdrum/ And we all know where it's at/ (Everywhere)/ But where it come from?/ (You tell me)/ The mountains of Columbia and Peru/ Extracted from the coca leaf, but see, that shit ain't new/ It's been a round for hundreds of years/ Exploited be the rich/ They even used to put it in Coca-Cola—ain't that bitch?/ You had kings, queens, princes and princesses/ Even priests and popes partook in it in different instances/ (No shit)/ A privileged possession for dozens of centuries/ Helped to fuel wars—legal and illegal industries/ (Damn)/ Grown by the cartels, protected by guerillas/ Transported by the feds to ghetto to straight killers/ (Hold up)/ The power of the powder/ Pimpin', you don't understand/ Ask W [G. W. Bush], man/ He's a dealer and a fan/ Of cocaine.*

—**Bun B (UGK), “Cocaine”**

Having resided in a many small towns, I witnessed up close and personal the futile and catalyzing effect of President Reagan’s *so-called* War on Drugs. In Wewoka, for example, the local authorities had three maybe four squad cars and a handful or two of sheriff vehicles to patrol the entire county. Per capita, the local drug economy was reported to have been in excess of that in Los Angeles, California. Obviously, the locals didn’t have the resources to combat this festering drug activity. So we exploited their inability to take action. Being that as it was, we really didn’t have to sweat the police doing too much of anything to stop the flow of drugs coming through this small town.

During the 1980s, Wewoka was to the drug dealers of Seminole County what Tijuana, Mexico is to the Columbian and Mexican drug cartels—a drug trafficking hub. The *Dope-Game* was so off-the-chain it seemed as if everybody (Black) either sold dope or smoked it. Too Hollywood for a small town, occasionally the flow of things would get disrupted by the feds.

As in the big city, after months, if not years of investigation, the indictments would be served by some 300 or better law enforcement officers composed of local,



state and neighboring counties—the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA), Oklahoma State Bureau of Investigation (OSBI), FBI, DEA, ATF, and the IRS. The *Alphabet Boys* made for quite a spectacle every time they kicked-in doors in Wewoka.

Trapped with wire-taps, surveillance photos and video, and the occasional decoy—which was not the norm because our network did not allow anyone but certified ‘hood stars and knocks to purchase—the scenery was reminiscent of slaves being captured and loaded onto slave ships. Many friends and associates were herded together like cattle and shackled in pairs due to a shortage of restraints when making court appearances. Eventually, many would see the inside of a state or federal penitentiary.

Despite these efforts, state repression was futile when it came to curbing local drug activity. This, as contemporary history has told, was anticipated by the likes of President Reagan and other government officials who knew all too well that when it came to repressing the drug economy not only would it fail by simply making room for the next generation of drug dealers by removing the previous, but so too that it had to fail in order to boost the American economy. If anything was to come of these efforts, they provided untold trillions of dollars to the U.S. economy and made drug dealers around the nation, the world for that much, step our *Game* up. *Out with the old and in with the new*, who learned from the mistakes of the old—no phone talk, pagers or open exchanges that could be monitored. The aspiring hustlas would step-up shop and seize the reins to make *Dope-Boy Magic*. Sadly, none of us slowed down enough to think about the fact that our strings were being pulled as if puppets in a grand scheme to poison our own people. A seed was planted, however, the day Conan stepped to me and asked: “Do you think it’s wrong if another homie sells dope to the homie’s momma?”

As if yesterday I recall Reagan’s *so-called* war kicking up dust in my backyard. It was on-and-cracking with the “One-time.” “*Three Suspects Held In Police Officer Shooting*” read the headline in the *Wewoka Times Newspaper*. Conan had let the pistol smoke on the 5.0 (police) as they attempted to raid *Pooch’s*. After close to a year in the county lock-up all charges were dropped. The ‘hood held it down for him—no witnesses! Things really got off-the-chain after that shooting.

Chaos had long spoiled the tranquility of the home. My mother was a registered nurse, who had been laid-off when the local hospital closed. Employment opportunities being scarce, next to nonexistent for Black folks, provided vigor to the roller-coaster ride of circumstances that forced her to try her *Game* hand. Looking back today I see the dominoes falling one-by-one. She had pulled a bad hand. Despite having did all the right things (i.e., graduating high school valedictorian, college, career, marriage, etc.) there was a storm brewing.

*What started as a hustle ended with addiction....* It was the summer of ‘86. Moms and I had taken the short drive to a trap-house in New Lima—a rural community outside of Wewoka. Ear hustling from the rear seat of my Grandpa’s van, I vividly recall her and Honey Jackson speaking about the new drug (crack-cocaine) as their sherm smoke dulled my senses. It wasn’t long after that a huslta or two was in traffic connecting dots between home base and distant shipping ports.

And so the story goes, from privilege to underclass households I had a front-row seat to watch crack-cocaine flourish. What was once a rich man’s high was now the poor man’s destruction. We were ignorant of its affects. The addiction deserves

little explanation. Yet what does is the *Blueprint* that transfigured our parental and communal structures into an atmosphere ravaged by social neglect.

The chaos that came of the crack-cocaine epidemic would forever change the relations amongst the afflicted. Overnight we went from mentors of humble origins and kids breakdancing on the block for fun to knocks and domestic terrorists without conscience armed to the teeth eager to rob, steal, and kill for the spoils of the trade. Where we once became friends before becoming anything else, everyone in the *Dope-Game* became everything else before becoming friends. This made for an environment that had an alienating affect on individual and community bonds. The first sign of a problem, this caused us to turn-on each other as if cannibals because we had no foundation to fall back on. Cats got so cold in the *Game* that they would literally give you a piece of dope to smoke before they would give you a plate of food to eat. The value we once placed on community solidarity was transfixed to a “block” represented by the neighborhood gang of trap-stars as a place not to be respected insofar as the greater community was concerned, rather a place to be respected and used to make *Dope-Boy Magic*.

Moreover, the epidemic gave way to *Afflicted Deliberations* (Chapter 2). It enslaved the mind of both the knock and dealer alike. There was this sense of euphoria despite whichever end of the pipe one was on that was addictive. The knock found escape in his or her “pipe dreams.” The dealer sought escape from poverty and with money came power. The need for diplomas and degrees went out the door as young Black men flooded the streets in the “Pursuit of Happiness.” Despite Mom’s developing habit, she remained adamant that I received that “honky” education. So much so, her methods often left welts on my backside and did more to discourage me. Besides, I thought I had it all figured out from seeing the hustle stacks she made. It didn’t take a diploma or a degree to get rich! All I needed was some powder-cocaine, a Mason jar, baking soda and presto! *Dope-Boy Magic* did the rest.

So there it was there, the birth of a means that seemingly provided financial security to those trapped in the ghetto. Crack-cocaine would create an opportunity, to say for lack of better term, for a large-scale drug economy that didn’t exist with marijuana or other drugs. This was so for reasons: (1) In 1984 Congress passed the Borland Amendment cutting aid to the guerrilla based anti-communist army (i.e., The Contras) in Central America. Thereafter, President Reagan gave Lt. Colonel Oliver North the “green-light” to form a private network to fund the Contras. The primary source of funding would stem from pumping tons of cocaine into the ghettos of America (Chapter 3—*Tribalism*)<sup>25</sup>; and (2) After the Contras had successfully overthrew the communist governments of Central America, the newly established democratic governments would roll-out the red carpet to accommodate the North American Free Trade Agreement (N.A.F.T.A.), which gave American Big Business access to Third World quasi-slave labor to man foreign manufacturing companies. Suddenly, many Americans, particularly Latino and Black Americans, found that their labor was no longer needed and thus they were left unemployed with mouths to feed.

\* \* \*

THE WAR ON DRUGS was anything but! Like many other rhetorical wars announced by politicians and enacted by political *institutions* such as legislators, courts, and prisons, it masked deeper social and racial agendas.<sup>26</sup> Namely, the record

disenfranchisement that ensued from drug related arrests and racially tinged laws such as the crack vs. powder cocaine statutes, which were purposefully designed to permanently lock predominately Black and Latino Americans into positions of second-class citizenship (Chapter 7—*The Web of Injustice*). Crime and welfare reform would gain tremendous momentum as America's right-wing media machine exploited pictures of crack babies, knocks and drug related violence to elevate this *so-called* war from a rhetorical one to a literal one for political gain.

Without question, the War on Drugs was a recipe for *Domestic Genocide*. For it created a repository of ghetto youth to feed into Reagan's political ambitions to decimate and exploit this sector of American society.

When reflecting on the fact that this war did absolutely nothing to curb the drug trade or use of illicit drugs, yet catalyzed catastrophe, the foregoing becomes irrefutable. To this end, Alfred McCoy would provide not only the history of America's failed drug wars, but so too the reason why they failed.

AMERICA'S FIRST WAR ON DRUGS HAD A MAJOR... impact on the global drug trade. As U.S. troops withdrew from Vietnam in 1971-72, President Richard Nixon inadvertently created a new market for Southeast Asian heroin by declaring a war on drugs in Europe. Though strong diplomatic pressure, Nixon forced Turkey to eradicate its opium fields and France to close its heroin laboratories, cutting the connection that had long supplied 80 percent of America's heroin. Ironically, however, Nixon's victory in Europe unleashed market forces that would soon expand drug trafficking on five continents.

America's first drug war thus produced paradoxical strengthening of the global narcotics traffic. By the late 1970s, the simplex of the Marseille New York [Italian Mafia] connection had given way to a worldwide commerce that tied rising First World consumption to spreading Third world production. With producers and consumers now dispersed about the globe, the international traffic knitted into a cat's cradle of smuggling routes far more resistant to suppression than ever before.

Conventional literary metaphors seem too flat, too linear to convey the explosive volatility of the global drug market. In his restless pursuit of drug dealers across the arc of Asia, President Nixon seems rather like Mickey Mouse in the animated Disney film *Fantasia*—a “sorcerer's apprentice” frantic to stem rising waters by attacking the bucket-carrying brooms with an ax, only to have the chips resurrect as full-grown brooms and the flood turn into a torrent.

The first of America's five drug wars was a precursor and accurate predictor of failures to follow as the United States launched similar campaigns in Latin America. Not only did Nixon's drug diplomacy unleash forces that would stimulate drug trafficking worldwide, it exposed a self-defeating dynamic that would occur in all subsequent U.S. drug wars....

In explaining the global spread of drug abuse over the past thirty years, commentators have often focused on the reasons why addicts [and people who sell drugs] turn to drugs—structural unemployment, youth

drug culture, Third World poverty, or the moral crisis of post-industrial society. While all provide a partial explanation, an exclusive emphasis on these demand factors ignores the economic reality that illicit drugs are, like cigarettes or alcohol, commodities with distributors....

The self-defeating dynamic first seen in Asia was repeated, with striking similarity, as the United States extended its drug war into the Andes. During the 1980s, surging U.S. demand for cocaine raised Latin America's coca traffic to unprecedented levels... By the late 1980s, cocaine was growing into a major commodity that was integrated, albeit invisibly, into legitimate inter-American economic relations.

Ignoring the lessons from Nixon's drug war in Asia, the Reagan White House pursued a parallel policy in Latin America with predictably dismal results. During the 1980s, President Ronald Reagan received Nixon's drug war, redirecting its focus from Asian heroin to Latin American cocaine. To Nixon's arsenal of bilateral negotiations and DEA interdiction, Reagan added regional diplomacy and intensified enforcement....<sup>27</sup>

That President Reagan sought to intentionally ignore these lessons, unquestionably, speaks to the fact that the War on Drugs (n.b., the *War on Communities of Color*) was a political ploy designed to fuel the American economy and political ambitions. It was a war, like all wars, that was to become profitable in countless but conceivable ways. At the bottom of the food chain would be us—the Black and Brown “have-nots”—with an ill-conceived means of economic mobility.

With such moves the capitalist hunter, the nimrod that Reagan was, effectively created his own prey. He didn't care about us “gettin' money” because he knew we didn't possess education enough to invest in legitimate business endeavors. What the nimrod foresaw was in comparison to when a mega lotto contestant wins millions overnight—they spend it overnight frivolously on jewelry, cars, and clothes. Then they back at the slots trying to win it all back. Ultimately, in the end the government, Cadillac and Gucci would prosper from the crack-cocaine epidemic.

Reagan also knew we wouldn't have the discipline to “get-in” and “get-out” of the *Game* before becoming victims to it. It was in this way that we would become fodder for the criminal justice system. Untold billions, if not trillions, would flood into the system from the subsequent legal fees, restitution, and the cost incurred to incarcerate those convicted of drug offenses.

Notably, in 1984 Congress would amend the 1970 Comprehensive Drug Abuse Prevention and Control Act to allow federal law enforcement agencies to retain and use any and all proceeds from drug asset forfeitures, and to allow state and local police agencies to retain up to 80% of the assets value.<sup>28</sup> According to a report commissioned by the Department of Justice, between 1988 and 1992 alone, state drug task forces seized over \$1 billion in assets.<sup>29</sup> Remarkably, this figure does not account for the monies that go to government agencies like the DEA, FBI, etc. Needless to say, this arrangement of allowing drug forfeiture assets to be retained by the arresting officers would create an incentive for law enforcement to prolong investigations in order to allow the drug dealers to build-up their bank for the taking.

Furthermore, not a dime of the monies obtained from the forfeitures goes back into the community to rebuild where drugs destroyed. Where, for example, \$115,000 in cash was taken out of “one” of GG’s safe houses and federal authorities confiscated more in assets, not a dime went back to the Black community. Instead, the money, as with the billions confiscated annually nationwide, went towards enacting domestic warfare and outfitting law enforcement precincts with the paramilitary aura of today’s “task-force.”

According to the Cato Institute, in 1997 alone, the Pentagon handed over more than 1.2 million pieces of military equipment to local police departments.<sup>30</sup> Similarly, the National Journal reported that between January 1997 and October 1999, the agency handled 3.4 million orders of Pentagon equipment from over eleven thousand domestic police agencies in all 50 states. Included in the bounty were “253 aircraft (including six-and-seven-passenger air-planes, UH-60 Blackhawk and UH-1 Huey helicopters), 7,856 M-16 rifles, 181 grenade launchers, 8,131 bulletproof helmets, and 1,161 pairs of night-vision goggles.”<sup>31</sup>

The transformation from “community policing” to “military policing,” began in 1981, when President Reagan persuaded Congress to pass the Military Cooperation with Law Enforcement Act, which encouraged the military to give local, state, and federal police access to military bases, intelligence, research, weaponry, and other equipment for drug interdiction. That legislation carved a huge exception to the Posse Comitatus Act, the Civil War-era law prohibiting the use of military for civilian policing. It was followed by Reagan’s National Security Decision Directive, which declared drugs a threat to U.S. national security, and provided for yet more cooperation between local, state, and federal law enforcement.<sup>32</sup>

What the foregoing has provided is irrefutable evidence that long before crack-cocaine hit the ‘hood, President Reagan and other military and government officials in D.C. were sitting about to enact the *Blueprint* to naturalize Black resistance (see Chapter 8) and capitalize on the travails of the Black and oppressed so as to stimulate the U.S. economy.

### ***THE BLUEPRINT IV: FROM PROJECTS-2-PRSION***

*Deliberately preventing a people from developing life-sustaining options and promoting conditions of self-destruction are acts of genocide.*

—Dr. Bobby E. Wright

When you gettin’ it the hard way it’s inevitable that prison comes into play. Too often it’s said that prison culture influences the ghetto. Indeed, the ghetto has an incarcerating affect. However, to say that the intense level of violence, crime, and drug and gang activity found in the ‘hood stems from influences found within the death fences of America’s prisons, is an euphemism that distracts and truly misleads society. We’ve learned at this point what factors influence the ghetto’s drug economy. In chapter 3—*Tribalism*, we shall learn just how it was that these same factors (i.e.,

the same “actors”) also influenced the ghetto’s gang element. Notably, chapter 4—*Culture of A Murderer*, explores the seldom spoken truth that the primary cause of violence in American ghettos is the culture of violence this nation ascribes to when resolving its political and social conflicts.

Suffice for the moment these factors foster one isolated environment to another—from *Projects-2-Prison*, where the sure likeness of conditions create the “Skinner Rat’s” reliance on drugs, gangs, and violence. For these reasons both life in the ghetto and life in prison are essentially the same. The *Game* don’t stop! The *Dope-Boys* stay pushing; the smugglers stay smuggling; the gang bangers stay bangin’—because the ghetto and prison are “socially isolated” environments created by and manipulated by the powers that be.

There’s little to question as to whether the ailing social and physical environment of the ghetto psychologically conditions one for an easy transition from *Projects-2-Prison*. Peep!, the incarcerating affect of the projects and how

...the “prisonization of public housing” has come to look and feel just like houses of detention. “Projects” have been fenced up, their perimeter placed under beef-up security patrols and authoritarian controls, including identification-card checks, signing in, electronic monitoring, police infiltration, random searches, segregation, curfews, and resident counts—all familiar procedures of efficient prison management.” Over the past decade, the Chicago Housing Authority [CHA] [for example,] has deployed its own police force and even sought to institute its own “misdemeanor court” to try misbehaving tenants on the premises. Residents of the Robert Taylor Homes at the epicenter of the South Side, have been subjected to video surveillance and required to bear special I.D. cards, as well as pass through metal detectors, undergo pat-searches, and report all visitors to a housing officer in the lobby. In 1995, the CHA launched massive paramilitary sweeps under the code name “Operation Clean Sweep,” involving pre-down surprise searches of buildings leading to mass arrests in violation of basic constitutional rights quite similar to the periodic “shakedowns” intended to rid prison wards of shanks and other contraband. As one elderly resident of a District of Columbia project put under such quasi-penal supervision observed: “It’s as though the children in here are being prepared for incarceration, so when they put them in a real lock-down situation, they’ll be used to being hemmed in.”<sup>33</sup>

To live in the projects is to live in a prison. If, indeed, we believe prisons are designed to control people, to destroy people—their hearts, minds and spirit—then what of projects? What is to come of the children born into this mold? What of the affect on their hearts; their minds; their spirit and dreams? More importantly, where does the maze they’ve been thrown into lead? The answers to these questions we already know. For it’s often said to be born into poverty is to be assailed by impossibility. Without question, this bespeaks to the influence of the *Blueprint* and how when the

...realities of the ghetto begin[] to settle within their conscious that sparkle [of hope in a child's eye] begins to dim, things begin to change; that soon, the laughter in their eyes begins to fade; like that, something will shut off inside, as the reality sinks in that their hopes will not come to pass, not because they aren't smart enough, not because they aren't talented enough, not because of anything about them inherently, but because, by accident of birth, they will not receive a fair chance in life.<sup>34</sup>

"Chance," it is said, "favors the prepared mind." Yet, the only thing ghetto youth are prepared for is the *school-2-prison* pipeline. From *Projects-2-Prison*, the imperialist educational experience in America incapacitates and makes puppets of not only ghetto youth, but so too the entire American population (Chapter 5—*The Unorthodox Teacher*).

Ghetto schools are purposefully designed "halfway houses" and prison compounds. Unlike halfway houses, which assist prisoner re-entry, ghetto schools do not prepare functional persons for release into society. Rather, they socialize ghetto children for "entry" into American prisons.

"Is it surprising that prisons resemble factories, and that schools resemble prisons," Michael Foucault (1929-1984) once asked? Today, American schools are quasi-compounds for security detail, surveillance, searches and seizures, and killing zones for mass murderers. The message this sends to the children is clear: When they see an armed guard at school that conveys an unsafe environment. This, in itself, is enough to make students second-guess attending school. For they are, again, killing zones just as those in Iraq and Afghanistan. Couple this with the drama in the 'hood and their homes, and they are more likely to figure they may as well be in the streets.

Consequently, school administrators have become more like prison administrators who place greater value on discipline and security with such totalitarian policies as "Zero tolerance" than on education. When children attend schools that place a greater value on discipline and security than on knowledge and intellectual development, they are attending prep school for prison.<sup>35</sup>

## ***THE BLUEPRINT V: THIRD WORLD AMERICA***

*I don't have a plan. I'm like a dog that chases a car and if I catch one I wouldn't know what to do with it. But Gotham City and the Commissioner have a plan.*

### ***BATMAN, THE DARK KNIGHT***

**—Joker**

Traveling abroad has unquestionably allowed for insight enough to recognize the fact that America's poor are rich by Third World standards. Our definition of poor is a euphemism in face of the fact that we live under conditions of extraordinary privilege by comparative standards of neighboring countries like Mexico and those further south of its boarder. Even our homeless citizens have shelters and free-crow lines; none of which I found while residing in Mexico.

In no ghetto in America do I recall ever encountering, as with those in Mexico, children of the tender age of five or seven hustling nickel candies for a living with snot boxes flowing and often in tow their soiled siblings on hip. These kids seemingly

learn to pander poverty before they can walk and talk. Ironically, such a reality is within yards of American soil—Tijuana (TJ, hereafter), Juarez, Nuevo Laredo, and several other U.S./Mexico boarder cities.

My journey through these cities began in TJ. It was a hair-raising experience for I was neither tourist nor partygoer. While millions tour these cities from around the world to frequent their nightclubs, corner markets and the beaches of Rosarito, Acapulco, Cancun, etc.—the majority of Mexico’s citizens are poor. This makes for “cutthroat” at its finest and corruption at every level of government. Needless to say, Mexico is a “narco-state” known as a drug-trafficking corridor for the Mexican and Colombian cartels. My travels there were solely to get the plug on the *work* for low.

In short, during my time in Mexico to establish myself with the cartels I took an unorthodox approach—I joined the working poor and took to the barrios. This allowed for me to make connections with the seedy elements of the environment. My logic, unreasonable as it may have seemed, eventually panned-out.

In the mean-and-between time, I worked for Third World wages and came to gain a profound insight on a foreign economy. Mexico, I came to find had no public assistance programs. No public schools, housing, welfare. Nor was there a federal minimum wage. This I came to learn within days of being in TJ.

I had landed this gig at the Pasaji Arcada. There, I would put on this costume I had put together with a poncho and sombrero. On the banner of the sombrero I had inscribed “El guia Negro viagar” (the Black Tour Guide). For eight hours a day I would post in front of a cluster of novelty stores and usher tourist off the crowded sidewalks of TJ. “PasaLe para dentro Y mire mi cosas” (Come in and see my stuff), I’d say to the tourist as they would pass. Of course, I would usher them to more than just what those stores had to offer. Being that each store only paid me two measly dollars a day—a decent wage I was lead to believe—I supplemented my income by directing traffic to a few girls I had made arrangements with at the whorehouse I resided at and trapped out of on 4<sup>th</sup> & Revolución. This arrangement would eventually land me another gig at a strip club named after the infamous New York nightclub *Studio 54*.

Both the whorehouse and arcade sat within a ten-block cluster of vibing business establishments ranging from liquor stores to nightclubs. Millions of people gathered here daily. I would make it a point to befriend every storeowner in the area. Most of the business owners I cut into by appealing to their business interests. For example, many of the stores that littered Revolución sold knock-off Tommy Hilfiger apparel and other knock-off American brands and silk-screen T-shirts. Being an artist myself and having acquired a feel for what the youth in TJ wanted fashion wise, I hired a local manufacture to design and produce some rather successful knock-offs of my own. FUBU would go platinum in TJ as I was able to bring something new to the marketplace that was not only popular with the locals, but the tourists as well. I made a killing selling bundles of twelve (12) T-shirts for \$60 dollars wholesale to the local venders. It would be this little endeavor that allowed for me to establish myself rather quickly with the cartel storefront owners.

Eventually, I was to relocate to a cheaply fashioned apartment in the barrios. Now keep in mind I’m not in no way trying to look like new money. This is a sure way to get robbed or worse anywhere, especially in Mexico where extreme poverty



fashions cutthroat at its finest. So I lived in a \$60 dollar month apartment complex with no indoor plumbing, which was no sweat for a country boy.

All in all, it was several months of a stay and a few trips back-and-forth between countries trappin'. While in Mexico I hitched hiked up-and-down the countryside, played cat-and-mouse with the Boarder Patrol, hung-out at the boxing gym in TJ, and befriended some hard hustlas.

My experience in Mexico, while brief, nevertheless, provided for the realization that indeed there are more extreme definitions of poverty in the world. However, being poor is universal. Whether it's poverty here in America's ghettos or in the barrios of Mexico, it matters not because poverty, anywhere, embodies the same oppressive elements. It is for this reason that, while I've previously noted the fact that America's poor live under conditions of extraordinary privilege, we fail to recognize our opportunities all the same due to the blinders forced upon our conscious. Again, the conscious develops only by what it has been exposed to. Considering the fact that the ghetto is a socially isolated environment, this doesn't allow for much exposure to other cultural and life experiences. Thus, we are conditioned by the limitations and vices common to the environment.

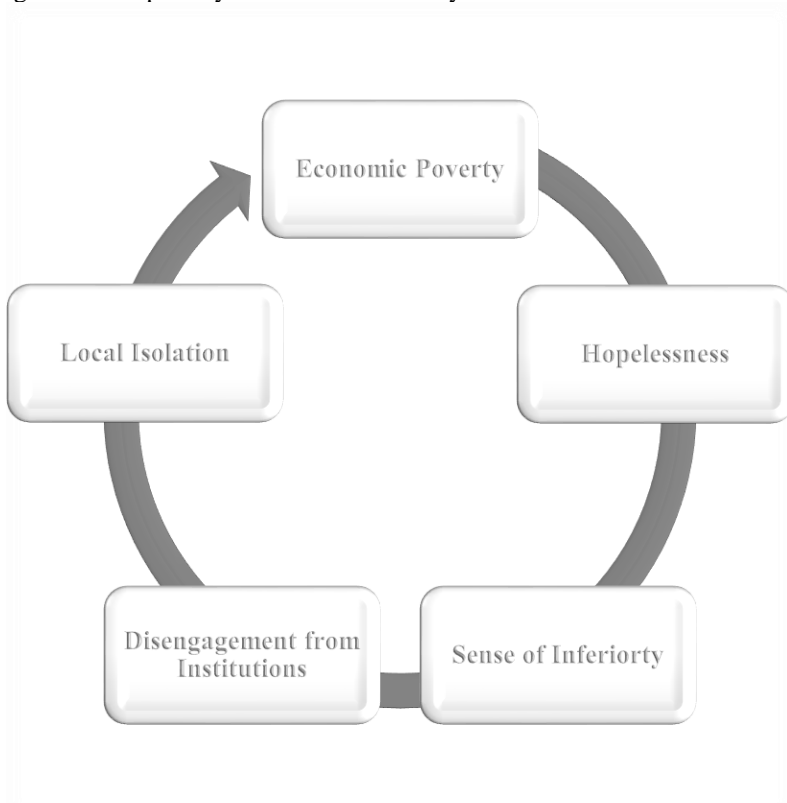
Caught in the tangle of this trap and the distortion that comes of it, we may be said not to perceive the mighty forests that surround us until we've fallen beneath the hatchet of its design. In a world that's cartoon-like yet lacking in humor, the scene becomes a game screen we cannot touch; a control that our ignorance cannot navigate because the prescribed circumstances of the ghetto shape us instead of us shaping the ghetto.

This all is possible given the "Culture of Poverty" we ascribe to. Anthropologist Oscar Lewis first coined the phrase "Culture of Poverty" in 1966. Lewis, who notably conducted extensive research in the ghettos of Mexico, Puerto Rico and New York, was convinced that the cultural environment of the poor fostered self-defeating attitudes and behaviors.<sup>36</sup> These included a strong present time orientation, a sense of fatalism and resignation, incompetence in patterns of middle-class interpersonal communication, and low aspirations.<sup>37</sup> Poverty, in itself, indeed is a genuine culture in the strict sense that it provides people an overall design for living under disorganized conditions that provide, as dysfunctional as they may be, solutions for their social and economic problems. Take for example how we develop defective modes of production by selling drugs, prostitution, and robbery. These modes of production, this struggle to provide for ourselves, transcends national and regional boundaries as well as rural-urban differences. Regardless of where it occurs, those who are involved show remarkable similarity in their values, social relationships, and many of their beliefs.<sup>38</sup>

The foregoing explains, in part, why it is that ghettos around the world share the same characteristics. Moreover, as Lewis has observed: "We do not have the knowledge, the vision, or the ideology to see the similarities between our troubles and those of our counterparts elsewhere in world."<sup>39</sup>

Arguably, Lewis provides the below chart to illustrate that poverty is part of a vicious cycle of hopeless attitudes, a sense of inferiority, disengagement from social and political institutions, and local isolation. To a large extent I agree. However, as I have previously demonstrated America's social and political institutions have a negative effect on ghetto residents. Here, we must keep in mind just how it is that

they disorganize these communities and how they are designed with the intent of making crime and poverty functional for society.



From this we must ask ourselves just how far are America’s capitalists—that is, its ruling elite—willing to go in order to maintain their interests? The answer to this question has only been provided in part. What remains, however, takes us beyond the unthinkable—the social engineering of Third World America!

Designing Third World America, what is one think? Poor? Diseased and vice ridden? Violent? But how so could this be possible in America—the land of opportunity?

For several decades political scientists and other scholars have been commenting on the fact that America has embarked upon an era of deindustrialization. Notably, the nation’s three-tier system (i.e., lower-, middle- and upper-class) is withering away as the gap between the haves and the have-nots increase creating Third World poverty in the land of opportunity. Why?

With other nations aspiring to revolution in pursuit of “freedom” and “democracy,” America’s ruling class is looking at the bigger picture. They are in a global ball game where these developing countries will eventually become consumers and producers of goods and services in their own rite. That said, understand that, if for no other reason than to remain a global competitor, America’s failing banking structure, housing and stock markets, health care and educational systems, job

markets, and other social service systems—must reduce the nation to a Third World economy. Otherwise, America will not be able to compete with those countries that specialize in, for example, manufacturing goods at a low labor overhead cost. We're talking about countries like Mexico that pay labors on the average of \$20 dollars a day to make billions of dollars of goods to export to America and other wealthy nations.

Thus, America's ruling elite has been in the process of benching its three-tier class system to remain in the global ball game. The two classes represented by the haves and have-nots are increasing in favor of the have-nots because we also live in a world of rapidly diminishing natural resources, increasing population projections, globalization, displacement of human labor through technology (ergonomics), and the diminishing power of labor unions.

These happenings have prompted America's ruling class to restructure the nation's economy in an attempt to force the have-nots to accept next to nothing in wages to produce billions of dollars in goods to export to newly industrialized nations. To this end, critic Tom Ely would say of the Obama administration:

Far from advancing the interests of the majority of the black population, identity politics has become the vehicle for a sharp attack on African Americans workers and the working class as a whole. While his administration has handed over upwards of \$12 trillion to the finance houses, Obama has manipulated the bankruptcy of the auto industry in order to drive down the wages and living standards of the working class....<sup>40</sup>

The vitality of America's standing as a global superpower depends on the success of this endeavor for reasons provided by the late Adam Smith (1723-90): "The riches, and so far as power depends upon riches, the power of every country, must always be in proportion to the value of its annual produce... [For] the great object of the political [economy] of every country, is to increase the riches and power of that country."<sup>41</sup>

That said, in order to maintain and increase the riches of the ruling class, the American government has again began to loot foreign nations of their resources (e.g., oil), and have been deindustrializing the nation's infrastructure so as to resituate its current standing as the leading consumer of foreign goods to the leading producer of exports. The deindustrialization this entails calls for creating Third World poverty here in America.

Needless to say, if the powers that be have their way in continuing to carryout this plan, there's no questioning who is going to makeup the majority of the have-nots—*People of Color!*

*We lock ourselves up  
Not because of the bars and  
Steel that surround us  
Not because life doesn't bend  
To our every whim*

*But because of the projections  
We place onto our worlds  
The judgments, the I can'ts  
The trying to please everyone  
While not pleasing ourselves*

*By seeking the beauty on the outside  
That is surely within  
For prisons are created internally  
And are found everywhere*

*We allow unnatural and unreal thoughts  
To be our walls, our limits  
Because of the dam we build to  
Stop the universal love, the light*

*It's all within ourselves  
This paradise you go to of beauty  
And love  
There's peace, where along with the  
Eagle you may soar  
A place inside that was inspired  
From the inner and above  
Which are one and the same*

*The world may not bend to  
Your every whim  
But, it will flow wherever you  
Want it to go,  
There's beauty in cell bars*

## **BEAUTY IN CELL BARS**

—Spoon Jackson

## CHAPTER 2

### “AFFLICTED DELIBERATIONS” [THE INSTITUTIONALIZATION OF SOCIETY II]

*Material and selfish aspirations blinded and driven by greed  
Morals and principals abandoned;  
Could this really be the lifestyle that I lead?*

*Self-doubt, insecurities and hatred.  
With no love or respect for my fellow man.  
An unconscious contributor to genocides;  
Playin' out my role in Massa's elaborate plan.*

*No desires for a higher elevation,  
Not to mention family and self neglect.  
Just a lost boy pretending to be a man,  
Is exactly what I see in retrospect.*

***N-RETROSPECT,***  
—Keene Ester

Every space has its history of unhappiness and tragedy. Yet none are more frightening than the mindset the ghetto creates. A look into this afflicted soul reveals the social ills that have been forced upon the conscious. It exposes to the subjective mind its construction and dysfunctions that govern a set of principles like burnt out sparkplugs and cylinders in an engine as they hit and miss causing a miss fire. To the spectator of sound mind the recon reports total chaos and self-inflicted mayhem. For its inhabitant the skepticism of the viewer goes unseen. How it is two people can view the same theatrics yet draw opposing perspectives? It is due to their social backgrounds having derived from two entirely different social settings.

The dysfunction hails from a family and community structure that has been disorganized in all the usual ways. It's of no secret that in the ghetto we navigate alcoholism, drug addiction, violent and abusive parenting, estrangement, and poverty stacked high onto sadness.

The factors that influence our dysfunction have been provided in the previous chapter. Here, I shall attempt to explain just how it is that the perspective worldview shaped by the ghetto leads people to make the decisions that they do and just how it is that these decisions seem to solve the problems they face.

To better understand this dysfunctional social behavior will require of us to focus on the individual's definitions and interpretations of the self, others, and their situation. By identifying the meanings that they attribute to their surroundings, by getting “inside their head” and seeing the world from their perspective (what sociologist define as cultural relativity), we can understand why people do what they do. Taking a clue from Lev Vygotsky's *Mind In Society*: “We cannot fully understand

the development of the mental process without considering social and cultural influences.”<sup>1</sup> Vygotsky further provides that intellectual development is tied to social situations. This means that we cannot begin to understand an individual’s behavior by simply considering the person alone. We have to always consider the individual in their social context.

### **GHETTO MINDS**

In a world where egos rise in thin air and life evaporates like oxygen, love-hate and trust-betrayal are siblings rivaling the conscience of the individual entertaining the pains of poverty. Vice filled, the social environment created in the ghetto will likely split, weaken, or destroy convictions. They tend to fall into a gray area and most times sway when encouraged by demands for survival. Where loyalty can be found, trifling disagreement will tarnish. I love you today fuck you tomorrow! As for boundaries? There aren’t any with respect to what is or is not acceptable to survive. For, necessity knows no law. The wretched affects of poverty have rendered us insensitive to the feelings and well-being of others. Thus, the first law of nature is self-preservation, which becomes paramount. We have been conditioned to be indifferent. Any person or thing that hinders an abrupt detachment is considered a weakness. One that could very well cost us our life. For its well understood in order to increase our odds of survival in this jungle, we have to play the cards dealt for what they are worth because death stalks the ill equipped.

As if an animal on the attack, our instincts beget life and death for one or the other. Life for many has no immediate future so the decision to engage in death threatening activity is commonplace. We prey on each other with ill-conceived convictions manipulated by faces we’ll never see. The rules we live by will prove transparent, if not downright cannibalistic. Not everyone who entertains them has taken covenant with consequences of the *Game*. Like any *Game* you play eventually it’s “*GAME OVER*.” The inquisitive, unfortunately, will endure the ups and downs before arriving at this conclusion. By not taking heed we will thrive to survive in an environment without rule or respect. Except where the influence of Smith & Wesson can be found, we’ll die respecting a bullet to the head.

Sadly for many of us, our views tend not to be very adult-like. In fact, they tend not to reflect the true world accurately. This is so because much of our early intellectual and moral development has been distorted by the environment. Therefore, many of us never reach the point of maturity as adults who intellectualize our choices and relationships with others. We are stunted by prison or death. Our life experiences are cut short at puberty. Our concepts of manhood are skewed. As time passes and we become institutionalized by prison, for example, fear comes to dominate our spirit. It makes us timid in face of adversity.

Fear, needless to say, is an emotion that consequentially controls and often paralyzes behavior. It holds us captive to our environment. And while it can be just as equally a motivator (e.g., a powerful currency in the minds of unscrupulous politicians), it is unlikely to be so in the context in which I’m speaking because

[n]egative acts and negative thoughts originate in fear. To the extent that fear of betrayal by another person, for instance, or of violation within a relationship, or of being taken advantage of financially has authority

within [us], it determines the extent to which [we] will behave in negative ways. Faith in anything, be it positive or negative, produces results. Putting faith in fear generates destructive results, beginning with the disintegration of [our] ability to relate confidently to the external world.

...[M]otivated by fear, [we] can easily be seduced by the false gods of sex, power and money and all that they represent. Once seduced, [we] abdicate [our] control to the seductive authority: the dysfunctional personal relationship, the external source of money or security, the experience remembered long after it should have been put to rest, or the addiction to drugs or alcohol. Hypnotized by the voice of fear, [we are] unable to think or act with clarity because [we are] contaminated with fears that short-circuit creative energy and ideas.<sup>2</sup>

Peep!, how the fear that came of the 9/11 disasters impacted the nation; pandering society of their due process. And while this may be a little out of context, has anyone given thought to the possibility that Osama bin Laden foresaw such a reaction?

As noted, fear controls. In Plato's *Allegory of the Cave*, the cave made prisoners of those who were afraid to venture beyond its entrance. Consequently, this made them prisoners of their own reality. Their ideas, traditions, perceptions, practices, and beliefs were adapted within the confines of the cave. It became their window of enlightenment as to their existence, purpose, and how they came to know of themselves and everything in their environment. Thus developed the illusion that truth extended no further than the cave. What lie beyond it remained a mystery held at bay by fear of the unknown.

The ghetto is the cave. Here, the fear it inspires cultivates and causes negative acts and thoughts. The residents are trapped, socially isolated to a zip code of hopelessness, which causes a great sense of anxiety when simply contemplating charting unfamiliar waters. Said differently, most of us are afraid to leave the 'hood (i.e., the cave) for even a momentary change of venue so as to gain a different perspective on life. This stunts our growth process very much the same as the inhabitants of cave. Thus distorted our view of the world does not extend beyond the 'hood. We are left to interpret the world through our limited life experiences, which in turn isolates and strengthens our beliefs and values. The stronger they become through our interplay with each other, and the longer we hold on to them without their being challenged, the more instable our view of the world becomes.

The narrative provided at the beginning of the previous chapter allowed for a visual as to the affect of our isolation and how it distorts our rationale. It has conditioned the mind to adopt within the confines of a highly plagued environment distraught by vices of every sort. Consequently, dysfunctionality is so deeply embedded in our train of thought we are oblivious to the psychological prison that inhabits our reason.

Distraught, unstable, miseducated, misguided, abused, and emotionally detached from others and ourselves, we exist in a perpetual state of defiling our communities and ourselves because this is all we are being taught and conditioned to do.

It is for the above-mentioned reasons that many of us are content with the vile and debasing conditions in which we exist. The narrative tells of the fact that you

have defecated where you pleased as if the untrained dog. At the point that the TV (i.e., “Dummy Box”) was placed in the room to program you, the narrative does not make clear whether you continued to defile your space. This I have done for reason that, despite the fact insight was provided as to the proper use of the toiletries, force of habit tends to render dysfunction unchangeable. Then too, “learned helplessness”—as defined as a mental condition of apathy or a sense of defeat anticipated when faced with challenges due to adverse outcomes in past instances—produces feelings of incompetence that generalize in all subsequent situations.

“Well anyone is capable of change,” I always hear people say. This is true. But how effective is preaching change to someone whose perception allows for him or her to interpret his or her dysfunction as hopeless or rewarding? In their mind this behavior is appropriate given the circumstances to which they are raised and the values, or lack thereof, that come of these circumstances.

To illustrate, I again turn to my childhood. Working with my grandfather as a landscaper instilled hustle. My mother’s drug addiction and mental illness made me responsible at an early age because I often had to provide for my little sisters. Burger flipping and mowing lawns wasn’t cutting it. I had seen the “shine” of the Southside D-boys. So I started to flip double-ups (buying small quantities of crack-cocaine for half price for profit) until I bubbled-up! Wasn’t no looking back at this point. I went full fledge huslta. My achievements in selling dope soon brought me the type of notoriety a star athlete receives. Though, my fan base was the neighborhood gangstas, pimps and dope-fiends. This drove me through the ranks making *Dope-Boy Magic* along the way. The addiction that came of this would eventually feed into my ego as a *Baller*.

I knew what I was doing wasn’t right by conventional standards. But in the “hood I could do no wrong. Besides, it wasn’t about “wrong” or “right.” It was about “eating!” So I pushed the lever like the Skinner Rat. That I was never caught at it only encouraged me further. Because of this, and the fact that I was shining amongst my peers, I would push the consequences of my activities to the backburner. The pains of poverty, social isolation, and notoriety had won this round. My excuse? I had mouths to feed, which was more truth than excuse. Yet as time passed and I went from buying double-ups to pushing weight, it became moreso my ego as a *Baller* I had to feed.

The narrative further illustrates the gutter mentality that came of my activities. It shaped the mind-set of an animal—a sort of human predator and prey positioned in the lower echelons of society fending for myself with a cocktail of socially engineered disorders. The “anomic”<sup>3</sup> for example. Said disorder assisted in the creation of the ghetto hell in which I resided.

Blinded by manipulation and oppression, material starvation shaped the norms and values that led me to push the lever like the Skinner Rat. Where we find, for example, parasitic behavior in the ghetto, material ambitions have set content ablaze. In most cases when this occurs like the rat that continues to run into a dead end when trying to find its way through a maze for the cheese (\$\$\$), our ignorance denies access and brings about disaster.

I credit our methodology having not been inspired by what I call “functional models”<sup>4</sup> of capitalism. It’s exactly the opposite—*By any means necessary!* We



improvise by working with the cards the experimenter has placed on the table—the gun and the bundle. They become our perspective opportunities.

### *SOCIAL ISOLATION I*

Of course we know that people do not develop in total isolation as depicted in the narrative. Yet, the ghetto isolates and functions very much like a prison. As noted in chapter 8—definition [5], it has the affect of isolating and insulating in the literal sense of these terms. To insulate means to place in an isolated condition. And the definition for isolation reads: To keep (an infected person) from contact with non-infected ones; quarantine.

To be socially isolated is to be restricted to the norms and values introduced by the social environment. Psychological-moral values are learned social-political products. People are taught to be moral by direct instruction, observational learning, personal-familial-community-peer group relations and experience, and prevailing overall politicoeconomic conditions of their environment.<sup>5</sup> This, I've come to learn is a no-brainer for a sociologist. Yet, I'm no such professional. Least not in the conferred sense.

When seeking to make meaning out of the confines in the narrative, they should be interpreted as social barriers limiting the quality of experience and knowledge to be gained in this environment. The severe, prison-like atmosphere tends to shape and constrain those within the ghetto.

To better illustrate the point in context I feel the need to lay some foundation regarding the impact of our everyday social exchanges to show how it is that dysfunctional social behavior extends for generations.

By nature people are social animals. The social and emotional bonds we build and experience throughout life critically affects our personal reflections of the self, our perceptions about others, our circumstances, and ultimately, our behavior. Our interactions with friends, lovers, and family become the lens to which we view the world and develop the meanings defining it. Said differently, these relationships assist us to adopt our environment by fine-tuning our worldview.

Quite often I compare the mind and the computer. The experiences we encounter in our environment become the software download guiding our system of behavior. Greek philosopher Aristotle (384-322 B.C) described the mind as a blank tablet upon which experiences are written to form the basis of knowledge. This knowledge becomes the program interpreting the experiences faced in our respective environments.

It is often said that the parent is the first teacher of the child. They put to us the rules of their culture both acknowledged and implied. They have internalized these rules along with other values, beliefs, and definitions of the circumstance to which they exist. As a matter of course, through them much of our worldview is developed provided their example and insistence upon our conforming to “their” ideas.

In a perfect world our parents are to ensure us proper care and insight. Yet, it's a well-known fact that children are often neglected and abused by their parents. None more so than those who reside in the ghetto. The pains of poverty have forced the parent's hand one way or the other. Either they slave day and night to put food on the table, thus leaving the child (in their absence) to experience the world with little or

no direction. Or it's the mounting frustrations to pay the bills and other anxieties, which are vented physically and verbally on a seemingly annoying child.

Without question, neglectful and abusive parenting has a tornado-like impact on our social development. We tend to develop a host of emotional insecurities that in turn cater to a whirlwind of mental disorders. Then too, our parent's drug addiction, for example, has denied us affection. It has shoblifted the necessary emotional support to make us affectionate human beings. Consequently, we become withdrawn from society or we grow to reject it with misanthropic or other antisocial behavior.

Notably, it is through the parent-child bond that we learn to trust or mistrust our environments. In the initial years of our life our parents are the only agents of our world with which we have contact. They are our first teachers. If by chance they are unstable and there is no intervention from others who provide us with sound guidance and emotional support, the more likely it is that we will become incidental by-products of their dysfunction. For example, my mother's addiction and selling of drugs impressed upon me that the consumption of drugs was bad. However, her selling of drugs had the opposite affect.

The narrative further provides that dysfunctional parenting cripples our social abilities. It creates an emotional void within us that comes to bear on the *self* causing hatred and violence—*Life pivotal to hate besets all, including itself!* Hate easily transitions into anger and anger easily turns into violence.

There are multiple factors that contribute to self-hatred, which in turn contributes to violent behavior. To list several of the social/learned causes of aggression: provocation, modeling, punishment, extreme frustration, roles and social norms calling for aggression, physical discomfort, crowding, presence of guns and other objects associated with aggression. Imagine a horrible fantasy world that would put together all these known social/environmental causes of aggression. What would it be? Prison? The ghetto?

It is often said that exposure to extreme levels of violence increases the potential for violent behavior. It is also said that the day-to-day violence witnessed in the ghetto tends to desensitize its residents and urges us to become receptive to employing it. Further, we are tormented so by our extreme poverty and the instability that comes of it.

The instability of society in itself fosters the instability of man's desires. In the midst of these perpetual fluctuations of his lot, the present looms large upon his mind; it hides the future, which becomes indistinct, and men seek only to think about tomorrow.<sup>6</sup> It should thus be of no mystery as to how hope is extinguished and we lose our sense of purpose where the future cannot be discerned. In this hopeless state of mind we are lead as if the horse by the bit to self-destruct where the riddle hidden in our oppression reaps havoc on all we encounter.

Our lives are so chaotic that feelings of urgency and haste advance a "Ready to Die" mentality—I got to "get mine's" before I die or go to prison. This is yet a form of escapism that ushers in the self-fulfilling prophecy that our violent world seldom allows escape. It causes us to become void and careless in feeling and conscience. Once infected we become irresponsible not only to our family, but also our community and ourselves as well. It is for these reasons that the soil we tread upon becomes sterile and flowerbeds spring makeshift street-corner memorials where blood nourishes violent seeds.

This brings me to the point that, as the years have passed and I've done some soul searching, I've come to find that my wasp-like (I use the phrase "wasp-like" because they are defensive creatures yet with an often violent sting once threatened) behavior stems from the circumstances and the violent culture in which I was raised.

It was obvious that my mother's abusive and neglected childhood caused her significant pain and anger. I recall the horrid stories she would tell of how my uncle and her would barricade their bedroom door with a butcher knife to keep the sexual predators from again assaulting them. Where was my Grandma? These were her hay days of drinking and partying.

At the center of my mother's pain was the institution of racism. Her white father had disowned her. My Grandma, I strongly suspect, despised her for running the sorry S.O.B. off. This, however, was a story that I would not learn of until well into my teenage years. It made for the most unusual day of my life.

There I was about fifteen years old and my Mom, out the blue, just up and picks me up from school. "My grandfather had died," she tells me. She spoke with so much pain in her voice between attempts to catch tears with the back of her hand. This was an unusual sight to see. Honestly, I can say it was the only time I ever recall seeing her all worked-up. My mother was not the type of woman that wore her emotions on her sleeves. At least not when it came to shedding tears. But could what she just said be true? I just spoke to Grandpa that morning. Tears and confusion immediately filled my face.

Things became even more confusing as we took off in the direction of the white funeral home. Yet and still, my eyes remained full of tears on that long but short drive. I was confused as hell when we pulled in the parking lot. Black folks did not patronize this establishment. I'm thinking to myself, "What the hell!" Next thing you know we in the viewing room and my mother boo wooing and an impulsive, "Who the hell is that?," spills from my mouth as if vomit to her ears. So many questions invaded my mind at the moment. However, before any of them could filter down through my mouth, Moms checked me with a fierce backhand. "Show some respect," she snapped, "that's my father, your *real* grandfather!"

"Real grandfather, hell!," I thought to myself as I massaged the sting of her infliction. "I don't know this honky. And he sure in the hell is not the Grandpa who taught me how to fish, hunt, and get money. Respect? Obviously, neither he nor any of his kind had had any for me or the countless other descendants of Africa they fouled with their seed only to leave women like my grandmother with bastards to raise." No wonder she drowned herself in "Bumpy face."

These were but few thoughts I had that day that would come to bear on my feelings, and ultimately shape my views on matters of race and racism. Needless to say, these feelings have caused me to have a deep-seeded hatred towards *racist* white Americans. It is the hardest of all feelings to face or admit that for years, as a child, made me feel this way about *all* white people.

When attempting to navigate the racial minefield, I struggle to remain objective and not sit in judgment of white America as a whole. This I have simply failed at. For my collective experiences and relationships with these people has not been healthy. This I realize. Of course there are those that I make exception for very much like my grandfather and his white drinking buddies.

Yet, some may think of me as a bigot due to the tone of these comments and others throughout these writings. But is that even possible? A racist I'm not! A bit prejudice possibly. Though, I could never be racist because it takes being in possession of institutional advantages that systematically impose on or provide race favored social and economic advantages—to which I nor Black America as a whole possess.

Then too, when it comes to the issue of racism it is a subject that, no matter who's framing it, it is extremely sensitive and often provocative. This is especially so for Black Americans who continue to be the subjects of white oppression and injustice.

For me personally, racism is more than just an issue of oppression and injustice. It is a subject that has provoked great pains within my family due to the racist practices and perspectives that said because we were Black, we were to be discriminated against and that my mother's father was to disown us.

For my mother the impact of racism and sexual abuse caused so much pain in her life that she was driven to drugs. Drugs, indeed, kept her from revisiting her troubled childhood.

When she wasn't high, she became extremely abusive having found herself frustrated. She had my sisters and I shell-shocked any time her hand drew back. At times her tantrums were unpredictable. Schizophrenia had begun to eat at her mind. She was hard in the paint like a NBA star driving through the lane. At any act of defiance a backhand would be served. Switches were her most effective means of making her point. A many of times I was ordered to sprawl ass-hole naked to be welted like a slave.

However, my stepdad got the worst of it. Seemingly, my mother's estranged relationship with her father created within her an insecurity, an anger, that out the gates compromised her relationship with male energy. To me it appeared as if this complex drove her to emasculate men. It drove her crazy too. For she inherited this white man's mental illness.

Of the affect of drugs, violence, gangs, and racism to which I have been exposed to throughout my life, none have been as devastating as that of a family member who suffers from mental illness. In my case, it's been four—my grandmother, my mother, uncle and now my sister. With drugs, etc., you know the consequences are of your own making and despite the manipulation there's choices involved. However, with mental illness there is no one to blame or a choice other than the nursing home or crazy house.

As a thirteen-year-old kid, mental illness is a difficult experience to process. No one taught me about it. And I was too ashamed to ask. So I was stuck on stupid wondering why all of the sudden Grandma rambling at the mouth and pointing in an effort to communicate instead of just saying what was on her mind. We would just sit there stirring at each other frustrated. She's now putting her clothes on backwards and burning food—just stirring at the smoke as if a charmed snake. Now we have to watch her closely, too close. Because if not, she will wonder off or burn the house down. It's a full time job that no one but my Grandpa and I care enough to undertake. Yet he's half paralyzed and I'm just thirteen. We don't want to see her in the nursing home, but the decision has been made. Here comes all the above—the drugs, gangs, violence, etc.

It's no better at Mom's house. She's full throttle on the voodoo. "It's because of all the sherm she has smoked," my ignorance tells me. Yet, something just isn't right with her. It's more than the Sherman. She done went from spitting on brooms and black cats to arguing with herself. She's pulling out her hair and screaming at the walls. In her mind "It's the spirits." Superstition has led her to hanging cedar leaves over the door to keep the "voices" out. Are they good or evil? Agape in the living room rests the Bible. Her "voices" tell her to keep the lights out and the spirits will not find us. So we move about in the dark with only the Bible to protect us. The "Boogie Man" is hiding in her head I tell my little sisters as we cling to each other in fear. They bite! Yet the Boogie Man is a myth to me.

Manic flights, voices, paranoia, and suicide attempts are something I have unfortunately had to witness in my family. They have assisted me to understand mental illness as not simply the result of outside pressures of a treacherous social landscape.

That dysfunctional and violent behavior is often credited to abusive and neglectful parenting only accounts for the symptom and not the source of these problems. They say nothing of the institutional forces and culture of violence that greatly influences human behavior. These are the forces of racism and poverty, for example, which influenced my mother and I. Like a sponge we absorbed their taunting affects.

When I reflect on my childhood I see these forces at work. They made me insensitive to the perils of my environment. They distorted the constructive aspects of my upbringing. Consequently, I came to perceive drug dealing, stealing and killing as a means of survival. This is how these forces affected me. They essentially trapped me in the belief that this was the only way to "make it rain."

I sometimes feel I was robbed of the ability to know better. But I knew! Thing was, the gravity of my influences were not constructive all-the-way-around the board. This misled me from the cradle up to get it like 50 Cent (the legend the rapper coined his a.k.a. from, Darnell Martin [1964-87]).

Though I had my grandparents as a positive influence, their influence didn't always stick. This was especially so with my mother whose attitude was: "Do as I say and not as I do." What really grew on me as a child were the stories that my Grandpa told of a notorious bank robber named Pretty Boy Floyd having dined at his table as a child and the many other gangsta stories he would incite me with about running moonshine or his enlistment days during the Second World War. Often he told of receiving weekend passes in the military to terrorize the gambling halls of Oakland and San Francisco, California. His bullet wounds and razor scars told of how he shot-up the crap-house or got shot or stabbed for his otherwise mischievous behavior. Fortunately for my grandparents and I they found Jesus and provided me *some* balance.

In addition, the peer pressure my friends and I exhilarated on each other pushed positive influence to the backburner. Often, I avoided rejection by yielding to the peer pressure we influenced each other with. This drove me to get with the business. The in-crowd took possession of my better judgment.

What my grandparents had taught me about respect for those in my community, as well as the morals and integrity they instilled, was put on the backburner because I wanted to be accepted. Ultimately, it was the peer group that became the agents of

the diffuse culture. Like mirrors we set the bar to influence each other to accept what our world had put to us—pimpin', dope dealing, and being a goon or gangsta.

Where our parents failed us, the gangs pick up. It's often said that the gang element is the most significant force cultivating ghetto youth. We've heard time and time again that children who have no one to turn to often turn to the streets for support and guidance. Notably, the majority of us who become gang members make this decision as kids with little to no understanding of what we have signed up for. We lack any real knowledge of the world, organization, life-experience, etc. Sadly, many of us get stuck on the decisions we made as kids. A man who lives by the decisions he made as a kid remains a kid in his thoughts, objectives, and decision-making.

I recall the comfort and sense of acceptance I felt with my Southside homies. With them I found an extended family where many of them stemmed from the same background as I. This allowed for common ground to build upon, to embrace each other with love and affection. It was with them that for the first time, since my grandparents, someone took notice and asked, "What's good?"

While I can honestly say that most of my homeboys meant good and, to this day, lookout, for many ghetto youth, especially inner-city ghetto youth, the bonds we build are built upon vulnerability. This, unfortunately, influences us to accept the challenges and terms of the rigid street culture. From jump we prove ourselves not punks with a rite of passage driven by insecurity. For many of us this will prove to never be enough. Be it a beat-down or a murder, it is never enough until we die! From *Projects-2-Prison* to the grave, many remain ignorant of the fact that we have been punks all along by allowing what others thought of us to dictate our behavior.

How is it that we remain in this dreaded state of mind? We are spiritually broken and damaged from years of abuse and neglect. We are desperate and willing to accept anything that resembles love.

The love that we find in the streets as kids, we often do not realize is contingent. For most of us this street-love only serves as a band-aid that attempts to cover the emotional void left by our parents' neglect. Sadly, the betrayal and heartbreak that comes of it causes us to become embittered and thus the void exacerbates. Nevertheless, the gang and the streets are all we believe we have.

For those of us who become conscious of this destruction or can no longer withstand the harsh culture, we face the difficult decision of renouncing the deathstyle. At this point many of us have matured or had enough life experience to put a value on life that allows for a level of consciousness to reflect on our behavior and how it has impacted not only our lives, but others as well. The challenge now becomes whether or not we will be the living testament to change. Most will not because they are trapped by an overwhelming sense of fulfillment that the deathstyle provides to their self-esteem or it's because they fear the consequences of dropping out of the gang, for example. It is for these reasons that the deathstyle has such a powerful purchase on our lives. To change or step-down creates within us a palpable sense of disgrace that is strapped upon us like an oxygen tank. Yet, we struggle with the fact that we cannot continue living a life that will ultimately destroy us. Often this leads us to make the tragic mistake of remaining part of something that inevitably clashes with the betrayal hidden within.

## TENETS OF THE WORLDVIEW

*If we could only escape to become all we've never been. If only we could let go. It's amazing the box of life we die in. Confined to our ideology we become prisoners in a free world. How is it then one ever becomes conscious? For the very thought held is the very thought commanded. Freedom! What is it to think of? For you? For me? To anyone? Can it simply be an illusion bought by time? Time, someone has obviously taken to deny another with his indoctrinations. So trapped are we in that to which yesterday knew. So blinded are we in our beliefs, that without them we cease to exist. Thus, we create ready-made perceptions for our future conceptions. Can these views be deceptions?*

—Ivan Kilgore

Sitting prison I often contemplate the moral contradictions that exist between worlds. This train of thought, unfortunately, had to be the result of tragedy. Negative situations can at times be positive in affect because they have the potential to prompt one to evaluate their system of checks and balances—provided they have a balance! One could hope for change or something of benefit to be gained from this evaluation. Yet, I have found that many will not change because the deathstyle is analogous to the “fix” the knock ever searches for to nourish the void created by his or her addiction. Said differently, it has become adrenaline for the soul. After years of mental conditioning, like the Skinner Rat the behavior has become rewarding irrespective of risk or regard to the *self* or others.

Moreover, our perspectives are further encouraged by the *Rules of the Game*. These are the rules—that is, the norms, beliefs and values—that construct our worldview. Thus we tend not to focus on our destructive behavior as cause of our misfortune. Rather, we tend to focus on if we violated the *Rules*. We then correct ourselves, if need be, then trek deeper into the deathstyle with aspirations of becoming the next idol in the ‘hood.

What becomes impractical here, is that we convince ourselves we can arrive at a more favorable conclusion the second or third time around. Considering the definition of insanity is doing the same thing the same way over and over again but expecting different results each go at it, I've found myself questioning my sanity. Have I contracted mother's schizophrenia? Here it is I have been incarcerated and charged twice for murder before I was 26 years old! I must be crazy? I'm sure there are plenty of people reading this thinking that I am. Well, I'm not!

What can easily be mistaken for insanity in my case, or that of countless other ghetto youth slinging iron in the jungle, is directly tied to the values and beliefs we have embraced. For example, the violent world in which we live teaches us that challenges cannot be left unanswered. A man who is jumped, robbed, or insulted and doesn't respond is labeled “soft” or a “punk” or a “bitch.” He becomes prey. Once he is perceived as weak the attacks keep coming. He loses not only his honor but also his friends and his personal safety, until he fights back and wins—sometimes via homicide.<sup>7</sup>

Every day I see people who because of their beliefs think of themselves or their people as a superior race, they gangbang, shoot dope, and so on and so forth they are led by beliefs that too often are destructive. Despite the consequences, they are sacred in practice and clung to as if air. This I find depressing because in the highly manipulative world in which we live people seldom, if ever, stop to reflect on just how it is that we came into our beliefs.

Good or bad, even when good is made bad and vice-versa, the beliefs that we hold on to are often blinding. We are blinded by the differences and prejudices that they create. Nevermind the fact that we are all human beings and imperfect in our nature. Nevermind the fact that our beliefs may be unrealistic in a world where man is continuously manipulating and constructing a new reality. Nevermind the fact that our beliefs originate long before our time and present circumstance.

For many it is not simply a matter of stepping back from their beliefs to question them. This I realize. We hold steadfast to our beliefs because they are the pillars to our sanity. Especially, when hope and faith is all we have to comfort us in troubling times. Here, we tend to rely on something or someone other than ourselves because we are weak creatures of vise. If not for our concepts of God and heaven we would be extremely pessimistic about life and the world in which we live. Not to mention the distinct possibility that the world would be in a state of utter chaos.

What I have attempted to convey here is the fact that our beliefs (and values)—be they religious or otherwise—are socio-political phenomenon, which manifest as a proximate cause of man's controlling nature over society and those to which he seeks to exploit. This is what we commonly refer to as politics, culture, or just plain ole manipulation.

## ***SOCIAL ISOLATION II***

From the cradle to the grave our interaction with those in our respective social environments tend to operate like mirrors nourishing the introspect. We tend to find comfort in associating with those who share in our beliefs and the activity that comes of them. Our interplay with each other reinforces our convictions and creates a social playground for us to bond and further exercise our beliefs. For those of us in the ghetto this functions to isolate, to keep at bay, adverse perspectives that can benefit our worldview.

In grasping the essential outlook of others, with reverence and real understanding... we cannot but help widening our own. We cannot possibly reach the... wisdom of knowing ourselves if we never leave the narrow confinement of the customs, beliefs and prejudices into which every man is born. Nothing can teach us a better lesson in this matter of ultimate importance than the habit of mind which allows us to treat the beliefs and values of another man from his point of view.<sup>8</sup>

In a perfect world this all makes sense. Yet in the ghetto, where fear is cultivated and causes negative acts and thoughts, again most residents are trapped, socially isolated to a "Culture of Poverty" that induces a great sense of apathy when it comes to seeking out another perspective. Not even the adversity of prison inspires us in this way.

Somewhere out there is an individual, or group of individuals, who believes that after all these years in prison countless others and I would have a strong desire to seek out new perspectives given the impact of our incarceration. Well, recidivism proves those assumptions wrong. Prison only makes us more of what we were before we came in.



What people fail to realize is, it's not that the con hasn't questioned his perspective worldview. Everyone for the most part has "penitentiary promises" of walking the straight line or bouncing to a new spot once released. Yet, what I've learned about perspective has little, if anything, to do with "right" or "wrong" or a change in zip code. Rather, it boils down to the circumstances in which one finds himself and the reasoning affecting his decision-making skills when faced with moral dilemmas. People tend to make multiple choices depending on the circumstances they are faced with.

Circumstances, undoubtedly, affect human behavior. Notably, a person's outlook when solving problems becomes critical. Here, our intellectual development (e.g., acquired values, meanings, and skills) enables us to better rationalize and direct our behavior when challenged by environmental circumstances that stir, for example, emotions of need, desire, and fear. Yet, when we do not possess a multitude of healthy and productive methods to address our desires, we get it best we can. Thus, morality and expanding on our horizon goes out the door.

To aid the point in context here's a dilemma I had encountered my junior year in high school. Circumstances had found me homeless. After I had several run-ins with the law the State determined that my mother's home was unfit for me. I was to be sent to live with my Aunt and Uncle in another town. It was a foster home-like setup. So when the funds didn't come through—I was put out! I didn't care to return to my mother's house. Instead, I took to the streets and sleeping over at friends. These were the circumstances in which I found myself homeless and the circumstances that would force me to grow up fast. Within a matter of a few months I had my own place and was back in the trap-house in Wewoka.

In the mean time, however, with nowhere to turn I literally had to steal to eat. Fortunately, for society that is, I lost heart in picking up the pistol to rob folks like my cousin and 'em were doing at the time—kicking in trap-houses like SWAT TEAMS for the dough. Believe me you! It sure crossed my mind when my stomach began to grumble and growl. However, due to the charitable contributions of the trap-house that my cousin provided from time to time, they kept me from going there as well as the hospitality my girlfriend's family provided when hunger pains overcame my pride. In the mean time, if not for one of the two, like clock work circumstances sent me off to the local grocery for a five-finger discount of choice cuts.

Was I "wrong" or "right" for stealing to eat? Mind you, food consumption is not a matter of personal choice, and despite the occasional charity and hospitality of my cousin and girl's family, these options weren't always available.

You probably have your own answer to this dilemma. But your "Yes, I should have," or "No, it was wrong," is not of chief importance. Rather, it's the reasoning that justifies your answer, which possibly reflects where your perspective stands when faced with moral dilemmas.

What I have presented here is an investigative technique pioneered by psychologist Lawrence Kohlberg. Dr. Kohlberg believed that people could be classified into stages of moral development based on the quality of their reasoning when faced with moral dilemmas.<sup>9</sup> These classifications are as follow:

- **PRE-CONVENTIONAL LEVEL:** Here people tend to make decisions about right and wrong mainly based on terms of possible punishment and

reward, not the goodness or badness of the act. For example, if your answer was “No,” I should not have stole... because I could have been caught and sent to jail (thus avoiding punishment); or “Yes,” you had to do what you had to do in order to stay fed (thus rewarding self-interest).

- **CONVENTIONAL LEVEL:** Here moral reasoning justifies your actions based on established decree. An action is right or wrong because it maintains or disrupts the social order. For example, “No,” I should not have stole because others will think of me as a thief [thus avoiding disapproval]; or although I was hungry, homeless and broke, I should not break the law because no circumstance is above the law (thus respecting the law of the land).
- **POST CONVENTIONAL LEVEL:** here we have two aspects of this stage that somewhat contradict. [A] **SOCIAL CONTRACT:** support of laws and rules is based on rational analysis and mutual agreement. For example, I should not steal out of the mutual respect for the right of the storeowner. [B] **MORALITY OF INDIVIDUAL PRINCIPLE:** Here a person adopts a moral standard not to seek approval from others or authority figures and opts to follow a more comprehensive ethical principle. For example, the means in which I employed were necessary despite them being a crime, if I get caught I’ll do the time, but today I must eat. Here, what’s right or wrong depends on two factors: One, if the act is self-serving. Two, if you are willing to stand by the consequences of your conviction.<sup>10</sup>

The insights provided by Dr. Kohlberg, unquestionably, turn on an individual’s capacity to address the circumstances he or she is faced with. Then too, given the appropriate circumstances it is often said that anyone could be compelled to commit a murder, robbery, etc. This provides insight as to why we find a host of criminal elements in the ghetto. Like I said in the beginning of the chapter, “Necessity knows no law.” Thus, there are no boundaries as to what is permissible to survive because circumstances have limited perspective options.

Arguably, the reader may take the position everyone has the ability to accept or reject the choices he or she is faced with from day to day. Here, the perspective more or likely has been shaped by either a sound setting or been through the ringer of enough bad decisions to learn from the lessons of mistake what path not to re-travel. Yet and still, we must remain mindful of the fact that you cannot make conscious decisions when options are not readily available or you have been limited in your perspective capacity.

### ***CONSEQUENCES TO THE SKINNER RAT EXPERIMENT***

In the previous chapter I told of the circumstances and factors that went into making American ghettos the headquarters for the world’s leading illicit drug economy. Here, I shall detail to some extent the violent street culture that came of this. As noted, with the loss of jobs in manufacturing and the coming of crack-cocaine, an opportunity was created for a large-scale drug economy that didn’t exist with marijuana or other drugs. Like leaves on trees untold billions, if not trillions, of dollars

would spring from the epic addiction to crack-cocaine. *Dope-Boy Magic* instantly made millionaires of some of the most deprived and marginalized elements of American society. They became our gods and with this newfound opportunity to “get-money” grew the religion that material gain took precedent over life.

Needless to say, the false esteem we came to place on material items brought about a corresponding misery. More than before, we came to equate our self-worth with the amount of material items we possessed. Consequently, greed consumed us. The sting of “want” jolted us. Our love for material gratification grew with our wealth.

However, with wealth our poverty had not afforded us discipline and education enough to soar beyond the pettiness of mere appearances. We lost all sense of humility and self-restraint. Captivated by long fancy cars, extravagant jewelry, and beautiful women our wealth was squandered away.

In our “Pursuit of Happiness” we became insensitive to the consequences of mammonism. The love of money corrupted our morals, disrupted family structure, and dismantled the foundation of the Village. Our communities were no longer able to cultivate a progressive youth at the rate of previous generations. We had become capitalists in the rawest forms: The murder and stickup kid whose narcissistic disorder took on a god-like propensity to influence life or death; the *Dope-Boy* whose politic was to get his *weight* up in order to influence block affairs; the knock who sought heaven in his/her pipe-dreams; the tennis-shoe and gorilla pimp who sought out the run-away to get her party-game on; the boosters stealing any and everything not nailed down; and the gang banger who sought power by slangin’ iron and ego—all swindled of their days by the taunting affect of crack-cocaine.

Close to three decades have gone by yet the violent street culture that sprung from the crack-cocaine epidemic remains. Across the nation the ‘hood hot like a tender box. So much so, it’s said that Black males have a better chance at survival at war than in the streets of America’s ghettos.<sup>11</sup> Imagine that! Here it is suicide bombers are committing acts of mass destruction in the streets of the Middle East yet their destructive force fails to register with the immense level of violence had in America’s ghettos. It is so intense that on any given day a street corner shrine or portrait on a White “T” can be found on the block of every ‘hood telling the familiar story of another soul lost to the streets.

Every day, our ill religion manipulates us to kill and die. So intense this manipulation, I find many who wonder about the prison yard believing the destruction we gave life to was justified. Like the soldier living in the delusion of fighting for “freedom” and “democracy,” many of us romanticize the streets. I find a certain illogic to this that compares to a suicide-bomber who contemplates entering Paradise. These are but few of the misappraisals we tend to make in our “Pursuit of Happiness.” They are crude reflections of the impact of an environment that, unfortunately, has succeeded in not only incarcerating me for life, but countless others who have suffered the same fate or worse.

That said, it should be of no surprise that the ghetto conditions the mind to accept prison or death as our natural lot in life. In the same sense a Muslim celebrates the death of a befalling brother to Jihad, we’ve been conditioned to celebrate such realities as if a religion being spoon-fed to a child since birth. Seemingly, we are left with no sense of choice. This present-time orientation is deeply embedded in us as a

consequence of the turf. And this is very well the intended consequence given the deadly nature of our coerced activities.

Unquestionably, the beliefs, which govern our livelihood, are the by-product of ill-intended socioeconomics. When viewing the reason of the average drug dealer, for example, he honestly believes he's actually doing what he gotta do in order to feed his family. This is often true in face of racial disparities that create a lack of meaningful employment opportunities.

Here, it pays to recall from the previous chapter my mentioning of the fact that my mother had lost her job at the local hospital and was forced to pick up her *Game* hand to pay the bills. I say she was forced because we were poor as dirt, without vehicle, and living in the racist South where white folks owned everything and only hired other whites at what few jobs were available outside the hospital. Consequently, in the case of my mother, her childhood pains drove her to violate the *Rules of the Game*, which led to an addiction derived from her own supply. As for me, as I attempted to ball my way out of the *Game* into a life of legitimacy, statistics would foresee my future befalling a life sentence in prison before I made it. Fortunately, it wasn't the bullet that countless others have fallen to.

That having been said, our social manipulation can be credited, to a degree, to the institution of racism having influenced circumstances that in turn influenced our train of thought. This leads many of us to get active in the *Dope-Game*. In the case of my mother and I, as well as countless others across the nation under the gun of poverty with mouths to feed, our options were seemingly limited to welfare and/or the fast buck that is much needed.

Today, when I reflect on the 'hoods I've hit from Miami to the Bay Area I see the consequences of my *work*, which can be found in the trap-houses and dope tracks across the nation. For many years I was indifferent to the ravaging effect of the overseas poison I pushed in these cities due to the pains of poverty having such an intense bearing on my conscious.

### ***THE CALAMITY OF CRIMINAL JUSTICE***

History tells of the fact that America's court system was established to enforce white rule and white rule only. From slavery to Jim Crow to the social and economic inequality represented in today's statistical studies on everything from stiff prison sentences to police abuse—the Black community remains the object of this oppressive system. That said, it is of no surprise as to why a significant number of Black Americans have an appreciated sense of disdain for the police and court systems. We do not recognize a legal system that does not treat us fairly. Nor do we cooperate with it. We have no desire to pet the dog hell-bent on attacking us. This, however, does not mean that we do not desire a benevolent and crime-free community.

Then we have, for example, the likes Supreme Court Justice Clarence Thomas and other Black Americans who prop the system up believing that it is the answer to the problem of crime in our communities. When I read memoirs like that written by the likes of Justice Thomas, I'm confused as to their loyalties to the Black community.

In *My Grandfather's Son*, Justice Thomas explains the menacing realities of being a Black American growing up in the racist South whereas stereotypes were placed upon him simply because of the color of his skin. In explaining his "PAIN

AND ANGER,” he cites Bigger Thomas, the main character in Richard Wright’s *Native Son*, which notably is one of the most powerful portrayals of racial division in American Literature.<sup>12</sup>

“Reading Richard Wright’s *Native Son* had made the strongest possible impression on me as a college student,” Justice Thomas writes. “What happened to Bigger Thomas, I knew, could happen to any black man, including me.”<sup>13</sup>

This may be a little out of context, but it’s hard to believe that after having lived the whole Jim Crow experience, Justice Thomas has simply brushed off its affect. The way I see it he either hates the black skin he’s in or he’s there (in the U.S. Supreme Court) to find security in the belly of the very beast he’s feared and acknowledged to be oppressive towards his own people.

It’s often said of these types (i.e., the Clarence Thomas’s) that they are the kind of sick minded, slave-catching Blacks that caught Kunta Kinta for the white slave traders in the movie “Roots”; that they have adopted the oppressive and segregationist thinking of their white counterparts. That they are positioned as legal killers against their own people speaks to their weakness as a people and their misunderstanding of America’s criminal justice system. When speaking to this dilemma, Wilson provides the following:

If the [Black] community unwittingly cooperates with a historically and contemporary crimogenic system, the Afrikan American community allies itself with its racist enemies, *opposes its own communal interests*, and abets its degradation and destruction. However, when it does not cooperate with the antagonistic White racist establishment in protecting itself from its criminal element, it is made to appear to be tolerant of their presence and condoning of their activities and the victimization of itself. More importantly, it appears to collusively cooperate with its criminal elements in dismantling, destabilizing, and ultimately destroying itself and society... Caught in this no-win position the Afrikan American community consequently becomes paralyzed or indecisive, luke warmly committed, or seemingly indifferent and unresponsive to State sponsored... ostensibly “crime prevention” programs [that] are elaborate covers and rationales for all-out assaults on its integrity and well-being....<sup>14</sup>

In light of the fact that crimogenic conditions are purposefully orchestrated to ensure *The Web of Injustice* (Chapter 7) ensnares its prey, it is of sound reason that a significant number of Black Americans harbor disdain for the criminal justice system.

When you live in the ghetto the situation makes for worse because the police and the court systems treat ghetto residents as if the scum of the earth. We are to them but a means to secure their retirement and pensions. Each-and-every-day, fuel is being added to the fire. The burners are being turned-up with rogue police officers, over zealous prosecutors, and renegade court proceedings. They are the Assistant District Attorney Mike Nifong(s) (2007 Duke University lacrosse players framed prosecution), the LAPD’s Rampart Division, the “Riders” of the Oakland Police Department, and the countless other foul law enforcement agencies across the nation kidnapping members of our community to nourish capitalism. They are to the Black community what the Gestapo were to Jewish shtetls—a Holocaust! When we look to

cities like Oakland, California, for example, police bullets are murdering unarmed Black men quite frequently.<sup>15</sup>

Where objection enters the mind of the reader, I challenge you to answer the following question: If the system is geared towards “serving and protecting” as it proclaims, then why is it that its focal point to reduce crime centers on the offender rather than the social and environmental factors that greatly influence criminal behavior?

It is because of all of the above “some” of us chose to hold court in the street. The racism, the police brutality, and injustice of the American court system has virtually left us to police our own social activities best we could since the days our ancestors swung from capitalist nooses. That is until crack-cocaine became the noose.

Crack-cocaine flipped the script 180° backwards. “Pretty Ricky”<sup>16</sup> kept the prisons packed and provided countless job opportunities in law enforcement to white Americans. The so-called *Dope-Boys* and gangstas began to cross *Game* causing even more chaos by dropping dimes on each other as if they were throwing pocket change into a wishing well. The pressure of stiff prison sentences played its role.

Consequently, we have two systems of authority (*Rules of the Game* and conventional judicial authority) functioning in our community tearing it apart. What’s criminal versus a means of survival within the ghetto I’ll leave to the reader to decide. Yet, it should be noted that every social setting has its own set of rules designed to maintain order. There are those that emphasize lawbreaking in the conventional sense. Then there’s the *Rules of the Game*. Each influence people to adopt the prevailing norms and values of their respective environments. Notably, what counts as deviance in one subculture may constitute a norm in another.

When worlds collide, with the assistance of Pretty Ricky for example, we are subject to the constraints imposed by an outside force (i.e., the criminal justice system) that has no concern for our domestic tranquility. This in turn devastates our informal social controls. Notably, the social problems that persist are sustained due to the criminal justice system functioning to the advantage of the coercive mobility theory detailed by Professor Clear. Therefore, one form of authority, if not both, is deprived of its authoritative affect. This, needless to say, operates to create the conflict and the mayhem we witness daily in the ‘hood. Where we find chaos in our community has little, if anything, to do with the community refusing to cooperate with the system. The system is the source of the chaos! For it feeds on chaos.

Given, a community has taken the position the criminal justice system is designed to reap havoc upon it or that calling the police is a wasted effort, again, the people in that community are left to take matters into their own hands. Here’s where the *Rules of the Game* inevitably led to acts conventional society will deem criminal or vigilante.

Where conventional society believes the refusal to cooperate with authorities is the cause for a high level of crime and violence in the ghetto, is simply misleading. It is an illusion. To assume that the criminal justice system provides a solution to crime ignores the fact that informal social controls are destroyed by the coercive mobility model. To this end Jane Jacob would note:

The first thing to understand is that the public peace—the sidewalk and street peace—of cities is not kept primarily by the police, necessary as

police are. It is kept primarily by an intricate, almost unconscious, network of voluntary controls [e.g., informal social controls] and standards among the people [in the community] themselves, and enforced by the people themselves. In some city areas—older public housing projects and streets with very high population turn over [due high incarceration rates] are often conspicuous examples—the keeping of public sidewalk law and order is left almost entirely to the police and special guards [i.e., the court systems, which do not have any concern for the residents' domestic tranquility]. Such places are jungles. No amount of police can enforce civilization where the normal, causal enforcement of [informal social control has been purposefully destroyed and] has broken down.<sup>17</sup>

Now, the point I'm making here should not be misconstrued to imply those of us who reside within ghetto should embrace the code of the streets. No! Not at all. But, this doesn't mean we turn loose the leash and sic the capitalist dogs on our community. This is not an easy situation to address. This is the dilemma that Wilson was referring to in the previous quote. Yet, it's not a problem our community hasn't proven throughout history it couldn't solve itself without resorting to a racist criminal justice system.

### ***WHEN KEEPIN' IT REAL GOES WRONG***

At the beginning of the chapter I noted the fact that the *Rules of the Game* prove transparent, if not downright cannibalistic. For those of us who *keep it real*, bear witness to the fact that we are eventually destroyed by the very rules we live by. This is so because those of whom we play the *Game* with have not taken covenant with the consequences of our activity. Despite the often self-proclaimed *realer than real*, every man has his breaking point. Because of this the ratio will continually ever increase in favor of the spurious. And there's no conceivable method to predict when and whom this hazard will befall next.

In addition, the trust much needed to build solid relationships will prove difficult because we cannot afford to overextend ourselves to the potential betrayal lurking within the environment. The *Game*, we know, is not foolproof and many make the tragic mistake of believing so. This is especially so with today's youth, who are not built like the old school for lack of better guidance. There are exceptions. Yet, the unguided overall mentality of today's youth has changed the *Game*. All ethics have gone out the door. No longer is there honor amongst thieves. Today's youth have become gatecrashers with little concept of rules written or otherwise. This has transformed many of our rackets into a flock of vultures and rats shortchanging each other.

Blinded by an image industry (Chapter 6—*The Terrible Beauty of Hip Hop*), which recklessly displaces and nullifies the consequences of the *Game*, today's youth have taken the bait—hook, line, and sinker. Too often they are misled by the image of the gangstas played out on the silver screen. When this clashes with the horrific reality of bloodshed, like shell-shocked soldiers, many fumble and freeze-up. Most kill out of rage or fear. Emotionally charged, they make the gravest of mistake. Few are calculated killers. Narcotics have paralyzed their ability to think before acting. I cannot count the number of times I've heard, "Cousin, I was off that good yowda

(powder cocaine),” or, “Folks, I was thizzed-out (borderline overdose on ecstasy) the *Game* when it went down and all I can remember was awaking to a murder-robbery charge.”

Often, they found themselves succumbing to adversity. Worlds collide because perseverance they never had. Gone, are the days of considering the “what ifs” and wholeheartedly accepting them beforehand. Where conspiracies build bonds amongst them, they’ll prove superficial when confronted by authorities. *I love you today fuck you tomorrow!* Whereas, they instinctively turn against one another with the *Get Down First*.

Time and time again, I’ve witnessed partners in crime rushing to drop a dime on the other. All is well as long as they continue to avoid being apprehended. First instance of trouble, and moment of truth resonates. Adversity and conviction will test their will. There’s only two ways this situation will pan out: (1) Son drops the ball and adversity wins! He’s appears in court ready to testify with his khakis and Locs on. Everyone is taking a ride on the slave ship. While Son receives a reduced sentence for his cooperation with authorities. He’s a snitch now. If the streets do not get ‘em, the system will chew on him like bubble gum then spit him out when he’s out of flavor; and (2) Son holds the ball and rides the slave ship off to prison—conviction wins!

Let’s take it from parole (that’s considering he’s not served with a life sentence). Back in the mix, he’s a certified soil star (i.e., validated by the streets to be a stand-up guy). So it’s perceived there’s no breaking point with him—he’s solid! So he’s back in action. Let’s say hitting banks again. The circumstances change. This time the caper leads to murder. One of his partnas kills a cop in the getaway chase. They get apprehended. It’s not the slave ship Son is concerned with this time. It’s the death penalty the authorities are throwing his way. This is the breaking point. *Get Down First* comes into play. His reasoning? “I didn’t sign up for murder.” The *Game* gurgitates another!

Let’s look at the *Game* from a different angle. It’s funk season on the bricks. Holding court in the street, Son rains on another with retaliatory gunfire. At this point the moment of truth has resonated in the opposition. Seeing his partna cut down in a hail of bullets has made timid the heart that initiated the gunplay. He brings the police into the picture. Pretty Ricky sets in motion the events that cause worlds to collide. Son, who stuck to the script, is sent to prison with a life sentence. Keeping it real (holding court in the streets) has betrayed Son for funking with the spurious.

Let’s change the scenario. By chance or design the witness is pushed out of existence before he could testify in court. Son walks because the witness was the glue holding the D.A.’s case together. With his newly found freedom befalls consequence: VIOLENCE BEGETS VIOLENCE! The deceased’s family and friends are likely to retaliate. For Son, life now becomes the perpetual hit man. He has to handle his business eliminating those who pose a threat. Until he handles his business life will be consumed with fear for even the most cautious have a back.

For the family it’s about beef now. World order dictates retaliation is a must. When an individual has either been emotionally or physically injured, the resentment generally incites requital demanding an eye for an eye. Though, we are not pleased with simply getting even. The ghetto has created an emotionally fragile and insecure being with a narrow military mindset. We are hypersensitive in our youth. The



slightest infraction can trigger a reaction similar to poking a stick at a hornet's nest. Ego and low self-esteem hinder the ability to "*Charge it to the Game*"—a concept we never entertain.

Today, I sit back and observe the kids that come through the *Zo*. They, more than my generation, disregard *Chargin' It to the Game*. Instead, they go hard in the paint like G.W. Bush bombarding each other as if in the Middle East.

When violated, America has taught us retaliation is a must. We cannot live with defeat. "Justice" must be avenged. When unattainable, we are taught to improvise by counterattacking an innocent immediate. Where, for example, Bush killed over 150,000 innocent civilians in Afghanistan and Iraqi to settle the score for 9/11, bullets spray the ghetto daily holding an immediate accountable for another's action.

Notably, the Bush administration's response to the bombing of the Twin Towers sheds light on the retaliatory conviction deeply embedded in American culture (Chapter 4—*Culture of a Murderer*). When those suicide bombers flew into the Twin Towers, America felt so defeated because they had died in the attack. So the Bush administration improvised by counterattacking their government, associates, and innocent citizens to fulfill the injurious void.

Every citizen makes the perpetual cry for "Justice" to be served when wronged. And we all know that justice, no matter how it's served, transparently seeks revenge (Chapter 7—*Web of Injustice*). Here, we fail to place in perspective the end of the universe lies at the beginning of vengeance. The paradox of vengefulness is that it makes people dependent upon those who have harmed them, believing that their release from pain will come only when they make their tormentors suffer.

\* \* \*

In these streets greed is essential and selfishness is virtue. There is a surreal nature to the street life to which the ordinary rules of human interaction are suspended if not obliterated. Once the choice is made to get active, to survive one must become a master in deception, concealment, subterfuge, trickery, and outright lying. This street culture I've had to learn the hard way is filled with less than honest men. They smile in your face like jackasses eating cactus but all the time they want to take your place.

Here, my mother's chidings play over and over in my head as if a scratched CD: "Son, those cats you think are your friends—they are not! They envy you and every time you come to town they seething and plotting—'Here come that green-eyed nigga in that green Chevy on gold-ones. Get what you can and lock-up ya ho's because he go get all the money and pussy on the block.'"

I would dismiss my mother thinking she was paranoid due to her suffering from schizophrenia. Turns out I was the one with the mental illness believing those I considered friends held my family and I in their best interests. Not that there were not any who actually did. However, where the adage applies, I have thus spent a life time making associates but rarely have I made but a few friends. It would take me killing Conan to realize this. One could say that up until that point in my life my lenses were tainted as to the spiteful and envious nature of those in the streets.

Living in California (the majority of which time has been in prison) has really placed in perspective the foregoing. This is the "Land of the Scandalous." And they are proud of this very fact. Poverty makes them hungry like baby birds. So much so,

they would ambush a buzzard just to eat. Here, I must admit this has been a life saving discovery. It has been amongst the few perks of my incarceration. I'm on the inside peeping the real! Without question, I see some of the worst elements in society—both guard and prisoner alike.

I've come to know men who hate to see anyone other than themselves with the most insignificant of material items or affections. Literally, there are men in here that not even their mothers care for. The bitterness this has caused within them makes them incapable of having anything be it material or emotional. The imbalance this has caused in their lives has polluted them so with toxic levels of hatred that make for "grimy" at its best. This is an understatement to say the least. And this just isn't cats from California I'm around up in here. They are from everywhere—New York, Tennessee, Texas, Oklahoma, and other places from around the world. That said, it's a shady world we live in.

For Black Americans, this deceitful behavior has been said to be a matter of survival that descended from of slavery. This, needless to say, has made for a life in the streets that "eats us up" with the funny business. Out there it's cold and hard, the law of "cutthroat" rules. In all respects and circumstances this mentality erodes dignity.

Bartering in all manners of death, violence, and destruction this is what many mistake for *Game*. Like ass sniffers they will try to get up under you just to see what your shit smell like. And do not be "somebody" having "things" or "building." Instantly, they become crabs in a bucket—*Game* stoppers I call 'em. It's deep. So deep, they'll sit down and eat at your table—if you are fool enough to invite them. They will play with your kids and try to get close to your family—banking on it being an ace-in-the-hole for a kidnapping and ransom plot. They invite you to the trap-spot to *eat*, build up a bankroll, then rob you like the FBI. They will pull capers with you and swear they got cha back—wrong or right! That they "Love You Folks." "We Family." Truth is, ain't no love in these streets.

When I first moved to California I was living in Pittsburg, the 'burg as they call it. It's a short drive north of Oakland. My cousin's then boyfriend was out the Woods Manner Projects. Through him I came to learn a bit about the 'burg. He also had a partner who was tied in with some cats from West Oakland. Supposedly, they were heavy in the *Dope-Game*.

My cousin, Big Dave, and I had planned to transport four bricks (i.e., kilograms of cocaine) from California. Upon my departure from Oklahoma I had hoped this would be a come-up for me fresh out the gates of the penitentiary after the 36-month jolt for killing Conan. I could get four bricks in Cali for \$10,000 each and Cuz had been paying \$18.5 and was willing to part with the difference for my troubles.<sup>18</sup>

However, before I could see what these cats from West Oakland were about, word got back to me that my folks out the Manner had got shot twice in the back by his own connect. Initially, I thought this was the consequence of him dealing with strangers, so I was highly critical of his lack of security. But then, he explained to me that he had been dealing with these cats for quite some time; purchasing no more than a quarter key (i.e., kilogram) at the time. I'm sitting there scratching my head like this don't add up. Why would they attempt to rob him and they had been doing good business for quite some time? Come to find he had upped the ante from a quarter key to two (2) bricks and got plucked by cats who were middlemen "looking" the part of

*Heavyweights.* They were jack-artists “gettin’ it in chunk\$” by building the homie up for the lick like the feds who wait months, if not years, to kick the doors in just to ensure they get the spoils of your grind.

This was just one of many observations—that is, you’re only good as your last transaction; and when you up your *Game* in the streets things and people change—I have made regarding the street life that had me looking at the players of this *Game* like what kinda shit these cats on. Is this their definition of *real*—fucking over a cat whose bringing them \$stack\$; or the one who’s making a way for everybody? Instead of working together to build the machine up, their crumb snatching and dope-fiend mentalities inspire stagnation with plots to bite the hand that feeds them.

These are the type of cats that will rob their mothers. And some of them have gone as far as to kill their own mothers, blood brothers, etc. They have absolutely no loyalty to anyone or anything other than themselves. It’s kinda chilling to think that at one time in my life I was out there attempting to “build” with them.

On that, I’ll never forget what my Woods Manner partner told me after I shared with him my plans to crank-out \$250,000 from the streets of the ‘burg: “Cousin, these niggas ain’t go let you see that kinda paper around here! They will rat you out or kill you first.” Knowing what I now know about these streets today, this is not hard to convince me of otherwise. Circumstances as they have played out, have forced me to reckon with the fact that there are no rules in this B.S. called the *Game*. It’s just that—a game! One without rules where cats play it as if an Xbox with no life or death consequences. With the ease that it takes to push a restart button, they’ll cross-you-up irrespective of what’s real. For being “real” to them is being “fake.” Thereby, truth has no merit. They run from it. And they know it not when in its presence for they are blinded by greed. Moreover, because their mindset has been polluted so, it’s skewed and often impervious—that is, incapable of responding to truth from a rational standpoint because everything and everybody is viewed as suspect.

So when I hear one of these *so-called* “realer than real” cats talking that dignified talk about “I’ll never snitch,” for instance, I look to the contradictions of their behavior. This always tells the real. Because, if they will rob and kill their own mothers, brothers, etc., out of spite or jealousy, then to “rat” someone out comes with ease.

Having spent the past thirteen years behind prison walls, the circumstance speaks to the truth and not all that B.S. about “all the real niggas” locked-up. Once, I asked a correctional officer to give me a figure, a ratio out of ten, of how many prisoners he thought to be potential snitches?” “Eight,” was his response; adding that it was the *so-called* shot-callers that were the likely candidates. Taking in consideration the fact that his response very well could have been stated for purposes of propaganda to sow distrust amongst prisoners, the fact still remains that a significant number of California’s prison population is protective custody. And this figure is growing by the day. So what does that say about a significant number of the cats in general population or on the streets of California?

On that, I can not count the number of times I’ve seen this cat or that cat with his chest all puffed up on the yard claiming he “gangsta,” only to hear he “turned it in” (i.e., PC’ed up!). The most entertaining part of this whole charade is how for so many years he walked the line all “extra’d out,” “reputable,” “solid,” and “wit’ the business”—so he manipulated others to believe, which was simply an act, a hype of

playing the “fool” amongst fools. Because any M.A.N. would have recognized his folly to be nothing other than insecurity. But, because prison is not a place where *men* reside, his childish acts of violence are not analyzed nor placed in the context of a mature perspective. Thus they go undetected in a pool of childish mentalities that have yet, if ever they will, discover what a M.A.N. is. So they walk about the yard with this skewed sense of manhood which drives them to act out as if children drawing imaginary lines in the dirt daring each other to cross it or “knock the stick off their shoulder.” The first (and hopefully the last time) a cat pulled this on me I pushed an eight-and-one-half inch shank into his lungs.

It’s sad, for I’ve come to find they know not of any other experience or means to define their manhood or respect a M.A.N. The majority have not experienced the responsibility of maintaining a household, a family, caring and providing for their children or anyone other than themselves. And most have never done this—living off their moms or some struggling sister. Here, it’s only fair to say that their inexperience and maturity levels are due to the fact that many of them have been incarcerated since they were kids.

Another fiction I find in prison is our *so-called* Black, Brown, and White Pride. I find it amusing. No matter how many cats I see talk a good one about representing and defending our Blackness, for example, the contradiction is glaring: They address our sisters as bitches and poison our brothers with dope for nothing other than a few cases of soups and some deodorants. This really places in context the extent of their *so-called* Black Love. Unquestionably, it speaks to the fact that they place more value on material possessions than building solid bonds of brotherhood, family, and community. It would be rhetorical to question whether or not they would sell their mothers, brothers, or sisters dope. They will destroy their families simply to make a dollar. For I’ve known a many who have (ir)rationalized it’s better that they get the money than someone else.

These are but few of the many contradictions of their *so-called* Black Love. And I’m just as guilty as the rest. Because there was a time in my life that my conscious was polluted so by the elements that made it easy for me to say “Nigga, I don’t give a fuck about you!” Yet all was not lost. Despite the misfortune dealt to my family and I, it was the exception not the norm. So there was some balance there that allowed awareness and ambition enough to overcome my contradictions.

Aside of my family, one of my acknowledged facilitators was being incarcerated in the Alameda County Jail (a.k.a. Santa Rita) in Dublin, California. Rita is the county lock-up for Oakland. There I discovered a plethora of Black Pride and Nationalists attitudes but not behaviors. Immediately, I was forced to reckon with the contradictions within myself and those of the individuals with whom I had found myself incarcerated.

Survival demanded the assessment of my surroundings, which forced me to realize rather quickly that today’s vanguards were not of the character history told when Black Panther leaders Huey P. Newton, Bobby Seale, John Huggins, and many other true revolutionaries sacrificed for our people and held in esteem the virtues of nation building. Compared to this legacy they stood weak collectively.

Their condition, arguably mine has well, was not the result of a lack of ideology. No! They had plenty of that to share with me. Rather, it was the result of a lack of compassion, trust, and discipline. These cats, I observed, were living off fumes. For

all their talk of being a vanguard and hating the white man, they nonetheless embraced his behavior (i.e., white hatred toward our own people, violence, duplicity, etc.). The more familiar I became with them the stranger they became. However, I would in time come to understand why they were so “cutthroat.” They had allowed their conscious to be gassed with beliefs revered in European ideals designed to mislead and destroy us. It is this mentacide<sup>19</sup> that has led many of us to our destruction.

\* \* \*

The topics discussed throughout this chapter beg of society to question the assignment of accountability for the crime and violence we encounter throughout life. Should the fox be put down for trespassing into the hen house? All the more, should the criminal be held accountable for actions otherwise coerced by an environment that intentionally fosters crimogenic conditions? I seek not to make excuses here to account for responsibility. No!, I offer a real life explanation of what happens when a person’s actions are not perceived by a conscious mind, aware of all the options available. Only when options are apparent should what I have said here be considered an excuse. Thus, holding the individual fully accountable for his or her decisions.

Ultimately, society will be tricked into focusing on the symptoms that stem from these underling problems by prosecuting the crimes that come of them. Yet, it’s the vile system that needs to be focused upon. Otherwise, these problems remain because they are shielded, preserved, and safeguarded from reproach.

*Wake up people, my life sentence will not prevent the next homicide from occurring as long as the Blueprint exists.*

## CHAPTER 3

### “TRIBALISM” [THE INSTITUTIONALIZATION OF SOCIETY III]

*They say if you don't stand for something,  
you'll fall for anything...  
By any means Malcolm stood in front of the windows of injustice  
Before Agustus became Caesar  
Even before Jesus collected his disciples  
man...  
has been governed by the laws of the land  
and...  
the 1<sup>st</sup> rule of nature is self-preservation  
You know why the natives were restless?  
Because they went from “our land” to casinos and reservations*

*Education taught me to praise the conquerors and pity the weak  
“MY COUNTRY TIS OF THEE”  
will eviscerate you and watch you bleed  
as your life force-feeds the seeds  
of the next generation's deeds of greed*

*Because only the strong prevail  
and dead men tell no tales  
How can I convince you that you are sick if you don't believe in the ails  
You see... I can kill for country,  
But if I kill for self... it's L's  
Why?*

*Because I murdered my dreams, killed my hopes?  
Nah, because I had the audacity to kill for self-capacity  
and tragedy blooms like winter moons from a cold heart.*

*There's an art to warfare  
If you kill one—then you are just one of the many  
But if you kill many—then you can be the one  
It just depends on how you spin  
And if you win... then  
It's HIS-STORY*

*And to the victor goes the spoils  
Whether it's gold, soil or oil  
or the commodity of you and me*

*You know the difference between the Christians & Mayans?  
One stood behind belief  
The other stood behind the iron  
United we stand  
You provided the land  
And they made it disappear with the slightest of hand!*

*Walla ... Jai, Buddha, Allah  
Lord knows that even the perfect rose has its thorns  
And a bull with no horns is...  
food for thought  
So think*

*If you're skin color is less than pink  
And the ink has yet to dry on the walls  
At least you stood for something, even if you died for the cause*

*A cowboy once said,  
"Get busy livin', or Get busy dyin'"  
We all got to go,  
whether you go as meek as a sheep  
or with a roar of a lion...  
It's a jungle out there isn't it?  
Yeah, it's called survival of the fittest*

## ***SURVIVAL OF THE FITTEST***

**—Jimmy McMillan**

**(a.k.a., "Nati")**

In previous chapters I touched on the fact that no one, absolutely no one enters this world with the ability to juggle fate. We have learned that environmental factors shape people—our characters, behaviors, and attitudes. These attributes begin to take shape at birth and continue to develop throughout the span of one's life. What is their greatest influence? It is the tribal energy they tap into. It is in this way that they become an extension of their environment. For the youth of America's ghetto it's often a wretched gang culture that they become an extension of. Seemingly, it provides for them the primal needs of survival—protection, membership and identity. Yet we must ask: Protection from who and what? Is it simply protection from those within the community who feed on each other as if cannibals? Or is it protection from the manipulative social, political and economic conditions which shape them?

The answer is a given had they the time to reflect. Yet the chaos of the trap-spot distracts them, distorts their perspective. Wake up people! It's not the gang element that's to be feared. We are not each other's enemy. We *Product(s) of the Ghetto*. Products of social, political and economic manipulation. What is this manipulation? And why is it not easy to identify and move on? The answer to these questions I can only hope to provide knowing they will require us to ponder: Protection from who and what? The answer will undeniably reveal what has caused the youth to morph into a culture hell bent on community/self-destruction.

That said, *Tribalism* seeks to identify the who and what, while explaining the why and how. In addition, this chapter explains what must be done to change their agenda.

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To be a part of a tribe is a primal need. People are dependent upon others and thus bond together as a collective for basic survival needs: Protection, emotional support, sustenance, and a functioning identity as a member of a group. As tribal beings, we are designed to live together, to create together, to learn together, to be together, to need one another. Each of our tribal environments—from our immediate family to the homies on the street—provides the essential physical setting within which we explore the creative power of our collective. Even if what we create is destructive.

In every community setting, the ghetto included, there are constructive social activities that impress upon and shape the tribe. The church, community center, school activities, non-profit organizations, etc., these are but few examples. They

function as personal group associations that provide the accepted standards of communication, rules of engagement, and a sense of purpose and fellowship in the organizational structure. As this suggests they are instrumental in organizing the community and society at large. Yet, if there's anything we have gained thus far, it's the fact that the ghetto is not a natural environment. Rather, it's a setting that has been thrown in a perpetual cycle of disorganization. The climate this creates makes for an environment where the youth immersed in it generally cannot relate to the church, for example.

Divested of affect, partial and even alien, and of meager social effectiveness, such organizations are not psychologically meaningful. In other words, they lack the psychological force to alleviate their aggressions and dissatisfaction with their condition. Given the at times large, rationalized and impersonal nature of said organizations, they do not find in them the opportunity for personal expression, responsiveness, fellowship, or the sort of identity afforded by the neighborhood gang. The elements have persuaded them that the neighborhood gang is a provision for their intermediate group needs.

It is in this way that the gang element becomes an informal—arguably, formal—social control; a process of socialization in the daily lives of ghetto youth. Disorganized and instable by happenstance of age, inexperience, a lack of constructive influence, and other social and economic influences, the gang element will function to proselytize and inject its respective tribal beliefs, values, strengths and weaknesses, and superstitions and fears. Further will it solidify in the mind of the collective the antisocial mores and convictions created by social and environmental manipulation. Like all behavior, the destructive behavior that comes of this is a learned behavior where the norms and values put to them are esteemed by circumstance.

Captivated by what for many becomes a deathstyle the tribal influence promotes this is all there to entertain to ameliorate the danger and poverty. The wretched affect of this coercion and its connection to poverty's amoral suggestions shape a gullible state of mind that readily accepts as "real" the images evoked by a distorted sense of manhood. Fostered by a questionable initiation ritual, it disallows the experience necessary to transition from an adolescent frame of mind to adult consciousness. This, as explained in Robert Moore and Douglas Gillette's *King, Warrior, Magician, Lover*, occurs because

...in the case of men, there are many who either had no initiation into manhood or who had pseudo-initiations that failed to evoke the needed transitions into adulthood. We get the dominance of Boy psychology. Boy psychology is everywhere around us, and its marks are easy to see. Among them are abusive and violent acting-out behaviors against others, both men and women; passivity and weakness, the inability to act effectively and creatively [with] others (both men and women); and, often, an oscillation between the two—abuse/weakness, weakness/abuse. There are many pseudo-initiations for men in our culture... The gangs of our major cities are [a] manifestation of pseudo-initiation and so are the prison systems, which in large measure, are run by gangs. We call these phenomena pseudo-events for two reasons. For one thing ... these processes, though



sometimes highly ritualized (especially within city gangs), more often than not initiate the boy into a kind of masculinity that is skewed, stunted, and false. It is a patriarchal “manhood,” one that is abusive of others, and often of self. Sometimes a ritual murder [jump in, or other criminal acts are] required of the would-be initiate. Usually the abuse of drugs is involved... The boy [more often than not] become[s] an acting-out adolescent in these systems and achieve[s] a level of development roughly parallel to the level expressed by the society as a whole in its boyish values, though in a contra-culture form. But these pseudo-initiations will not produce men, because real men are not violent or hostile. Boy psychology... is charged with the struggle for dominance of others, in some form or another. And it is often caught up in the wounding of self, as well as others. It is sadomasochistic.<sup>1</sup>

Every day I see in prison men who have yet to transition from the decisions they made as a child to making decisions as adults. Arguably, they are trapped in a *boy* state of mind due to the fact that most of them have been incarcerated since adolescence. Thus, without those conventional rites of passage that lead to adult consciousness (e.g., maintaining a household, providing for one’s children, being a role model to one’s children, parenting full-time, traveling and experiencing different cultures, marriage, and other life and cultural experiences), it’s as if their growth process stopped the day they got locked-up.

Here, the gang becomes the object of their affections. They tend to develop a greater sense of commitment to the gang than their families and children. Consequently, this is due to the fact that circumstances from *Projects-2-Prison* have alienated them and their families from each other and brought them closer with those of whom they frequently engage—other gang members. The gang, thus, provides for them a certain amount of status, respect and camaraderie.

As the foregoing suggests, membership in a gang appeals to many because it provides for them a sense of purpose and responsibility. Such feelings, needless to say, motivate them to preserve and defend the destruction that comes of a cancerous tribal energy. And where doubts enter the mind they dare to confront them because they have been conditioned to make decisions in accord with tribal favor. To do otherwise would beckon the fear of rejection. Thus without a comfort zone to fall back on they become engulfed in yet another dysfunctional family structure that ascribes love, loyalty and honor as a contingency based upon their ability to meet tribal approval. This truth often goes unseen in the mindless uniformity of behavior, beliefs and expectations manipulated by their insecurities. It’s generally at the point of a rare conscious liberty of their fears that they entertain the contingency of the gang’s commitment to them or vice-versa.

Arguably, the tribal affect evaporates an independent frame of mind and thus inflicts the individual will. The loss of individuality is a fundamental aspect of the gang culture. It assumes a fundamental likeness wherein members respond and act akin because it is distinctly more than the sum of its individual members. In other words, the acceptance by each member as a part of the collective is what dictates the norms and values—ultimately the behavior and identity of each member of the gang. The similarities we find in its members tend to be the result of peer influence, imitation and rapport.

At this point most members of a gang are no longer themselves, provided they ever knew themselves, but have become puppets. Considering the fact that each member becomes dependent upon another, too often, though not always, they become torpedoes, crash-dummies, leeches, or crutches for another man's cause. Consequently, this creates a dependency upon the gang that in itself will breed a weakness that forever holds them hostage. Once isolated many become victim to their own feeble-mindedness.

\* \* \*

There are four fundamentals to social interaction that are vital to understanding street gang culture: competition, accommodation, assimilation, and conflict. Notably, they are not unique features of this culture in itself. Rather, they are reflective of the mere nature of interactions amongst people who have been influenced by the socio-economic and political structuring of a capitalist society. As noted in R.E. Park and E.W. Burgess's classic *Introduction To the Science of Sociology*: "...competition, accommodation, assimilation, and conflict are 'society.'"<sup>2</sup> They go on to provide:

- **COMPETITION** is a form of social interaction without social contact between the competing individuals. It takes the form of conflict of rivalry only when there is conscious identification of others as competitors. It is usually associated with the distributive order of society... or what might be more broadly called economics....
- **ACCOMMODATION** is an alteration of function leading to more efficient adjustments to the environment. Accommodations are always the result of conflicts, and may be thought of as processes of adjustment in social relations to prevent or reduce further conflict. The outcome of accommodation, then, is some kind of unstable equilibrium between the formerly conflicting groups. If this equilibrium comes to be transmitted through time it may be carried on traditionally....
- **ASSIMILATION** is the interpenetration and fusion of meanings and values of one group with another and the consequent compounding of a common culture. The process of assimilation is central in the historical record of man. It is always gradual, moderate, and unconscious; it tends to be most facilitated by contact between peoples and common language indispensable to it....
- **CONFLICT**, like competition, accommodation, and assimilation, is one form of social interaction; one way in which people deal with each other. Conflict is always conscious; it is always intermittent, and it is always personal. Social contact between people is always involved. Conflict is always conscious because it is impossible for an individual to be in conflict with another without self-awareness of the event. It is intermittent because it is expensive of time and energy and of resources. It is personal because conflicts can only occur between persons; one cannot fight ideas. Social contact, for the same reason, is always involved; one cannot fight individuals unseen, unsensed, and unknown. Conflict is always involved in social status.

It has a tendency to determine the status of persons or groups. In the context status may be defined as consisting of a position in rank-ordering of power, where that concept (power) is conceived simply as the ability to secure the acquiescence of others in one's ideas or actions. It not uncommonly happens that competition determines one's place in a community; one's position in society, however, is determined by conflict. This does not mean that each individual must by personal conflict determine his own social location; rather the statuses of the groups and positions of which one is a member or an incumbent are determined historically by conflictual processes.<sup>3</sup>

Often manipulated, conflicts arise because man refuses to objectively confront the product of his ego. This for him provides the ultimate distinction in a homogeneous society. Considering this, man's desire to control humanity ever comes into play for he has always seized (or created) the opportunity to act as God. And though this may seem a bit out of context, this god-like complex bears significance because it has been the driving force that manufactures the conflicts created by his ego, which strives to cultivate a collective conscious.

Subjectively subdued by an ego that's often beyond his control, so too are many of man's creations. Take for example warfare. Here, Reece McGee describes in *Social Disorganization In America* that "... warfare [is] the most severe, the most extreme, and the most exhausting form of conflict in which man engages."<sup>4</sup> He goes on to provide:

No conflict is ever settled by conflict. A war does not settle the issues about which it is fought; the war rather settles the issue of who will settle the issues of war at the diplomatic tables of peace. The immediate outcome of any conflict is an accommodation of the forces involved on the basis of some change in their relationships of balances. The political scientist's concept of the balance of power is perhaps familiar in this regard. War commences when the relations between nations (or parties) have so changed over time that the balance of power (the accommodative relationships) between them no longer adequately represents the true state of social facts. When the issue involved cannot be settled by diplomacy, by subversion, or by economic imperialism, the states involved may resort to war. On the basis of the real social forces exhibited in the conflict situation a new accommodation will be struck, the combat deciding who will set the terms and what shall be the changed relationship resulting from the dispute.

One often hears when conflict is in the offing that if we could only clarify the facts in the case, get at the real root of the troubles, some means other than force could be applied to the determination of a solution. This analysis of conflict indicates that exactly the opposite is true: that often conflicts can be prevented only by muddying the issues and that as a matter of fact clarification of issues often makes conflict inevitable. Where the differences between the parties are truly irreconcilable, if this fact ever becomes unequivocally clear, they then have no recourse other than resulting to violence for settling their differences....<sup>5</sup>

However imperfect this may be the favor is obviously decided in terms of might and not in accordance to reason.<sup>6</sup>

In addition, McGee points to the necessity of a certain amount of “overt disharmony” when engaged in warfare that is vital to the liberation of psychological aggressions that otherwise, due to the bottling of emotions, cause one to self-destruct.<sup>7</sup> Warfare, thereby, becomes an outlet to vent frustrations as well.

In the same context that McGee has referred to nations and states going to war to resolve conflicts, so too does the theory apply to gang violence. He has provided that man often finds himself in the stench of funk when diplomacy no longer serves as an alternative to peaceful resolutions. As previously noted, conflicts arise because man refuses to objectively confront the product of his ego. This is so because the ego—defined as the psychic apparatus that experiences and reacts to the outside world and thus mediates between the primitive drive of the soul and the demands of the social and physical environment—distorts man’s self-image so as to enhance and protect the self. This is especially so in the case where ghetto youth are reduced to the most abject of behaviors to survive. Thus enter into the equation the previous mention of “status” and “respect.” Such values nestle in the conscious creativity of man’s ego and are determined by his ability to measure up to the social and physical demands of the environment.

Here, I must digress to place emphasis on the fact that what man places value in often reflects his economic circumstance. As noted, the ghetto’s substandard living conditions often infuse trifling values, which in turn devalue life in itself. I have known men who placed more value in a hotdog than the life they took for accidentally knocking it out of their hand. In both prison and in the world I have witnessed massive explosions of violence for nothing more than a ninety-cent debt collected by a ninety-cent ego due to the fact that: “It is not men’s consciousness that determines reality; on the contrary, it is the social reality that determines their consciousness.”<sup>8</sup>

Each measure of man—from the poorest of the poor to the richest of the rich—strives to obtain an esteemed level of status and respect in the peer environment. And where his ego stands to suffer a blow in this regard there can be no peace on account of mere arrogance. An arrogance that I might add places value on simple rocks by calling them diamonds. “Paper” represents wealth, which in turn determines his status. And it is his status that will determine the level of respect he’s to receive from the peer environment.

Here, he distorts his values so as to enhance and protect the self. Now factor in the “principle of scarcity.” This for the ego has become a vice manipulating not only the self, but moreso the social and political environments to which he manipulates others to believe that there is not enough bread and butter to go around. So it’s **SURVIVAL OF THE FITTEST!**<sup>9</sup>

Considering the fact that men hunt men as if cannibals, it’s only natural the struggle to survive polarizes them into opposing groups—those who hunt and those considered prey. Yet both have a stake in survival. Whereby, an irreconcilable conflict is created by mere happenstance of the position one finds himself in the pecking order. Accordingly, Walter Bagehot would write in *Physics and Politics*: “... the struggle for existence and survival of the fittest are indeed examples of irreconcilable conflict which traditionally has been addressed through the formation

of groups; with cooperation between group members developing as a survival mechanism for man kind.”<sup>10</sup> He adds the fact that “the social man with the ability to get along and cooperate with his fellows tends to survive,”<sup>11</sup> while the misanthrope dies.

Bagehot’s observations are reflective of all living creatures. The herd better ensures the survival of the wildebeest; the pack better ensures the loin a meal. Without the protection of the herd the wildebeest becomes more vulnerable; without the pack the lion starves.

Bagehot makes two other observations that are worthy of mention. One, the social function of an external threat to a social group, for example another group threatening war, ever increases the bonds of cooperation and social solidarity within the threatened group.<sup>12</sup> Nothing better illustrates the concept like today’s gang culture. As I’m to explain in the following segment, the creation of the Crips and Bloods was the consequence of an external threat—other gangs.

Second, Bagehot observes behaviors defined as “social virtues” are apt to make for increased solidarity in the social group, while those behaviors defined as “vices” are apt to be divisive of the group. Virtues (e.g., charity, honesty, integrity) are behaviors that support, unify and maintain the collective. Vices (e.g., theft, dishonesty, drug addiction) on the other hand tend to split, weaken, or destroy the collective.

Too often it’s the vice-ridden influence of the ghetto that creates a cutthroat mentality. It is this mentality that’s at the heart of a lack of tribal cohesion. Moreover, vices are partially to blame for the ghetto’s fragmented and disorganized gang culture. Then too, this happens on account of when leadership or the collective no longer possess the ability to captivate or fulfill the individual needs of membership. Divested of affect, alienated from the tribe’s spontaneous commitments of social life, people defect, separate and go their own direction. At times, people simply want to distinguish themselves from the former authority.

In the case of street gang members this often signals growth, maturity and a change in perspective. Though, this is not always the case. At times, many times, the individual splits from the group because he has not obtained the level of commitment from the gang that he feels entitled to for his undivided loyalty. So he either seeks-out a new tribe or creates one of his own. In either event, the split, the deflection, is the consequence of a conflict that involves one or more of the fundamental processes of social interaction.

To better illustrate the foregoing the following specimen case reflects on how it is competition, accommodation, assimilation, and conflict function with other economic factors to create the *Tribalism* we are all too familiar with in the ghetto.

### **TRIBALISM: A SPECIMEN CASE**

*As alienation proceeds and we are further removed from the breast of moral nourishment, forsaken are we the most significant function of positive group reinforcement that provides structure and freedom to one’s psychological aggressions. Couple this need to vent with the wretched affects of poverty, and you have a formula for a hypnotic esteem transfixed to mistle the deathstyle for a lifestyle hell-bent to self-destruct. Another vice indeed, it’s composed by the notion that the world evolves around this expression contracted to embrace fratricide as a vessel to fulfill shallow souls. Whence, each will encourage another’s man of steel complexional abilities to become ruffians in the extreme.*

*Fueled by praise, loyalties to fratricide raise. With pretentious swagger and a sag heaved by the rod sized to fill insecurity, we perceive ourselves invincible in our self-initiations into manhood dictated by the uncognizable act of gunplay. Senselessly representing values without appraise, our souls are transfigured into unrighteous material: BLOCKS, GLOCKS and TRAP-SPOTS. Whereas we become defenseless ignorant prey for the capitalist hunter and his toy soldier who regale in our ego's graveyard jungle scene of misguided tribal conflict. "It's all I've got..." the manipulated pledge fosters in mislabeling his coerced nightmare while continuing to sleepwalk in the blind dignity of indentured servitude which allows certification and trill claims, despite the vice-ridden seed of faultiness, to the 'hood. As the resulting carnage ensues to inflame genocide, ever is it kindled by his shallow soul seeking to get active in the hopelessness of gang bangin'.*

—Ivan Kilgore

Since the days that kerosene street lamps lined the street, street gangs have been an essential to the urban element. They provided protection to the local rackets and some began as pro-community organizations. Gangs such as the Chicago-based Vice Lord Nation, the Black Stone Rangers, and Latin Kings were pro-community organizations that would undergo dramatic changes as times changed and economic influences impacted their objectives.

For the particular region I've choose to begin this specimen case—South-Central Los Angeles—the Slauson gang would gain notoriety as gunslingers and hustlas during the 1950s. They would carry over onto the '60s where gangs such as the Businessmen, the Home Street Gang, and 18<sup>th</sup> Street Gang would be duly noted.

By the 1970s many members of these gangs were absorbed into the revolutionary tempest of Black Nationalism. Militant organizations such as the Black Panther Party, the United Slaves (US), the Black Liberation Army (BLA), and several others would gain tremendous appeal. However, there were those that would remain part of the predatory gang culture that was blooming in this region.

In time, these gangs came to influence what was in the making thereafter. Needless to say, the seeds they planted would give raise to the most profound tribal division to date. The history of which has been provided by Tookie Williams:

While black economic programs experienced a full downswing the gang factor and its circle of violence were experiencing a surge. This was a growth industry! Throughout South-Central there were many factions of visible and latent street gangs with parasitical appetites... the Chain Gang, Low Riders, Avenues, Brims, Figueroa Boys, and the Van Ness Boys. These gangs give rise to a newer, more predatory gangs such as the Sportsman Park Boys, Denker Boys, Manchester Park Boys, Hustler Mob, New House Boys, and many other street cliques.<sup>13</sup>

Tookie goes on to tell of how he was approached by Raymond Washington and together they would unify their West and Eastside crews to form the "Baby Cribs," which later morphed into the "Crips."<sup>14</sup> This union, as described by Tookie, was an "alliance [that] would commence an urban cleansing of the gang element"<sup>15</sup> that had been strong-arming his and Raymond's neighborhood crews.

As noble as this may have appealed to Tookie's conscience at the time, with no directive other than to avenge themselves, Crippin' would explode/implode into a

fusion of mass destruction that deserves little explanation except reality bore from inoculate gang activity. Notably, the LA gang element would be undermined by self-hatred, false pride and ego—all compliments of the wretched affects of poverty.

During the late 1970s onto the first year or so of the '80s, the LA gang culture would undergo several transitions that would fuel the Black-on-Black violence that the region would become known for. Corrupted by the strength found in numbers, as the Crips grew throughout southern California, power became a burden to their unsteady and loosely fashioned ranks.<sup>16</sup> Consequently, they began to splinter into other factions that would spread to create over 700 tribes in the general Los Angeles area.

As the Crips grew, so too would the degree of conflict and competition amongst them.

... the unified West Side Crip regime started crumbling into factions. Buddha fiercely reminded me [i.e., Tookie] that Raymond's East Side Crips broke into numerous splinter groups after his incarceration, as did Mac Thomas's Compton Crips when he was locked up. The explosion of the West Side Crips was matched by a kind of implosion, Crip cells splintering, reforming, and splintering again. Factions began cropping up all over, and the West Side Crips become a cluster of autonomous sets....

... the Crips imploded by pitting Crip against Crip. Inevitably, the Crips proved to be no different than any government that creates its own bogeyman and believes in its own invincibility. Such an entity—be it a gang, tribe, or nation—will unwittingly defeat itself.<sup>17</sup>

And defeat themselves they did having set aside the theme resounding Black Nationalism. This would further separate and shift the nature of fellowship from one extreme to another. It would destroy any defense unity once afforded the Black community from self-destructing as their gang violence became more and more fratricidal. The pieces of the chess game were now perpetuating their own oppression. And while the voices screaming "Black Power" in northern California and elsewhere throughout the nation had been quieted, Mr. Charlie would turn a blind eye to LA's festering gang culture. For its genocidal nature was in sync with his agenda.

And so it was the stage was set to encourage the yellow tape to define boundaries and manhood. Groomed in what would become perpetual conflict, peace would long be suspended for generations to come. Conflict would be ready-made depending on the 'hood you grew up in.

In time South-Central would become ideal to nest a disaster that would to this day compromise further the futures of the LA youth. For their receptiveness to commit fratricide displayed the worst form of violence mankind has engaged in—the moral emptiness of a cannibal's sadistic ability to nourish upon his fraternal makeup. And so the story goes, the capitalist hunter seized upon their eagerness to make war and destroy themselves by escalating the funk with the injection of high power assault weapons and the extract of the coca leaf.

With this move the hunter swiftly checkmated the King with a parasitic poisoning that fastened itself upon their greed and need to liberate the frustrations of poverty. This, by far, became the most underhanded scheme to date. By simply

unleashing the subtle mechanisms of competition, the hunter prompted material gain over life. From this he would redirect and channel into this unconscious youth his hatred towards them and force them to adopt his distasteful views of them upon themselves.

This social engineering would forever change the nature of violence amongst gangs in LA and elsewhere around the nation. It would take on new proportions as it begin to spread; creating turf-wars abroad. No longer would the government need the likes of the Ku Klux Klan or COINTELPRO<sup>18</sup> to assault the Black community. It now had the Crips and countless other disenfranchised criminal organizations and street gangs draping on white sheets to emulate Dave Chappelle's character of a blind Black-white supremacist.

However, this was no laughing matter because even those in the Bay Area would assist with the ruse to subdue the voice resounding "Black Power!" Here, Mumia Abu-Jamal painstakingly informs of us of the events that lead to Huey P. Newton being slain in the streets of Oakland by a young drug dealer.

He was a remarkable man, both at his apex, as Founder and Minister of Defense of the Black Panther Party, and at his nadir, as an alienated drug addict, caught in the crippling clutches of crack....

A one-time field marshal, [Washington] D.C., once said of him, "Huey is the only man who could walk across America, and black folks would follow him, from coast to coast." Once, his observation was quite true.

But in later years that would no longer be the case. The Party, beset by destructive forces, within and without, paranoid and real, lost its moorings, as the man who formed the organization lost his. In one dizzying year of indecision, he went from Defense Minister, to Supreme Commander, to Supreme Servant, to Servant, a reflection of the influences of his travel abroad, especially to North Korea.

And when the Party fell apart, burst asunder by the political and personal strains that besieged it, he was an integral part of that process, as drugs continued to sap his brilliance and destroy his vision. It is one of the supreme ironies of life that the hand that would strike him down would be a black one, in a midnight quarrel over drug money and debts owed. His lifelong fascination with the seamier side of the streets of his youth became, in the end, a fatal attraction.

The irony is exacerbated when we learn that the man<sup>19</sup> who slew Huey was a member of the Black Guerilla Family, a prison-based offshoot of the BPP; that as a youth, he ate his breakfast at one of the Bay Area Black Panther Party Community Free Breakfast Programs; and now, as a man serving a life term at the Pelican Bay SHU, has had the opportunity to read the writings of Newton and has become inspired by the words of the man he murdered.<sup>20</sup>

Just as the U.S. government had duped the Native American with whiskey and small pox infested blankets, so too would its complicity allow anticommunist allies to dupe predominately Black communities with the "READY ROCK." "Use the



niggers as a stepping stone,” was the objective of the C.I.A. and the Fuerza Democratica Nicaraguans (Nicaraguan Democratic Force), commonly referred to as the Contras, who conspired collectively to fund the anticommunist movement in Central America. And so it came to be Nicaragua would gain democratic freedom and the U.S. government could begin to roll out the red carpet to accommodate the North American Free Trade Agreement (N.A.F.T.A.) so American Big Business could exploit third-world quasi-slave labor.

In other words, both N.A.F.T.A and Nicaragua’s democratic freedom would come at the expense of the Black community sucking on Columbia’s glass dick. Gary Webb of the *San Jose Mercury Newspaper* would be the investigative reporter who exposed this menacingly evil plot. The details are as follows:

For the better part of a decade, a San Francisco Bay Area drug and gun ring sold tons of cocaine to the Crips and Bloods street gangs of Los Angeles and funneled millions in drug profits to a Latin American guerrilla army run by U.S. Central Intelligence Agency, a [San Jose, California] Mercury News investigation has found.

This drug network opened the first pipeline between Colombia’s cocaine cartels and the black neighborhoods of Los Angeles... The cocaine that flooded in helped spark a crack explosion in urban America... and provided the cash and connections needed for L.A.’s gangs to buy automatic weapons. It is one of the most bizarre alliances in modern history: the union of a U.S.-backed army attempting to overthrow a revolutionary socialist government and the Uzi toting “gangstas” of Compton and South-Central Los Angeles.

The army’s financiers—who met with the CIA agents both before and during the time they were selling the drugs in L.A.—delivered cut-rate cocaine to the gangs through a young South-Central crack dealer Ricky Donnell Ross. Unaware of his suppliers’ military and political connections, “Freeway Rick”—a dope dealer of mythic proportions in the L.A. drug world—turned the cocaine powder into crack and wholesaled it to gangs across the country. The cash Ross paid for the cocaine, court records show, was then used to buy weapons and equipment for a guerrilla army named the Fuerza Democratica Nicaraguans (Nicaraguan Democratic Force) or FDN, the largest of several anti-communist commonly called the Contras.

While the FDN’s war is barely a memory today, black America is still dealing with its poisonous side effects. Urban neighborhoods are grappling with legions of homeless crack addicts. Thousands of young black men are serving long prison sentences for selling cocaine—a drug that was virtually unobtainable in the black neighborhoods before members of the CIA’s army started bringing it into South-Central in the 1980s at bargain-basement prices.

And the L.A. gangs, which used their enormous cocaine profits to arm themselves and spread crack across the country, are still thriving, turning entire blocks of major cities into occasional war zones.<sup>21</sup>

This epidemic of gang and drug violence spreading throughout the country I recall as if yesterday. The year was 1986. Manish, we were delinquent youth approaching puberty unmindful of the block-bleeding chaos that plagued the West Coast (WC). However, this began to change as it poured into the heartland and exercised its demoralizing influence.

My initial experience with the WC gang culture I must admit was introduced to me through the movie *Colors*. Walking out the theater with a local gang—the W.I.P. (*Walk-bys In Progress*)—we all seemed to be captivated by the intense gang violence and drug activity depicted in the movie’s portrayal of the LA gang culture. A seed had been planted as we joked around with each other, “Whatz up Cuz!,” “Whatz up Blood!” Though, we made no true claim at the time nor did we understand the twenty-plus years of conflict fueling South-Central’s gang wars. Nevertheless, the movie’s sinister energy had harnessed our delinquent souls’ inner-gorilla as had the actual movement for those on the WC who, in rejecting the ideology of Black Nationalism, were manipulated to direct their fierce spirit to the cause of gangbanging’.

Looking back, I strongly believe that movie made many people conscious of the nature of the WC movement. After it made its debut it seemed as if lightning had struck the South with the WC virus. Though, it wasn’t the hype of the silver screen that had cats who-bangin’. The theatrics were live and direct as the media in OKC broadcasted in 1988 “Oklahoma City was baby LA” as fortified trap-houses and gang violence resurrected on street corners like church houses and liquor stores. To the east Arkansas would later produce the critically acclaimed documentary *Bangin’ In Little Rock* that portrayed a full-blown epidemic of gang violence once isolated to South-Central now having migrated and paralyzed the *Dirty Dirty*.

By the late ‘90s titles like “Arrest May Slow Drug Flow Into City Temporarily” became redundant in newspapers statewide. This particular title was the actual headline of a May 20, 1996, *Daily Oklahoman* publication that read in part:

A drug pipeline linking Oklahoma City to the second-largest city in the nation is dumping deadly narcotics onto Oklahoma City streets....

Law enforcement officials took a major step last week to plug the pipeline that has fed the state capital for a decade....”

“The arrests remove a strong pocket of violent drug dealers and thieves in the south central Oklahoma area....”

“It should cut some of the violence in the areas where they operated. [But] there’s always somebody waiting in the wings to pick it up. It’s ongoing....”

The conspiracy involved buying multiple kilograms of cocaine power from Los Angeles gang sources, including the Main Street Mafia Crips, the [Eastside] Insane Crips and [a local gang] the Prince Hall Villain[] [Gangsta Crips], and selling it in the Oklahoma City area in the form of crack.

Cocaine dealers have looked to Oklahoma City since the late 1980s when crack-cocaine flooded the streets of Los Angeles, lowering the drug’s street value.

Oklahoma City, along with major midwestern cities, provided a new stomping ground for West Coast gangs.

The number of known gang members in Oklahoma City is 45 times higher today than it was 10 years ago.<sup>22</sup>

WC gang activity would eventually make its way to home base. Wewoka was just 45 minutes southeast of OKC and home to one of several large statewide attractions—the Wewoka Rodeo<sup>23</sup>—that offered festivities to the Black community. The WC gang culture would eventually become just as much a part of the rodeo as the cowboy himself. The LA banger and his new found cronies found Crenshaw in the heartland as ‘64 Impalas began to bounce up-and-down the strip during and after rodeo parades. These events, as well as the local drug markets found on Cedar Street, the Eastside of OKC, North Tulsa, and a few other backwood and metropolitan Black communities throughout the state, would attract the WC gang and drug culture. In time, gang violence would bring to an end many of these events.

The Chicago based Folks and Peoples factions were present too, as well as a few East Coast cliques.<sup>24</sup> Yet it was the WC gangs that did it moving. This goes without saying considering the circumstances created by Freeway Rick’s connect (the CIA’s FDN) which gave gangs like the Hoover Crips an advantage to take the show on the road and captivate impressionable souls across the nation to get active in drug and gang violence.

Media hype would further manipulate the situation by drawing comparisons between the LA factions and the notorious Italian Mafia. The mendacious nature of the American press goes without saying. It misled a whole school of kids to accompany the Crips and Bloods to emulate the Mafia deathstyle. It ignored the fact that the founders of these gangs had reflected little, if at all, on criminal organization for profit.<sup>25</sup> Rather, they organized, for lack of better expression, in the most disastrous manner to date, which influenced the gravest political and social regression that the Black community has ever witnessed. The negligence of such commentary served to attract and mortgage infinite souls beyond the holdings of Standard & Poor’s Fortune 500 companies.

Thereafter, street gangs became a threshold to fulfill empty souls seeking to identify with the Mafia deathstyle. However, violence would be the only facet of mob life they would effectively correspond. Consequently, gang violence would trademark racially motivated legislation (e.g., drive-by laws) that would come to beckon death sentences nationwide due to the innocent being paralyzed with fear to crossfire.

Picking up where I left off with the trafficking of gang and drug activity beyond South-Central, it appeared the gang factions that migrated South had family wherever they pulled up. Rather it was by keen insight or mere happenstance they came to learn that the *work*, which had marginal gains on the streets of California, would fetch three to ten times the profit in the heartland. Needless to say, local hustlas would in time get up on *Game* and begin to establish connections on the WC. In the mean time the WC gangs migrated by the herds: The Hoovas, Neighborhoods, the Gangstas, the Brims, 456, and many other red and blue factions from all over the state.

Thirsty for the scratch they came. However, some were fleeing the intense gang wars that had infested their ‘hoods with block-bleeding AK-47 choppa shells.<sup>26</sup> Like a portable slaughter house their gangbanging’ mentalities traveled along suit assailing

southern hospitality moreso than the KKK. In addition, many fled the anticipated consequences of their otherwise shifty behavior and criminal indictments.

Assisting this transition were economic factors. As noted, the down turn of the nation's manufacturing sector was brought about by N.A.F.T.A. Millions of jobs were lost when doors opened wide to Third World quasi-slave labor.<sup>27</sup> Overnight many Black men suddenly found themselves unemployed with mouths to feed. It was here that the F.D.N. pack mule would provide *work* for the displaced worker.

The impact this would have on the youth would be tremendous. We came to distance ourselves from those traditional pathways (e.g., careers, marriage, family life) of social life. The decline in meaningful job prospects weakened the stabilizing influences and traditional forms of informal social control that, subsequently, strengthened gang life as a dominant informal control and socialization force.<sup>28</sup> We went from our everyday group of kids looking for a summer job, to young adults "papered-up" and "strapped-up" in loosely structured gangs. And as the stakes got higher, so too the violence.

Before the gang life acculturated the South majority of us simply carried about with a sense of jovialness that did not allow a grudge to be held simply because you were from a different 'hood or town. Because many of our communities were two-stoptight towns everyone was familiar with each other and their families had histories that stretched for generations. This enabled us to function as a village. And where egos and testosterone would clash, a set of mixes (one, two, uppercut) would quickly squash the matter. Occasionally gunplay would reign out. But this was not the norm. That is until gangbangin' came on the scene to exchange the knuckle-game we practice with little grievance for the high-powered assault weapon's mayhem and murder.

Needless to say, the blue and red flag divide that spread throughout the South would make conflict visible. In addition, it would intensify tensions and further cripple the community. This was so because our conflicts became irreconcilable. The flustered emotions of a fistfight in time would heal and ironically bring cats closer. But the block-bleeding acts of gunplay influenced by the WC venom left the community torn and damaged beyond repair. The menace had transcended South-Central to influence the country boy to correspond with equal, if not greater, force to enact genocide.

Our conflict would become the most wayward having attached itself to the need to vent aggression moreso than to acquire drug turf. To compensate our ego a manifesto was provided from decades of WC conflict. Like any franchise, instruction manuals accompanied the WC gang migration: "*GANGBANGIN' 101, 102, and 103.*" By the time this movement was in full swing and flags were being sailed on the South Coast, the accommodations and terms had in South-Central had set in stone the politics of blue and red light flight as to what set was or was not an ally. However, because our communities were too small for both bangin' and slangin', which was like mixing oil with water, accommodations were struck. In some spots we had cliques composed of Crips, Bloods, Vice Lords, etc. who made *Dope-Boy Magic*. In other spots the entire town was considered a Crip 'hood or Blood 'hood, etc. where the youngstas, for example, sought to rep the "set" instead of getting paper. For them the 'hood was a ego play ground where they could ride the pony and compete for glory and stripes and tag with their war paint for vanity.

\* \* \*

Before moving to California in the late '90s I could have easily been convinced that because this is the home-state that gave birth to the Crip and Blood gang culture, this would be what I encountered from the top of the state to the bottom in poor Black communities. And it was from San Diego to Sacramento with exception of the Oakland-San Francisco *East Bay Area*.

Having stumbled across a rare stretch of soil where the blue and red flag divide did not mark crime scenes with yellow tape, the Bay, however, did have its “TURF POLITICS.” In other words, bloodshed was not the result of a love to “WHO-BANG.” Rather, blood was spilled on account of getting money for the most part. There were occasions that turf wars would spark or a dispute would often end with gunplay. Yet the gang activity was more structured and primarily focused on selling drugs or some other pursuit of illicit gain. This sealed off blocks with a number of small cliques that generally got along with each other and networked.

The one clique that everyone seemed to speak on that played a major role in changing the atmosphere after the Bay Area lost its revolutionary zeal was the “69<sup>th</sup> Village MOB” (69<sup>th</sup> MOB, hereafter). Second to none, the 69<sup>th</sup> MOB would transform the home of the Black Panthers into the “Heroin Mecca” of northern California. It would stain the streets of Oakland with blood. Beginning in the 1970s and carrying onto the '80s, the 69<sup>th</sup> MOB made its mark with a rein of terror, which enabled it to carve out a lucrative drug empire.

Provoked by the slums of East Oakland, a ghetto champion would elevate to mythic proportions of shrewdness, savage and altruist all in one Felix “the Cat” Mitchell—founder of the 69<sup>th</sup> MOB. His reputation precedes him as stories are told daily in the cells of Santa Rita, rap songs, and wherever an ear lends itself to Mafia inclination. His unheard of success has been written of in some of the nation’s most esteemed publications. *Time Magazine* and many others like *Don Diva* have told of how he built a ten million dollar empire with contacts through the Bay Area and as far east as the Motor City, where heroin sales bestowed him the title “King Heroin.” And this was during the 1970s when major drug connections seldom were afforded to Blacks.

For a decade, until his arrest and subsequent conviction for running and operating a continuing criminal enterprise, “Fe,” as Mitchell is often referred to, led the 69<sup>th</sup> MOB in ruthless drug battles for control of drug turf against the remainder of the “Big Four,” as his organization, Mickey Moore’s, The Family, and Funktown USA have been dubbed by their Bay Area following. Fe’s no-holds-barred approach and grace—pushing through Bay Area ghettos in a “Double R”—not only assured him victory in the Big Four drug wars, but etched his name along with the 69<sup>th</sup> MOB at the top as the most vicious and *paid* Black criminal organization to ever spring from the Bay Area.

Though, the etchings would no sooner set before the shackles were thrown on the King. Damned to a life sentence without the possibility of parole, Fe would be fatally stabbed within months of his sentence at Leavenworth Penitentiary. Mother Africa would reclaim his soul and his name would be spoken as if a God to the street corner disciples’ ambition.

Too Hollywood for a small town, the media would report the 69<sup>th</sup> MOB operated a “heroin supermarket” in four housing projects throughout Oakland: the

San Antonio Village, Campbell Village, Westwood Gardens, and Lockwood Gardens. During the early 1980s, the Oakland Police Department would credit as many as 35% of the city's murders each year to drug related activities that could be traced back to the 69<sup>th</sup> MOB.<sup>29</sup> In 1988, Oakland would be named the murder capital of the United States as officials credited Fe's reign of terror for creating generations of violent drug dealers and thousands of heroin addicts.

The effect of Fe's reign goes unabated. Today, Oakland remains in the top ten of the most violent cities in America. The Black youth are highly instable and more deadly than a suicide bomber. And they are more venomous than a baby rattler injecting all of its venom in a single bite because they do not calculate. They just react. They react to prescribed circumstances as if a bearing in a pinball machine bouncing to-and-fro without control of themselves. Consequently, this has made for an environment riddled with crash-dummies, torpedoes and addicts of the sort and of all ages where many of the souljas see little wrong with tooting their horn.

After the King's untimely, and to many misfortunate demise, his protégé, Darryl "lil' D" Reed would be the next of Oakland's ghetto legends. Having been raised for the most part of his life in the San Antonio Village, it was inevitable that lil' D would be exposed to the daily operations of the 69<sup>th</sup> MOB. In his autobiography, *Weight*, lil' D tells of how these elements influenced him and how it was he came to be Fe's protégé.<sup>30</sup>

Like heroin did for Fe, crack-cocaine would make legends of the likes of lil' D. During the mid to late '80s there were so many drugs being allowed into the country that squares who just happened to know some hustler were getting their hands on 60 to 100 kilos on consignment.<sup>31</sup> With cocaine flooding the streets like snow storms, many snowmen would be created. Every city had its lil' D. New York had Kenneth "Supreme" McGriff. LA had Michael "Harry O" Harrison. Detroit had Demetrious "Big Meech" Flenory. Miami had the "Boobie Boys." For those in the Bay Area, none however would be as praised as lil' D. Like Fe, lil'D would gain a fierce reputation for violence. Moreover, it was his uncanny success at such a young age that made him stand out. By the age twenty he had pioneered the sales of large quantities of crack-cocaine.<sup>32</sup> It's been said that his roster included over fifty dealers who he supplied with kilos; moving upward of \$100,000 in sales a day.<sup>33</sup>

Thirty-six months of lil'D's life was fit for a king. Filled with luxurious sports cars and all the trimmings of the parvenu, he rose from street dealer to multimillionaire overnight. His reign would be short-lived, however, compared to his mentor's. Though, death would elude him as well as a life sentence—a federal stint wouldn't. Caught red-handed on December 8, 1988, standing over a pot puttin' the whip on 14 birds, the Oakland Police Department would raid his Lake Merritt apartment. Before it was all said and done with the police had uncovered seven more kilos of powder cocaine and 83 empty kilo wrappers. His conviction would result in a 35-year federal prison stint for three counts of possessing and manufacturing 20 kilograms of crack and powder cocaine.<sup>34</sup>

Bore from the legacy of the Big Four, lil' D and others in the Bay Area like San Francisco's "A-Team" and Oakland's Red Walker, would spring a culture of "get money" enthusiasts. Curious as to why the Bay Area was unique in the respect—that is, the absence of the Crip and Blood gang culture in the *Black* community—and the

distinctive “get money” attitude of its gang element, I was eager discover the history behind this region.

Over the years I have gained tremendous insight from a number of sources ranging from the Bay Area’s Black Nationalist legacy—the Black Panther Party founded in 1966 by Huey P. Newton and Bobby Seale—to academic studies pertaining to northern and southern California’s street gang activity. In addition, I’ve seized the opportunity afforded by my incarceration. I’ve walked-the-line at Santa Rita for four years, San Quentin and the New Folsom state prisons for ten, and have come to know many of the Los Angeles O.G.s, members of the 69<sup>th</sup> MOB, the Black Panther Party, etc. Their first hand accounts have been invaluable to say the least and have provided me insight on the movements they were part of that assisted to lay the foundation for their distinctive gang elements.

What was to be discovered about northern and southern California’s gang culture applies nationally. They are distinct because they were not cultivated by the same endowment. In other words, the character of a gang, or those considered criminal organizations, is a certain style of life and personal relations that are less a cause than a result—the result of the totality of physical characteristics of the environment coupled with its social influences, which have shaped the collective over a period of time. The differing tribal spirits of northern and southern California is the product of the social and economic influences exerted upon them.

Their differences, however, have developed against backgrounds of a similar nature. Each has had to endure obstacles of racial oppression, police brutality, poverty and drug infested neighborhoods. Each has experienced more or less favorable geographical circumstances—each area has a major shipping port. In addition, when considering South-Central, it is a densely populated metropolitan area that, due to its size, has gave way to close to 100 years of inoculate and predatory gang activity; while the history in the Bay Area tells of a village being shaped. This then collectiveness in the Bay Area I attribute to a relatively small Black population. This allowed for close relationships and open lines of communication.

Moreover, there were distinct social influences that shaped these regions. The Bay Area was greatly impacted by the philosophy of Black Nationalism.<sup>35</sup> Los Angeles also shared in the philosophy of Black Nationalism. However, the experience would be short-lived. Notably, the endemic violence favored in this region would infect even its pro-community organizations, which lead to the Black Panther Party withdrawing from the LA region. For even they were not exempt from the fratricidal air. January 17, 1969, will forever remain a tragic day in Black Panther history. On this tragic day Black-on-Black violence beset by the US Organization would lead to the murders of Black Panther Party leaders Alprentice “Bunchy” Carter (n.b., the former leader of the Slauson gang) and John Huggins.<sup>36</sup> This was said to have been the doing of the U.S. government—COINTELPRO having seized upon the animosity directed at the Black Panther Party by other pro-community groups in the LA region that did not take too kindly to the northern California organization having setup shop. Needless to say, to this day there remains this animosity between northern and southern California Blacks.

Having successfully pitted the US Organization against the Black Panther Party, the FBI would be puppeteer to Carter and Huggins’ fate. In recent years an interview with Black Panther Ericka Huggins—window of John Huggins—would receive a

telling response to the question of COINTELPRO's impact on the Black Panther Party:

...it left many people dead, my husband John Huggins and Alprentice Carter another. The [COINTELPRO] did not start with the [Black Panther Party]; it began to do its heinous dirty work with people like [Martin Luther King, Jr.] and the Civil rights Movement at all levels. Its intention was, as they said, to wipe out the [Black Panther Party] by the end of 1969... Looking back at it, taxpayers are appalled at what their money went to: to setting up situations where, for instance, John Huggins and Alprentice Carter could be killed at UCLA.... The FBI setup the circumstances for that; then the print media said it was Black on Black crime. But the FBI was a teacher for us. We learned to look at how insidious and subtle the work of a huge bureaucracy is and how fatal it could be for a small group of people who rebel against the status quo. So the FBI harmed, tortured, harassed and setup the circumstances to kill directly or indirectly many, many, people in the [Black Panther Party]... [J. Edgar] Hoover urged his special agents to "prevent the coalition of militant black nationalists groups... and leaders from gaining respectability... Prevent the rise of a black 'messiah' who would unify and electrify the militant Black Nationalist Movement."<sup>37</sup>

By the early 1970s the assassination of revolutionary Black male political leaders in LA and abroad had created a climate of loss and chaos that was ripe for the growth of the gang element due to feelings of disempowerment that grew from a lack of Black resistance. Suddenly, this spirit of resistance, which had been grounded in an oppositional belief that white power was limited, that it could be challenged and transformed, had dissipated. Without the revolutionary zeal of "Black Power" the Black youth in LA were defenseless in face of their oppressors. Many already harbored feelings of being abandoned by the Black Nationalist organizations. And US organization leader Maulana Karenga had been slandered as a FBI informant. Thus, this organization did not appeal to the LA youth.

Divested of affect, alienated from these organizations the sense of powerlessness caused by the absence of a revolutionary tempest would give way to the gang element. Tookie would write of the matter:

The Crips was a vehicle to provide us with illusionary empowerment, payback, camaraderie, protection, thuggery, and a host of other benefits. We wanted to be exempt from being disenfranchised, dyseducated, disempowered, and destitute...We were seventeen-year-olds with minds polluted by misconceptions, and we wanted to be emancipated from the struggle against the conditions seeking our extinction or emasculation. But regardless of hostile opposition or lack of social privilege, my vested interest, like everyone else's, was simply to survive....<sup>38</sup>

This can be said to have been the case in the Bay Area and elsewhere throughout the nation where Black Nationalism would eventually loose its zeal. However, it



would be the Big Four, the Vice Lords, Black Disciples, etc., instead of the Crips and Bloods that would appeal to the ghetto youth.

Moreover, because Black Nationalism had such a strong presence in these regions, many of the gangs that would take shape, for example the Black Guerrilla Family (BGF), better understood and valued economics and structure. Notably, this organization was manipulated by agents of COINTELPRO to pump tons of heroin into the veins of the Black Nationalist Movement. It's been said that the leadership of this prison gang was sold on the notion of keeping the Italian Mafia from controlling and profiting from the drug markets in the communities they were to return to; and that the profits they were to see from the sale of drugs would be a means to an end—THE END! Consequently, heroin and other drugs would in time become an “opportunity,” to say for lack of better term, to better position them economically. So they structured-up—MOBBED UP to organize and control the drug markets.

In much the same way, by the '80s the likes of lil' D would do the same with crack-cocaine. However, the logic had changed. No longer were the Italians the motivating factor, it was about “Triple Beam Dreams” as Nas would rap:

A project minded individual criminal tactics/ Us Black kids born with birth defects we hyperactive/ Mentally sex crazed, dysfunctional, they describe us/ They liars at the end of the day we fucking survivors/ I remember watching Scarface the first time/ Look at that big house, Porsche paid for by crime/ *How could I sell this poison to my people in my mind/ They dumb and destroy themselves is how I rationalize....*<sup>39</sup>

\* \* \*

The foregoing has allowed a distinction to be drawn between a street gang and a criminal organization. The distinction being the result of the influence of leadership or lack thereof—that is, who is involved, on what issues and with what effect or influence as revealed by their actions, which in turn caters to their ego: “Who Bangin’” or “Gettin’ Paper.” As this indicates the recognition and expression of certain characteristics, values and motivators (manipulation) or the absence of such attributes in one group opposed to another defines a “cultural” or “entrepreneurial” gang. Here, the terminology was coined sociologist Jerome H. Skolnick.

“Cultural gangs,” explained Skolnick, “were initially organized horizontally,<sup>40</sup> stressing values of neighborhood, loyalty, and the equality that obtains among members of a family. As an extended family, the cultural gangs typically hold respect, fraternity, trust, and loyalty to gang and neighborhood as bedrock values. These gangs are strongly grounded in the neighborhood or territorial image that tends to extend across generations. And while they routinely engage in criminal acts including the black market, they have existed prior to and independent of the illegal activities in which they are engaged. Thus, their criminal acts do not define either the identity of the gang or its individual members.”<sup>41</sup> Nor do they play a role in the recruitment of its membership. Anybody that shows a little “heart”—and this is not always the case—and is willing to “put-in-work” can get-on.

“By contrast,” Skolnick asserts, “entrepreneurial based gangs are organized vertically,<sup>42</sup> with status in the gang dependent upon role performance.”<sup>43</sup> They function on a business type model similar to most corporations, however with a paramilitary structure. Discipline, secrecy and strict codes of behavior are

fundamental characteristics of entrepreneurial gangs. These gangs are business orientated with financial goals paramount. Members enter for instrumental economic reasons; fealty of membership tends to depend on economic opportunities (e.g., drug-dealing, prostitution and extortion rackets) offered by the organization; and they are motivated by profits and control of the black market.<sup>44</sup> Leadership consists of those who are capable of strategic planning and personnel management. It goes without saying that illicit and licit business skills are essentials of leadership.

Taking this into consideration, in 1989 Skolnick would observe

... the dynamic movement of African American Los Angeles gangs from symbolic interaction to the purposive rationality: “[T]he situation of the Los Angeles gangs... seems to be changing, indeed dynamically so, as the values associated with drug marketing come to dominate members.” And we continued, noting the specific importance of such attributes as initiative and ambitions in African American gangs and explained why these gangs are particularly likely to transform their role in the marketing of cocaine.

Since crack-cocaine appears to be most profitable drug, and since crack-cocaine is sold mainly by African American street dealers, the sale of that drug seems to have blurred the distinction between cultural and entrepreneurial gangs. African American LA cultural gangs... are increasingly becoming instrumental in their relationship with drugs. African American gangs seem to prize individual initiative and ambition as indicia of status. As a result, African American LA cultural gangs seem increasingly to look like gangs instrumentally designed for the sale of drugs.<sup>45</sup>

Indeed, in the years since 1989 many Crip and Blood gang members have been active participants in the *Dope-Game*. However, this has not changed their cultural framework. The only exception has been the Hoover Crips, now the Hoover Criminalz, who no longer consider themselves a Crip gang. Otherwise, Skolnick has made the mistake of assuming the activities of “a few individuals who operate drug-selling cliques within these gangs that split for certain goals, and remain united for others.”<sup>46</sup> Though, make no mistake about it in certain cities, generally beyond California, there are spin-off Crip and Blood gangs that are exclusively involved in loosely structured drug-trafficking operations.

For instance, “[i]n Maryland investigators see the presence of the United Blood Nation... [They] transport ‘mutlikilogram quantities of cocaine and marijuana primarily from southern California and Texas and distribute the drugs in locations throughout the Southern region [of the United States].”<sup>47</sup> As this suggest, there are certain cliques of Crip and Blood gang members who are from California that have migrated to other states to create splinter groups to facilitate drug-trafficking. But, by little measure has *California’s* Crip and Blood gangs “structured-up” to become an entrepreneurial gang faction or criminal organization as that of the Gangster Disciples or other Midwest and Bay Area gangs.

Chicago native “King” David founded the Devil Disciples in the 1960s to which Larry Hoover’s Gangster Disciples would evolve. Initially, the two groups were odds

with each other. However, in time they would form an alliance that created the Folks organization. After the murder of King David in 1974, the Gangster Disciples would undergo several transitions before becoming the now “Growth and Development Nation” (GDN). After King David’s death the Folks organization would splinter into multiple Folks organizations: the Black Disciples, the Gangster Disciples, the Black Gangsters (now known as the New Breeds), and many others.<sup>48</sup> Whence, Larry Hoover, who was now serving a 150-200 year prison sentence for murder in the Illinois Department of Corrections, would work tirelessly to build the Gangster Disciples into a political organization.

As the Gangster Disciples spread throughout the Illinois prison system, the Chief, as Hoover is commonly referred, was able to corrupt high-ranking correctional officials, which subsequently opened the gates for a lucrative drug racket. It’s been said that at its height the Gangster Disciples were receiving up to “50 pounds” of marijuana a week to supply a statewide racket within the prison system. Moreover, just as BGF would spill over into the streets of Oakland and come to control certain neighborhoods during the 1970s onto the ‘80s, so too would the Gangster Disciples spill over into the streets of Chicago. Then crack-cocaine hit.

Spurred by the flourishing drug trade, the Chief directed his “Board of Directors” to capitalize on the possibilities of the “Ready-Rock.” According to federal authorities, by the mid 1990s the Gangster Disciples had grown to a multi-state criminal organization. It was estimated the organization had grown to 30,000 members, including a female branch—the “Sisters of the Struggle”—that facilitated cocaine trafficking from South America to Chicago and elsewhere throughout the nation. In 1998 the Chief and members of the Gangster Disciples were federally indicted for operating a criminal enterprise along with a slew of other charges ranging from murder to racketeering. At the time of the indictment the Gangster Disciples were estimated to be a \$100 million-dollar a year illicit and licit drug cartel.

The *Chicago Tribune Newspaper* would report that the Gangster Disciples and the Black Disciples were “built on a corporate mentality” having adopted the best business practices which permitted their drug cartel to flourish. The article would go on to read:

It’s unlikely to become a source of civic pride, but some South-Side Chicago gangs have been among the most successful in the nation at taking the best practices of corporate America and adapting them to their use, gang experts say.

“I’ve always believed they were run the way IBM should have been run,” said Jonathan King, a former U.S. attorney who prosecuted the Black Disciples’ archrival, the Gangster Disciples. That gang, he said, was adept at putting the right people in the right jobs and identifying legitimate business opportunities to launder cash.

“They were incredibly efficient at what they did. A lot of these people could have been business leaders if they had choose to run a legitimate firm instead of a drug cartel.”

The Gangster Disciples and the Black Disciples adopted a pyramid-type organization led by a CEO-type leader. Each had its own board of directors that held regular meetings.

Although they used different designations, both gangs had the equivalent of middle managers who oversaw drug sales, and enforcers who collected fines and administered “violations,” physical discipline that went far beyond the corporate norm for performance.

While the leaders made the fortunes, front-line employees—the street-level gang members who sold drugs—earned roughly the equivalent of minimum wage in many cases, researchers found.

Except for the 40 or 50 Black Disciples who hold positions of rank, “the rest of them are the fry-makers at McDonalds,” said Andrew Papachristos, a sociologist and director of field operations for the National Gang Crime Research Center in Peotone [Illinois].

“They’re not all driving Benzes and Lexus’s. They’re not making the cash,” he said.

Both gangs had a code of conduct and a benefits package of sorts. Gang members who were arrested usually could count on the organization to foot the bill for an attorney and to post bail. The gang regularly paid for funeral expenses... and sometimes paid annuities to families of those killed or incarcerated.

Another thing the gangs had in common with big business: a glass ceiling. An estimated 30 percent of the Black Disciples in some parts of the city were women, but they rarely, if ever, rose to prominent positions.<sup>49</sup>

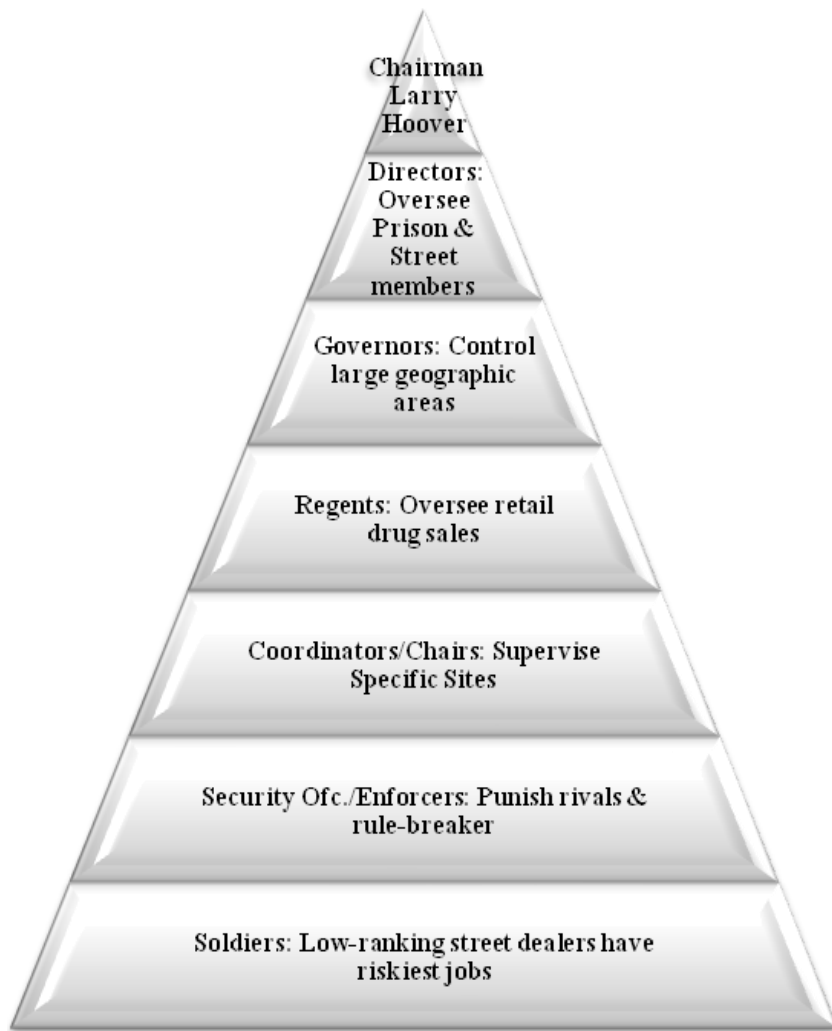
Similar to criminal organizations in the Bay Area, though more disciplined, the GDN was organized by the following structural operation:

☆ GDN ☆

*We believe in the teachings of our honorable chairman  
We believe in all laws and policies set forth by the chairman  
And executive staff*

*We believe in the concept and ideology of organization  
We believe in aiding and assisting our fellow brothers in the  
Struggle for “righteous endeavors”*

*We believe in standing strongly upon our six points utilizing  
Knowledge, wisdom and understanding as we strive in our struggle for educational, economical,  
political, and social development.*



There are many variations to structure. Irrespective of their nature being criminal or not, they are structured to maximize the output (\$\$\$) of human and social capital.

In the case of the GDN, the above diagram depicts the operation worked like this from the bottom up: First, you have your soldiers on the street. They are the labors or employees of the organization who have the most dangerous job—“bundle boys.” Then there’s the Chief of Security. His job is to keep the hyenas off the bundle boys, enforce discipline, and, more importantly, keep security on the daily take (\$\$\$) generated by the machine. The treasure’s position, which is not listed on the diagram, is responsible for the daily count, the pickup of the take and accounting for other legitimate business endeavors. As to be expected, the treasure is accompanied by a security team and is responsible for logging the counts, sales and receipts.

There are several levels of supervision. First, you have your block coordinator. Coordinators run the entire machine—bundle boys, security, treasury, etc. Above them you have the regents. The regents oversee the entire neighborhood operation and thus have several coordinators responsible to them.<sup>50</sup> The regents were to the GDN what mid-management is for McDonalds. They oversaw the operation of each unit. Thus they were responsible for making sure the machine had all its working parts. “The regents had to report to the Governors though. The governors ran entire sections of the city like South Side, West Side,”<sup>51</sup> and out-of-state operations. The governors were for the GDN what top-level management is for McDonalds. They oversaw the franchise—warehouse operations, product distribution and development. They reported to the board of directors and only the board members spoke to Hoover—the Chair of the Board. The board was responsible for carrying-out the Chief’s operation.

There are several other features about the GDN that are worth mentioning:

- The franchise system the Chief implemented on drug sales did way with the traditional street level competition. Very much like Felix Mitchell’s 69<sup>th</sup> MOB and the Italian Mafia, Hoover taxed the right to sell drugs whereas the bundle boys were either paid weekly salaries or took a commission from the sales.
- Members paid monthly dues along with political dues. According to the DEA these dues added up to approximately 15% of the organizations annual revenue (\$15,000,000).
- Members were subject to fines and physical discipline for transgressing by-laws. Depending on the offense a discipline could result in death.
- As the GDN migrated to other states the established branches of the organization remained under the control of the Chief. As this suggests, unlike the Crips and Bloods, which have spin-off gangs in other states *that are not recognized as affiliates* by their WC parent-groups, the GDN is unified under the umbrella of one organization.
- While West Coast organizations like the Main Street Mafia and Hoova Criminalz have established a host of illicit and licit business enterprises around the nation, unlike the GDN these businesses are not structured under a corporate framework and thus operate on an individual basis that is not connected to a central leadership.
- The GDN as well as other Chicago based organizations such as the El Rukns, have taken an active role in the American political process. These organizations have created voters leagues and have government officials on the take.

Despite the criticism, the structural framework of the GDN and other similarly structured criminal organizations have been instrumental in reducing gang violence.

Note how since the 1997 federal prosecution of Larry Hoover and other Chicago gang leaders, Chicago has erupted into a fury of gang violence. The national media and other publications, such as the *USA Today Newspaper*, have reported Chicago as the “Murder Capital.”<sup>52</sup>

With each passing year the violence has increased due to an unstable drug market. In 2012, Chicago witnessed over 500 gang related homicides. This surge is tied directly to the “Law of Consequences.” When law enforcement removes the influence of a career criminal the gangs naturally struggle for position and realignment of drug turf.

This, unquestionably, has been the case in Chicago where Larry Hoover and other gang leaders have been removed from the state prison system and placed in a supermax level 5 federal prison in Florence, Colorado. The Chief and other Chicago gang leaders are now imprisoned with the likes of Ramzi Yousef, the architect of the 1993 World Trade Center bombing; “shoe bomber” Richard Reid; Robert Hanssen, a former FBI agent turned Russian spy; OKC bombing conspirator Terry Nichols; “Unabomber” Ted Kaczynski; and other gang leaders representing a constellation of violent groups from the Aryan Brotherhood to the Latin Kings.

Turning to the question of how urban violence factors into the activities of cultural and entrepreneurial gangs, I find Skolnick’s work to be on-point. From his description of the differing institutional frameworks of each gang we can grasp the way in which they utilize violence. Here, Skolnick has observed: “Cultural gangs employ violence predominantly as a symbolic aspect of gang loyalty and identity. Entrepreneurial gangs may employ violence with comparable savagery, but with different goals. This is, the entrepreneurial gang employs violence for the purpose of controlling drug-selling territory [or some other illicit activity] or enforcing the loyalty norms of the operation, rather than for gang or social identity per se.”<sup>53</sup>

In other words, the “block-banger” gangs for the sake of appearance, ego—the masculine identity. “Set-trippin’” is a part of his socialization process beginning with his pseudo-initiation, which distorts his ego and thus creates more conflict because the stake is based in values (glory and prestige) that are consciously oscillating between parties. The conflict his “ego-trip” creates has become principle from generation-to-generation. Consequently, “... the ‘expressive’ aspect of [cultural] gang violence involves impulsive and emotional defense... of the gang, defense and glorification of the gang’s reputation...”<sup>54</sup>

The “turf hogg,” on the other hand, vies to expand or control the drug markets that feed him. He is a capitalist in the strictest sense of the word. He strives to carve out his piece of the American pie. While his violence is destructive all the same as the “block-banger’s,” it is conventional and demonstrates how power is obtained in American society. As I’m to explain in the following chapter, the violence that comes of his criminal activity is the very means by which America’s forefathers and descendants have benefited from the riddle hidden in A.M.E.R.I.C.A.’s spelling—C.R.I.M.E.

Crime and violence have been essential to the structuring of American society. Moreover, they have been essential to the progress of the capitalist for reasons explained by Aron Raymond:

... the capitalist regime... can only function if there exists a group of men who possess capital... [And] [h]ow does this group of men come to be? It is not difficult to explain historically the formation of this group of capitalists: violence, force, guile, theft, and the other procedures traditional in [America's] political history [that] easily account for the formation of a group of capitalist.<sup>55</sup>

Accepted as such, the violence exercised by an entrepreneurial gang is tantamount in principle to that of the U.S. Armed Forces. The Gangster Disciples were for Larry Hoover what Major General Smedley of the U.S.M.C. explains he was for Standard Oil and other American Big Businesses:

I spent thirty-three years and four months in active service as a member of our country's most agile military force—the Marine Corps. I served in all commissioned ranks from a second lieutenant to major-general. And during that period I spent most of my time being a high-class muscleman for Big Business, for Wall Street, and for the bankers. In short, I was a racketeer for capitalism....

Thus I helped make Mexico and especially Tampico safe for American oil interests in 1914. I helped make Haiti and Cuba a decent place for National City Bank boys to collect revenues in... I helped purify Nicaragua for the international banking house of Brown Brothers in 1909-1912. I brought light to the Dominican Republic for American sugar interests in 1916. I helped make Honduras "right" for American fruit companies in 1903. In China in 1927 I helped see to it that Standard Oil went its way unmolested.

During those years I had, as the boys in the back room would say, a swell racket. I was rewarded with honors, medals, promotions. Looking back on it, I feel I might have given Al Capone a few hints. The best he could do was to operate his racket in three city districts. We Marines operated on three continents.<sup>56</sup>

\* \* \*

Seeing how Midwest and southern California gangs were impacted by the influx of the "Peruvian Flake"—notably, their migration to other states and countries, Skolnick sought to answer the puzzling question of why Bay Area gangs have not migrated beyond northern California. He postulated: "...gangs which were initially culturally organized could draw upon more resources to support migration to sell an illegal product than entrepreneurial gangs organized for specific purpose of selling drugs."<sup>57</sup> While I have previously noted the fact that wherever the Crips and Bloods setup shop in the South they seemed to have family, again, I'm in disagreement with Skolnick on this point. Here, his theory reflects he either ignored or truly lacks understanding as to the nature of drug addiction. For, it's known all too well to the trap-stars that the dope, no matter who's pushing it, sells itself. Moreover, Skolnick's theory does not measure up in face of the fact that Midwest gangs have migrated nationally. By his definition they are entrepreneurial gangs "organized for the specific purpose of selling drugs."



In my opinion, the reason why Bay Area gangs have not migrated beyond northern California is because the drug markets are relatively stable compared to their LA and Midwest counterparts. Thus, the degree of competition and violence has not been as intense. Notably, the epidemic violence seen in LA during the 1980s attracted the national media, which served to promote the LA gang element. Conversely, the drug market in the Bay Area had been well structured up until the late '80s. The Big Four drug war had settled the issue of who got what drug turf and since things have pretty much remained the same. Thereby, the drug dealers in the Bay Area were complacent and did not have to move around to make *Dope-Boy Magic* because they were sitting on “million-dollar blocks.”

Skolnick, however, did correctly observe that competition and police pressure in LA motivated the migration of its gangs. The drug market was so saturated by the Contras that the price of a kilo of cocaine declined dramatically from \$60,000 to \$12,000 by 1988. Then too, those LA cats were stepping on the dope so tuff that the “cut” effected the price of a kilo. With prices like that, everybody and their momma “got-on” with a dope-sack. Competition, thus, made the LA market like a barnyard auction where the sale went to the biggest rock for the cheapest price. In a competitive market like that it was inevitable the dealers would seek-out uncharted waters.

In addition, the LA gang culture was not complex. It did not require of its members any particular skill-set. As long as they had “heart”—and this was not always the case—and was willing to “put-in-work,” anybody could get-on. This was an attitude that crews across the nation could easily adopt the cultural framework of because social cohesion is a universally applied concept that assures protection from an outside threat—another gang threatening war.

### ***TRIBAL METANOIA***<sup>58</sup>

*The gun is your source of power on the street when it  
should be your brain and brotherhood...*

—***Muhammad Bashir***

Today's gangs are yesterday's political organizations that have come to be our grass-root movements. They are our power-base; the iconoclasts of the era who have been manipulated into a community-destructive force. This is why Malcolm had to die; why George Jackson had to die; why Huey P. Newton had to die. For they understood that if we united as not only intellectuals, but also a militant faction, we would be dangerous. The fear of us aggrandizing our “Nation” strikes at the heart of the powers that be because we will be in a position to challenge them. Malcolm proved this; Jackson proved this; Newton proved this. And because of this they were murdered. So too what they stood for—the progressive and collective Black community.

The death of Malcolm's message, Jackson's message, Newton's message was brought about by manipulating labels: Black supremacist, communist, criminals. It was manipulated by greed, ego, drugs, and high-powered assault weapons—all of which involved the manipulating of the four fundamentals of social interaction. Needless to say, this manipulation caused us to go from Black Panthers to Pirus; from “Forever Almighty” to “six poppin', five droppin'”; from country boys to trap-stars,

who in a grave attempt to escape poverty's discordance were manipulated to self-destruct.

As if cowboys and Indians, we've shot 'em up and bang banged for ego and turf as the world around us moves forward gaining the very prosperity sought in and created by our destruction. Seldom do we recognize this design and how it benefits the capitalist hunter. It is the reason why "dope" equates jobs and opportunity for ghetto youth and the ghetto youth in prison equate jobs and opportunity for law enforcement. It is the reason why our mothers fall to their knees daily in a pool of tears and blood.

But enough talk preaching the destruction and the power of the collective. This won't dry mothers' eyes unless something new is brought to the table that captivates the collective conscious of those who embrace this *Tribalism*.

As I continue to rot in the belly of the beast (i.e., prison) I constantly look to my surroundings for some solution to this tribal madness. Often, I ponder with others the question: Is there a solution to this madness or only partial solutions to a number of specific problems that create it? Ironically, I find many gang members who are just as tried of it as everyone else. They recognize the destruction and analyze the disadvantage it causes to their communities. Some have suggested solutions that entail a *Tribal Metanoia*. This seems only logical given the fact that the destruction that comes of our *Tribalism* will not disappear or change for the better unless fundamental changes are made to our train of thought.

Too often the subject of "sound" leadership or the lack of leadership altogether becomes the primary focus of our conversations. We take in consideration the fact that most gang members grew-up fatherless or lacking a strong male figure. Thus, the gang becomes the surrogate. We discuss the fact that gangs do not create Kings, rather statistics. This tends to give way to the question: If a gang or its leadership is ignorant, then what's to come of its following? How can you groom the King when leadership is "tooting its horn"?

This is what we are faced with. The majority of today's gangs consist of a leadership that is the poorest of the kind. It is the sort of leadership that is incapable of incorporating and constructing the human and social capital of the collective. It is the kind of leadership that constantly leads the collective to prison or the grave. It is composed of junkies of the sort with feeble minds captivated by vices and ego. Vanity is the source of its destruction—the best leaders lead without recognition. All the while it is living off its appeal, the flock gropes in the dark while being exploited. It betrays the collective for a bag of blow. It poisons the well with its very example. It is the stone tied around the flock's neck. They drown in poverty because of it. As a mere opportunist, this is where this sort of leadership prefers the flock to be. Envy and insecurity hold it hostage. It lacks a directive and consequently because it is without program, failure resonates within the tribe becoming a norm. Thus the tribe wonders about groping at the most senseless of acts to promote its esteem. Nothing ever comes of this sort of leadership but destruction, disunity and betrayal. It is worthless even in the eyes of its following. Yet they follow because they know of no other example.

As a street-level politician this sort of leadership knows and respects only what the ghetto has allowed it to entertain. It takes residence in the ignorance promoted by the environment. It bypasses the public library, college or the book a wise convict

attempts to pass on the tier. Forsaken then are the lessons of sound leadership. Its own stupidity has disabled proficiency in personnel management, commerce and structure. This is the shot-caller the ghetto produces. Due to a lack of exposure to sound leadership, this is who ghetto youth validate as grand.

Leaders make Kings and Queens, not statistics. They are about taking the organization somewhere other than prison or the grave. This is the utmost of a leader's responsibilities. Nothing less can be expected of him. None of the shaking and faking to be something he's not. If he cannot fulfill his obligations then he must be rejected, dismissed and replaced. To do otherwise only assures failure. Just as a CEO of any major corporation would be fired for not cutting the mustard, so too a gang leader who is incapable of delivering on the fulfillment of each member's aspirations.

Thus, the first object of a leader is always success. Success in the mind of the collective assures his authority to give directives and see them carried-out. Here is where his control lies. To control the image of success or to possess the means to succeed or fulfill one's desires bestows him with a god-like authority. At times this is nothing more than possessing the economic means that sustain life. Unquestionably, this is what motivates people.

Moreover, with success there's vision. Leaders must bring vision to an organization, because organizations are goal-orientated networks with an end in mind. They are more than simple machines for drug distribution and gang violence. And while vision is great, if a leader does not have strategies, people lose focus. They get frustrated. A leader, thereby, has to define reality and give hope—vision, strategy, people, and execution. This, of course, demands of a leader to thoroughly assess the organizations strategic challenges and key success factors that will determine whether it will thrive.

As the foregoing suggests, much intelligence, knowledge and art is required of a leader. He is proficient in personnel management. Most organizations have strenuous recruiting practices. Can't just anyone get-on. Think about it. Microsoft just doesn't hire anybody that walks through the door. A potential employee has to have a minimum, preferably high, degree of qualifications and experience. Otherwise the business gets nowhere. In the same respect so too a criminal organization. They recruit the most skilled of the criminal element that is capable of managing the responsibilities and resources they are entrusted with.

An organization is a complex structure of specialized roles. Each role has a specific function—governor, regent, and coordinator. They are compartmentalized and perform only a part of a broad range of specific tasks. An organization's effectiveness reflects their degree of human and social capital and leadership's ability to organize it. A leader must, therefore, assess each member's ability to fulfill their designated role. This obviously requires of leadership to be familiar with what these roles entail and to make clear their expectations, demands and limits.

The ultimate end for a leader is to inspire the collective and its ranking officials to work together. Critical to an organization's cohesion is an environment where both the foot-soulja and ranking officials can thrive. Here, the different roles that makeup the organization are vital. They go a long way when it comes to establishing group morale because people tend to rise to the occasion when and where duty calls and allows them to exercise their talents. In the organizational setting this often

encourages them to better position themselves on the chain of command. Consequently, this makes for a more efficient organization due to the fact that the different roles and the rewards connected to them make for a competitive environment. People tend to perform at their best when challenged. This is especially so when rank (i.e., status) caters to their self-image.

Part of making for an environment where group morale and cohesiveness are at their highest is understanding the fluctuations of the mind. People are fickle. The flock must therefore be courted unceasingly. Leadership must ever strive to keep a hold of their conscious. It must lay a close hold on each member of the organization by staying in tune with their interests as well as their grievances. At times, many times, it may be convenient to use their own passions to keep them in check. Thus, feelings and opinions must be attended to assure group morale and cohesion. Moreover, this is vital to legitimizing a leader's authority. People tend to grow dependent upon those who are sympathetic to their emotional needs. They increasingly look to those who can take action on their needs and can alleviate their problems.

Group morale assures unity. Yet there can be neither where there is no body of ruling ideas adopted by all. The lack of a set of uniform principles (i.e., by-laws, rules of conduct, etc.) ensures a group's disunity due to the conflicts that naturally arise from social interaction. "People are able to act together in an organized manner over an indefinitely long period of time because they have internalized a large number of meanings and values, commonly understood and adhered to. *Social Disorganization*—in the form of one or more of the familiar social problems [that arise from our *Tribalism*—occurs when a significant proportion of meanings and values are no longer sufficiently internalized to guide the behavior ... of the [collective]."<sup>59</sup> Thus, the inner-life of the organization must be regulated by a constitution (or creed), by-laws and a rank-and-file structure, which becomes purposeful in informing of the expected conduct of its membership and their objective. This is a function of the organization's educational arm, which nurtures and develops human and social capital. To achieve an extensive social and psychological collective, leadership must indoctrinate and institutionalize controls that cater to the organizational structure and its objective. This usually entails rituals, symbolism, social pressure,<sup>60</sup> and tradition.<sup>61</sup>

\* \* \*

At this point we have learned of the various elements that have shaped today's street gang culture. We have learned why it is that the average gang lacks structure and leadership enough to organize, to direct, to create vision and purpose aside of drug distribution and turf wars. We have learned of how it was that their value system was manipulated. We have learned why it is that these kids get "active" in gangs; are stunted by boy psychology; strive for identity and status to feed their egos; and reject conventional ways of social life. Drugs are jobs. Violence regulates the block. This all provides for them a sense of power; a break from the vicious cycle of poverty. They are not conscious of the social and economic manipulation driving them in this direction; in the direction that pits them against each other; to compete against each other; to kill each other as they struggle to scratch-out a living, a sense of identity and purpose.

All is not lost however. They do crave structure and leadership. They even recognize the need for a more meaningful objective. They long for the return of Malcolm, Jackson, Newton, etc. They simply do not know what it takes; what sacrifices have to be made; and what message they need to turn-off and more importantly what message they need to turn-on—without true leadership at their command there can be no organization, no direction, no vision or objective.

## CHAPTER 4

### “CULTURE OF A MURDERER” [THE INSTITUTIONALIZATION OF SOCIETY IV]

*As I come from the rez with blurry eyes,  
Fuck the F.B.I., a.k.a. Indian genocide.  
Giving us thousands of blankets by the box,  
what we didn't know they were infested with smallpox.  
Just because our skin is red,  
That's not to talk about the poisoned rations that they fed,  
or the uranium in our water.  
Never getting the chance to have a son or daughter,  
because your baby is born diagnosed with cancer,  
illegal seactions, tying your tubes is the answer.  
A government plot to bury us in the dirt,  
but why? We are the only ones who give thanx to Mother Earth.  
Do you understand what I'm saying?  
They murdered three-quarters of our entire population,  
what makes you think that they're playing?  
Anna Maye Aquash over exposure was the reason she was presumed dead,  
but you didn't know the F.B.I. planted a bullet in her head.  
And does the name Leonard Petier ring a bell?  
The brother in Leavenworth sitting in a one man cell.  
You can lock us up and throw away the key,  
but you're blind to see our spirit will always be free.  
By any means necessary is what we have to do,  
F.B.I. beware I'm on the war path and I'm coming for you...  
You'll Never Win!*

*Dog Soldiers arise their sticks in the ground,  
I see a Spotted Eagle flying all around.  
You came to our land without invitation,  
now your scalps are on my coup stick without hesitation.  
You started this game but its not the same.  
You wanted our land for fortune and fame.  
A modern day cavalry like Custer's before you,  
Killing our women and children you'll soon die too.  
Trying everything under the sun,  
from biological warfare to the most sophisticated guns.  
All because of your White man's greed you didn't take heed,  
Now you'll be wiped out, even your seed.  
You're staked to the ground on an ant hill,  
Memories flashing before your eyes of your last will.  
But its to late, this is your fate,  
You're dying a victim of your own hate.  
500 years of your generations in sin,  
you should know by now that YOU'LL NEVER WIN.  
By any means necessary is what we have to do,  
F.B.I. beware the tribes are on the war path  
And they're coming for you....  
You'll Never Win!*

*Geronimo, Red Cloud, Dull Knife too,  
gave up their lives just for you.  
So what you gonna do?  
A shield on your arm, a lance in your hand,*

*Stick in the ground, be a dog soldier Man.  
Defend Mother Earth and the heart of our People,  
for the power of Wakan Tanka there is no equal.  
Now the voices of a thousand warriors from the past,  
call on all our men to do a war dance.  
Your feet are in rhythm and your fist is in the air,  
your breast-plate is on, war paint you will wear.  
In the heart of the battle bullets won't hurt,  
cause all of our warriors will be wearing their Ghos and shirts.  
Black Elk and Sweet Medicine spoke of this battle before,  
Of how we would win and a whole lot more.  
Wovokas dreams and prophecies do come true,  
And this one was made from the Creator to you.  
I'll say it again and again,  
We'll never give up and YOU'LL NEVER WILL.  
By any means necessary is what we have to do,  
F.B.I. beware the Nations are on the war path  
And they're coming for you....*

***YOU'LL EVER WIN,***  
—*Four Bears,*  
*Yakama Nation*

Growing up fatherless, I often gave thought to an opportunity to address my father's murderer with: "Was it necessary?" Unfortunately, this question I'm sure there are those who would ask of me the same. For I too have created the sort of pain my family and I have had to endure since his murder. My actions I preclude, however, from the sort that was motivated to kill my father. I've taken life only to keep from being devoured by the vultures that hover the deathstyle I've entertained in the streets. Nonetheless, I cannot exclude my contribution to *Domestic Genocide*.

Once, I heard an actor say, "Kill a few men and you're a murderer. Kill a few hundred-thousand, and you're a conqueror." I guess it is by this definition society has come to consider me a murderer; while the likes of G.W. Bush the conqueror. Yet I can only question: Does not my violence have the agenda of the conqueror? Is not violence a simple means to empower or control a certain situation? Given the certainty of these assertions, then like the conqueror I've sought only to manage the threats my circumstance has set before me. For America's afflicted communities have long since bare witness to a staggering magnitude of violence that is spreading beyond our communities onto the most unusual settings.

For instance, across the nation Sunday schools and college campuses have now included in their course curriculum "HOW TO SURVIVE A GUN ATTACK." These violence prevention workshops unquestionably are the telltale signs of the time and what's to come. Whereas, a niche for violence has become increasingly infectious where despair manifests. No citizen is immune. And, ironically, the only prospect of hope stems from the mind of a killer.

We already know the script set by the medical community. They have informed us that there's no set profile—murderers come from many different racial and cultural backgrounds. What has been common amongst them? *Culture of a Murderer* seeks to explore and reveal the seldom spoken truth of the violent world that created them.

\* \* \*

Somewhere I recall having read that what we call civilization is a veneer and a very fragile one on the brink of collapse. This seemingly is an undeniable truth considering how frequent it is we flip on the evening news to hear reports of yet another Columbine, Fort Hood, Virginia Tech or some other mass killing. Even more chilling and convulsive to digest, *USA Today* reports “the public has grown ‘numb to [the] mounting body count.’”<sup>1</sup> Arguably, this is a given considering the fact that “[s]ince 1976, an average of 18 mass fatal shootings occurred yearly” on American soil.<sup>2</sup>

The Virginia Tech massacre in 2007, which questionably has been recorded as the deadliest mass shooting in U.S. history, has been the most cited. A total of 32 people were killed by lone gunman Seung Hoi Cho. In the aftermath of this catastrophe Cho would take his own life in what has become a growing trend of murder-suicide to escape emotional distress, anonymity and the outcome of a murder trial. The phenomenon is one everybody, including myself, has weighed in on. Notably, columnist Stanley Crouch chimes in with a dreadful take on *the mind of a killer*:

...He is the man lost or hidden by the crowd, but he will not put up with it any longer. He has decided that happiness is more important in its pain than the lives of anonymous others.

But, most of all, killing as many as possible will draw him the attention he never got, and people will, perhaps, come to “understand” the depth of his anger or how much his failure meant as it transformed itself into the acid of absolute hostility within his mortal coil.<sup>3</sup>

On that, what the medical community has termed as a “narcissistic disorder” has repeatedly been played out in the media as yet another confirmation telescoping into view a psychological precursor which drew Cho and others in for the kill. Here, Crouch sarcastically questions: “Do we actually need to know or learn much more about the mind of a killer or what happened in his early life?”<sup>4</sup> While he believes that we do not, I believe we do. Because, it is not as if the medical community has failed by any measure to provide us understanding as to what goes on in the mind of a killer, rather they have failed to provide us the necessary insight to comprehend the manner by which political manipulations and the contradictions that come of them operate to label one the “murderer” while the other the “conqueror.”

Moreover, there it’s a seldom spoken truth that needs to be acknowledged here considering the fact that psychologists are quick to write off the causes of violent behavior to some troubling childhood experience ( e.g., Cho’s being bullied as a child) as the primal cause for such destructive behavior. Here, they largely ignore or seldom attribute man’s mercurial nature to the fact that violence has long since been a conditional, if not arguably innate (n.b., “fight or flight”), characteristic of his social development. Therefore, its practical uses (i.e., its socio-political uses) are equally, if not exceedingly, cause for violent behaviors.

To this end, we must question as Dr. Alvin Poussaint urged us in writing some forty years ago: “What has society done to our minds?” He goes on to add:

It is an ugly fact that the American experience has taught us that... violence is a way to success and manhood. Crime data indicate that Americans



value guns and other destructive weapons. The whole frontier cowboy mentality sanctions and teaches violence. Television and movie folklore reinforce the popular conception that problems can be solved by violence. It is a rare occasion when the “good guys” do not triumph over the “bad guys” either by maiming or killing them.

Americans respect violence and often will not respond to the just demands of its citizens unless they are accompanied by violence. It was only after black riots and uprisings in the streets of our cities that whites were finally willing to listen to our grievances. Consequently, some of us have come to feel that the quickest [way] to solve any problem, personal or social, is through an impulsive act of violence.<sup>5</sup>

Unquestionably, violence is an ingrained feature of American life and the American psyche which cannot be easily eradicated. Thus, to detract from this fact by assigning the cause of violent behavior to some personal problem arising from psychosis is a euphemism that only allows for an escape goat. This is especially true for those who have been labeled murderers and thus befell a political pretext designed to conceal the imperfection of mankind’s mercurial nature. Because this is a social problem of greater proportion beyond the scope of the individual act, if, and were this fact ever to become unequivocally clear, it will shatter that veneer we call civilization and bring about its collapse. This is so because to acknowledge the foregoing as truth would invite chaos were those political and moral manipulations, which strive to distinguish the murderer from the conqueror, became transparent.

Considering the fact that society’s education and morality (i.e., its training) are political products (Chapter 5—*The Unorthodox Teacher*), they are lead away from exploring such a fact—arguably so for the sake of mankind. Therefore, they are lead to focus instead on the distractions, the trivial aspects of behavior and social background of those like Cho who, for example, as a child and teen was left to the vices of being coy and submissive when challenged by the more aggressive children. Here, the manner to which his background has been exploited by academics to explain his actions serves to illustrate just how society has been distracted from making the aforementioned discovery. Now society has been hoodwinked to accept bullying as a social cause that may affect one in ways which later in life produce violent behavior.

Here, I must digress to say I do not necessarily mean to detract from the theory that bullying or any other abuse may be damning in affect. Indeed, it is challenging and can potentially leave a child scarred for life. They have been teased, beaten, and pushed around at a primal stage of social development. While unquestionably devastating to a healthy self-image, especially for the shy, I can only doubt whether these intrusions are of the magnitude which cause the murdering of *32 innocent people*. My reservations here are not made in vain, because I too was a shy kid and subject to this sort of treatment. And I’m sure there are many others reading this that went through the same thing and did not grow up to be mass murderers.

Though I fought back, it seemed as if a never-ending battle getting rat-packed by my New Lima classmates. It is difficult, even as I write this at age 39, to grasp the fact that as early as fifth grade it was *on-and-crackin’*. Because I never ran or reported these incidents to authorities, I took one bruising after another. I felt desolate and only wanted to be accepted by my peers. Their rejection would indeed serve to prompt me

to question my self-worth. However, despite all this, I never thought of taking *the lives of innocent others*.

There was no psychosis, narcissism, or a paranoid view of the world either. Nor did I suffer the conscious belief I was a victim. I guess what psychologist would like for us to believe is, because Cho was bullied and obviously suffered some lack of celebrity considering he sent photographs and videotapes of himself to NBC before going on a shooting rampage—he met all the makers of a lunatic? If that be the case then what of Hitler, G.W. Bush or other American presidents and world leaders who have paraded themselves before cameras before *going-on-one*. Needless to say, all of them have been said to have suffered from these very same mental disorders. Better yet, where did Cho get the notion that violence was the cure-all to his problems if not from the violent world before him?

And to think that Cho and those of the like have been credited for Americans having grown *numb to the mounting body count*? Please! What then of the affect of the millions of Africans slain during America's infamous slave trade? Or the 1800 or so Black Americans lynched during the Jim Crow era. That's not mention the genocide of Native Americans or that to which America has sponsored the world over.

Yet and still, each time such tragedy occurs America scrambles about hopelessly to find impossible methods to prevent the next catastrophe from happening or looks to someone to blame. For instance, they faulted Virginia Tech for not locking the school down at first sign of trouble. But did that solution prevent the January 2012 double homicide at that campus? They even faulted the judge who recommended that Cho receive outpatient treatment rather than being involuntarily hospitalized. The implication being: Those citizens who suffer from the slightest sign of mental distress or illness should be locked away. Here, I cannot help but compare this reasoning with the hysteria that befell Europe during the Middle Ages. During this period an estimated eight million people were burned alive, hanged, or otherwise put to death for being a little off their rocker. Then there are the advocates for stricter gun laws who never fail to capitalize on these ordeals by faulting legislators' refusal to enact tougher gun laws. Did the law prevent those kids at Columbine from getting their hands on weapons? Better yet, do countries like Mexico, where gun possession is illegal, or the District of Columbia for that matter, prevent cartel and street gang gun violence by banning the sale of firearms?

All this, yet and still, the medical community remains adamant to admit the violent world we live in plays a far greater role in the shaping of violent behavior opposed to any prognosis of mental disorder. I can only wonder if this denial, this *so-called* doctoring of the mind, is all done in an effort to market and promote the sale of their services. When considering their conclusions are largely absent of the fact that the world we live in has always been and possibly always will be controlled by either threats of or actual violence, then it is not too far fetched to conclude that they are doing just that—selling their services! For the very fact that it is the violent and often abusive encounters and projections of the world that induce such mental disorder—unquestionably, speaks to the point in context.

Thus, I do not care how many reports or studies are made about what causes and prevents violence; what sort of conditions promote it; who is more likely to commit it—the fact of the matter is, we can analyze it, categorize it, medicate, punish, execute,

and attempt to restrain it with other measures, but at the end of the day, despite having done all this, if we continue to allow ourselves to be misled by these *so-called* professionals we will never get around to dealing with the reality *we have created* which sanctions violence as the socio-political resolve to all our problems. That said, the world will continue to see the child who is born only to become the next Cho, Adam Lanza, Eric Harris and Dylan Klebold.

*I face the world as it is and cannot stand idle in the face of threats to the American people... For make no mistake: Evil does exist in the world. A non-violent movement could not have halted Hitler's armies. Negotiations cannot convince al-Qaeda's leaders to lay down their arms....*

—President Obama  
Oslo 2009

## **WHERE IS THE PROACTIVE RESPONSE?**

Where is the “pro-active” response to young, white mass murderers? Are we going to detract from the issue of white youth mass murdering children by shifting the focus to gun laws and mental health programs? America seems to want to sweep under the rug the fact that people kill people and where gun possession is illegal (e.g., D.C. and Mexico), the ban on firearms will not prevent murder. We can look to the Middle East for further example. Suicide-bombers kill insensibly daily. Remember Timothy McVeigh? The real question here is: “WHAT IS AMERICA GOING TO DO WITH ITS TROUBLED WHITE YOUTH?” They are going-off like landmines! Their destructive force is unlike anything we have witnessed in Urban America; where the “pro-active” response to street gang and drug violence was two (2) full-scale wars—the *War on Crime* and the *War on Drugs*—aimed at hunting down and capturing menacingly evil, young Black and Latino males. America’s criminal justice system sought to contain and neutralize these predators with police bullets, lethal injection, and warehousing them by the millions in prisons across the nation. So why the hesitation to hunt down these white predators? Where is the “pro-active” response?

In recent years the nation has bare witness to a staggering epidemic of predominately young, white male mass murderers. Seemingly, they are a new type of predator, a new type of threat that epitomizes the Middle Eastern terrorist and suicide bomber. Yet the American media has been reluctant to call a spade a spade. Where is the “pro-active” response? If it were Black youth killing white children and other innocent peoples, the entire Black community would be vilified as a people. Right now our community would be subject to a *more* extreme form of Marshall Law. But since it is young, white males who are killing innocent white children and other white people, there is no talk in the media about how sadistic and savage many white people tend to be, and how they, themselves, must be *checked* to make America and the world safe. Where is the “pro-active” response?

These young, white males have repeatedly been responsible for the mass killings of innocent movie goers, church parishioners, mall shoppers, co-workers, family members, and, as of recent, the December 14, 2012, slaughter of twenty (20) innocent first-graders and six (6) teachers in Newtown, Connecticut. Where is the “pro-active” response?

While these young, white male mass murderers have been terrorizing the country, there has yet to be a national response by the nation's criminal justice system. Where are all those tough-on-crime big mouth politicians and right-winger radio and media mongers like Rush Limbaugh and Jean Cannedy? Why are they not screaming at the top of their lungs to contain this white threat to public safety? Where is the "pro-active" response?

The nation's criminal justice system has so effectively demonstrated its ability to hunt and capture urban predators—so why the hesitation to hunt down these white predators? Where is the "pro-active" response? Seems all we have been hearing for the past decade or so is sensational news stories and politicians giving lip service to empty promises to tighten up on public safety. Yet the criminal justice system remains silent—No preemptive measures to entrap the potential white threat; No racial profiling white boys; No "Stop & Frisk" directives in white neighborhoods; No draconian meth laws; No massive prison or psyche ward construction projects to contain the potential white threat; No around the clock media dramatizations of dangerous white predators armed to the teeth threatening to run-up in the next school; No paramilitary units moving in and out of white communities to hunt, capture and neutralize these dangerous white predators—period! Where is the "pro-active" response? These were the "pro-active" policing measures that have been taken to assure public safety against Black and Latino predators. So why have they not been implemented against white predators?

Right now the American people should be in utter disgust and outraged at their elected officials lack of response. These are the politicians and other proponents of the criminal justice system that Americans have so entrusted to protect them and their children against terrorism. Notably, for the past three or four decades these officials have created and capitalized on the *so-called* urban "threat," yet are now seemingly looking for a way to give these young, white mass murderers a pass. Note the different approach to managing urban violence opposed to that which has been suggested to manage the potential white threat.

At the forefront of the public debate for creating a policy to manage the violence of America's troubled white youth, what we are hearing from the media, law enforcement, and the medical community is not the suppressive authoritarian approach as noted previously to manage urban violence, rather the empathetical approach—that is, that these young, white mass murderers are "suffering," yeah suffering!, from mental illness; that they need mental health treatment; that they are psychopaths, crazy.

This approach obviously begs of the Black and Latino community to ask the important question: "Why wasn't this mental health approach at the forefront of suggestions to alleviate the violence in their communities? I'll tell you why! This whole treatment thing is smoke-screen. For behavioral scientists generally agree that there is no known cure for the psychopath. In fact, it is a widely held belief that the only successful treatment for the psychopath is incarceration, radical psycho-surgery, and death.<sup>6</sup> Here, it seems that the issue of race is undermining public safety.

Further, the psychopath has been described as "an individual who is constantly in conflict with other persons or groups. He is unable to experience guilt, is completely selfish and callous, and has a total disregard for the rights of others."<sup>7</sup> To this end, the late Dr. Bobby Wright suggested, "Europeans (Whites) are psychopaths

and their behavior reflects an underlying biologically transmitted proclivity with roots deep in their evolutionary history.”<sup>8</sup> The racist and segregationist history of white America attests to the factual basis of his claim. So how does all this tie into the recent epidemic of predominately white male mass murder?

Traditionally, white America has been accustomed to experiencing, benefiting from, and publicly displaying their supremacist ego-defensive complex without reproach in American society. However, in a supposedly *post-racial* America, this has been suppressed drastically and consequently many a white youth now struggle for identity and recognition—that is, who they are as a people, what purpose they serve, and what impact a post-racial society will have on their social and economic position in American society. These circumstances are unique to them. For they are possibly the first generation of white Americans who are not to benefit from white privilege. They actually have to fend for theirs for the first time on an equal playing field. This troubles them so. So much so, the Neo-Nazi gangs both in prison and on the bricks hold accountable white citizens—who embrace Dr. King’s message—for the social and economic loss of ground on the political plateau. In their distorted frame of mind, those white Americans who do not embrace their segregationist thinking and efforts to maintain white supremacy should be exterminated. As this suggests, the aggression that comes of suppressing their ego is now being directed at their own people.

This is only a glimpse into what has set these white mass murderers off. The question still remains: “Are they truly crazy or are they simply keeping with their history?” Remember Denise McNair, Carole Robertson, Cynthia Wesley, and Addie Mae Collins? They were the four precious little Black girls that the white world did not care enough about back in 1963 to *check* the young, white terrorists who bombed and killed them at the Sixteenth Street Baptist Church in Birmingham, Alabama. The men who committed this horrendous act were not considered “terrorist” or “crazy” neither then nor now by racist white America. Nor is it crazy today to slaughter 100,000 Iraqi women and children. And what about Trayvon Martin? His murder and that of innocent Iraqis is what Americans are being misled to believe is patriotic. But when the violence lands in their back yard—all of a sudden it’s “crazy,” “sadistic,” and “criminal” activity. As would have been the case if Trayvon killed Zimmerman.

What is crazy and sadistic is this “Culture of Violence” America ascribes to and attempts to manipulate with labels and circumstances which sanction the killing of human beings—be it imposing a death penalty for a crime or excusing the murderous behavior of the neighborhood watchman. But when a young Black or Latino male goes a foul the script and takes it upon himself to define what justifies his own personal agenda to kill—all of a sudden he’s “crazy,” “sadistic,” and a “criminal.”

It is this sort of reasoning and manipulating of labels that gives people like Adam Lanza the inclination to think it is acceptable to kill. For both he and the rest of the world have witnessed what little regard this nation has for children of other countries who are labeled collateral damage; for the children of this very nation who are being murdered by police and neighborhood watch bullets; for the children who are lost to abortion, etc.

That said, what is America going to do with its troubled white youth? If public safety is objective #1, then the “pro-active” response demonstrated to contain and neutralize urban violence seems only an appropriate response to contain and

neutralize white violence. After all, what's good for the goose is good for the gander. So wake up America, all that talk about how complicated and unpredictable the situation is to detect the potential white threat is smoke-screen. For the C.I.A. and F.B.I. have been conducting preemptive operations for decades to draw out suspected terrorist plots against American citizens. Where is the "pro-active" response?

—Ivan Kilgore  
December 2012

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It's been said by religious fanatics and humanitarians that "murder represents a fractured element of our social contract." To that I ask, "What contract?" Because everywhere I look I see violence. Nature is violent. It is brute. Moreover, as human beings there is no questioning the fact that we are comparatively, if not exceedingly, as violent as any creature of the wild. Despite our capacity to rationalize our thoughts and emotions, we are just as insensitive too when it comes to placing a value on life. The mere fact that we categorize it in such a manner (i.e., "the value of life") denotes there has been and possibly always will be some measure of expectation to be met in order to be deemed and treated as a member of the "human family."

The million dollar question then becomes who or what defines these expectations? Is it Jesus? Buddha? Muhammad? Or simply the whims of power? Personally, I'd be more inclined to go with the latter. Because of the former, all have historically proven to be social instruments used to maintain the interests of the powerful. Has not religion, like politics, prompted war the world over and for all eternity placed an authority over our lives and thus our behavior? Has not al-Queda proclaimed jihad to oust the imperialist clutches of the West from their lands? That said, it is easy to make an argument that religion is politics. Thus, the murder that comes of it—irrespective of the faith one chooses—serves to heighten the point in context that, as human beings, life becomes expendable where it fails to comport with that which has been made socially acceptable or politically correct. This has been accomplished throughout history to present times by mere exercise of power. Morality, then, can be posited as an outgrowth of political manipulations which manifest, for example, the previous mention of who will be labeled the murderer opposed to the conqueror.<sup>9</sup>

Often, I put in perspective the contradictions that come of this. For instance, circumstances as they are with me having suffered conviction for first-degree murder have compelled me to recognize the irony in being labeled a murderer opposed to say a prison guard who is a former war veteran or active soldier having returned from a tour of duty. For those who have seen actual combat, while at war they were faced with the possibility, if not the reality, of murdering people for ideals I call into question when gauging their level of understanding and culpability in the larceny and deceptive acquisitions of war. Some do and readily admit no shame or guilt in partaking in the plundering of other countries so as to maintain their (as well as America's wealthy) financial standing. Then there are those who have been put to sleep with the lullabies—America the just, America the great, free, and so on and so forth. The former having acknowledged and admitted to his larceny, you would think

would also recognize what can rightfully be characterized as his “murder for hire” by the U.S. government, which is an inhumane act. Yet, as with the latter, they have returned home proud and often, though not always, unaffected only to have the audacity to condemn those of us in prison that have killed like them with either larceny or conviction at heart.

Despite the reality that both the prisoner/murderer and the guard/soldier have deprived humankind of life, the latter has been relieved of any sense of wrongdoing because his actions were taken in an effort to maintain and further the political ambitions of the powerful elite. Thus he is awarded handsomely with medals and given a pension for his malice. If taken captive, however, he will be treated like a common criminal. And where he may stand charged with war crimes, he is usually slapped on the wrist.

Case in point, in 2005 Staff Sergeant Frank Wuterich led a Marine squad on a death raid that ended with the murder of 24 unarmed, innocent Iraqi women and children. Of the seven Marines charged with murder, they would all eventually be acquitted or had their charges dropped.<sup>10</sup> Here, we can rest assured that in the eyes of the jury they stood before political manipulations worked as if magic to deem them as members of the conqueror’s group under extreme pressures of war attempting to carry out their patriotic duty. This effectively cast upon them the guise of mere patriots fighting for freedom and democracy. Had this jury been composed of members of the afflicted community, the outcome would have unquestionably been different. Sgt. Wuterich, on the other hand, would be the only one to suffer conviction—a maximum of *three* months in prison for dereliction of duty for telling his charges to shoot first and ask questions later—for ordering the murder of *24 unarmed women and children*.<sup>11</sup>

Needless to say, it is exactly the opposite for those of us who bare the label of murderer or lunatic or what have you. We, inevitably, become the scapegoats of society’s manipulated conscience which has directed it to condemn us not because of the gravity to which our actions reflect in depriving one of life, but rather on account of our lack of power in the struggle to define what acts of violence will or will not be deemed beneficial for society. In other words, the actions of the murderer, despite them having mirrored the conqueror’s, are without merit simply on account of the fact his larceny and conviction does not fit into the scheme of preserving (in the strict sense) the interests of America’s ruling class. Therefore, our larceny and conviction (i.e., our objectives) must be criminalized and made to appear as self-serving and thus inconsiderate of the overall economic and social well-being of society at large; while that of the conqueror’s is deemed beneficial given the exploits and spoils that accompany successful warfare. Needless to say, the conqueror of Iraq is just as guilty of a crime as the man who stands convicted of murder. The soldier need only be captured at war to prove the point in context.

### ***BIRTH OF A TERRORIST YOKE***

The morning of April 19, 1995, shall ever remain a vivid memory to me. There I sat on a tweed brown and tan couch facing a picture-window view of the withering apple tree in my front lawn. I had just walked into the living room of our small two bedroom home having returned from the daycare to drop off my baby girl. After turning on the TV, I set fire to a blunt of stress when all of a sudden there was a news flash: THE

ALFRED P. MEMORIAL BUILDING IN DOWNTOWN OKC HAD JUST BEEN DESTROYED BY AN EXPLOSION OF SOME SORT. Immediately, my mind was consumed with the devastation projected on the screen. As I sat there taking it all in, I did not realize I was wasting the weed blowing on it as if a cigar. I was so mesmerized watching the news crew scatter about to report the mayhem not even the effects of the marijuana eased my focus on the ensuing chaos.

A total of 168 people would die and over three hundred would be injured that day in what would later be reported as the first of the largest and most disastrous acts of terrorism on American soil. This, however, we know was not actually the *first* large scale act of terrorism on American soil. Nevertheless, as the story developed the media would report what seemed to me to be a reckoning sense of fear amongst white Americans that the “chickens had come home to roost” again once the culprit was found to be a 27 year-old white supremacist and ex-military man—Timothy McVeigh. Years later after he and co-conspirator Terry Nichols were found guilty, I will never forget what McVeigh so callously uttered to the court prior to being sentenced to death: “168 to one, the odds are still in my favor.” Man!, the nerve of this guy I thought.

For years, thereafter, this comment would remain resinous to my thoughts as it prompted me to question: Is this how the terrorist calculates his destruction? What would motivate a man to be so adamant to think his attempt to become a martyr would have a lasting affect on the world? Why is it he so faithfully believes his suicide and destructive act would in some aspect change the world or benefit his cause? And of more importance, why is it that we as men seem to always resort to some act of violence—be it physical or mental—in our efforts to manipulate the circumstances in the world before us? Is this simply the way of the world as we have created it?

The answer to these questions would be years in the making for I was undisciplined in matters of violence when it came to understanding its use from a more rational standpoint. So much so, I recall during this time an incident which got me to thinking on a more mature and sensible level regarding the whole McVeigh ordeal and the damning affects of terrorism.

It was shortly after my 24<sup>th</sup> birthday and there I was in the final months of a 36 month prison stint. Sitting at a dayroom table playing dominoes, someone had struck up a conversation about the OKC bombing. As the comments about McVeigh being a racist rounded the table, I sought to change the tone of the conversation by voicing an anti-government opinion and further insensible comments that practically praised him for his efforts to strike a major blow to the U.S. government. No sooner had I made these comments a quiet, young brother out of OKC—Jon Jon—immediately got up and walked away from the table apparently disturbed. His cellie, Scooby, who sitting next to me leaned over and in a calm but serious tone said, “Jon Jon’s moms was killed in that bombing.” Instantly, I was overwhelmed with grief. I was all too familiar with his pain having lost a parent myself. Not to mention, Jon Jon was a kind spirit amongst *the brothers* that we all considered a friend. I definitely regretted what I had said and would make it a point to apologize to him thereafter.

Looking back on that day, it now seems as if everyone gathered at the table accept me was aware of Jon Jon’s tragedy and had been sympathizers given their comments and support to his cause to reap havoc on all the Klansmen on the yard. Trust, he and the Crip gang he ran with, especially Scooby, were giving them the



blues. It was gangbanger 101. However, it was the white boys that were getting banged on for a change and not a rival gang.

One incident I will never forget started as a typical day of prison life. A Klansman had attempted to shank Scooby in the housing unit. Things had grown tense by noon and it was looking as if the yard was about to explode into a full-blown race riot when Lieutenant Bryant intervened. He announced to the population that he was not about to have this happen on *his* yard. So he suggested for the Blacks to pick a representative and the whites the same. Next thing you know there's Scooby, slim like the Geico lizard at about 6'1" and 170 lbs, paired with a corn fed white boy, who had him by every last bit of a hundred pounds and several inches; a thousand prisoner audience, including myself, shouting and cheering them on: "Kick his ass!" "Scooby don't let that honky grab you!" "You better whip that skinny nigger hoss!" I just knew Scooby was going to come out on the short end of this one seeing how he was up against a "yard ape." The white boy was a mammoth standing over him. Yet when it was all said and done with it was the white boy who was drug off the yard by his comrades, who in verbally chastising him let it be known he was "a fucking disgrace to the white race." Scooby had beat the dog shit out of that white boy and did it with the grace of a professional boxer as he bobbed and weaved around his target striking one devastating blow after another until the white boy was face down in the dirt and knotted up like a bashed pumpkin.

In time, my acquaintance with Jon Jon would usher in a newfound perspective which displaced the former detachment and callous disregard I held for the people who were killed in the OKC bombing. Prior to this experience, they were simply images on a TV screen that were depersonalized as if a violent theatrical work. But this was no movie. These were *real* people I had come to know now through stories and acquaintances I had grown fond of. For the first time I actually put in perspective the fact that innocent children, women and men—that is, people from the 'hood and those in prison—not only were killed, but were affected by the loss of a love one on that horrible day. Moreover, McVeigh's actions had done little, if anything, to curb the corrupt activities of an oppressive government and more to harm struggling families. Jon Jon and his mother, who was a single parent, were real life examples of this. Not only did this tragedy affect the families in such a way, it also strapped the survivors with an ailing pain that closure has yet to find. Jon Jon was someone the pain of this tragedy had emotionally damaged and ultimately imprisoned with a festering hatred for white people.

Thereafter, I found myself questioning how it was I had grown so callous as to think the murdering of 168 innocent people was praiseworthy. The search for an answer to this question and others certainly had me discombobulated. Clarity, however, would come in time as this confusion compelled me to study with great detail not only the impulsiveness of my own violent behavior, but that as well of other men and governments that have manipulated the devices of violent force. This eventually worked to readjust the lenses to which I perceived terrorism and the use of violence as commendable. Moreover, in studying the men of the time and those noted throughout history who were considered great leaders, or not so great yet noteworthy, it was inevitable I was to find what has thus been a beacon to what could only be understood from a position telling of the quest for and maintenance of power and wealth.

In this particular vein (i.e., terrorism) history has taught that mankind has often resorted to some measure of violence as a means of intimidation to facilitate social control. The mere definition of the term terrorism, in itself, explicitly states inasmuch where it reads: "The premeditated use, or threatened use, of violence against civilians by an individual or group to gain a political or social objective."<sup>12</sup> That said, terrorism has long since been instrumental in the maintenance and achievement of power over society. Arguably, this is a given considering its contemporary uses to promote ideologies, secure religious freedoms, obtain release of political prisoners, incite rebellion against governments, and other social and political movements which arise from conflict.

Of the various tactics used by the terrorist to achieve his objective, we have observed: assassinations, skyjackings, suicide bombings, armed attacks, kidnappings and hostage taking, threats, and various forms of bombings. It goes without saying, through such activities the terrorist struggles to induce fear within the targeted population so as to create pressure to change policies or undermine the authority of a government he considers objectionable.<sup>13</sup>

The latter of these affects seemingly go unconsidered in the widespread use of terrorism to demoralize a nation or people's spirit. In this respect, history is replete with examples. To cite a more recent example, consider the whole affect of the 9/11 ordeals and al-Qaeda's ability to exploit and instill an incarcerating fear within Americans and people the world over. Here, I must digress to say my heart instantly bled for the countless innocent children, women and men who perished not only on American soil, but those as well who were killed (some estimated 151,000 in Iraq;<sup>14</sup> not to mention those in Afghanistan and Pakistan) overseas in the name of "freedom and democracy." At this point, I wonder if my readers have come to realize these pretty painted ideals come at the expense of innocent blood?

Since 9/11 Americans have constantly been thrown into the irons of their own fears. The probability of another such attack is so deeply embedded in their minds that the fear that comes of it is unquestionably prolific to al-Qaeda's cause.<sup>15</sup> For this fear has been so persuasive in restricting their way of life they are now willing to forgo their most cherished of due process assurances just to obtain a measure of security that in all reality is unattainable and grave to the cost of their liberty. To this end, Mick Farren and Jon Gibb explain:

Although our privacy was being progressively eroded long before 9/11, that was when the whole process went into alarming overdrive. When a country is subject to attack by an enemy, an atmosphere of "anything goes" prevails, and the public easily tolerates what, at other times, might be universally condemned. Politicians, law enforcement, and intelligence agencies naturally view this situation as an opportunity to extend their power. The public tends to forget that when they are in the mood to "relinquish some of our freedoms to preserve our safety,"... the difficulty is always in retrieving those freedoms when the treat is never nullified or vanquished, and peace supposedly returns. Most of the time, however, those freedoms never come back....<sup>16</sup>

Farren and Gibb go on to question whether the Bush administration has pushed things too far, now that its War on Terror legislation (The Patriot Act) threatens the very fundamentals of trial by jury, habeas corpus, and presumption of innocence until proven guilty.<sup>17</sup> Here, I cannot resist quoting the adage: “Democracy without freedom is tyranny.” Thus, if the erosion of civil liberties, including wire-tapping, torture and suspending the “Great Writ” is necessary to prevent the spread of terrorism on American shores, then America’s democracy is mischaracterized and thus must fall under the category of those governments it hypocritically condemns and history has shown gradually grew to be despotic in nature. This is especially so where the threat of (or actual) violence has become instrumental in creating fears and prejudices so as to exercise and mask America’s own tyranny and theft. Therefore, “if, because of terrorism laws don’t matter anymore, then [America is] no better than the terrorist.”<sup>18</sup> I needn’t even get into the whole lack of due process that is forsaken to those convicted within American shores of terrorism—this includes your everyday street gang member.

These are several of the lesser of manipulations I have observed during the course of my studies. Of greater interest is the manner to which men and governments manipulate feelings of fear and requital to their advantage. What Osama bin Laden accomplished with fear alone did more to damage America’s sense of security (and ego) than the actual 9/11 catastrophes. This, in part, was due to the fact that he was able to cultivate the fear that came of the disaster into an effective weapon of psychological warfare by continually taunting America in the aftermath. This, unquestionably, served as a precursor to social repression and thus led to a more despotic American government. Here, I must revert to an earlier postulation made in chapter two which questioned bin Laden’s ability to predict said outcome.

When we consider the fact that bin Laden not only studied at some of the world’s most distinguished universities, but also had a very thorough apprenticeship in the application and mannerisms of guerrilla warfare, it becomes undoubtedly clear this man had calculated every move (including his murder by) the American government would make in response to the 9/11 attacks—beginning with national security at the expense of freedom and democracy. In other words, America played right into his hands by curtailing the aforementioned freedoms and due process assurances. He had effectively waged jihad and to this day, even in post-mortem, achieved his objective of restricting the ways of the West.<sup>19</sup>

On a different note, yet along the same vein, peep how fear and feelings of requital were procured by American leaders to manipulate the whole 9/11 ordeal to gain public support to further impose American imperialism on Islamic nations the world over. Just three days after the attacks, the battle cry was sounded as then President Bush stood atop the rubble at Ground Zero to declare to a watchful world: “...the people who knocked down these buildings will hear [from] all of us soon.” By October 7, 2001, U.S. and British forces had geared up to invade Afghanistan in what would become known as “Operation Enduring Freedom,” which became a full-scale war effort “to destroy al-Qaeda’s terror network and its protectors, the Taliban, so Afghanistan could never again be a base for attacks against America.”<sup>20</sup> Like that!, over the course of 26 days after Islamist terrorists struck New York and the Pentagon the focal point of “World Stability” instantly was to be determined by the outcome of

America and its allies's ability to export freedom and democracy to its Islamic neighbors.

In the initial stage of this madness next to nothing was said about the fact that these *so-called* terrorists were the monsters of America's own making. Nor was there any pause to reflect on how it was America's agenda went from fighting a "War on Terrorism" to securing Iraq's oil reserves for American Big Business. Blinded by rage and paralyzed by fear, America and the people the world over would ride the hype as Bush mounted his father's pony to lasso the world's most notorious dictators; beginning with Saddam Hussein once the capture of Osama bin Laden proved difficult. This would allow for Bush to pacify the American public's thirst for blood while he and other U.S. government and military officials targeted and obliterated the ranks of al-Qaeda; which was no counterfeit government or nickel-and-dime street gang, rather an enfranchised terrorist organization. An organization that I might add is a formidable force enshrined by the hearts and minds of the radical Islamic world order. Nonetheless, the battle cry had been sounded as the rhetorical pursuit of freedom and democracy would lead the way as a pretext to mask tyranny and old political ambitions carried over from the first Bush presidency.

Having revved up its propaganda machine, the American media would be the first of U. S. forces deployed to paint a picture dehumanizing and criminalizing Saddam's at times violent regime. Thus making his ousting and later his murder palatable to the watchful eyes of the world. No one cared to mention or report, wrong or right, that those who had perished under his regime were casualties of civil uprisings that had to be suppressed in order to protect the prevailing political ideals and interests of the Iraqi government. Here, I beg of my reader to take a moment to reflect on that—TO PROTECT IRAQ'S POLITICAL IDEALS AND INTERESTS! This unavoidably places in perspective the fact that America's dictators have done exactly the same in the name of freedom and democracy. We do not have to look far for proof of this considering the uprisings of the 1960s were not that long ago. Thereby, there is little to distinguish America from other nations considered to be dictatorships. This is especially so given the fact that America's standing as one of the world's superpowers was not established by the humane ideals it sticks to its citizens to abide by, but rather violence, guile, theft, and the lot of other procedures traditional in its political history that are characteristic to a dictatorship.

That said, what has encouraged power in the yesteryears remains viable to do so today. Though, the foremen of these instruments of violence have become more tactful and clandestine in their works because the world has grown more critical and demanding of human rights for people the world over. This does not mean, however, the would-be perpetrators of tyranny will disappear or become less in number; rather they will have taken on different faces under the guise of justice as that which masked Saddam's murder by conscientiously manipulating society at large to disregard him as a leader doing simply what politics required. In the words of the great Montesquieu: "*There is no crueller tyranny than that which is perpetrated under the shield of the law and in the name of justice.*"

Not long ago a fellow prisoner and I were discussing the imaginary line that exists between what is considered politically correct opposed to what is not. During the course of this conversation it was mentioned that circumstances—either as they have naturally befallen or been manipulated—often swing society as if the pendulum in

political or moral perspective. To illustrate, the circumstances which placed a rope around Saddam's neck were mentioned. No sooner had this been said, a correctional officer butted in, "Justice was served!" This, I noted, would be a matter of opinion and that's to say the least considering it was an unfounded truth that lead to his demise—*scratch a lie, find a thief!*

"Well," the officer said, "we don't know if he had weapons of mass destruction or not!" But we sure put a rope around his neck and seized control of Iraq's oil reserves didn't we? Adamantly, the officer began mumbling something about Saddam having done plenty in his past to deserve what he got. Yet I could hear in his voice a tangible insecurity and noted the puzzling look on his face as he began to search his thoughts for further comment. What I had just said possibly impressed upon him the undeniable truth that the concept of justice he and America subscribed to in this case was a euphemism for murder and graft. No sooner had I thought I had him cornered he quipped some rhetoric about, "Justice is about getting what one deserves for infringing upon the rights and liberties of others!"

Seeing there was little he was willing to concede, if anything, in accepting justice as a façade masking political gain, I went for the kill: "If that is your definition of justice, then when will America get its just due of this *so-called* justice you speak of? After all, the irony of your comments are simply profound considering the fact that the citizens of this country (n.b., white America) have manipulated war around the world—killing innocent women and children then labels them collateral damage; It has stole, enslaved, and murdered by the millions on its very own soil; It has placed embargoes that knowingly starve children around the world; It has imported devastation in form of drugs, weapons and other social precursors that intentionally and knowingly cause dysfunction within communities of color—all of which solely to maintain capitalism. Need I say more?" To this he could not because I had just shattered his *so-called* ideal of justice.

Here, I must again digress to comment on the mental blockage individuals such as this *white* officer suffer which diminishes their ability to reflect with any true degree the moral correctness of America's war efforts. To aid my delivery here I borrow from the writings of Amos Wilson where he explains:

Societal amnesia, a society's [willful] repression of the memory of the traumatic experiences which created its structure and character, is markedly typical of the collective white American ego complex. The domination of Black Americans is made all the more effective and comforting to the collective White American ego if its historical and current dominative processes are kept from its own consciousness and the consciousness of the subordinate Black community. Historically embarrassing behavior, lowly and criminal origins, revelations of social iniquities and their current progeny, hidden from consciousness, permit the myth of the inherent moral, social, cultural, intellectual superiority of the white American complex to persist unchallenged, and enhances the efficiency of its exploitation of Africans at home and abroad.<sup>21</sup>

Seemingly, I have thrown my reader for a loop and went way out into left field. However, if we were to simply apply Wilson's theory to the greater scheme of

America exploiting the world over, and not just people of African descent, we would begin to better understand the officer's lack of consciousness and need to believe the war on terrorism is being fought in the name of justice, freedom and democracy. For the capitalist spirit of this nation has long distorted these ideals—if ever they were regarded as self-evident truths as proclaimed by America's *so-called* Founders—and ultimately shaped them into a way of living, behaving, thinking, and feeling characteristic of and conducive to America's well hidden tyranny. As such, these ideals are nothing but smoke-screen providing Americans a sense of self-righteousness and dignity to cover their wrongness.

Thus the fact that this war, as well as those of the past and to come, has been waged for political and economic gain, and that this fact has been lost in the cloudiness of America's conscious—is a consequence of selective consciousness and their political and moral views being contorted by elite manipulation, which goes to great lengths to conceal the fact that

...the roots of war are often antagonisms that emerge whenever... countries... struggle for control of resources or have different political, economic, or religious ideologies. In addition... war benefits the corporate, military, and political elites. Corporate elites benefit because war often results in the victor taking control of the raw materials for its own industries... Pentagon contracts often guarantee a profit to the developing corporations... In the late 1950s President Dwight D. Eisenhower referred to this close association between the military and the defense industry as the military-industrial complex.

The military elite benefit because war and the preparations for it provide prestige and employment for military officials. According to some estimates, private contractors...contributed more than 180,000 civilians to the occupation of Iraq, about 20,000 more than the U.S. military and government employees deployed in the country...

War benefits the political elite by giving governments officials more power. Porter (1994) observed that “throughout modern history, war has been the level by which...governments have imposed increasingly larger tax burdens on increasingly broader segments of society, thus enabling ever-higher levels of spending to be sustained even in peace-time.”<sup>22</sup>

Surely, this passage has assisted to somewhat remove the smoke-screen? For it provides transparency to the objectives of war and the true ambitions of American government leaders and businessmen who work collectively to manipulate the people to support their efforts to exploit foreign markets and economies.<sup>23</sup>

To remove all further doubt, note the fiction hidden in the rhetoric, “to rid the world of terrorism.” As noble and appealing as this may sound, this is bullshit at its finest. I say this because, “there can be no final victory in the fight against terrorism, for terrorism (rather than full-scale war) is the contemporary manifestation of conflict, and conflict will not disappear from earth as far as one can look ahead and human nature has not undergone a basic change.”<sup>24</sup> To make such a statement is not only rhetorical, but it also evidences the fact that America's leaders have been leading the people by the bit all along to keep the smoke and fire going.

By 2011 the deception of which had carried the nation's war efforts (to conquer the markets of the far East) well into the itinerary of Obama's presidency as he stood stone-face viewing a live feed of U.S. Special Forces storming Osama bin Laden's safe-house in Pakistan; ultimately bringing about his demise. Instantly, the world lit up with craze and relief as the media chased the details and narrated what is likely to go down in history as the President's greatest feat. As the story circled the globe, countless interviews were broadcasted of Americans over-indulgent with feelings of closure and satisfaction for a president who had assuaged their affliction.

The celebration did not end there, however. As with Saddam, on October 20, 2011, Libya would see its recently exiled dictator, Moammar Gadhafi, with a bullet in his head after nearly a half a century of controlling one of the world's richest oil reserves. Not one to take all the credit, President Obama, however, would make it known America's oil interests had puppeteered his fate. "In the name of freedom and democracy," was the rhetorical quip he used to conceal the forced acquisitions of foreign oil that Saddam, bin Laden, Gadhafi and those to come (notably Iran) were murdered for.

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The foregoing has attempted to illustrate, among other criticisms, the extent to which men have used violence as an instrument of social control in their often tyrannical pursuits of wealth and power. Particularly, U.S. government officials, dictators and terrorists have been cast in a light that allows little to distinguish except their respective titles. This has been done, needless to say, for purposes of highlighting the very fact that at the end of the day the particular ambitions and interests of powerful men, and at times not so powerful yet determined men, are the motivating factors that lead to large scale acts of destruction—be they in the name of justice or otherwise—so as to exploit fears and thus manipulate circumstances to their advantage. As contemporary history has shown this is an effective means by which social control is both maintained and achieved. Needless to say, the concept has rooted itself in the conscription of social and political character at every imaginable level of public life. Accepted as such, this allows for us to examine the motives and violent methods incorporated by men at any social or economic level in American society. This calls for me to illustrate the concept functions all the same for those of us trapped in America's ghettos.

Figuratively speaking, I want to feel and be like an American. You know, be a patriot, proudly sail my flag high on the hill, pledge allegiance, and all that. However, this is simply not the gist what being an American is really all about. What of the theft, the oppression, the injustice? This also is part of the deal. I'm positive those people overseas do not despise this nation for nothing. So, we need to really know what it means to be an *American*, and not some fool living in the cloudiness of idealism—is to be everything but what America proclaims to be.

Therefore, in the world of power plays and ghetto politics I am the lil' dog that snarls and stalks about with ambitions to bite like the big ones. Yet circumstances as they have been circumscribed to foster my ignorance, and thus my lack of resource, have forbid entry into their arena. So I've been forced to create one of my own where the concrete jungles of America's ghettos are my stomping grounds—that is, my Iraq, Afghanistan, and Libya. Here the mission statement reads all the same: reap havoc and be *King Manipulator* so as I can secure the power and wealth created by my

warfare. Thus there is no need to further rationalize, make excuses, or apologize for my violent behavior. It is what it is—the irony of my country: the American way plain and simple! For it has trained me well from K-12 to glorify and celebrate war. So much so, every history book I read implanted the *Blueprint* to dominate my world. And that's not to mention how at recess I played war games as a child with toy guns and other weapons; built forts in the countryside; and watched movies and played video and computer games that romanticized and awarded the kill. This was only a drill for what someday would become real given the fact that in my community guns and drugs were sprinkled about as if parade candies.

That said, I'm unlikely to accomplish anything in the way of true wealth and power because I've been conditioned to play my hand for crumbs in a world that has been made to appear to have its limits. Thus the instruments of violence I have come to study and exercise are deemed selfish, meaningless and senseless in the greater scheme of things controlled by the big dogs. Again, my contrived ignorance and lack of resource has played its role to limit the potential benefit I am to gain from exercising a means that, had not been for my deprived state, has bestowed men with great influence and resource.

Because of these shortcomings, I have grown desperate with feelings of ridicule and failure. My country mocks me in my inability to pull myself up by the boot strap and rise above this poverty. So now I stalk about my lil' Iraq in strife on an ego trip seeking empowerment and an identity to be revered. Here, the "block" and the crumbs it feeds me are my oil reserves nourishing both ego and material starvation. The *so-called* opportunities it provides are the linchpin to my world (in)stability. But that's "*TOP SECRET.*" Therefore, a National Defense Fund is required: (1) A rocket launcher in my pocket; (2) A shoebox defense fund; (3) The "set" as my Marine Corps—"WE TEACH THE SKILL TO GET KILLED"; and (4) A warmongering spirit to fuel my ambitions to topple world dictators Larry Hoover, Willie Lord, Tookie Williams, Joe Morgan, and the many other "Gods in who We Trust."

I am a patriot to my flag too! Its colors? Well, let's just say they are not red, white and blue, rather red, blue or black—if not simply the color of money. Moreover, the manner to which it is paraded about tells of my national character. I'll defend it to the death of me. So when the flag goes up and the drama ensues because the reserves are low, for example, if there is anything I've learned about being an *American*, it is to kill simply to secure the market; to maim solely to be respected; to destroy insensibly to forestall competition; and when all else fails, make everybody out to be suckers to rob until they are blind, broke, and taking a blast of my dope because success I have denied them do to my greed.

### ***KILLING FOR THE LOVE OF PRAISE***

THERE IS NO MAN MORE DANGEROUS than the one who has been groomed to pursue power and wealth yet has to achieve any. He will seek desperately to elevate his social standing by means of violence for little or no reason other than to appease the calling of his inner ego. His circumstance having been proscribed too little resource—both intellectually and materially—has seemingly left him without alternative. Thus violence has become to his soul what drugs are to a junkie's addiction. As with any drug, the chemical reaction elevates the endorphin levels and causes a great sense of pleasure. So too the power differential wielded by the



addiction of violence which causes one to lash out. This, in itself, becomes too great of a force for the impressionable to resist. It intoxicates the reason, causing one to at times indiscriminately impose it where challenged or threatened. Despite the reality of these perceived threats, violence in his mind empowers him by victimizing another. For violence is about power. To his afflicted soul it has bestowed the reins of a king's chariot. It has encouraged the once timid for the cost of a bullet and transformed the meager into the now distinguished with the pull of the trigger. Violence has nourished the ego by distorting and bolstering a barbaric mentality. He is a savage now provided with the means to steel himself against the elements.

Add to this the mechanical use of force witnessed daily in the arena of American politics, and the *hitter* (i.e., a cold-blooded killer) manifests. For his activities were taken from the history books illustrating American political figures who taught to accomplish self-fulfillment and defy the boundaries of a world that has no respect for him, he must lash out in a fury of violence so as to be successful and respected. Needless to say, his willingness to follow suit creates a perspective worldview that too often is mistaken for courage and authenticity. Thus he strives to assert himself and become an intimidating figure to the world before him out of a desperate need for recognition and success. The spellbinding nature of violence, he has learned, commands respect from all. The clout of which stems from his menacing ability to take life without hesitation. The world, thereby, becomes his hostage in cold blood.

Yet it remains to be told who the real captive is. For his own insecurities, emotional pains, and an ego unwittingly bind him to a complex that ultimately works to the disadvantage of his own well being. All of which compel him to lash out as he does in a feeble effort to mask feelings of inadequacy and loneliness with intimidation. Desperate, he is determined to be acknowledged in a world that otherwise does not see him. The anticipated pain of his violence, therefore, becomes the language of the unheard. Or in the words of Rollo May:

To inflict pain and torture at least proves that one can affect somebody... The mood of the anonymous person is, If I cannot affect or touch anybody, I can at least shock you into some feeling, force you into some passion through wounds of pain; I shall at least make sure we both feel something, and I shall force you to see me and know that I also am here! Many a child or adolescent has forced the group to take cognizance of him by destructive behavior; and though he is condemned, at least the community notices him. To be actively hated is almost as good as to be actively liked; it breaks down the utterly unbearable situation of anonymity and aloneness.<sup>25</sup>

When considering the psychosis that comes of these insecurities, emotional disturbances, etc., May directs us to the work of Anthony Storr who describes "it more from the point of view of individual psychopathology [holding] that the schizoid person is cold, aloof, superior, and detached. This may erupt in violent aggression. All of which, says Storr, is a complex mask for a repressed longing for love. The detachment of the schizoid is a defense against hostility and has its source in a distortion of love and trust in infancy which renders him forever fearing love 'because it threatens his very existence.'"<sup>26</sup> Given the callous nature of his rendering environment, his presumably violent behavior is indeed a reaction—a defense mechanism as Storr has provided—which interacts with the ego's response to each

ploy of violence enacted to build his sense of security. So much so, he becomes too sure of himself feeding on the distortion within the environment—the guns and drugs that are readily available to facilitate his destruction. Thus, *Domestic Genocide* becomes most probable due to the fact that his arrogance does not allow for him to recognize a vice foretelling of fatality. In other words, he has been misled by a man of steel complex promoting bullet proof beliefs and practices which ultimately get him *lead-checked*. This is so because his mind is consumed with illogical and reckless thought: “The moves I use I cannot lose.” And this could very well be so but for the truth that there is always another who will out think him or is more adept.

Yet this is a reality he cares little to take heed to. That is, until that fatal moment where his security has been breached and his world crumbles and collides with the sounds of his own screams. Otherwise, he neither respects nor considers the wisdom of these words and thereby thrusts into the future of his own destructive consequence. Here, awaits a beast in the shadow of his arrogance which has failed to caution him to a potentially real expiration date.

As for the violent extremes he is willing to demonstrate in order to fulfill the sense of recognition he needs to feel adequate? It is driven by the depth of his pains which ail him so and provoke him about recklessly. This is the sort of pain that arms are too short to wrap around. It is tormenting and too often rooted in abuse of every sort ranging from child molestation to racism. The consequence of which is comparable to the affects and methods used to make a vicious fighting dog. One method is to take a puppy, say a pit bull, and place it in a small cage (cf., the ghetto and prison). Then as the days pass you starve it to the point it is willing to kill and eat anything you place in the cage with it. Occasionally, you may even rattle the cage with a stick or something which eventually drives it crazy. Another method is to rough play the puppy; constantly irritating it until it learns to lash out in rage every time it is aggressively handled. Comparatively, these methods provide insight on the affects of physical and mental abuse and how they potentially lead to violent behavior.<sup>27</sup>

Having been overdosed with a prescription of such abuses, not to mention that of America’s racial hatred, he suffers from sensory deprivation. To vent the emotional build up of these pains his social isolation and self-hate encourage him to venomously attack his surroundings. Whereby, his community becomes his escape-goat to enact genocide. Unquestionably, violence has become his drug of choice. Therefore, what in a typical situation could be excused by an apology, in this state of mind, it will be excused only by tossing lead.

Consequently, the funeral parlor becomes his art gallery and makeshift memorials of stuffed animals, liquor bottles, wilted flowers, and white T’s affixed to hydrants, chain-link fences, and mailboxes—go up daily marking “Ground Zero.” Without a shadow of doubt, murder is the foreseen consequence of a psychosis that has been conditioned by a world predisposed to hate and violence. It has impaired his ability to reflect with depth the moral correctness of his discipline against others. For, the sensory deprivation to which he suffers taints his ego driven strife to achieve self-fulfillment. Forsaken then is both objective reasoning and consideration of what is humane and just. Again, he is the savage—an autonomous creature of the wild completely indifferent to the feelings, needs, and existence of others.

As such, he is posed to kill (or die) daily because the angry summon vengeance; the fearful seek security; the envious seek completion; the spiteful snivel for

pacification; the depressed wail for serenity; and, most disheartening, the attention starved seek recognition—anticipated with the pull of a trigger. This is why we die “shot in the head and shot in the gut and shot in the back and shot in the chest and shot in the thigh. We die on asphalt and on concrete, and lying in bed and slumped against refrigerators and prostrate on gurneys in the back of ambulances hurtling down city streets and quietly inside, too, in the soul a little, at the carnage.”<sup>28</sup>

From this naturally flourishes the principles written on his belief window, which have instilled a sort of twisted pride and recognition as that dude who will take life just as a mother gave it. To her, her child’s life is the personification of a soul viewed in the most favorable light. To him, life is statistical fodder for a report that reads: “Homicide is the leading cause of death for Black men ages 15-25.”<sup>29</sup> This represents to him the fact that men hunt men as if cannibals. Thus, it’s survival of the fittest. Be it headhunting or a police manhunt, the life or death circumstances of the ghetto have purposefully, and to his detriment, taught him all the markers and applications of tracking down and ultimately taking down the prey—his fellow brethren.

As time passes he will bury one after another failing to place in context the flaw of his character—the whole of his existence has been corroded by violence. Again, he has been desensitized by circumstances which do not allow reflection to note how, little-by-little, the very essence of his existence (i.e., his humanism) has been wiped away each time he was made to bare more than his weight in oppression.

### ***THE VIOLENCE OF OPPRESSION***

In all my years of study and experience with violent behaviors—be it that of my own or another’s—it would not be until I began research for this segment that it became abundantly clear there exists a direct correlation between violence and oppression. When I reflect on my personal experiences coupled with the studies I have undertaken which dealt with the affects of America’s racist and class based infrastructure, not to mention the revolutions it give life to, I recognize this truth has been before me all along and is very much a fundamental aspect causing the extreme violence witnessed in the ghetto. This observation while not completely lost on my conscious obviously was not at the forethought of it either considering all the days I spent wilding-out in my youth. Here, I have nothing but my former education and the ignorance that came of it to blame. For this inattention was the expected outcome of its repressive nature to distort my conscious.

As for my newfound consciousness? I attribute it in part to my studies of revolutionary history and the revolutionary thought which gave life to them. These studies inevitably directed me to consider the social and economic precursors that, for example, gave wind to the Black Power and other radically defined political movements of the 1960s. They were militant, organized and at times lethal not to mention extremely outspoken when it came to matters of race and class oppression. Yet I must digress to say, while inspired by the victorious guerrilla war efforts of Cuba and North Vietnam, for example (which employed both small and large-scale acts of organized violence to thwart their capitalist oppressors), they were not of this character neither in ideology or force. For, unlike communist leaders Fidel Castro or Ho Chi Minh, who were devoted to a full-fledge campaign of socialist reform and violence to accomplish and maintain such a system, the leadership of America’s political movements were not. Instead, they sought to exercise their “right” to self-

defense and empower the Black community by implementing a sort of mingled philosophy of quasi-socialism within the existing capitalist structure of American society.

Here, the potential nature of such approach is best described by Biko, who in making a distinction between America's Black Power Movement and the Black Consciousness Movement of South Africa, has best articulated the objectives and, arguably, the shortcomings of the former in comparison to the gains of the latter.

Biko: I think the end result or the goal of Black Power is fundamentally different from the goal of Black Consciousness... Black Power is the preparation of a group for participation in an already established society, a society which is essentially a majority society, and Black Power therefore in the States operates like a minority philosophy. Like, you have Jewish power, Italian power, Irish power and so on in the United States. The Black people are merely saying that it is high time that they are not used as pawns by other pressure groups operating in American society. They must themselves form themselves into a defined pressure group, because there were common problems with Black people in the United States, but essentially they accept that they are a minority group there, and when they speak of bargaining—you know, which word they use—they are talking within the American context of using the ballot box. They want to put up the kind of candidates they like and be able to support them using their block votes. So in that sense Black Power is a minority philosophy in the United States.... And the other thing which causes that: The American Black man is essentially, you know, he is accepted, he is truly American in many ways. You know, he has lived there for a long time. All he is saying is that "Man, I'm American, but you are not allowing me to live like an American here in America." He has roots with Africa...but he does not reject his American-ness...

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Conscientization is a process whereby individuals or groups living within a given social and political setting are made aware of their situation. The operative attitude here is not so much awareness of the physical sense of their situation, but much more their ability to assess and improve their own influence over themselves and their environment. Thus in the South African setting, for instance, it is not enough to be aware that one is living in a situation of oppression or residing in a segregated and probably inferior educational institution. One must if conscious be committed to the idea of getting himself out of the morass. One must be aware of the factors involved and dangers imminent in such an undertaking, but must always operate from the basic belief that he is in a struggle that must be seen through in spite of the dangers and difficulties. Thus then conscientization implies a desire to engage people in an emancipatory process, in attempt to free one from a situation of bondage. The framework within which we are working is that of Black Consciousness.<sup>30</sup>

Having absorbed what Biko has put to us, a mingled philosophy of quasi-socialism paired with an agenda to empower the people within an existing capitalist structure obviously will be thrown the wayside for reasons that, in addition to those provided by Biko, the late Dr. Bobby Wright provides where writing:

One dilemma posed for Black people is the consistent appeal for liberation through channels created for them by the psychopaths [n.b. racist white America], namely democracy and communism (Marxism). A cursory examination of both systems immediately points out the futility of Blacks giving them any more consideration. Blacks must accept the reality that, for the White race, democracy and racial [and class] oppression are not conflicting ideals. The fact that Blacks have been enslaved for over 350 years by a democratic government presupposes an inherent equality of races; it does not provide methods of liberation for those who are not equal. Communism can be dismissed as an alternative with even less discussion. For communism to be viable requires the cooperation of the masses of the White race. With that as the primary condition, communism needs no further consideration.<sup>31</sup>

In light of the foregoing, I do not mean to necessarily take away from the fact that the political struggles of the 1960s were revolutionary and conscious. Indeed, they were marked by radical change. This being that which changed only in *practice* a totalitarian government's *defined* racist and economic policies which blatantly denied people of color the opportunity, not to mention an equal opportunity, to live out the American Dream.

Furthermore, these political struggles rekindled a sense of racial pride and character, economic independence, and cultural education that had been phasing in-and-out of the Black community since emancipation. Notably, the invigorating cultural pride and consciousness that again served to heighten the psychological violence employed by a racist government whose manipulations plagued every aspect of Black life ranging from the degrading concepts of Eurocentric education to the fluid and corrupt preachments of English law. Needless to say, the reinvigoration of this conscious character gave voice to mantras such as "Black is Beautiful," "Black Power," "Say it Loud, I'm Black and I'm Proud," and the many others which functioned to build the esteem of people of color. They were both sacred in practice and a testimonial to a liberated conscious rooted in culturally significant education and economic empowerment geared towards casting off the oppressive hands of a racist government. For these reasons, which gave rise to the conflict fueling the uproars of the '60s, the aforementioned happenings were unquestionably the product of revolutionary character and consciousness.

Of greater importance is the fact that the violence of the time—that is, that commissioned by the oppressed—was not of a predominately self-destructive nature, rather one aimed at destroying the circumstances which had created their oppression. Here, my studies have informed me that the particular mindset prompting resistive and violent action to counter the oppressive nature of totalitarian governments throughout history—and not implode with self-destructive and inner-community chaos or acquiesce to this authority—was a mindset that was well disciplined in the

measures and countermeasures of and to resist such circumstance. In other words, not only had these brilliant minds studied the nature of the oppressor; more importantly, they studied and developed the countermeasures that provided them defense to the physical and psychological violence of oppression. These were lessons perfected only with time as they evolved in the reflection of those like Biko, who has provided us those sacred words: *“The mind of the oppressed is the most potent weapon in the arsenal of the oppressor.”* With just these few words, he inspired countless authors, including myself, to expound upon the distorted educational processes that have been designed to further the agenda of our capitalist exploiters.

To this end, we begin to understand revolutionary thinking. It seeks out the unorthodox and innovative of disciplines not simply to defy the status quo because knowledge has enabled it to do so. Rather, to change perspectives because it knows boundaries have been set in place with this distorted education so as to hinder independence and thus allow for a violently oppressive relationship amongst the classes and other racial groups. Here, I must digress to say that those afflicted who respond violently should never be misconstrued as criminals, radicals, militants, or the lot of other heterodox labels to which the oppressor has sought to castigate upon them. For the violent undertakings of the oppressed *against their oppressors* is nothing other than counter offense to what by nature of oppression is an already violent relationship. For as the late Paulo Freire has informed us: “Every relationship of domination, of exploitation, of oppression, is by definition violent whether or not the violence is expressed by drastic means”<sup>32</sup> because, “with the establishment of a relationship of oppression, [etc.], violence has already begun.”<sup>33</sup>

Let us now turn to the question of how and why the violence of the oppressed went from counter-destructive to self-destructive as witnesses today throughout America’s ghettos. Here, it pays to revisit the topic of Black-on-Black-violence discussed in the previous chapter. Having already concluded that the rise in gang violence during the 1970s onto the 1990s was largely attributed to the rejection of Black Nationalism, allows for further comment on the strategic undermining of the formal and informal social controls which were assailed by J. Edgar Hoover’s FBI.

To begin, we must first acknowledge there have been several defining moments throughout Black history. Notably, there were the women and men who in the first ninety years of being emancipated brought us to the tipping point of the 1960s. These were the likes of Harriet Tubman, Gwendolyn Brooks, Margaret Walker, Frederick Douglass, W.E.B. Dubois, Marcus Garvey, the Honorable Elijah Muhammad, and many many others. They encouraged us as beacons of hope and lead us as liberators of the Black mind and spirit to rise to the calling of greatness bequeathed to us by our African ancestors. They kindled the flame of our great spirit by teaching us *how* to unite for the greater cause of mankind. They brought to the world benevolence, decency, and understanding during a time when the white world sought to shackle and deny people of color their humanity. Indeed, they taught us the meaning of being Black and powerful.

By the 1960s these influences had become frangible as the next generation of freedom fighters had grown divided in their methodologies—Black Nationalism verses Civil Rights. Here, Tom Burrell provides us an insightful critique of this disunion which shattered over 100 years of political progress in the Black community:

While Dr. King and other civil rights leaders peacefully worked to tear down legal barriers and push for integration, other, more militant groups demanded the right to defend themselves as they addressed economic and class issues. Instead of strategizing, playing their diverse strengths, perhaps assuming “good guy/bad guy” roles to share a mutual prize, civil rights and black power movements’ leaders launched verbal attacks at each other, each jockeying to be the ultimate organization with the ultimate plan for black people. Each organization was so intent on being “the one,” they often underestimated the skill of the opposition.<sup>34</sup>

What Burrell has effectively painted here is a picture that provides for us an undeniable truth echoing the consequence of these organizations having been played against each other as if a chess game only to stalemate. This, unquestionably, neutralized those ideologies and practices that had built a progressive Black community. This was the objective of Hoover’s administration. For he knew all too well the lessons of the great Tocqueville: “If ever America undergoes great revolutions, they will be brought about by the presence of the black race [because] they owe their origin, not to the equality, but to the inequality of condition.”<sup>35</sup> White supremacy was at stake and Hoover was compelled to take such steps to reverse the progressive culture that had grown from the Black American’s oppressive experience.

This would eventually lead to a more retrogressive street gang culture. For many of the organizations Hoover targeted had captured the aggressive psychological energy pent up in the Black community and effectively channeled it into a progressive force. For example, his use of cold war tactics to infiltrate and dismantle the Black Panther Party allowed for him to plant a seed of discontent amongst the ranks of this organization’s leadership. The effect of which would eventually trickle down throughout the body of this organization and lead to inner-group and counter-group conflict. The distrust that came of this manipulation consequently induced a self-destructive violence. For, again, this organization functioned as a constructive outlet for pent up aggressions within the Black community. Thus the solidarity and formal and informal social controls it had managed to build a benevolent and progressive community were dismantled. Needless to say, the aggressive energy of this community was thereafter easily manipulated into a community-destructive force with the coming of crack-cocaine.

To accomplish this, the would be father of America’s tyranny had to be more clandestine in his efforts. This was especially so given the fact that the bloody encounters with local law enforcement and the Black Nationalist and Civil Rights organizations had painted the stripes of the American flag with enough blood to evoke even the passions of a surgeon. The effect of which was undesired because it extended to the hearts and minds of white sympathizers the world over. Nevertheless, Hoover was determined to suppress those who took a stance against their oppression and in doing so threatened the existing capitalist infrastructure.

For these reasons the American government has had a long history of duplicity and playing puppeteer to the assassination of prominent leaders (e.g., MLK, Jr., Malcolm X, Che Guevara, Saddam, Gadhafi, and many others, including failed assassination attempts against Fidel Castro) who have stood in the way of elite interests to maintain the inequality and theft which fuels America’s capitalist spirit.

In the past sixty years the fate of those who stood in the way of these interests has been made to appear as if unrelated to the preserving of capitalism. In *the name of freedom and democracy*, the whip used to punish the slave has strategically been placed in the hands of puppet governments, anti-communist militias, and Black defectors in the community who have turned on their own for promises of capitalist's dreams—solely for the sake of public appearance so as America can maintain its image of a peace seeking and just government.

In respect to the puppets in the Black community, the government has much to work with considering those long existing inferior complexes which arguably plague our community to this day. Here, I find it exemplifying to revisit those damning psychological controls stemming from the history of America's infamous slave trade. To better explain the social engineering that has come of it, I again enlist the works of Burrell, Poussaint, Tookie, and Amos Wilson.

To begin, Burrell is both instructive and informative where writing:

Slavery and the country's addiction to race-based violence is no excuse for the murderous behavior of blacks today. However, to fix a problem you have to understand its roots. Exploring antisocial mores and values, as well as societal and legal injustices, helps us connect the dots between the deadly "code of honor" of yesteryear and the nihilistic "code of respect" defiantly practiced today.<sup>36</sup>

What Burrell has touched on I must expound upon further by quoting extensively the writings of Dr. Poussaint. For his writings serve to illustrate the connection between the affects of racism and the aggressive inner-community violence caused by the antisocial mores and values and societal and legal injustices Burrell speaks of. Moreover, by simply exchanging the term "Negro" (as was appropriate at the time Poussaint wrote this article) for Asian, Latino, Native American, etc., what we shall discover is a systematic process by which the racist has continuously induced feelings of inferiority in all people of color. The consequence of which

...social scientists have come to attribute many of the Negro's social and psychological ills to his self-hatred and resultant self-destructive impulses. Slums, high crime rates, alcoholism, drug addiction, illegitimacy, other social deviations have all attributed in part to the Negro's acting out feelings of inferiority. Many behavioral scientists have suggested that the recent urban Negro riots [i.e., Watts, Newark, Detroit, Dayton, Cleveland and forty other cities across the nation that exploded in riots in the 1960s] are a manifestation of subconscious self-destructive forces in black people stemming from this chronic feeling of self-denigration. Noted Dr. Kenneth B. Clark has even speculated that these riots are a form of "community suicide" that expresses the ultimate in self-negation self-rejection and hopelessness....

No one denies that many Negroes have feelings of self-hatred. But the limitations of the thesis became apparent when one realizes that a Negro with all the self-love and self-confidence in the world could not



express it in a system that is so brutally and unstintingly suppressive of self-assertion. Through systematic oppression aimed at extinguishing his aggressive drive, the black American has been effectively castrated and rendered abjectly complaint by white America. Since appropriate rage at such emasculation could be expressed directly only at great risk, the Negro repressed and suppressed it, but only at great cost to his psychic development. Today this “aggressive-rage” constellation, rather than self-hatred, appears to be at the core of the Negro’s social and psychological difficulties....

Let us briefly look at the genesis and initial consequences of this oppressive behavior and the Negroes’ responses to it. The castration of Negroes, and the resulting problems of self-image and inner rage, started more than 300 years ago when black men, women, and children were wrenched from their native Africa, stripped bare both psychologically and physically, and placed in an alien white land. They thus came to occupy the most degraded of human conditions: that of a slave, a piece of property, a non-person. Families were broken up, the Negro male was completely emasculated, and the Negro woman was systematically sexually exploited and vilely degraded.

Whites, to escape the resultant retaliatory rage of black men and women, acted to block its expression. The plantation system implanted a subservience and dependency in the psyche of the Negro that made him dependent upon the goodwill and paternalism of the white man. The more acquiescent he was, the more he was rewarded within the plantation culture. Those who bowed and scraped for the white boss and denied their aggressive feelings were promoted to “house nigger” and “good nigger.”

It became a virtue within this system for the black man to be docile and non-assertive. “Uncle Toms” are exemplars of these conditioned virtues. If black people wanted to keep some semblance of a job and a full stomach to survive, they quickly learned “Yassuh, Massa.” Passivity for Negroes became necessary for survival both during and after slavery, and holds true even today.

For reinforcement, as if any was needed, white supremacists constructed an entire “racial etiquette” to remind Negroes constantly that they are only castrated humans.... If the Negro...rejected these social mores he would probably be harassed, punished or in some way “disciplined.” White racists through the centuries have perpetuated violence on Negroes who demonstrate aggressiveness. To be an “uppity nigger” was considered by white supremacists one of the gravest violations of racial etiquette.

Nonetheless, the passivity to which the black community has been so well conditioned is frequently called apathy and self-hate by those who would lay the burden of white racism on the black man’s shoulders. The more reasonable explanation is that Negroes had little choice but to bear the severe psychological burden of suppressing and repressing their rage and aggression.

NONASSERTIVENESS WAS A LEARNED ADAPTION TO INSURE SURVIVAL....

Of course, this also is conveniently protective for white racist, because Negroes who are nonassertive will be afraid to compete with him for education, jobs and status....

Many psychiatrists feel that self-denigration is secondary to the more general castration of the black man by white society. Some believe that the self-hatred should be viewed as a rage turned inward rather than as a shame in being black and a desire to be white... [C]entral to whatever specific emotional problems their Negro patients exhibits is how they deal with their feelings of hostility and rage....

Of course, Negroes react and adapt to the stresses of white racism in a myriad of ways depending upon socioeconomic level, family life, geographical location, etc. Yet the fact remains that Negroes as individuals must deal with the general effects of racism....

What happens then to the accumulated rage in the depths of each Negro psyche? What does the black man do with his aggression?

The simplest method for dealing with rage is to suppress it and substitute an opposing emotional attitude—compliance, docility or a “loving attitude....”

Sometimes rage can be denied completely and replaced by a compensatory happy-go-lucky attitude, flippancy or—a mechanism extremely popular among Negroes—“being cool.”

Or the aggression may be channeled into competitive sports, music, dance. Witness the numbers of Negroes who flock to these activities, among the few traditionally open to them by white society....

Another legitimate means of channeling rage is to identify with the oppressor and put all ones energy into striving to be like him.... Such blacks usually harbor strong, angry anti-Negro feelings similar to those of the white racist. They may project their own self-hatred onto other Negroes. This is indicated in the high incidence of impulsive violence of Negroes toward each other: assaults and homicides by Negroes are more often against Negroes than against whites.<sup>37</sup>

It is also legitimate and safe for the oppressed to identify with someone like himself who for one reason or another is free to express rage directly at the oppressor. This phenomenon would account for the immense popularity among Negroes of Congressman Adam Clayton Powell and Malcolm X....

Another technique for dealing with rage is replace it with a type of chronic resentment and stubbornness toward white people—a chip on the shoulder. Trying to control deep anger in this way frequently shows itself in a general irritability and it always has the potential of becoming explosive. Thus the spreading wave of riots in the Negro ghetto may be seen as outbursts of rage. Although these riots are contained in the ghetto, the hatred is usually directed at those whom the rioter sees as controlling and oppressing him emotionally, psychologically and physically—store owners and policemen.

The same hostility which is expressed in a disorganized way by a collection of people in a riot can be expressed in AN ORGANIZED WAY

IN A POLITICAL MOVEMENT. IN THIS CONNECTION THE BLACK POWER MOVEMENT IS RELEVANT.

In [the] South I observed many civil-rights workers struggling with suppressed rage toward whites until it culminated in the angry, assertive cry of "Black Power!" I remember treating Negro workers after they had been beaten viciously by white toughs or policemen while conducting civil-rights demonstrations. I would frequently comment, "You must feel pretty angry getting beaten up like that by those bigots." Often I received a reply such as: "No, I don't hate those white men, I love them because they must really be suffering with all that hatred in their souls. Dr. King says the only way we can win our freedom is through love. Anger and hatred have never solved anything."

I used to sit there and wonder, "Now, what do they really do with their rage?"

Well, after a period of time it became apparent that they were directing it mostly at each other and the white civil-rights workers. Violent verbal and sometimes physical fights often occurred among the workers on the civil-rights projects throughout the South. While they were talking about being nonviolent and "loving" the sheriff that just hit them over the head, they rampaged around the project houses beating up each other....

As the months progressed and Negro workers became more conscious of their anger, it was more systematically directed toward white Southern racist, the lax Federal Government, token integration and finally the hypocrisy of many white liberals and white civil-rights workers. This rage was at a fever pitch for many months before it became crystallized in the "Black Power" slogan. The workers who shouted it the loudest were those with the oldest battle scars from the terror, demoralization and castration which they experienced through continual direct confrontation with Southern white racism. Furthermore, some of the most bellicose chanters of the slogan had been, just a few years before, exemplars of nonviolent, loving passive resistance in their struggle against white supremacy. These workers appeared to be seeking a sense of inner psychological emancipation from racism through self-assertion and release of aggressive, angry feelings....

Rage is also directed inward in such deviations as alcoholism, drug addiction and excessive gambling. These escapist expressions are very prevalent among poorer Negroes and often represent an attempt to shut out a hostile world. In psychiatric practice it is generally accepted that a chronic repressed rage will eventually lead to a low self-esteem, depression, emotional dullness and apathy.

It appears that more and more Negroes are freeing themselves of suppressed rage through greater outspoken release of pent-up emotions... A report this June [1967] by the Brandeis University Center for the Study of Violence said: "Although most Negroes disliked violence and had mixed feelings about its effect, even moderates were shifting to the opinion that only intense forms of social protest would bring relief from social injustice."

The old passivity is fading and being replaced by a drive to undo centuries of powerlessness, helplessness and dependency under American racism. It is not uncommon now to hear Negro civil-rights leaders as well as the teen-ager in the ghetto say such things as, "White America will have to give us our rights or exterminate us." James Meredith echoed the sentiments of many Negroes after his "march against fear" in Mississippi when he said, "If Negroes ever do overcome fear, the white man has only two choices: to kill them or let them be free."

The implication of all this seems to be that black people can obtain dignity only through continued assertive social and political action against racism until all of their just demands are met. It also appears that old-style attempts to destroy the natural aggression of the black man and to fail to give him his full rights can only provoke further outbreaks of violence and inspire a revolutionary zeal among Negro Americans.

The behavior of young Negroes today implies their recognition that racial pride and self-love alone do not fill the bellies of starving black children... Nor does being proud of one's African heritage alone bring jobs, decent housing or quality education. Perhaps the emphasis by social scientists on self-hatred problems among blacks is just another thesis that is guilt-relieving for whites and misguides the Negro. It's as if many white Americans are saying, "From now on when we oppress you, we don't want you to hate being black, we want you to have racial pride and love each other."

For the fundamental survival problems of black Americans to be dealt with, a variety of social, economic and political forces controlled primarily by whites must be challenged....<sup>38</sup>

Again, I have quoted extensively Dr. Poussaint's work for it is telling of the various effects of racism and the suppressed rage that comes of it. Moreover, these are the reflections of an era of thought aimed desperately to maintain our focus on the deceptions—that is, racist white America having promoted and projected upon the Black conscious its distorted theories and practices to develop self-hatred, self-denigration, and other psychological psychosis which create extremely violent behaviors—which have caused the oppressed to now turn on themselves. Sadly, there has been, and continues to be, a long existing nefarious intent to sow corrosive elements within the Black community. This, needless to say, has continued to shadow our conscious since the days of chattel-slavery. Undoubtedly, the angry and aggressive feelings caused by racism are the proximate result of our relationship with a hate-filled white society. The consequence of which is best articulated in the hindsight of Tookie Williams where he writes:

...My rage was nourished by the hate I saw and felt from mainstream society and white people, a hate based on my black skin and my historical place at the nadir of America's social caste. I was filled with hate for injustice. Yet my reaction to the hate was violence directed only towards blacks.

Unlike those ashamed to admit their motivation or too blind to recognize it, I forged through much of my life locked into a hostile intimacy with America's wrongness. Conditioned and brainwashed to hate myself, and my own race, other black people became my prey and the Crips my sword. Though I cannot condone it, much of the violence I inflicted on my gang rivals and other blacks was an unconscious display of my frustration with poverty, racism, police brutality, and other systematic injustices routinely visited upon residents of urban black colonies such as South Central, Los Angeles. I was frustrated because I felt trapped. I internalized the defeatist rhetoric propagated as street wisdom in my 'hood, that there were only three ways out of South Central: migration, death, or incarceration. I located a fourth option... incarcerated death.<sup>39</sup>

Game on! The manipulators of oppression had reverted to an old campaign of subterfuge (i.e., the doctrine of Willie Lynch discussed in chapter 5) aimed to displace the aggression that came of their oppression, which served as impetus to the oppressed to at one time "fight the power." Because the causes of oppression had been directly associated with the activities of a racist government, it was only obvious as to why it and racist white America were the sole object of the people's aggression. Thus the first step was to remove all physical signs of oppression (e.g., Jim Crow). Now the oppressor was no longer distinguished and the people were made to bare the blame for their own shortcomings. Yet, as these writings have thus indicated, the strings are still being pulled by an objective that remains all the same to create oppressive conditions which support America's capitalist infrastructure. As the adage applies: "The *Game* remains the same only the players change." In this particular situation, it's the tactics.

Having arrived at the conclusion that violent behavior often derives from an oppressive relationship or conditions that are bound to manifest from such relations, seemingly is a truth that would not escape one's conscious. As it is unquestionably the most obvious of consequences to occur, especially where there exists a nefarious intent to manipulate the livelihood of one class or group of people for and to the advantage of another. Thus enter into the equation the conclusions to which Dr. Poussaint's work has provided. Here I must emphasize the fact that people of color and the poor have long since been held in a forced state of ignorance, helplessness, dependence and other psychological traumas induced by their exploiters so as to prevent them from attaining a level of consciousness to organize resistance and economic independence enough to forestall their exploitation. This unquestionably frustrates them so as witnessed in the uproars of the 1960s and even more recently the LA riots and the Occupy protests. Furthermore, having been sold on the concept they bare the blame of their predicament does not make it any better because now they neither recognize nor understand the nature of the forces that operate to oppress them. Thus they are blinded by an ignorance that causes them to be distracted with feelings of anger and aggression to which they have not been provided constructive means of organization to vent. Needless to say, the emotional distress that eventually comes of this transforms itself into a violent outburst stemming from their *Afflicted Deliberations*.

Here, it pays to revisit the work of Amos Wilson. He is informative where writing:

The violently oppressed react violently to their oppression. When their reactionary violence, their retaliatory or destructive violence, cannot be effectively directed at their oppressors or effectively applied to their self-liberation, it then will be directed at and applied destructively to themselves. This is the essence of Black-on-Black violence. Oppressive violence is both pro-active, direct and misdirect. Black men kill each other because they have not yet chosen to challenge and neutralize [as the Black Nationalist Movement sought to disrupt] on every front the widespread power of White men to rule over their lives.<sup>40</sup>

When looking for examples to further illustrate how this oppressive design operates to induce the violence witnessed throughout America's ghettos, I struggle not to cite more of that which has already been written by others. For what more could I possibly add that they have not covered. I guess if anything it would be to make the subject a bit simpler to understand and identify. Here my prison experience has served me well given the repressive nature of its administration. Though I shall be brief so as not to detract from the subsequent chapter (Chapter 8—*The Zo*), which is of a more in-depth discussion on the damning psychological affects of prison.

Often, I have considered the social engineering that goes into creating my surroundings. Among the things I have managed to deduce or answer the question of without referencing some source is the question of why it is that violence is of such a frequent occurrence in prison. I'm sure the first assumption my reader will make is something along the lines of the obvious—prison yards are a cluster of some of the most violent elements within society. But are they considering what I have thus written? In light of the fact that prisons are said to be microcosms of the greater world we live in, we cannot simply accept the obvious in this explanation. Why? Because, in knowing what I have come to learn about violence having resided at one of the nations most violent prisons, has forced me to realize that such an explanation fails to account for the oppressive circumstances which operate like a trigger-wire attached to a landmine that's been activated where and when we explode.

Every day at some prison in America, if not here at New Folsom, someone is getting physically and mentally assaulted, raped, stabbed and at times shot or worse—killed! Behind these walls it seems as if I have been exposed to more death and violence than I have ever witnessed on the streets as a free man. As with the majority of people, I used to simply accept that these frequent occurrences were merely the consequence of so many violent people being confined to one place. But then I got to thinking and seeing for first hand what was making prisoners explode.

My observations here I credit to the unfortunate, yet insightful, experience of doing time in two different states—Oklahoma and California—on different security levels. These experiences have allowed for me to put in perspective the administrative vices and rigid conditions of confinement that operate to cause the extreme violence witnessed at say a maximum, opposed to a medium or lower security prison. Notably, the security level—that is, a prison's restrictive nature which allows or prevents the prisoner to move about freely and partake in approved recreational or rehabilitative

activities—makes for one prison setting that is more oppressive thus more violent in nature than others. This is so because the higher the security level (n.b., the more restrictive and thus oppressive) the lesser the opportunity for the prisoner to partake in constructive outlets which channel his aggressive feelings that come of the oppressive circumstance.<sup>41</sup>

This is irrespective of what sort of crime (i.e., violent or nonviolent) or amount of time he may be serving—be it a life sentence or simply a few years. For I have come to recognize that there is no set profile of offender that is more likely to commit a violent opposed to a nonviolent crime as the medical community, prison and justice officials have purportedly claimed. What it all boils down to is the violently oppressive circumstances he has been subject to—be they early on in his life or simply as a consequence of confinement. Therefore, once he has been thrown into such an oppressive setting, such as a maximum-security prison, because of the stress associated with the environment and an overly oppressive prison administration, he's going to *get-off-where-he-mad-at*. Welcome to Prison Psychology 101.

The foregoing attempt to draw on my prison experience has again been made in an effort to heighten the likeness in affect of oppression from *Projects-2-Prison*. Whereupon, the ill management of community policing has created oppressive circumstances (e.g., poor education, structured unemployment, lack of opportunity, police harassment, etc.); which have been discussed throughout these writings and others, that serve to communicate the point in context—the cause of violence is often a soci-political product of manipulation.

As I have repeatedly stressed, the affect poverty has in the ghetto serves as a precursor to a lot of what we witness here by way of violent behavior. This, again, is a truth that has been circulated in academic circles for decades. Yet it is one seldom, if ever, articulated in a context that allows for the observation that extreme acts of violence can be traced to socio-political and economic oppression. That said, when we look to the fact that the nature of many, if not most, social and economic policies functioning within the ghetto are oppressive and thus violent as Freire has provided, what we have then is a community of people who by design are reacting violently to the violence that has been forced upon them by a politic that has predetermined every aspect (e.g., the quality of their education, employment opportunities, etc.) of their conditioning.

**TODAY WE STUDY, TOMORROW WE GET ACTIVE  
TODAY WE STRUGGLE, TOMORROW WE SUCCEED**

*In this life of mine I've seen, heard, and read of many wars, famines, genocides, baby killers, evil dictators, and so on and so forth. The list of heartless people, acts and historical events never end. It seems as if in every book a new horror is revealed. In my latest read I came across the term "mentacide," an advanced form of genocide. My mind was blown with this horrendous, cancerous implement. It howls its disgust at me. Why a people can carry out such acts is beyond my comprehension. But with that, I do have to say I may not comprehend why these self proclaimed superior Europeans can carry out their diabolical agendas. But what I must understand is how they do it so that I can protect myself, my intellect, and integrity of my people from the cause of these racist white men.*

*This history of the white man seeking complete domination over a race is repetitious from era to era. It is a cycle of mental violence that must be broken. Not only is the fight for the Black American. It is for all who feel, have dealt, and continue to battle against the oppression these white men have created.*

*I am a Mexican and a proud one. Yet throughout the years these people have overtaken the conscious of my people and convinced us that we are all Latinos. Thus stealing away the right to be a proud Mexican. They are destroying our culture, rewriting history as I speak by attempting to crush our identities. We must shatter their labels of the immigrant, for example, who they criminalize with mistruths. Here, I acknowledge the writings of the late Dr. Bobby Wright where he discusses the child being trained what to think, and not how to think. I give him my highest regard for having the courage to speak, write and operate for his people. I advocate his calling*



*for enlightenment, for self-improvement, and revolutionary thinking for people of color.*

*I do know this country has a lot to offer. This I cannot ignore despite its evil and racist elements. Thus we must pursue in every positive possibility what this country has to offer and do away with the negative desires of some of its people.*

**—Miclo**

## ***THE CONTROL OF MODERN SOCIETY BY THE RAILROAD EFFECT***

The railroad effect is a metaphor that describes the continuing implementation of ideas, good or bad, that persist for centuries because it became a foundation for so many other rules of society that the origin of the idea has long since been forgotten. Take for example the railroad track.

England was the first country to develop a railroad. The track width was set at four feet and eight and one half inches. Where did the track width come from? The Romans invaded England in the First Century BC and again in the First Century AD. The Romans brought with them their cavalry and war machines drawn by horses. The Romans had built a wagon with wheels the width of two horses' asses so that the following wheels aligned with the tracks of the horses. This served to compact the trails for the wheels and help to prevent the wagon wheels from being broken by rocky terrain. Thus the width of four feet and eight and one half inches became the width for all future tracks which followed a horse's ass.

Even the space age had to conform to the width of the old Roman standard because the components of the space shuttle, built in various parts of the country, had to be transported by rail to central assembly areas and could be no wider than the tunnels of the railroad through which the rails ran. In other words, the space age is still controlled by the Roman standard of two horses' asses.

Governments, religious and educational institutions are replete with civil laws, Canon laws, administrations and departments that take on a life of their own once they are put into the bureaucratic machinery. Yet, no one questions the effect of the two horses' asses!

—Zane Ira

## CHAPTER 5

### “THE UNORTHODOX TEACHER” [THE INSTITUTIONALIZATION OF SOCIETY V]

*As I sit back with eyes open to life,  
I've become able to understand the realities of life!  
Time has changed, but life remains the same.  
People have to understand the obstacles of this world,  
so as to remain free from political wars and government struggles.*

*UNDERSTAND ME!*

*Open your eyes to the unjust economy.  
You're living in a country built on lies and thievery.  
So protect your community, understand your opportunities,  
and strive for better against the opposition to proceed on with  
a positive community.  
All I ask is that you just,  
UNDERSTAND ME!*

**UNDERSTAND ME**

**—Gene Wheaton**

I've always known I needed more of this world than what my humble surroundings were willing to provide. My stepfather would say I carried myself in a manner to which the world would someday be my servant. Somewhere down the road of my past I figured like many I'd accomplish this with the drugs, violence, and rules introduced to me by the streets. Boy!, was I wrong. Like many, I had been hoodwinked by a set of beliefs garnered by my dwellings. Along the way I managed, however, to prevail and gain a dire strength and insight to survive, which allowed those once perceived opportunities afforded by the streets to become transparent deceptions.

For most of us, prison has been the consequence of these beliefs. Twisted and false beliefs that led us down the winding road of destruction. Here we are. Trapped and driven by the pull of concentrated ignorance. A dismal and wicked sanctuary, overflowing with the dull and laboring day-in and day-out circumstances of monotony. Ironically, this setting allows for leisure enough to catch up on centuries of literature. Thus from the irony, from the ashes of this dungeon, arises the elements that can build a man and his dreams if he opens a book.

The following chapter is a critique of both worlds where the lessons inside and outside the classroom oscillate; where the essence of knowledge ensues in the most unconventional yet conventional means. When class is released, the streets of America's ghetto and prison dwellings become revealing institutions. Here, the disciplines are fostered by extreme conditions. The best reads become the company one keeps and the lessons come hardscrabble where business etiquette is mastered by networking grams, pounds and kilos. Graduation?, it generally commences behind

bars where the best reads then become the Xeroxed books passed down the tier: Marx, Lenin, George Jackson, Tocqueville, Castro, and the many others who we study with brutal patience and often in contrast while Tupac, Too Short, and UGK blur in-and-out of the tiers of Folsom's madness.

So did King's "Dream" benefit or work against me? Or did Malcolm's call for self-reliance compel me to pick up a pistol and a dope-sack on account of the "Dream" failing to capitalize and rebuild where racism destroyed? These questions and more are explored in the up-and-coming:

### ***THE UNORTHODOX TEACHER***

For many *Product(s) of the Ghetto* the value of an education is often displaced in the chaos that ensues in traps that fail to challenge academically. That's not to say the environment is not creative or mentally challenging. Yet when it comes to the immediate need for the orthodox religions, histories, sciences, and other curriculums predestined to enrich man's spiritual and material life, these disciplines have been circumscribed by circumstances that demand raw instinct to ensure survival. Thus they are without incentive in a world of frequently violent encounters that render diplomas, degrees, and Bible and Quran pages meaningless pieces of paper that better serve as crutches and rolling papers for a joint. Again, what we have before this community has been scripted by our reaction to a procreated environment.

As we are lead by the blind our instructors will school us to believe we can get Trump change (\$\$\$) through the vehicles at bay. Provided we have attended a conventional school beyond the elementary years, by the time we have reached our freshmen year in high school the burners are full blast with chaos in the house and the 'hood's ailments are clutching at every hopeful thought to provide relief. This forces us to grow up quick. And there's seldom time for school time activities, except one: Grinding for tomorrow's milk money because moms and/or pops have exhaled it in a cloud of dope smoke. Or it's one of many other elements common to the setting. Take gangs, for example, which often rob us of the support to commit to higher learning.

As for the conventional curriculum we may have acquired before dropping-out, it will have little, if any, bearing in an imposing slum life that today has, for example, extended its violence onto the campus grounds. Thus paying homage to President Washington having chopped down a cherry tree becomes useless information in face of the probability of hitting the floor in both the 'hood and classroom where kids nowadays pack guns instead of lunches. They are the trendsetters of their time divested in making history—a history built on chopping down each other where President Washington is overrated except where adopting his niche for violence in an atmosphere of fast money enthusiast striving for the American Dream in a "Draped-Up & Dripped-Out" culture.

As this suggests, this culture did not just pop up out the woodwork. It came from the generations before me. Nevertheless, by the '80s I was on the frontline running and relating to it. When it came to Washington and school lessons the only president I concerned myself with was the one on American currency. As for mathematics? The value of knowing one's numbers goes without saying yet required of me to know only how to count "STACKS" (i.e., thousand dollar racks of money). Science was the least appreciated. Though, when it came to mixing cake, depth was not required beyond

the chemistry of mixing the right amount of cocaine with baking soda to make a brick lock. This science, needless to say, carried me a long way when it came to manufacturing drugs of any sort that would bring the President to the dinner table.

Thus hardscrabble was the *Game* I was on the frontline playing before landing in prison as a result of it. Like so many who came before me I had to learn the hard-knocks and ups-and-downs. My first lesson was to recognize the *Rules of the Game* were scripted by some stupid muthafucka who idolized the wealth of Trump and P. Diddy then foolishly attempted to connect the dots between his world and the one he entertained after down-loading “Get Rich or Die Tryin’.” I was that stupid muthafucka!

When the ignorance of this down-load eventually ran into prison’s brick wall, thereafter, a seasoned vet directed me to picture the world through the eyes of my idols success. I couldn’t. For I quickly came to realize the need to be real with myself and recognize the circle I was running with was not exposing me to those means necessary to obtain the level of success my idols had achieved. Here, I was forced to reckon with the fact that I had paid more attention to the “Glitter & Gold” instead of how they had achieved it. Specially, how the institutions of higher learning had played a vital role in making them better exploiters of human and social capital. This was what the institutions of higher learning had allowed for them. It allowed for them to dissect the intricacies of America’s capitalist system to enable their material fortunes.

It wasn’t until I found myself facing capital murder charges for killing Conan that I discovered this value—that is, the value of education (n.b., “knowledge”) and how it opens doors. My world had shrunk to a 20’ x 15’ space with five other prisoners ever in my company. We were forced to share one sink, shower, and toilet. Never had I realized what grand surprises fresh air and sunlight were until having been deprived of them those 23 months I fought for my life. No commissary, TV, radio, or yard this was the program—24/7 cell program. Hard time for real! And they starved us so. What we ate for lunch was reheated for dinner. And on the two occasions we saw a chicken leg over that span of time, a couple ole boys came up short. And I was no impressive threat standing at 5’8” and then 135 lbs. Yet those conditions had made me savage inside as if a puppy caged and starved then constantly irritated so as to intentionally make vicious. The fear I harbored walking in would in time evaporate. Moreover, I came to understand why it was the *so-called* friend I just so happened to be charged with killing was so savage. He had been a regular in that hellhole spending up to eight to ten months of each year of his short life trapped and shackled like a slave.

When I look back on that experience, it’s as if I’m looking at someone else’s life or a scene from an old prison movie where the guards (and they did) rack the door in the wee hours of the morning to sick another rabid pup on the unsuspecting. Though, I was primed for the get-down when it happened. For I had long learned to sleep with one eye open with my steel ready.

Bored, I was forced to pick up a book. Reading had never been my joy. Yet I sure discovered an escape in doing so while incarcerated and subsequently improved my ability at the same time. For in my “reading world” there was no cage, no long hungry nights, no misery or loneliness. Reading became like eating for me. Since, I’ve done it daily and consumed the best. Unfortunately, there was not much to select from in that Barney Fife hellhole called the Seminole County Jail. Nevertheless, I

read every shit-kicker they had on the shelf. During this time I acquired an interest for the African history my racist school administrators had denied me. My Aunt Beverly, who lived in Oakland, California, had paid me a visit and dropped several history books on me. She would also suggest that I move to the West Coast “if” and when I got out.

Those books were a revelation to me and a testimony to the great empires of Africa I had been made oblivious to during my formal years of (mis)education. Often, thereafter having read them I thought about had I been taught the rich history of Kings and Queens in Africa and the great African civilizations that gave life to modern science, mathematics, etc., during those former years of school, I just might have had paid more attention and most definitely would have had more self-respect and dignity to hold my head high in an environment plagued by bigotry. Needless to say, when I eventually moved to California I further enriched my conscious with a few courses of African history while attending college. These experiences would open my eyes to what Dr. Carter G. Woodson (1875-1950) had written in his book *The Miseducation of the Negro*: “If you want to keep something hidden from the Negro put it between the covers of a book.”<sup>1</sup>

As I sharpened my tools, an epiphany for the value of education would come during this troubling time while preparing for the death penalty trial. When the “Dream Team,” as the father and son team of attorneys were aptly named, took over my case the situation had long before their appointment been disparaging. I had ran through five other attorneys (firing some, some withdrawing). Dealing with the public pretenders and an initial money hungry, good for nothing attorney out of OKC named Ervin Box, who was a renowned legal analyst reputed for his coverage of the O.J. Simpson murder trial, had forced me to do my homework. Even here I ran into roadblocks because the county jail and court officials refused to allow any prisoner law library access. So I had to have information smuggled in. Fortunately, I was able to gain some insights regarding the legal process. However, I make no attempt to claim I became seasoned in something that is as ever changing as the law. In this particular case, however, it wouldn’t take a rocket scientist to put one and two together. And this was exactly what I did with serendipity for my attorneys by simply reading a book.

Now I’m not trying to steal the show here. I’m confident the Dream Team would have done an excellent job deciphering and discrediting the state of evidence against me. And they did. Yet the fact remains that during that nineteen-month period that I had been firing attorneys left-and right, I had composed a summary of notes covering every stitch of the state’s case—pointing to its deficiencies. At pretrial my attorneys argued some thirty or more motions and ninety-five percent of them were granted. When Jack Jr., who had never tried a murder case, took to the lectern under the direction of pops, I then had the epiphany of the value of education due to the fact that just about every entry I had presented in that binder of notes was used during the course of my trial. Notably, there were insights I had gained from reading a forensic science book that detailed the modalities of firearms and thus allowed for my attorneys to undermine state witness testimony—the ballistics did not match their testimony. The end result of the trial further validated the epiphany—**KNOWLEDGE KEPT ME OFF DEATH ROW!!!**

IN JUST FOUR MONTHS we had put together a defense and presented it to a jury where each-and-every one of those *white* jurors had declared their willingness to lethally inject upon a finding of guilt. Fortunately, it was never delivered. Hung nine to three in my favor to acquit in self-defense, the now twenty-three year-old kid would unknowingly trade his innocence for the compromise which had been based on misinformation. At the time I agreed to the deal my attorneys had been told that the favor was not for the defense. So the deal was most appealing. Especially, since it was nothing more than a turnaround at the prison reception center to freedom within months. Never would I have imagined in taking that sweet appearing deal that it would be something that I'd live to regret. Nor would I in my wildest dreams ever believed, even if God himself had told me, that I would find myself back under the gun of another capital murder case. I'd have called God a fool. But turns out I was the fool for not changing the way I viewed the *Game* which allowed for me to continue to entertain the vultures and the rats.

In total, it would be thirty-six months of a life changing experience. Eleven months prior to this my then wife had blessed me with a Queen whose birth had initiated the notion of change. The idea of my shortie looking up to a father who was a drug-dealer was not ideal to me. Indeed, her birth was transformative in many ways as it inspired me to focus on my education and legitimate business opportunities that would afford me the kind of money I had had grown accustomed to from selling dope. Up until this point of my life my activities had appeared to make a way out of no way in a racist environment where legitimate opportunities to make *Dope-Boy Magic* seemed to only present themselves to white folk who owned everything and practiced keeping the wealth in the circle except when they wanted to take a blast.

After the trial, my journey to the free world would take a short spin through a medium security prison in Cashion, Oklahoma. Here, I was fortunate to have made the acquaintance of an elder who had fared beyond well in the *Dope-Game*. He had been transferred to the state pen after a short stint in the feds related to a drug seizure in Columbia. Eventually we would become cellies and the O.G. would lace me with some real "G" (i.e., *Game!*). Up until meeting him, he was what I aspired to be—A BIG TIME DRUG DEALER. However, his life story would further inspire me to pursue another career. In short, his story went like this: Twenty years ago (1977) he owned a small janitorial service in Inglewood, California; had received a contract for \$250,000; bought several kilos pure cocaine and never looked back until his current pinch (55 years state). His situation, we observed, was he may well die in prison from his twenty years of hustling that in the end would account for nothing more than a slow death in a 6' x 12' coffin and a phat commissary account. He would often sigh in great distress: "If I could only give all I have, all I've made (\$\$\$) for my freedom. I'd walk out of here ass-hole naked and broke and wouldn't think twice about showing the world my naked ass."

He would ever encourage me to pursue a legitimate business and what mother always wanted—for me to go to college. "College!" For what? I used to think when she would say: "Son, I didn't raise you to become a drug-dealer, go to college...." My response to this would often be: "What cha mean YOU DIDN'T RAISE ME... Hello, we broke and you like to smoke coke, which draws the neighborhood Nino Browns to the porch like flies on stench come the first and 15th. Yeah, you kept me in school with the encouragement of an ass whippin' when bad grades hit the mailbox, and I

love ya for that. But Momma pleeese! Come on now! You knew I had that Williams and greedy white man's blood running through my veins. Hustling was in my DNA! And I'm stacking money like legos off the block! College? Yeah Right! So I can learn some more about useless facts that aren't putting bread and butter on the table or Nikes on my sisters' feet?" Having ran this down to O.G., he would drive mother's point home by stating: "How you go seriously entertain having Trump change and not know anything about accounting for your money to the IRS, business law, economics, and other money related 'G'? You know how to hustle and get block money. But you gotta learn how to make money make money beyond investing in dope. When I was your age, had I invested the kind of time and resources in my janitorial company as I did moving weight from country-to-country, state-to-state, I'd be sitting on top of a multi-million dollar company instead of this bunk giving my hustle stacks back to the man!" What he said came down on my shoulders like a ton of bricks. It was a powerful message. One that I immediately recognized by not only taking heed to his situation, but also the "G" he was lacing me with being *real talk*. What I did not realize at the time, however, and I'm sure both he and my mother had good intentions, was the fact that what they had put to me with this whole college thing was in all actuality learning to become a better exploiter of the resources before me. I was blind to this fact and it would take me years thereafter to come to such a conclusion.

In the mean time, along the way to discharging my prison term, I picked up the pieces and direction to what I believed at the time I needed to further my insights and carry me during those challenging times change would bring. One route I stumbled into that would ever change my outlook on life and what I could achieve if I put my mind to it was a *Zig Zigler* motivational course. Initially, when I enrolled my objective was simply to get thirty days knocked off my sentence for partaking in rehabilitative programs offered by the administration. Never would I have realized the impact this program would have in carrying me during those hard times while in transition. Thereafter my release, I came to understand the challenges I had to face, to which I embraced with open arms, were only temporary adjustments required to get me where and what I wanted out of life. Often I trip on how, during this time, I went from 'hood rich to financial aid and public transportation by choice not fretting the ride on my beach-cruiser and the Bay Area Rapid Transit (BART) to-and-fro from Los Medanos Community College in the 'burg and Laney College in Oakland. I was learning that exploiter's *Game* that Momma and O.G. had put me up on (accounting, business law, economics, international business, etc.).

Awarded, I received praises from instructors, deans and family. Imagine that, an ex-con who was pushed through high school with a 1.5 GPA was now in college maintaining a 3.75 GPA and recipient to an academic scholarship. Moreover, like I told one of my instructors, I wasn't there (college) to receive a piece of paper (a degree) to become an "educated servant." I was there to get that "G" to empower my family and dreams.

Where I once had blinders on my eyes as to the importance of education and how it was so necessary to fuel my dreams, a capital murder trial and prison experience had removed them. These events, along with the responsibility of being a father, had assisted to change my worldview. Thereafter, having found myself in the college world, I began unraveling the exploiter's *Game* and was receiving what we



call on the streets “*boss game*.” However, I must admit that my Grandpa Willis had done an excellent job lacing me with the hands-on aspects of business I chose to major in and further study. Of course my escapades in the *Dope-Game* had also assisted with this.

Moreover, having acknowledged these experiences would later in my life pursuit of wisdom and knowledge serve to caution me as to the danger of simply taking lessons from a sterile classroom setting. I would discover there was a danger, a certain naiveté to simply learning in a college setting. Nevertheless, these experiences collectively allowed for me to peep into the window of my idols success with real expectations fueled by education and experience enough to succeed at the exploiter’s *Game*. No longer did I simply hold to those miscalculations of the dope-sack and its peril to my future. I had found a way to feed my family and dreams without having to take penitentiary chances that I at one time I was so adamant to believe was the only way. I was relieved at having made this discovery to say the least after spending countless nights on my knees asking the Creator to keep my family and I safe as I trended through the shadows of the valley of death.

There was yet another more significant change that I would undergo as a result of this near death experience—I lost my fear of death! The experience had forced me to make the ultimate wager with my life on the line. Stirring death in the face, my heart was willing to make this wager. The stakes were certainly high. It was a “Give Me Free!” moment—life or death! The D.A. was granted a death warrant by the State of Oklahoma. The day it was served on me was the day I came to realize I was not faint at heart as a many of my childhood friends would tease. Ironically, I looked on this death warrant as if a challenge. Instead of cowering and accepting compromise,<sup>2</sup> I chose to be “judge by twelve instead of carried by six.”

The challenges and outcome of this trial had assisted to boost my confidence unlike anything I’d experienced. Sure I was successful in my own rite in other endeavors; looked upon as an O.G. at sixteen years of age; and by age twenty had more money than I legally was supposed to have. But with this trial I had looked death in the face and not only found I was fearless, but willing to die for what I believed in. I was unyielding and determined in face of such stakes; I won at all costs and arrived in California a change man; a confident man; a focused man. The prose of Du Bois had swept over me.

*With all this came the strengthening and hardening of my character. The billows of birth, love, and death swept over me. I saw life through all its paradox and contradiction of streaming eyes and mad merriment. I emerged into full manhood, with the ruins of some ideals about me, but with others planted above the stars; scarred and a bit grim, but hugging to my soul the divine gift of laughter and withal determined, even unto stubbornness, to fight the good fight....*

— *W.E.B. Du Bois*

## **REFLECTIONS**

Looking on my formal years of school I often reflect on how memorizing redundant facts never entertained me. This was especially so in history where all I recall being taught about Black Americans and Africa was a dismal account of a chapter’s worth

of Uncle Toms and how as descendants of slaves we were brought to this country as hostages with the intent of being nothing more than appreciative servants and undeserving recipients of Massa's freedom. Thereafter, emancipation, affirmative action, and the educational inequality that remains to date, would tear at the threads of America's historical account that made clear not only was my African and Native lineage not welcomed, but neither did they (white America) want me to be a functional citizen. For at one time it was a crime to teach my ancestors how to read and write and, at another, the government would proclaim "separate but equal" yet the funds appropriated to my community school system were short. This, of course, was during the segregated days of Jim Crow before King's "Dream" would assist to blend Black with white and make life in America that much more gray. I say this because the America his dream created did more to confine Jim Crow to a state of mind where, despite integration, Black rarely mixed with white and vice versa.

This was the world I grew up in beginning in 1974 'til present time where I reside on a prison yard that might as well nail up the "Colored" and "White" only signs. It's been said that prisons are microcosms of the greater society we live in. Accepted as such, the racial hostility I encounter daily on the yard evidences the fact that the issue of race is just as complex today as it was in the 1960s.

Growing up in the South, like Jena 6, in school and in prison it's no different. We have our shade trees and they have theirs. Black rarely mixes with white and vice versa. As for the closet racist that oversaw my formal education, the objective remained the same: Program servitude into the Black masses. And integration would make their job that much easier. For now they had gained complete control over what I was or was not to learn.

With each stage of integration I came to observe how the Black community had become increasingly accustomed to being spoon-fed by white supremacists. The education they provided us, for example, would erase our cultural values, independence, and inconspicuously persuaded us to give up our interpretations of events pertaining to history, government, and the social, political, and economic construction of our community. They discouraged us from learning the true history of America. And spoon-fed us the Tarzan stories of an uncivilized Africa. As a consequence we became accessories to, dependent upon, and controlled by a people who have never had our well being at heart; other than to enslave and oppress.

Whether I learned in their schools or not they could care less. They preferred I not for reasons articulated by Du Bois: "... the [white] South believed an educated Negro to be a dangerous Negro."<sup>3</sup> Thus the assault on my community educators had been objective #1 long before I came long. History tells of this endeavor which ranges in technique from bombed and burned schools and churches to established racially motivated legislation, which persists to this day. These were the undeniable activities of white supremacists who knew all too well the fact that as long as our minds were ignorant to the mechanics of the American political and economic system then we would be held at bay of obtaining freedom enough to live-out the AmeriKKKan Dream.

Dr. King having proclaimed: "No Lincoln Emancipation Proclamation, no Johnsonian Civil Rights Bill can totally bring... freedom. The Negro will only be free when he reaches down to the inner depths of his own being and signs... his own emancipation proclamation"—confuses me so because, for the best of me I cannot

find how it was that he was able to wrap his mind around the concept that an integrated school system would better serve the educational needs of the Black community. We might as well have tossed our pearls to swine because at this decisive moment we foolishly entrusted a racist school administration with that which we held most dear at heart—the shaping of our children’s conscious, the shaping of their future.

Sure an integrated school system would provide funding for education that we had indeed been shorted on. Indeed, it has provided facilities we were otherwise without. In addition, it has unquestionably assisted to ease racial tension. Yet, today many of these objectives have been hastened with school districting policies that require, for example, ghetto youth to attend ghetto schools. Thus assuring not only their “social isolation,” but so too their poorly funded and administered schooling. Maybe, just maybe this is not such a terrible thing considering their high school dropout rates reflect the rejection of this imperialist system and the need for more Afrocentric schooling.

Moreover, the argument has repeatedly been made integration took place in the midst of a lack of cultural understanding. To this day, the curriculum taught in American schools degrades and represses the histories of every race but the white race and refuses to embrace the perspective of ethnic studies. Because of this we have children of color who know everything that there is to know about the history of Europe, Britain, France, and other European countries, yet they know little, if anything, about the true history of their people and the countries they come from.

The psychological and cultural damage caused by this has been immense to Black futures. There is ledger upon ledger filled with examples delineating the destruction. Personally, I have been one to suffer the cultural and psychological damage. My involuntary participation as a second-generation integrated student devastated my conscious. Being in an atmosphere where my instructors, beginning at first-grade, were racist to the core was anything but healthy to my self-image and educational prosperity. The same teachers that were in charge of my education taught my fellow white classmates to think that I was ignorant, of foul odor, shiftless, and with tail. These mistruths seemingly provided them a sense of legitimacy—and a sense of non-legitimacy to apply to people of color—to view me as second grade (i.e., three-fifths human being). Needless to say, these preconceptions fostered an unwarranted xenophobia and lack of respect for me.

Of the many experiences I had with these racists, the one I recall most would come at the tender age of eight. My then principal, Richard Sloan, would faithfully serve his fellow Klansmen until well after I graduated high school. While in the company of my mother, we had paid a visit to the home of a co-worker who lived in an affluent white residential community. While there my mother’s co-worker’s son, Josh, and I took to the local park and were playing with Kerri and Alison. We were classmates. Kids simply playing at the park. Yet the following day at school Dick would call me into his office and sternly chastise me: “Stay away from the white park playing with white girls.” It was then at the tender age of eight that I found what Marcus Garvey described as: “...the first time that there was some difference in humanity, and that there were different races, each having its own separate and distinct social life.” Best believe I left out his office that day with a chip on my shoulder as I looked onto Margie—the local NAACP appointee who was stationed

outside his office—to question: “Aren’t you going to do something about this shit?” Thereafter, and to this day, I was poisoned on white girls. There were exceptions, however, for the most part the only ones that truly appealed to me were honkies in high-heels putting toes to pavement for payment and coke sales.

Then there were the frequent suspensions for the many fistfights behind being called a “nigger” by my fellow white classmates. Often, more times than not, I’d be the only party being sent home. Seemingly, my school administrators believed it was the white kids’ job to put me in my “place.” Therefore, they saw little, if nothing, wrong with me being called a nigger and all the wrong with my attempts to serve my best set of mixes on the conveyor of the word.

Of course, these incidents did not always end with me being suspended. Dick didn’t simply impart his superior character with threats to stay away from Kerri and Alison. There was the “paddle” now exchanged for the “whip.” I guess because I was high-yella with green eyes and cut, Dick felt the need to make sure I stayed in my “place.” Oh!, how Massa Sloan took delight in flogging me. Aside of the degradation, the licks he imposed on me would serve to nourish my niche for violence. By the time I reached my freshman year, enough was enough! My rebellious character had come to full bloom. Might as well have changed my name to Nat Turner. It was Massa Gene Stevens doing the flogging now. However, we came to terms quick—ya touch me whitey, and I’ma fight cha! So I got expelled every year until I miraculously graduated.

Again, this environment distorted my perception about who I was or what I was capable of achieving. It was a distraction to say the least that constantly had me on the defensive and thus interfered with my ability to learn that which would be of some benefit to my future. Then there was the temperament nourished by white hatred. It instilled in my heart hatred that afflicted my reasoning as a child. It made me as equally as hateful towards white skin as they of my Black. Fortunately, I digressed from this poison thanks to my mother’s discipline. She would correct me each time I complained to her my hatred for “peckerwoods.” “Son,” she would ask, “why do you say such things?” I would explain to her how I was being mistreated at school. Yet, she would side with my teachers: “You don’t hit people behind words.” Then give me some of that mumbo jumbo about not allowing the ignorance of others to pollute my conscience so and that I should not view the actions of the few for the many.

It would take quite some time for me to come to understand and appreciate the lessons my mother had put to me. It was easy to hate because I was hated. But it took character to love in spite of hate. This was some of that Dr. King holla that I must admit I struggle with to this day for reasons that Dr. King himself professed: “He who passively accepts evil is as much involved in it as he who helps to perpetrate it. He who accepts evil without protesting against it is really cooperating with it.” So while I no longer allow another man’s insecurity and hatred to become my insecurity and hatred, or be foolish enough to judge all for the actions of the few, I still observe the fact that while it maybe that not all white people are *consciously* racist, because they seldom, if ever, take a stance against it—they are supporting it all the same and stand to benefit from the white privilege it creates. So it’s difficult for me to simply buy into the *so-called* post-racial America concept when I am trapped in the proof (i.e., a racist prison system) that racism very much remains a cancer in the daily lives of Black Americans.

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By no means has integration been wholly beneficial for my community. The cost has been immeasurable forsaking the Black youth important cultural understanding and background. Case in point, we have allowed for Europeans to seek, explore, and develop the sciences, mathematics, and origins of civilization stemming from northeast Africa. Today their universities are leading expeditions to dig up and crack the codes of ancient Egypt. In face of the fact that they have already attempted to white-wash the faces of this region, and centuries ago knocked off the noses of the sphinx and other statues to prohibit our claims to greatness—we can rest assured that any application of the information that they discover will be used to *their* advantage and will, as their history demonstrates, be attributed to themselves.

History has repeatedly shown that we as a Black race are at lost as a people. A people who are ahistorical, who have but little knowledge of their history and its secrets are a people who are easily manipulated, a people who are easily distorted by the machinations of other races. As Lerone Bennet once stated: “History does not forgive those who lose their way.” As this suggests, history thereby is the basis for self-understanding, and more importantly, the basis for understanding the motives and psychology of other races.

It’s often said that history is written from the perspective of the author. This couldn’t be truer of European conquerors and historians who have torched the histories of the world and replaced them with their fabrications and machinations. To this day most American grade schools prohibit ethnic studies. And where permitted, they are watered down or white-washed to exclude subjects on imperialism, white privilege, ethnic genocide, etc. for fear of stirring the hatred that comes of learning the true history of Europe and America. It is for this reason that people of color have seen their history destroyed; that their children’s schools prohibit them from learning of the truth and that they have been acculturated with lies. For how could the true history of Europe and America be taught without insulting people of color and instilling hate?

As this suggests, the curriculum children of color have been downloaded with is designed solely to foster the superior and exploitative character of white America. In other words, what they are now being taught or trained in has been distorted to serve the interest of power (i.e., WHITE POWER!). To this end, Hoyt W. Fuller would write:

The American educational system, as it is, is not designed for the benefit of Black people, who are oppressed by that system; it is not designed to facilitate the regeneration of a people it has calculatedly debased; it is not designed to liberate the spirit of the sons and daughters of Africa nor to enhance that spirit nor to thrill at its soaring; the American educational system is not designed to encourage the destruction of the American



Grandparents Jean and Willis

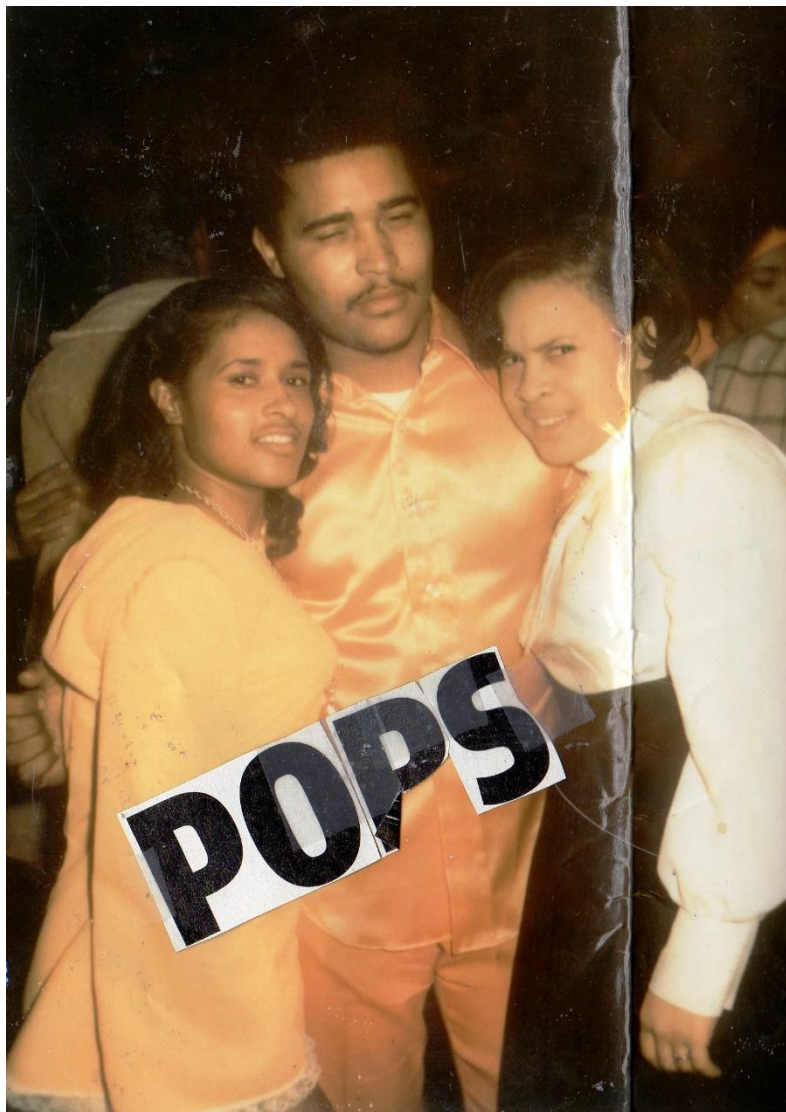


Grandparents Papa Daddy and Grandma Skippy



Momma



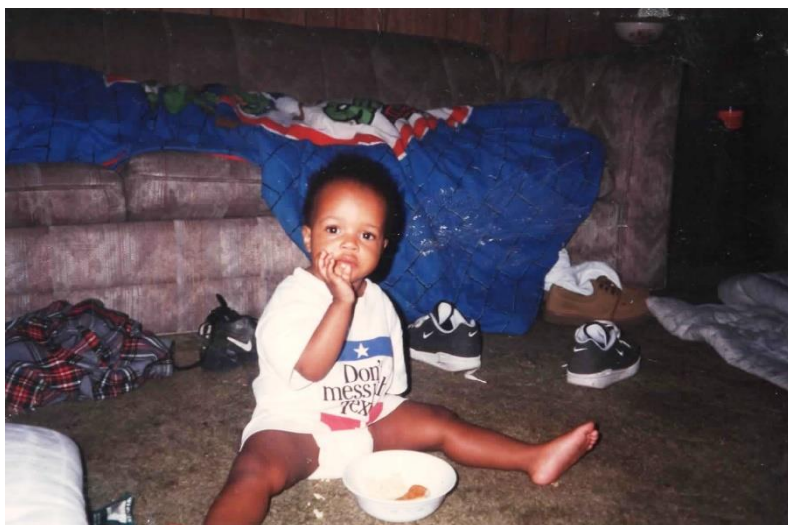
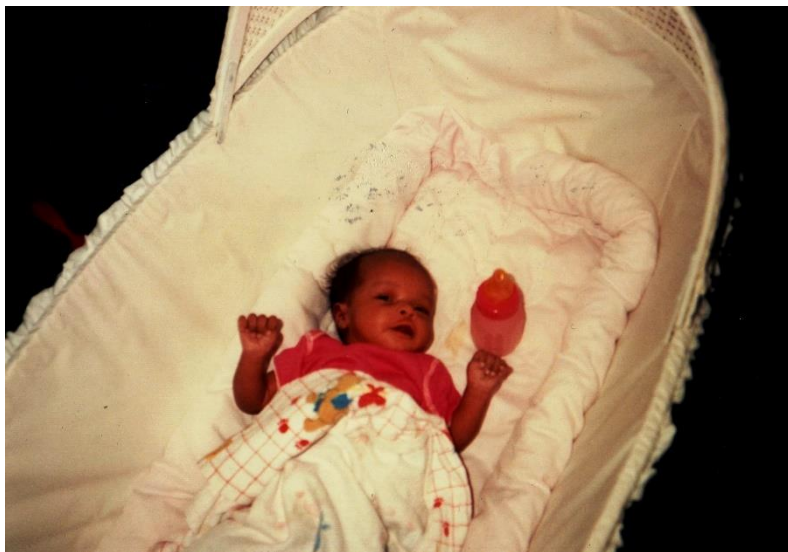




Aunt Frankie Mae and Uncle Henry



Big Dave (Center) at Federal Lock up with the brothers (Right to Left) Dewight, Daryl, Clifton (nephew), Wayne, and Henry Jr.



Daddy's little girl





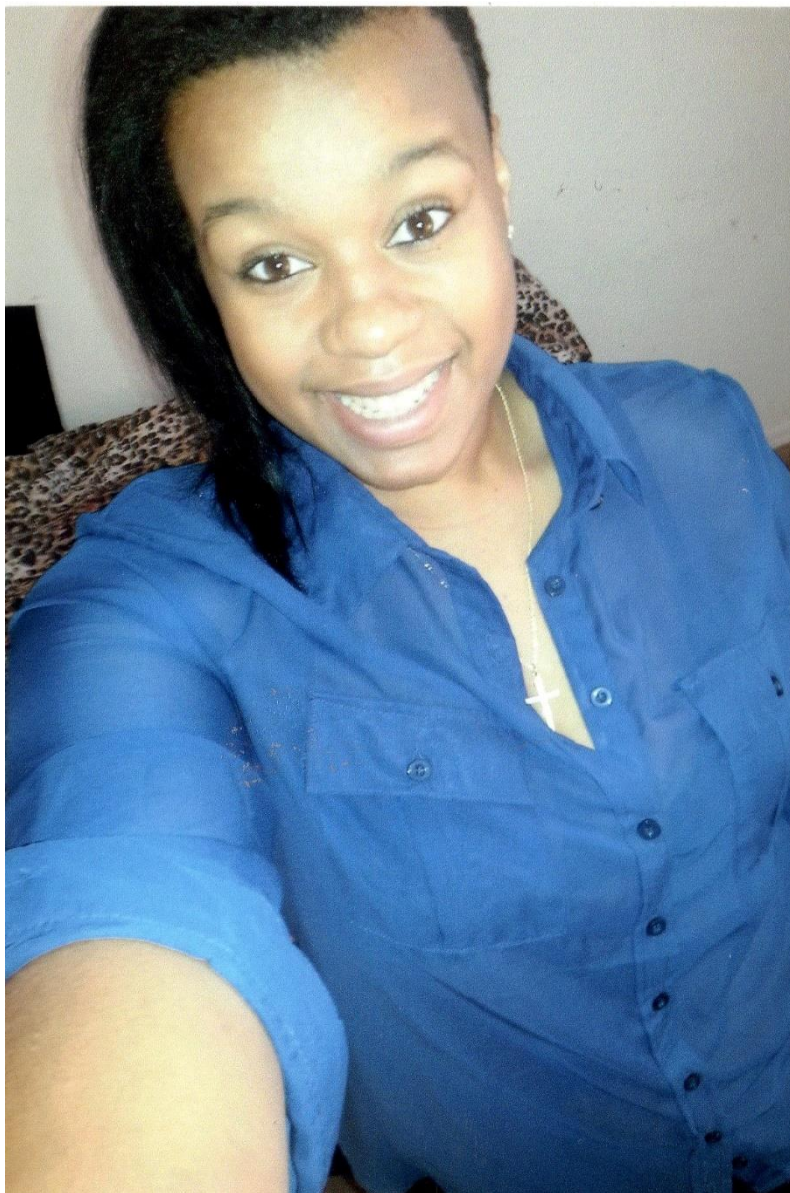
Daddy's little girl and sister Gwen visiting me in prison at Cushing OK



*Sis -n- Daddys Lil' girl*  
*Nov '05*

Kodal







Daddy's little girl and sister Gwen visiting me in prison at New Folsom  
CA





Modeling School 16 years old

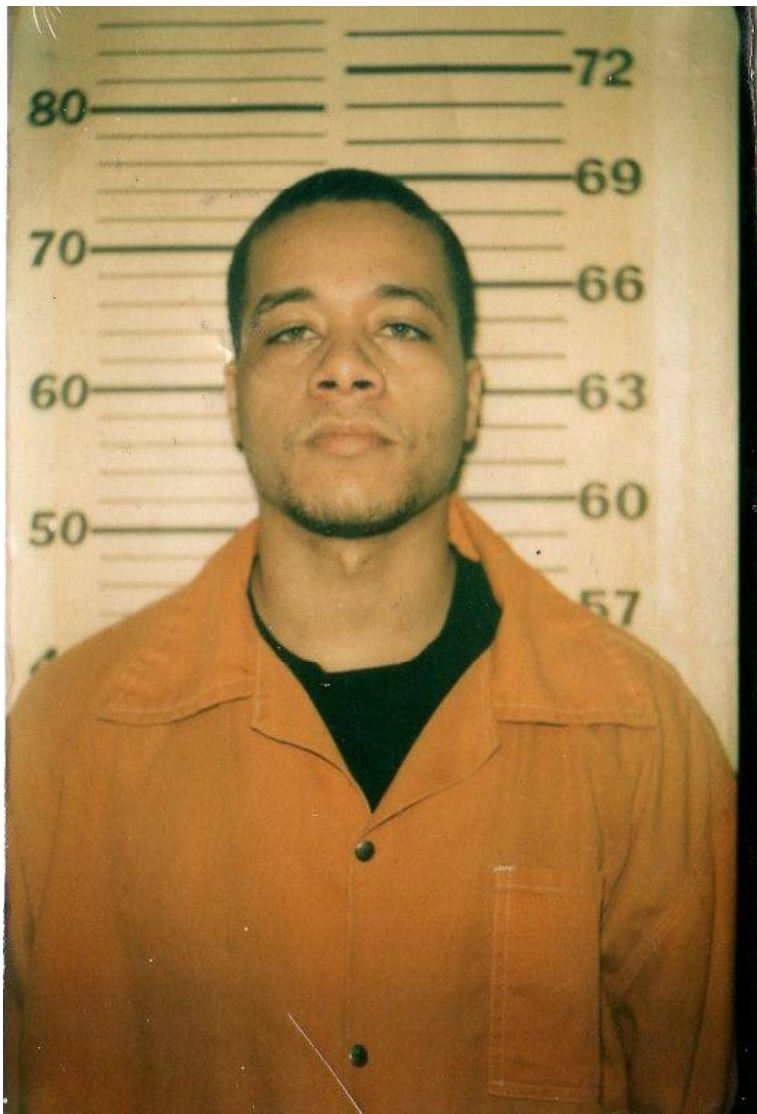


New years in 1994/95 with family in Oakland, CA (Right to Left) Aunt Joy, Enauda, Elrather, Me, Ayesha, and Grandpa Willis (Center)





That green, Chevy 71 Caprice



Mug shot 1997 Murder Trial



Me, Sister Viola and Big Dave visiting at Cushing Correctional Facility



Elrather and I at Cushing



Wreford, Me and Big Dave at Cushing



Bottom Right; Aunt LaVonna with child in lap, Barry, Cookie, Me, Aunt Beverly, and Grandpa Willis Center, visiting at Cushing.

political and economic system, no matter how cruel and debilitating embattled minorities may find that system.

The American educational system, as it is, is designed to benefit and to maintain the status and well-being of the white middle-class majority; it is designed to train the personnel and to maintain the ideology which will ensure the perpetuation and endurance of the American political and economic system, which is now, and always has been, hostile to the ultimate aims of the Black minority which serves it.<sup>4</sup>

Thus, the more we feed on European accounts of history and other Western academia, the more dependent and receptive we have become to European values. Consequently, this assails humanity moreso than overt racism.

To this day the brush stroking the canvas paints the descendants of Europe with greatness. Their history tells of them saving the pagan souls of the world and modernizing backward cultures ruled by uncivilized savages. The implication being: White is Right!—that it is better. “Is it better because Europeans are better, greater, and more nobler than other folk,” questions Du Bois.

It is not. Europe has never produced and never will... bring forth a single human soul who cannot be matched and over-matched in every line of human endeavor by Asia and Africa. Run the gamut, if you will, and let us have Europeans who in sober truth over-match Nefertiti, Mohammed, Rameses and Askia, Confucius, Budda, and Jesus Christ. If we could scan the calendar of thousands of lesser man, in like comparison, the result would be the same; but we cannot do this because of the deliberately educated ignorance of white schools by which they remember Napoleon and forget Sonni Ali.

The greatness of Europe has lain in the width of the stage on which she has played her part, the strength of the foundations on which she has [built], and a natural, human ability no whit greater (if as great) than that of other days and races. In other words the deeper reasons for the triumph of European civilization lie quite outside and beyond Europe—back in the universal struggles of all mankind.

Why, then, is Europe great? Because of the foundations which the mighty past have furnished her to build upon: the iron trade of ancient, black Africa, the religion and empire-building of yellow Asia, the art and science of the “dago” Mediterranean shore, east, south, and west, as well as north. And where she has builded securely upon this great past and learned from it she has gone forward and sneered at it, she has shown the cloven hoof of poor, crucified humanity—she has played, like other empires gone, the world fool!<sup>5</sup>

The greatest achievement of Europe was, in essence, the conquest of the mind. They colonized religious literature and images to make them more favorable to themselves and the most disastrous of all their colorizations was the colonization of the image of God.<sup>6</sup> Where the indigenous people of Africa and the Americas had a spiritual constraint which commanded them to look upon the heavens for guidance



and inspiration, Europeans would seize the advantage this created for them to distort their spirit. Consequently, Christianity would come to dominate much of the Western world solely on account of the natives having found themselves on the opposing end of a firearm or whip. Organized religion was thus co-opted by the status quo and the white Jesus the world would come to pay homage to would become both savior and oppressor.

Another casualty to integration would be the displacement of the Black educator. Consequently, the impact would measure twofold. One aspect would be the closing of Black schools as students integrated. This was the case with Noble Town Elementary, Douglas High and many other institutions that catered solely to the Black community in Wewoka and others around the nation. Thus a large pool of unwanted teachers were created; some 35,000 according to Wright.<sup>7</sup> For they were vacuumed into “White Men’s Jobs” and “Black Men’s Jobs.” Of course there was a token here and there. Honestly, I can only recall three during my formal years of schooling. And things haven’t changed much today in the South. Recently, I inquired of my teenage daughter as to the number of Black teachers in her school and her response was depressing: “There are none!”

Here, there’s correlation to be acknowledged between white involvement and control of Black education and self-destruction. In this regard the displacement of the Black educator can be added to the series of assaults against the Black community. Integration having displaced his or her need, would be in comparison to a chess player strategically positioning his white pieces for the kill of the Black Queen and then checkmates the King. Now that white America was in sole control of shaping Black futures the result would be an overwhelming 46.6% dropout rate.

Having checkmated the need for Black educator would in effect narrow our future vision. For the removal of the Black educator detracted from a functionally relevant figure to which the Black youth could identify with and relate to. This in turn meant the deterioration of an influence that shaped our character and reason. For the Black educator’s role in the community was quite diverse. How so? Before a child could aspire to achieve in education, or anything for that matter, was not, is not it imperative for that child to have an intimate and supportive relationship in both the home and the people he or she interacts with in the community? Of course it is. Thus, with white educators like Dick Sloan, the role of the Black educator was/is vital to our futures.

Think about it! Any success the Black community regaled in was built on the cornerstone of the Black educator and the educational institutions he or she strove to build. Black Wall Street and Rosewood, for example, were autonomous, thriving Black communities that radiated with Black owned everything from schools to doctor offices, etc. These communities were the result of a having a Black educational structure and educators who had a stake in their community’s progress. With integration, the stakes would be reduced, if not completely disappear, when Black children such as myself were placed in a hate-filled white environment where the teachers had absolutely no stake in the future of the Black community.

When one takes time to reflect on what I have put to the reader—the damage integration caused to the psychological and collective health of the Black community—it becomes clear there is a direct connection between white involvement in Black education and Black self-destruction. Notably, the more we integrated, the

more the mental health in the Black community has spiraled down causing its collective and progressive aspirations to vanish. The lack of Black community cohesion has weakened the structural character of our personal life. No longer do we share in the conscious reality of centuries of segregation. No longer do we acknowledge our plight, our struggle as a collective to support one another as a village, tribe, or race. We were now an integrated addition, recognized as a people—or so we convinced ourselves to believe—that the law has invited to partake in the AmeriKKKan Dream.

### ***MALCOLM VS. MARTIN***

When was about sixteen years of age I had managed to land myself a brief stint in the Tenkiller Youth Program (TYP). It was right outside of the city limits of Tahlequah, Oklahoma. While there the opportunity of a life time presented itself to me. Three days a week the other delinquents and I were shuttled to the neighboring Northeastern State University (NSU) campus to partake in a satellite educational program. It was here that the late author Alex Haley was to give a lecture and book signing for the *Autobiography of Malcolm X*. About a week prior to the engagement our instructor at TYP informed us of this and the fact that we had VIP action. We were also provided free copies of the book. Setting there, I recall how ignorant I was of my Black history as I turned over and over the book. Malcolm who? Alex Haley? Didn't read a page before the book was discarded. Again, Black history had been a short chapter in my life. And neither Malcolm nor Haley was part of it. Their significance had been erased from the pages of the history I was provided by my racist school administrators. The cost to my progress would be dear. For the void stamped on my conscious prompted me not to attend the lecture.

It would another five years before the stint in the Seminole County Jail prompted me to read this book. It was one of the few my aunt had provided. Having read it would provide me some inspiration and hope in a dark situation. Malcolm's transition from ignorant street hustler to gifted speaker and the most controversial minister of the Nation of Islam would inspire me to self-educate years later when I found myself again behind bars. After close to two years in community college and plans to transfer to Cal Hayward, I couldn't simply stop building because I was back in the *Zo*. Through severe cycles of hope and despair I would evolve in my studies. Through arduous self-examination, tears, barrowed books, books left on the tier, in the trash, the old college books, and those my family send—here, as with Malcolm, I study with greater intensity than when in college.

To contrast these experiences—learning in prison opposed to college—has been all revealing. I find that there is a danger to learning in college that assumes that because we study in such a setting, we are actually learning. The fact of the matter is most students are simply going through the motions: obtaining grades, completing assignments and passing exams based on the product of someone else's intellect. For many the process becomes for them what Paulo Freire described as

...an act of depositing, in which the students are the depositories and the teacher is the depositor. Instead of communicating, the teacher issues communiqués and makes deposits which the students patiently receive, memorize, and repeat. This is the “banking” concept of education, in

which the scope of action allowed to the students extends only as far as receiving, filing, and storing the deposits. They do, it is true, have the opportunity to become collectors or cataloguers of the things they store. But in the last analysis, it is the people themselves who are filed away through the lack of creativity, transformation, and knowledge in this (at best) misguided system....<sup>8</sup>

As if a chore, many students find themselves in a classroom setting that is sterile. However, for the prisoner who elects to self-educate learning is neither sterile nor emotionless. It is a choice motivated by a need to survive that drives us to understand and navigate the political, historical, and cultural forces that operate to hold us captive—both physically and mentally.

The experience certainly enables the distinction between being *educated* opposed to *trained*. Here, I find the analogy of the loin provided by Dr. Na'im Akbar serves to best illustrate the point in context. "The loin," explains Dr. Akbar, "that will jump through a fiery hoop because on the other side you have a big fat steak for him, is a trained loin, not an educated loin."<sup>9</sup> He goes on to explain: "... education is a process by which you are actively capable of manifesting what you are. When you increasingly manifest what somebody else wants you to be—which may or may not be critical to your survival as a life form—you are trained."<sup>10</sup> In the case of the trained lion, it is no longer king of the jungle. It has been domesticated (i.e., trained as a circus pet). Thereby, it has lost its ability to take to the jungle and hunt to fulfill its rightful place in nature.

As I'm to explain in the following segment, too often this happens to students of the American educational process. They become the trained pets of America's circus act. Seemingly this is all semantics. Though, we must note the dependency created when one is trained opposed to the independence of being educated. This dependency, as Western institutions have developed it, has increasingly impressed upon the mind of American students the epistemology of previous generations. These institutions neither prepare nor alert them to contemplate, to question, or doubt the *so-called* lessons (i.e., training they are spoon-fed). This training is the very cause that results in the dependency that leaves millions of graduates unemployed or strapped to a job they care not for.

Like all things American, its educational structure has a designed intent—to create a society of role takers. These roles are contingent upon and instrumental to the prosperity of the markets and economy created by capitalists. Again, Freire's "banking" concept serves to illustrate the point in context.

It is not surprising that the banking concept of education regards men as adaptable, manageable beings. The more students work at storing the deposits entrusted to them, the less they develop the critical consciousness which would result from their intervention in the world as transformers of that world. The more completely they accept the passive role imposed on them, the more they tend simply to adapt to the world as it is and to the fragmented view of reality deposited in them.

The capability of banking education to minimize or annul the students' creative power and to stimulate their credulity serves the interests

of the oppressors, who care neither to have the world revealed nor to see it transformed....

Indeed, the interests of the oppressors lie in “changing the consciousness of the oppressed, not the situation which oppresses them”; for the more the oppressed can be led to adapt to that situation, the more easily they can be dominated....

\* \* \* \*

It follows logically from the banking notion of consciousness that the educator’s role is to regulate the way the world “enters into” the students. The teacher’s task is to organize a process which already occurs spontaneously, to “fill” the students by making deposits of information which he or she considers to constitute true knowledge. And since people “receive” the world as passive entities, education should make them more passive still, and adapt them to the world. The educated individual is the adapted person, because she or he is better “fit” for the world. Translated into practice, this concept is well suited to the purposes of the oppressors, whose tranquility rests on how well people fit the world the oppressors have created, and how little they question it.

The more completely the majority adapt to the purposes which the dominant minority prescribe for them (thereby depriving them of the right to their own purpose), the more easily the minority can continue to prescribe. The theory and practice of banking education serve this end quite efficiently....<sup>11</sup>

Here’s where the beauty of Malcolm’s prison education exceeds the epistemology of King’s when considered by Freire and Dr. Akbar’s philosophies. Malcolm was not *trained* within the educational structures of Western academia like King. Consequently, King shackled his worldview with the instruction of the Crozier Theological Seminary, Morehouse, and Boston University. For these “Negro” institutions sought not to *educate*, but *train* him; indoctrinate him with “banking” concepts of religious mistruths and control machinations propagated by the white power structure. To this end, Dr. Wright provides us something significant in value to assess the conclusions I have drawn.

One of the most tragic beliefs widely shared by Blacks throughout the world is that White-controlled educational institutions—regardless of whether they are elementary schools or universities—will educate our children. Faith continues to prevail in spite of overwhelming evidence, which disputes this belief. Blacks continue to ignore the irrefutable truth that, in a racist social system, all institutions will reflect, protect, and sustain values that are consistent with racism. This should not be considered surprising or profound since all institutions serve to perpetuate the social theory of the group, which created them. Therefore, in any social system established by whites, the institutions will reflect racism.

Likewise, white-established institutions in “Black-controlled” countries [and communities] will continue to protect the welfare of whites’ interests regardless of their political ideology.<sup>12</sup>

Consider here the intent and influence that shaped America's Historical Black Colleges. The man who Morehouse College is named after, Old Man Morehouse, set forth the concept of the "talented tenth."<sup>13</sup> This was just one of many underhanded schemes presented to the then leaders of the Black community by the American Baptist Mission Society, the American Missionary Association, and John D. Rockefeller, Sr. and Jr. who industrialized America and done so by controlling the conscious input, or "deposits" as Freire has provided, of the masses. The particulars of this *Blueprint* read in part:

In the late 1800s and early 1900s, there probably weren't but about 1,700 college educated Negro people in AmeriKKKa, so once whites figured (chattel) slavery was over technically, and that some people had to be granted privileges in the society, (they wondered) could they set up a scheme where they could give one out of ten (negroes) something?

For every ten people that walk up to world white supremacy, they give one of them something, and they wanted the other nine to think that if they just acted like that one, they could in fact get the riches and promises of the AmeriKKKan dream. So they sold the Negro leadership (the idea), the gimmick of the "talented tenth," that this ten percent will control ninety percent of the aspirations of our people by exalting and holding up this ten percent.<sup>14</sup>

Old Man Morehouse was one of many founders of "Negro" institutions that bought into the cynicism of white supporters. He was sold on the fact that he would lead a university that would "train" the upper crust of the Negro (population).<sup>15</sup>

One would like to believe Black leaders at the time would have been more skeptical of their white supporters and recognized the scheme as it played out. Yet we can credit their lack of awareness, or what was likely their willingness to partake in this system, to the blinding elation of white acceptance. This acceptance provided for them a sense of wholeness, a sense of being human, and thus a sense of esteem in the eyes of their white sympathizers. Subsequently, this would allow for the likes of the Rockefellers to exploit them and further the interest to build an industrial work force.

These interests would create the dependency (i.e., the control) that socialized the Negro masses with European ideals and values and, more importantly, the dependency that allowed Black Americans to this date to contribute to white wealth and Black poverty. "Capture the mind and the body will follow," the Rockefellers and other industrialist surely reasoned. No longer could the Negro be considered chattel. However, his mind could be enslaved as Willie Lynch<sup>16</sup> had already proven. And yet, the ex-slaves' labor remained an asset to their fortunes. Thus northern industrialists set about to build institutions conducive to sculpting the subservient mindset necessary to man their developing industrial empires. The history of which Du Bois details in his ground shaking book *Darkwater: Voices From Within the Veil*:

... the South has invested in Negro ignorance; some Northerners proposed limited education, not, they explained, to better the Negro, but merely to

make the investment more profitable to present beneficiaries. They thus gained wide Southern support for schools like Hampton and Tuskegee. But could this program be expected long to satisfy colored folk? And was this shifty dodging of the real issue the wisest statesmanship? No! The real question in the South is the question of the permanency of present color caste. The problem, then, of the formal training of our colored children has been strangely complicated by the strong feeling of certain persons [n.b., Booker T. Washington] as to their future in America and the world. And the reaction toward this caste education has strengthened the idea of caste education throughout the world.

\* \* \* \*

It is here that a great movement in America has grievously sinned against the light. There has arisen among us a movement to make Public School primarily the hand-maiden of production. America is conceived of as existing for the sake of its mines, fields and factories, and not those factories, fields and mines existing for America. Consequently, the public schools are for training the mass of men as servants and laborers and mechanics to increase the land's industrial efficiency.<sup>17</sup>

Similar sentiments have been provided by Wilson:

Equal rights for southern Blacks was of little or no concern to northern businessmen. They had virtually no interest in transforming the region's racial caste system. In fact, they sought to stabilize southern society by organizing its industrial market, restoring its agricultural prosperity, and achieving racial cooperation on southern White terms by educationally preparing Blacks to work efficiently within that system. "Negro industrialist training" was recognized by industrial philanthropists as the most appropriate form of education for Blacks, who were expected to help maintain the racial order and political stability, and help advance the material prosperity of the South by keeping to their assigned "place" and playing their designed roles in the social and economic system of that region....<sup>18</sup>

King seemingly handicapped the struggle by limiting his educational intake to that which was offered by this perverse system. White institutions programmed him, his ideas, his values, and misgivings of America's capitalist infrastructure. He idealistically and not realistically posited equality. Intoxicated with hope, King sought by means of integration an equality that is unattainable in a capitalist society for reasons that

...the problem contained in the conflict between the maintenance of individual freedom and the stress on the equality of men... rest on the proposition that an effort to create equality among men must inevitably constrain the efforts, fortunes, talents, and opportunities of at least some men. Otherwise, through the exercise of these properties, inequalities will arise as a matter of course. Yet to impose constraints is to limit the freedom

of those affected, at least in the use of these personal properties. Hence... to proclaim a quest for equality may not only be illusory but, more significantly, demagogic and also deleterious to human liberty. The strain between liberty and equality is... generally resolved in favor of liberty, at the cost of a continuing inequality....<sup>19</sup>

As noble as King's "Dream" is, the reality before the ghetto today has proven it an overall failure. That is unless one is content with an eleven percent drop (from 35% to 24% since 1968) in poverty in the Black community.

Personally, I think of it as a failure. What all this equates to compares to what Lynne Zucker's experiment in the movement of light demonstrates. In short, Zucker challenged a group of women to determine the distance that light moves in a darkened room. Little did they know the experiment was a gimmick because light does not move. Though, there was an "auto kinetic" effect or visual illusion of movement being that in a completely dark room there is no frame of reference from which motion can be assessed.<sup>20</sup> Likewise, it is difficult to buy into King's "Dream" because, in the case of Black Americans and other people of color, educational achievement has come to symbolize that "training," that "credentialism" white America has so long distorted our reference point with. Like the construction of a house on sand, King's education was the contorted product of elite manipulation. For they both functioned to enable the fortunes of the well-to-do. First by removing Black dollars from the hands of Black businessmen and placing them in the hands of white businessmen. Second, by creating an integrated work force, competition for jobs would create the ideal circumstances for business owners to exploit the willingness of Blacks to accept less pay for white jobs. As I'm the detail in the chapters to come, the concessions made to the demands of the Civil Rights Movement were not made in the interest of humanity, rather capitalism.

As with King, Malcolm too would be trained in the academe offered by the city of Boston. Though, not the ideal rather the unorthodox universities of the street. An eight-grade dropout, Malcolm's intellectual ability was seemingly squandered away mastering the destruction taught in the ghetto. A bottom feeder, his story is all too known. He was cut from the cloth of abject poverty, fatherlessness, delinquency and other vices common to the ghetto. The deathstyle he led prior to a triumphant and transforming prison experience is another example of Dr. Akbar's philosophy of training. Both he and King feed on the two-edge sword of knowledge that white America had put to them to consume.

For Malcolm, the lenses this placed on his worldview trained him to carry about as "Red"—a street hustler, con artist, junkie, and thief. Like many, he had been placed on the leash of destructive training. However, unlike most subjected to this process who come out flawed, rejected, and opaque, these elements would cast back to us a grade "A" jewel. This, we know, was due in part to his redemptive prison experience. Notably, he became a pupil to his own educational enormity. His words are instructive to this day:

I have often reflected upon the new vistas that reading opened to me. I knew right there in prison that reading had changed forever the course of my life! As I see it today, the ability to read awoke inside me some long

dormant craving to be mentally alive. I certainly wasn't seeking any degree, the way a college confers a status symbol upon its students. My homemade education gave me, with every additional book that I read, a little bit more sensitivity to the deafness, dumbness, and blindness that was afflicting the black race in America....

I don't think anybody ever got more out of going to prison than I did... Where else, but in prison could I have attacked my ignorance by being able to study intensely sometimes as much as fifteen hours a day?<sup>21</sup>

Here's where the beauty of Malcolm's education exceeds the epistemology traditional to institutions of the like King attended. The distinction being, as Malcolm explained to Alex Haley: "You studied what he wanted you to learn about him in schools, I studied him in the streets and in prison, where you see the truth."<sup>22</sup> This is the danger of learning in white institutions.

Under the guidance of the Honorable Elijah Muhammad, Malcolm was able to sore to greatness as a commander at the lectern, commander of behavioral sciences, and commander of a movement that sought to achieve social and economic independence for the African race. For Malcolm the teachings of Elijah Muhammad were a reflection of those his father had taught as a loyal devotee of Garveyism. It was the immortal Marcus Garvey's *Philosophies & Opinions* that the Nation of Islam had constructed its program upon. They strove to break the destructive and oppressive chains white America had shackled to the Black mindset. With the mystic and cult like Nation of Islam, Elijah Muhammad would exploit, for lack of better expression, the Negro's need to believe in something other than the passivity of Christianity. "The Black Muslims," writes George Breitman, "had reached Malcolm at a time of acute crisis in his life: A young man in his twenties, he was in prison (1946-52), alone, rebellious, groping to understand what had happened to him and where he fitted into the future."<sup>23</sup> He goes on to state:

A movement denouncing white oppression had enormous appeal to [Malcolm] because he felt he had been a victim of that oppression... Perhaps a non-religious movement of the right type might have recruited him at that time—but none came into touch with him, and the Black Muslims did. It was a religious conversion [Malcolm would easily adjust to] because the answers he was searching for were supplied by a religious movement; he embraced its religious along with its non-religious aspects. But its main attraction for him was its message that he had sunk to the depths because of white oppression and the Nation of Islam provided a vehicle to combat and end that oppression. (Ibid.)

This all appealed to Malcolm because the Garveyism his father had introduced to him as a child. Marcus Garvey and Garveyism proclaimed:

We must free ourselves [from whites] mentally, spiritually, and politically. So long as we remain the religious slaves of another race, so long as we remain educationally the slaves of another race, so long as we remain politically the slaves of another race, so long shall other men trample upon



us and call us an inferior people. But when we lift ourselves from the racial mire to the height of religious freedom, of political freedom, of social freedom, of educational freedom, then and then only will we start out to become a great race and ultimately make ourselves a mighty nation.<sup>24</sup>

When assessing the educational backgrounds of Malcolm and King—one within the constraints of the white power structure, the other outside and in opposition of it—there’s no questioning the former was the product of the full 360<sup>o</sup> of knowledge. King being bred of upper middle-class stock, like other essentially upper middle-class groups, was essentially conformist with white values and ideology. The irony of this was he wanted to assimilate into a system that had wronged so many people. Moreover, how was it we as Black Americans were to integrate into such a system without becoming oppressors ourselves? After all this was a capitalist system were big fish eat little ones.

King simply lacked the edge that Malcolm’s educational background would have afforded for him to see through America’s rhetoric of equality, freedom and justice for all. Malcolm’s background, particularly his studies while in prison, made it all too clear the vices of capitalism (i.e., oppression, racism, poverty, crime, etc.), that ran rapid in the Black community, were all part of the ill design of racist and capitalist thinking white America. That said, who really could relate and build the Black community? Seemingly, with all the calls to action the Black community is hearing today to take action on all fronts—from the household to the community—the message of Malcolm is becoming clearer and clearer as it echoes for us to stand in the virtue and reward of our community’s independence just as other races have.

But NO! We weren’t listening then and many aren’t listening today. Black folk weren’t trying to hear the brother. “All that Negro trippin’” was all they could say. “I want to get in the house with whitey. Yelp! That’s the best move.” We thought we were being denied something or missing out on something because we could not give our money at a white lunch table or attend white schools. Yet, we failed to realize that white schooling and spending our money in white establishments had perverted us so mentally, socially, and economically. The very school system that we thought offered us something we did not have, did not offer us anything but an eleven percent drop in our poverty rate and a 46.6% dropout rate once we integrated.

Moreover, it was not ignorance that accounted for our poverty. Rather, racism. Arguably, what accounted for this condition then accounts for it today. Sure racism is not as blatant today as in the past. Yet, when we look at the statistical data we see that racism and the systems of caste control are very much alive and working hard to maintain white privilege. For the same people who control the school system also control the prison system. It would only seem logical then that just as prisons are used as tools of caste control (Chapter 8), so too are schools. This becomes evident when considering the *school-2-prison* pipeline mass incarcerates young Black males at a disproportionate rate when compared to other races.

That said, Malcolm put to us the fact that capitalism, colonialism, and racism were fundamental to the inner-workings of white America’s oppressive and progressive economy. Accepted as such, he would also state that America would have to undergo fundamental changes in its economic system before changes would occur between the races. It would take King until the final days of his life to accept this.

Consequently, he lead Black America to believe that once we integrated this would ameliorate our social and economic condition because, all of a sudden white America had upped its tokenism.

Moreover, Malcolm knew all too well the history of white America and how it was that white people had come into their social and economic position. It is a history of repine, racial quotas, and entitlements that tells of how they obtained their advantage. "The unequal distribution of power [i.e., wealth, capital, property, etc.] between Whites and Blacks," writes Wilson, "did not originate from the fabled 'economic genius' of the former relative to the lack of it in the latter."<sup>25</sup> He goes on the explain nor is it the product of honest "hard work." Because

[w]hite power, based on the White monopolistic ownership of property and accumulated capital, is the alchemical product of "blood and fire," i.e., of the genocidal murder by Whites of Native Americans, the outright theft of their lands and resources, the brutal enslavement and murder of Afrikans as well as the naked, direct exploitation of their uncompensated labor—all made possible by the unrestrained use of White-instigated physical violence, psychic terrorism [i.e., the doctrine of Willie Lynch], and psycho-political economic manipulation. Afrikans were brought to the Americas as the private property of Europeans. The surplus production of their labor was expropriated and accumulated both during and after their enslavement. This, along with the theft of Indian lands are the fundamental sources of European American-African American property-power relations to this very moment. Moreover, White America's "long history of 100 percent racial quotas in favor of Whites" and its use of racial discrimination as "a standard form of cartel power" (Cross, 1987) has provided Whites (and some of their non-White immigrant group imitators) with the propertied means of bending the will and shaping the behavior of the relatively propertyless dependent Black Americans.<sup>26</sup>

In making reference to the work of Theodore Cross, Wilson borrows the following chart detailing America's history of racial quotas. (See chart on following page) In addition, the *Final Call Newspaper* features an article telling of those false pronouncements of "hard work" white America has made to justify their social and economic standing:

The foundation of American White supremacy sits tenuously on a rickety base of lies and deceptions about how Whites gained their wealth and status. A century and a half after slavery the median wealth of White families is \$100,000; for Blacks families, it's \$5000. The belief that Whites achieved this 20 to 1 wealth advantage by HARD WORK is an absurd and a historical fantasy. Nonetheless, the airwaves are filled with self-righteous pronouncements of Caucasian commentators anxious to "advise" Blacks to "work hard" and to "pull themselves up by their bootstraps" if they want to succeed in America. Not only do they seek to invent a fraudulent fairy tale that white washes a very bloody legacy, but they also aim to re-affirm the notion that "non-whites" are naturally

inferior and lazy and are thus responsible for having comparatively nothing. The truth is a whole lot nastier than that... The mechanisms of government and private industry that were constructed to specifically hamstring Black prospects for success after slavery are extraordinary. In harmony, government and private industry, and all sectors of American society, instituted a series of White Affirmative Action programs for the benefit of WHITE EURO-AMERICANS ONLY, programs which gave them material advantages that had nothing whatever to do with either merit or “hard work.”<sup>27</sup>

Armed with this knowledge, it was Malcolm who was the socioeconomist and better understood the inner-workings of America’s capitalist system. His call for separation was a call to the Pan-African nation to essentially do as Garvey had instructed—to free ourselves of the physical and mental chains of European imperialism.

[Malcolm] clearly understood that this system is rigged against the political, economic and cultural interests of... the Afro-American socialist because it was impossible to be a capitalist without being a racist... His foreign experience had led him to see that the Afro-American problem is a part of a “system,” both domestic and international, in which there is a vital relationship between capitalism, colonialism, and racism. He became convinced that the capitalist system fosters racism and uses it as an instrument of economic exploitation and political subjugation. The system establishes a colonial relationship between a dominant and subordinate group that is sustained by police brutality, calculated to keep the subjugated people terrified and psychologically castrated.<sup>28</sup>

<b><i>AMERICA’S LONG HISORY OF 100 PERCENT RACIAL QUOTAS IN FAVOR OF WHITES</i></b>	
<b>For 300 years the American colonies, the States and Federal Government Allotted Untold Billions of Dollars of Public Wealth Exclusively to Members of the White Race.</b>	
1675—	Massachusetts Bay Colony cedes plantation rights in six-square mile tracts to “worthy” individuals. The population of the Colony included Black slaves as well as free Blacks. Neither were treated as “worthy” individuals eligible for land grants.
1683—	Maryland and Virginia establishes fifty-acre land grants to settlers who pay their own way across the Atlantic. Blacks were given a free ride in slave ships and thus were not eligible for grants.
1785—	The Federal Ordinance of 1785 authorizes the sale of 640-acre tracts to settlers for \$1 per acre. As slaves, Blacks were legally prohibited from owning property.

1800—	The federal government establishes liberal credit privileges in western territories for buyers of public land at a price of \$1 an acre. Slaves not eligible and free Blacks generally considered unworthy of credit.
1830—	The Federal Preemption Act grants land settlers rights to purchase up to 160 acres each at \$1.25 per acre. The vast majority of Blacks are still slaves and ineligible to own property. No evidence of significant participation by free Blacks.
1850—	The beginning of the massive federal land grant program for private railroad companies. Outright awards of 130 million acres frequently include property for twenty miles on either side of roadbeds. These lands later found to contain billions of dollars of petroleum and mineral reserves. Black businessmen never considered qualified to acquire, finance, or operate railroad franchises.
1862—	The Homestead Act grants settlers 160-acre tracts of federal lands without charge. Over 250 acres of public lands transferred almost exclusively to whites in the most important land program in American history. Negro claimants blocked by lynch mobs, intimidation and refusals of local authorities to protect their claims.
1889—	In the celebrated Oklahoma Land Rush, 150,000 white settlers scramble to claim the choicest tracts of land. Savage lynchings, KKK terrorism and Jim Crow legislation kept Negroes out. Later the heirs and successors of white settlers were to discover billions of dollars of petroleum resources on these lands.
1920—	The Mineral Leasing Act authorizes the federal government to lease public land for the exploration of oil, gas, and other minerals. Affluent Negroes need not apply. Race discrimination in public awards was the established policy of the federal government in the 1920s.
1926—	The Federal Air Commerce Act authorizes the granting of monopoly air routes to qualified aviators. The nation's airlines are born. Twenty thousand white pilots learned their trade in the rigidly segregated World War I Army Corps ensuring that the ownership of commercial aviation would be lily white.
1927—	The Federal Radio Act authorizes the award of radio station broadcast franchises to private citizens. Under settled policy of the federal government, no grants were made to Negroes. Radio broadcast licenses currently valued in the billions now held almost exclusively by whites.
1939—	The Federal Communication Commission issues the first licenses for television broadcast station. No grants made to Negroes until token awards of the late 1970s. In 1980, all television franchises, valued at \$5 million to \$10 billion held exclusively by whites.
1941—	Government contracting becomes a major in the sales revenues, and profits of private enterprises. Race discrimination in government contract awards becomes the official policy of the United States government. During the years 1941 to 1980, approximately \$3 trillion in contract awards were made almost exclusively to white-owned firms.

Malcolm's cry: "By any means necessary" was a mirror he put up to the white world and instructed the Black world that it would have to do to Europeans what they had done to us in order for us to get ahead in a capitalist society. Some have interpreted this as a call to arms, while others to mean if it meant flooding their communities with dope to poison their children's futures, or distorting their educational processes, etc.—so be it!

"Well," some will say, "we have made progress without having to resort to such schemes. After all we have a Black president now. Certainly, this evidences a *post-racial* America?" Conversely, Professor Michelle Alexander of Ohio State University notes:

I think individual black achievement today masks a disturbing, underlying racial reality. You know, to a significant extent... affirmative action, seeing African Americans... go to Harvard and Yale, become CEOs and corporate lawyers... cause us all to marvel [at] what a long way we have come.

But... much of the [statistical] data indicates that African Americans today, as a group, are not much better off than they were back in 1968 [ ] [w]hen Martin Luther King delivered his... “The Other America” speech [.] [t]alking about how there are two Americas in the United States. One where people have great opportunities and can dream big dreams, and another America where people are mired in poverty and... stuck in a permanent second-class status. Those two Americas still exist today. But the existence of Barack Obama and people of color... scattered in positions of power and high places... creates an illusion of much more progress than has actually been made in recent years.<sup>29</sup>

These comments indeed put in perspective the “auto kinetic” effect of progress. Thus, and in spite of Obama’s nomination as the president of the United States—and that’s indeed an accomplishment not to be understated, Black Americans need to take note of the foregoing statistics and Professor Alexander’s comments. For they reveal to us what the late Paul Robeson (1898-1976) so poignantly reflected upon in stating: “It means so little when a [Black] man like me wins some success. Where is the benefit [for the greater Black community] when a small class of Negroes makes money and can live well? It may be encouraging, but it has no deeper significance.”<sup>30</sup>

As a Black man sits in the White House, Black inequality on several levels— income, mass incarceration, health—remains, and I do not think the cause of Dr. King was solely to get Black faces in high places, but to improve the conditions of all people, prominently Black people.<sup>31</sup> There are approximately 33 million Black Americans in the United States. Twenty-four percent of them are living in conditions of abject poverty. This equates to some 7,920,000 of Obama’s brothers and sisters who are subject to the pains of poverty created by capitalism. Now take that number and pair it with other people of color living in poverty and surely this figure fills the cities of Chicago, Oakland, Los Angeles, Memphis, Houston, and several others throughout the nation.

With numbers like this it’s difficult to buy into the claim of Black progress in America. Here, we must ask ourselves: How has King’s “Dream” of an integrated America uplifted the Black community? How has an integrated school system—a system that notably caters to the formation of a superior mindset for white Americans while inhibiting those of Black Americans—uplifted the Black community?

The questions presented here are not made to prompt Black America to reconsider separation from whites. We are in too deep at this point. Rather, these questions are asked to prompt us to seriously reflect on what has or has not been accomplished in the Black community over the past 50 years; to reflect on the fact that people can draw from the same sources of information, education if you will, yet come away with an entirely different experience that often leaves them with nothing tangible to solve the problems before *their* community. To this end, Dr. Akbar notes:

We are in a world where we have all been well trained, but not very well educated. We boast of our degrees but our degrees do not equip us to deal more effectively with our environment. Our degrees equip us to act more in accord with the way we have been taught to act. Yet and still, we have PhD's in excess in our community and they still cannot solve the problems facing our communities; we have lawyers, J.D.'s, PhD's in political science and they cannot solve the organizational problems in our communities. They can go to some other's courthouse, or legislature, or some other people but they cannot solve our problems. We have MA's, MS's, MBA's, all kinds of educated people; but they are still incapable of stimulating business in our communities. We have teachers who are trained with all the latest technology and techniques of reading and writing instruction, and yet they tell us now that they cannot teach little Johnny how to read....<sup>32</sup>

“Knowledge,” Haki R. Madhubuti writes, “if it is indeed useful, must lead one to an active consciousness; creative and productive mind-set; a *doing* and problem-solving life-style; an environmentally conservation approach to nature; a sharing and loving presence among children and others’ and the *will* to find and be an example of an enlightened person who is seeking wisdom.”<sup>33</sup>

In light of what Madhubuti, Akbar, Wilson, Du Bois, and others have put to us here, it's obvious that Black Children and children of color are not being educated in American schools, rather trained. Trained in exploitation; trained in destruction; and trained in servitude. That said, we really need to examine that eleven percent drop in poverty. We must ask ourselves just how it is that our adoption (i.e., our assimilation) of white values, systems of education and economy have served the social and economic needs of our community? We must ask ourselves: At what point will we cease sacrificing our futures to King's “Dream,” when King himself, in the last year of his life, realized the “Dream” would not work in a capitalist society. When are we going to accept America for what it is—a highly competitive, a highly racialized, and highly capitalist system where big fish eat little ones. Having said this, I personally believe it's high time that Black folk quit the “Dream”—stop making America a better place for other people, and start making it a better place for themselves by getting their head in the *Game* as Malcolm instructed.

## ***WE HAVE DROPPED THE DREAM OR HAVE WE CHOSE TO FORGET***

Somberly I sit in the early morning hours of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, my heart heaved by the notions that this generation (my generation) has squandered and defiled such a powerful and brilliant legacy. A legacy handed to us by Ancestors whose talents, hard work and sacrifices shaped and formed the very civilization now enjoyed by every race of people throughout the entire world. Indeed, the gifts and achievements inherited by current generations from our forefathers are immeasurable, and to their

memories we owe no less than Millenniums of unquestioned unity and goodwill. Yet, the self-imposed apartheid and systematic self-destruction contaminating our households and inner cities have blinded us to the painful struggles and life lessons of the past 400 plus years.

***WE HAVE DROPPED THE DREAM  
OR HAVE WE CHOSE TO FORGET***

Too many of our more brilliant Brotha's and Sista's have traded their unmatched creativity for crack or other equally disenfranchising drugs, just as many more have abandoned the hope and self-determination which once sprang eternal from deep within all of us. Even our own Scholars and Philosophers of African decent have united and written, in their opinions that: "The most significant challenge facing African Americans here early on in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century is... the creation of 'new' methods to provide positive and meaningful leadership, guidance to a generation of Brotha's and Sista's who often find it trendy to be misled, misguided and even disgraced!" Additionally, Professor Cornel West wrote: "The major threat to Blacks in America today is not the semblances of oppression, but rather the loss of hope and the absence of meaning!"

***WE HAVE DROPPED THE DREAM  
OR HAVE WE CHOSE TO FORGET***

Today, when I close my eyes the shadowy images of my stolen Ancestors locked in the hauls of slave ships play on the back of my eyelids like full colored movies. I can hear and feel their painful cries echoing across the cotton and tobacco fields of the old South. But, just as quickly as my vision began I'm too often thrust toward this tasteless reality by the dissonance to today's negative rap tunes or plots, and I ask myself: "Have I alone inherited the painful sounds and visions of the African Holocaust? Can I be the only one who dares to remember? Or have the Brotha's and Sista's of this generation (my generation) simply chosen to forget?"

***WE HAVE DROPPED THE DREAM  
OR HAVE WE CHOSE TO FORGET***

Sitting here today chronicling my thoughts, I mentally raise my clenched fist to the memories of countless Africans and African Americans whose unselfish sacrifices and steadfast determination vicariously enabled me to nourish my hunger and thirst for knowledge, and to fully realize the importance of truly liberated thoughts. The list of my most honored, cherished Philosophers, Intellectuals and Role Models tempered from the thrusts of adversity continues to grow, but currently include the likes of Marcus Garvey, Booker T. Washington, Dr. Franklin Frazier, Frederick Douglas, W.E.B. Du Bois, Ralph Bunche, Nat Turner, Edward W. Blyden, Malcolm X and Betty Shabazz, Martin Luther King Jr., Harriet Ross Tubman, Sojourner Truth, Frannie Lou Hamer, Nelson and Winnie Mandela, Thurgood Marshal and the team of Black Attorneys who successfully litigated *Brown v. Board of Education*, the courageous Black Panther Party and countless others without who's struggles I'd be

much less than what I am. To that end, I (we) owe each of them a debt of gratitude beyond measure.

And, if for no other reason than those carefully articulated above, the dream in (me) must live on, and the legacy (we) inherited will remain strong. Long live the dream!

—*Kenneth Lynn Moore*

### ***THE EDUCATION INDUSTRY***

Education is a public good in the strict sense of commodity. Unlike private goods—material items sold for profit—public goods, arguably, are difficult to manage and equate into profit. However, like all things American that doesn't mean a price cannot be attached to them. Thus, education—that is, raw knowledge—must be compartmentalized and packaged so as it fits into the capitalist scheme of profitability. Profitability, not inasmuch as what the receiving party is to gain by acquiring it, but rather more of which the industry of education is to gain by peddling degrees and certifications. Here, we must understand how it is that the “training” and “banking” concepts of education that Dr. Akbar and Freire speak of work to the advantage of the educational industry's monetary gain.

Freire provides that people are adaptable, manageable beings who generally accept the world as it has been put to them with little to no resistance or questioning. Here, his theories greatly assist to provide understanding as to how it is that majority of people in industrial societies are made dependent upon the fluctuations and educational demands (i.e., training) of the market economy. By simply conditioning society to be dependent upon the various material comforts, goods and services offered in the market economy there develops occupational roles, which in turn create the need for occupational training. It is in this way that the educational industry is able to attend this need and turn a profit.

To accommodate this industry we are conditioned from birth, from K-12 to rely on a facilitator. Here, emphasis must be placed on the fact that this is not a matter of nature taking course. Rather, people who seize upon our natal dependency of others who put to us the concepts of the world as they have either accepted it themselves or created it with the intent of influencing us to become working components of their endeavors. In either case we are made to exhaust countless resources and years of attendance crowding the halls of costly “training” facilities (i.e., the numerous vocational schools, colleges, etc. of contemporary study which number in excess of the tens of thousands) because we have failed to take the initiative to self-educate, self-evaluate, and conceive from our intuition. And to think, the same books and education that we pay for can be found for free at the public library. Because of this, and this alone, we will be made to return again and again so as to enhance our training once it no longer suits the demands of the market.

Consider, for example, how the rapid advancement of computer technology during the 1980s forced the industrial worker to return to school obtain the necessary skill-set for gainful employment. Here, I must digress to mention how the development of the PC, Internet, and wireless communication has ushered in the Information Age that today has information at our figure tips. With the dramatic



increase in the availability of computer technology there would be a systematic implementation of computer “training” at every level of the work force and America’s educational structure from K-12.

Here marks the beginning of an era, as in the age of industrialization, where the nation’s educational infrastructure was again out-fitted to accommodate the market demands of technology. Consequently, the education industry would not only assist to train an effective “work force,” but so too stimulate the consumption of this technology.

As with other institutions, the institution of education that Americans rely upon to train their children is instrumental in the formation of human capital that’s to be exploited by American Big Business. Education for the capitalist is yet another form of investment that increases the availability of highly skilled, imaginative and creative human resource. Accepted as such, what has been labeled as education is in all actuality “training” that tends to be nothing more than an expendable exercise of contemporary value to our exploiters. This explains in part why college dropouts like Bill Gates and Mark Zuckerberg create charities that donate large amounts of money to support the American educational industry.

I liken American education to a raw product because it has come to symbolize an integral part of social and capital gain. It’s been fashioned as the most fundamental requirement to achieving the AmeriKKKan Dream. Its material worth, thereby, solidifies its commerce in the markets of the mind—the currency of knowledge. This age old fact can be traced to the earliest etchings of history. We find in ancient Athens, for example, a dilemma that would arise as consequence to education being commodified. As the story goes a free Greek teacher and Roman father, who evidently was caught between a rock and a hard place when trying to decide between the quality of his son’s education and its inordinate expense, negotiate: “How much will you charge to teach my son?,” the father asked Aristippus. “A thousand drachmae,” replied Aristippus, who obviously had a high opinion of his worth. “But I can buy a slave for that,” returned the father, to which the sharp-witted Aristippus rejoined: “Then you will have two slaves—your son and the one you buy!”<sup>34</sup> What this serves to notice us to is the leverage the endowed have in extorting the less endowed to obtain training.

For America this relationship would begin to take shape during the era of industrialism. While formal and secondary education had long been available to the privileged classes, with industrialization came the need to educate (i.e., train) the masses. For the children of all races were to be trained in the kind of industrial occupations that would serve the industrialist market and capitalist needs.<sup>35</sup> These were the market forces noted throughout history that constructed schools like Tuskegee Institute and those mentioned elsewhere that catered to Black Americans. During the late 19<sup>th</sup> onto the early years of the twentieth-century Du Bois would write of the matter in *Souls of Black Folk*:

...from 1885 to 1895, began the industrial revolution of the South... The educational system striving to complete itself saw new obstacles and a field of work ever broader and deeper. The Negro colleges, hurriedly founded, were inadequately equipped, illogically distributed, and of varying efficiency and grade; the normal and high schools were doing little

more than common-school work, and the common schools were training but a third of the children who ought to be in them, and training these too often poorly. At the same time the white South, by reason of its sudden conversion from the slavery ideal, by so much the more became set and strengthened in its racial prejudice, and crystallized it into harsh law and harsher custom; while the marvelous pushing forward of the poor white daily threatened to take even bread and butter from the mouths of the heavily handicapped sons of the freedmen. In the midst, then, of the larger problem of Negro education sprang up the more practical question of work, the inevitable economic quandary that faces a people in transition from slavery to freedom, and especially those who make that change amid hate and prejudice, lawlessness and ruthless competition.

The industrial school springing to notice in this decade, but coming to full recognition in the decade beginning with 1895, was the proffered answer to this combined educational and economic crisis, and an answer of singular wisdom and timeliness. From the very first in nearly all the schools some attention of singular had dignity that brought it in direct touch with the South's magnificent industrial development, and given an emphasis which reminded black folk that before the Temple of Knowledge swung the Gate of Toil.

Yet after all they are but gates, and when turning our eyes from the temporary and the contingent in the Negro problem to the broader question of the permanent uplifting and civilization of black men in America, we have a right to inquire, as this enthusiasm for material advancement mounts to its height, if after all the industrial school is the final and sufficient answer in the training of the Negro race; and to ask gently, but in all sincerity, the ever-recurring query of the ages, Is not life more eagerly because of sinister signs in recent educational movements. The tendency is here, born of slavery and quickened to renewed life by the crazy imperialism of the day, to regard human beings as among the material resources of a land to be trained with an eye singled to future dividends.<sup>36</sup>

These industrial training camps would in time make wage slaves of not only Blacks, but so too the entire white lower class. Here I must digress to say: for the best of me I cannot figure out how it was that leaders in the Black community were persuaded to primarily focus on industrial education. It just don't add up. How was it that the freedmen, previously slaves and thus master of all trades, were now striving to make an industrial skill-set the focus of their educational institutions? It makes absolutely no sense to pursue training in something you have had a monopoly on for over 400 years.

By the end of the Second World War the growing demand for a specific skill-set gave equal, if not greater impetus to the notion of monetary exchange for skill development and certification. With the call to war multi-billion dollar defense contracts would be awarded to the nation's builders of war machines and technology. Subsequently, this transformed the work force overnight to become dependent upon wartime industry and the particular skill-set germane to furthering America's foreign

endeavors. As a matter of course the particular skill-set required was (as it is today) prompted by warmongering politicians and businessmen who controlled the markets and economy of war. Notably, the history of capitalism, as taught by Marx and those who came before him (n.b., Comte Henri de Saint-Simon (1760-1825), François-Marie-Charles Fourier (1772-1837), Welshman Robert Owen (1771-1858), had taught these men that to control technology was to control the markets and thus control the livelihood of the masses and what they were to be instructed on in American schools. It is in this way that technology, the markets, the work force and America's educational institutions are but the tools of capitalism.

Thus, it was inevitable that with the industrialization of America the nation's educational institution would be built upon capitalist values and attitudes that in time would come to dominate and compromise the intent of education. For the aims of this educational structure came to be what Frantz Fanon so aptly described as "nothing but the re-establishment and re-enforcement of values and institutions of a given society." In this case, a capitalist society!

The question now turns to: How is it capitalist values and attitudes compromise the integrity of the educational process? Here, we must understand the ways to which society's values, goals, and ideas are shaped by American institutions in order to grasp how they organize and promote and benefit capitalist aims. Here, one must first ponder what set of circumstances or factors give rise to potential profits when considering the character and intent of this industry from a capitalistic perspective? Immediately, what comes to mind is a given considering the title of this section which directs us to rationalize education in the context of a commodity, an article of trade, a raw but abstract material or product to be exchanged at an incurred cost that has been deemed "necessary" by market forces and the belief that education is available by only attending American schools.

In a capitalist economy it is true that education is necessary to uplift one's social and/or economic standing. However, the point here is to bring attention to the misgivings purported by the educational industry. Here, we must view with distrust the aims of this industry and the emphasis generally placed on attending one of its many "training" facilities in light of the history Du Bois has provided. I say this not because we do not "learn" within them, but because of "what" we do not learn about them having such a powerful and pulling affect on the development of our values, ideas, and objectives. As this suggests, these institutions affect our ability to "think" independently of the curriculum laid out before us. In other words, they teach us what to think and not how to think; what to learn instead of how to learn. By following such a directive we mindlessly become assets to the capitalist endeavor.

That said, we must observe the power wielded over society by America's politicians and businessmen. As industrial history has shown they have a profound ability to shape our values, goals, roles, and personality structures. Unquestionably then, they wield the ability to shape our conscious. To this end Wilson provides:

... consciousness is about power, whether as generated and exercised by oneself and/or others. It is the medium by which the individual and others control his state of being and behavior. To the degree that others shape and direct the individual's consciousness, to that degree is his state of being and *behavior* under their control... In sum, consciousness is an instrument

of social control and power. It is the means by which personal and social behavior is controlled. *Hence, the society and culture, particularly those who represent and direct the consciousness of each of the society's and culture's members in ways which maintain their integrity and advance their... interests.* It is through its shaping and directing of individual consciousness that the society achieves social control, i.e., power over individual consciousness thereby becomes the society's instrument of social control.<sup>37</sup>

Ultimately, what is of chief importance to the nation's politicians and businessmen—we are incidentally informed of by Peter J. Burke and Jan E. Stets' *Identity Theory*:

... what maintains the patterned and coordinated flows and transformations of resources... is the functions that individuals provide through their behavior and the organization of that behavior... [T]he basic operation of identities is a control system seeking to match perceptions (inputs) [indoctrinated by the training process] with standards [set by politicians and businessmen] ... [B]oth perceptions and standards are coded in terms of meaning, both sign meanings and symbol meanings [e.g., diplomas, degrees—equal wealth]. The fundamental action of identities is, therefore, to alter situations in such a way that the meanings of the signs and symbols that are perceived in the situation match the meanings held in the identity standard... [Thus], identities using persons as their agents maintain the patterned and coordinated flows of resources. *Identities (not persons) are responsible for the vast network of resource transfers and transformations.*<sup>38</sup>

Similar sentiment has been provided by Wilson:

Identity as a personal or collective phenomena is as much, if not more, a political-economic entity as it is a purely social or psychological entity. As a political economy, identity is an organization of interests, tastes, desires, passions, ideals, motives, values, knowledge, abilities, skills, etc., the pursuit, satisfaction, exercise and realization of which helps to maintain the social power relations, social prerogatives and the integrity of social, political, economic systems which characterize a particular culture and its status quo. Thus, in both commercial and noncommercial sense an ethnocultural group trades on its identity. This is the case because the individual's personality is formed by and reflects the political, social and economic character of the culture and society into which he is born and nurtured. Societies and cultures socialize individuals to adapt to, contribute to, and to operate in their unique socio-economic system.<sup>39</sup>

Here lies the true definition of power—the ability to create and control the identities and behaviors of mankind. As noted in Thomas Dye's *Power and Society*: "... the most important bases of stratification in a modern industrial society are the different

roles that individuals play in the economic system. Individuals are ranked according to how they make their living and how much control they exercise over the livelihood of others.”<sup>40</sup> For these reasons we must always remain mindful of the fact that the directives set about by America’s educational industry lie at the footstep of the nation’s business interests, which in turn control the message of its politicians. For as Wilson points:

The exercise of power by the White male elite at the political-economic level entails the domination and manipulation of the governmental and economic systems by that group to control the behavior and attitudes, limit the interests, shape the experiences and thereby the consciousness of others. The exercise of power at the ideological level refers to the control over and manipulation of the symbolic environment, i.e., the creation, definition and presentation of language, image and symbols by the elite in order to determine or influence the character, range and behavioral expression of consciousness of others. Thus, the ruling elite needs to control or heavily influence the media, educational curricula and institutions, and all-important informational sources and services if its manipulation of the symbolic environment is to be effective....<sup>41</sup>

\* \* \*

With the commodification of education there would develop a need to distinguish the quality and degree of it. That is, the level of achievement a student had obtained and in what institutions had he or she studied in. This allowed for the façade of superior and inferior instruction. In other words, there was now education for the haves and education for the have-nots.

The quality of a student’s education would come to be associated with the availability of resources (e.g., human and social capital, technology, facilities). Here the availability or lack thereof these resources (n.b., the facilitators), would create barriers in the communicating of information needed to develop one’s conscious. We find here the origins of what sociologist today define as a stratified educational system.<sup>42</sup> In short, with the creation of these barriers—whether real or abstract—developed inequalities in the educational experience. This, in turn, formed the basis of knowledge—that is, the sociology of knowledge, which is defined as the relationship between the knowledge people acquire in their respective environments and social structures.

Note the expectations, attitudes, and inequalities that tend to develop given the educational experience afforded at an Ivy League college compared to those at your local state university or junior college. While there is a considerable amount of prestige associated with the former of these institutions, we need not assume the fact that because they are better funded that they necessarily afford a far more superior educational experience. What often gives them the edge is the fact that they are able to attract esteemed instructors and leading professionals from around the world.

Take for example Stanley McChrystal who now teaches at the University of Yale. Prior to his tenure at Yale he was a high-ranking general in the United States military who advised the president. Such an mentorship esoterically and egotistically cultivates the elitist attitude necessary to assume position amongst America’s leading CEOs, scholars, and politicians due to the fact that

[t]he “virtues” of classes are consciously and institutionally cultivated. The similarity and relative exclusivity of the educational and socialization experiences of key members of the ruling elite are two of the major means by which they are prepared to exercise power and authority in the interests of their class. Generally, it is in the early childhood, primary and secondary educational establishments, as well as in the under-graduate, graduate and post-graduate institutions attended almost exclusively or predominately by members of the ruling elite, where they learn the rules, behaviors and social abilities which prepare them to wield social power.

This distinctive education continues through private elementary schools, boarding schools and a handful of heavily endowed private schools and universities, e.g., Harvard, Yale, Princeton, and the like. Education at these institutions is not necessarily superior to that of lesser prestigious or public institutions, and is often inferior to the latter relative to the development of technical abilities. However, as Cookson and Persell (1985) contend, acceptance into these schools is tantamount to acceptance into an exclusive private club where shared attitudes, beliefs, lives and a sense of “character” and collective identity are forged through training and social encounters. As Domhoff argues, “The separate educational system [or set of related educational experiences] is important evidence for the distinctiveness of the mentality and lifestyle that exists within the upper class for schools play a large role in transmitting the class structure to their students.” Upper-class schooling provides the members of that class with *rationales and justifications for socio-economic inequality* and aids them in the acquisition of styles of behavior and social relations that legitimate unequal relationships, prerogatives and privileges. In addition, they provide the educated upper-class members with “legitimate” authority to exercise the power they already possess and to acquire new powers when necessary.<sup>43</sup>

As for the students of state run universities? They are likely to become the middle- and lower-class footfalls of the elite simply because their famished funded public education is devoid of such mentorship. They are “dumb[ed] down” and made to feel less important so as they are content with assuming the under-class positions of the work force.

Again, what we have here is a stratified educational system at work. From our earliest involvement in this system we are manipulated with myths, symbols and rituals. Take for example how “credentialism”—the pattern of accepting the formal symbols of educational achievement (e.g., degrees and diplomas)—creates the illusion of educational achievement.<sup>44</sup> Here, the myth creates in the mind of the degree holder a fiction. Its powerful and pulling affect on society’s conscious creates a value system based on the perspective that degree holders are “educated” and non-degree holders are not. The assumption ignores the fact that anyone can become an expert of any subject by being selective in his or her reading. Nevertheless, generally what comes to mind when assessing an individual’s educational background is diplomas and degrees. This is “credentialism” at work to preserve the status quo. For

these symbolic instruments both convey and veil suggestions that limit or determine selectively the individual's information supply. Moreover, by strategically rewarding the degree holders with better paying jobs and withholding them from non-degree holders, the job market further influences society's behavior in ways that are in sync with the interests of the education industry to peddle degrees.

With each passing year the argument is made that it makes absolutely no sense to reduce the budget for public education. The perspective here is one developed in (or looking up from) the lower strata of the educational structure. From the top looking down it makes perfect sense because by design of controlling resources or creating an atmosphere conducive to the development of an unhealthy self-image and poor information supplies, a reduced budget effectively negates the student's ability to obtain, advance, and exercise knowledge.

Here, I must digress to say that this, for Black Americans, has been made out to be yet another tactical ploy to reduce the prospects of a quality education. But when have we ever been afforded such?—that is unless we provided it for ourselves as in the case with Malcolm X. That said, we need to adjust our lenses so as we can recognize the calamity of public education. Otherwise, we will continue to suffer the effects of miseducation, which effectively limits our necessary role in the *Blueprint* that regulates humankind to menial tasks.





## CHAPTER 6

### “THE TERRIBLE BEAUTY OF HIP HOP” [THE INSTITUTIONALIZATION OF SOCIETY VI]

*I knew her from... modest means  
some say she was born in Queens—FITTING!  
'Cause from Her loins came royalty—SOVEREIGNTY.  
She took ordinary people, made them regal  
With a lethal speech, lit to the streets  
Seduced MC's and flirted with beats*

*Her causes evolved from lightheartedness to political charges.  
She spoke to our sons and daughters—made martyrs of men  
Made us look smarter.*

*We protected Her when others rejected Her...  
Disrespected Her...*

*And called Her names like “trend” and “fad”  
Said she didn't have the body of Jazz  
Hadn't paid Her dues like Blues  
She was taboo like FUBU—FOR US BY US.*

*But—*

*Soon she bloomed beyond those smoky rooms  
We could no longer invoke Her on corners  
She went from every 'hood to Hollywood  
From house and street parties to record release parties  
She found Her niche as a 'Gangster's Bitch'  
Made it Easy for Niggas With an Attitude  
—Blood, Cuz, Folks and Peoples,  
and the Gods too*

*Women became bitches*

*Ordinary men became extraordinary men with the power of a pen.  
She glorified the killas,  
Identified with the dealers*

*She even had white boys in supermarkets calling themselves niggas,  
...or wiggas*

*It used to be the material was literal  
Now the content should pay homage to the pretext  
Record execs pick and choose—  
Searching for talent in I.C.U.s  
Yeah you got skills,  
But where ya bullet wounds?  
How much dope have ya slain?  
How many men have ya slain?*

*The cycle of life,  
Social evolution  
She's the Revolution  
The new Charles Darwin  
Yet the question remains:  
To whom is the music harming?  
Hip Hop, I knew her well  
Even before Pac fell she was B.I.G.*

*And even though she flourishes,  
Some parts of Her are R.I.P.  
—that's OK with me  
'cause even as I mourn I can rewind...  
and push play  
My ode to Hip Hop*

**MY ODE TO HER**  
—Jimmy McMillan  
(a.k.a, "Nati")

**O**f all chapters this would be the one I especially struggled with to place in the context of the theme of this book. My struggle, I admit was rooted in my denial of the affect music has over our lives. A part of me simply refused to take issue with a form of art and culture that I am very much part of that has told of my struggles and staged acts played out in every 'hood the world over. With so much of the hype surrounding the debate about hip hop being a negative influence on my community, I was not ready to accept these criticisms, plain and simple! The way I saw it the world was full of critics who found something wrong with one of the most perfected art forms. So I had to put this chapter on the back-burner. I needed some time to seriously reflect on the issues. This was not simply about being another voice on the debate of hip hop's influence. Over the course of developing other chapters, this pause ultimately proved beneficial to handling her more objectively. That said, there was no way I could continue to ignore her influence. This was especially so given the attitude on the tier reflected anarchy, gangsterism, and misogyny. Being in prison, unquestionably, forced me to acknowledge there indeed is a connection between the music and these attitudes. This prompted me to ask myself: to what extent has the music been responsible for shaping these views? The answer we can only aspire to find within the pages of this chapter.

\* \* \*

*The Terrible Beauty of Hip Hop*, her flaws perfect her. I recall as if it were yesterday the excitement I felt having first heard her voice. It sent shockwaves through the community as if the gospel. It was powerful! And had been long awaited as it had traveled through history to arrive. African Spirituals had enlivened her; gave her a strong voice and character that shaped her aspirations; her conscience; her sound. It was a conscious sound that would go on to reinvent itself generation after generation; each carrying a part of her to remind us of her struggles.

The Blues would be her first offspring that told of America's empty promises of freedom and equality; of her pain and sufferings. By the 1940s she was with child again. She delivered to the world the sound of Charlie Parker, Thelonious Monk and Dizzy Gillespie who had inherited her creativity in form of fast tempos and complex harmonies of bebop. Thereafter, her soul was electrified as it transcended boundaries of race, geography, education, and politics. Black and white America had found itself at a crossroad, on the cusp of great change. They begin to mingle again. They danced the jitterbug together; christened the sound of Ella Fitzgerald, Dinah Washington, Lena Horne, Billie Holiday, and the big bands. She managed to put the Blues in R&B, and lindy-hopped well into the 1950s where Chuck Berry Rock-n-Roll[ed] her into an explosive sound that caught the ear of the likes of Elvis Presley, the Beatles, Eric Clapton, and others who put a white face on her sound. This, unquestionably, set

aflame her passions for a new genre of music which struggled until the 1960s to come around. Whereas, the likes of Gil Scott-Heron and the Last Poets dug deep into her soulful repertoire to take the rap from bebop and flow over explosive ballads which again echoed the struggles of the Blues—the injustices faced by Black America. They were insightful critiques about the nation’s wrongs, its hypocrisy and blood shedding. She had finally arrived as Gil Scott-Heron’s celebrated “The Revolution Will Not Be Televised” anointed him her godfather for his rhyming, socially conscious lyrics.

Yet before she could stand firm as a testament to Black genius, Vietnam threw her into the flame of foreign affairs. She wailed for peace and tranquility; freedom and equality; Power to the People! These were challenging times. So she escaped with a few lines of *girl*, played with some *boy* and slipped into a groove with P-Funk. This is where she began to unravel and gain notoriety for her funkadelic phase of musical madness, drugs, sex and urban violence. She stunk-up the air waves with Rick James, George Clinton, Bootsy Collins, Fat Back, and many others. Together, they were the tipping point of the evolution of her sound. By the late 1970s she had come down off the high to infuse more of the Motherland (i.e., the African drum) in her soul. She craved a lighter mood and thus took to house parties with DJ Cool Herc who employed the Sugar Hill Gang, Curtis Blow, Grand Master Flash, and many many others. It was all about good times. Then crack-cocaine hit the scene. She relapsed; got turned-out. This made her hard and promiscuous—a Gangsta Bitch! Again, the struggle had found her. Yet a part of her remained vocal—lashing out at the white world. A world full of hate and house niggas who sought to tame her because she was too outspoken and did not give a flying fuck about a token. So they corrupted her with drugs and money. As the years passed she grew beyond the ‘hood into a white world poisoned by greed. The sound of the siren they craved was sweet disaster to the community she wielded power over. She was used to corrupt Black souls some say; heaped on Black toils. This forced many to put her on the back-burner. As her flame blazed the inferno she became sparked *hot-ones* in the ghetto. Where she once enthralled and brought a great sense of joy, her nature had become destructive and adulterous. She was now a prostitute with white pimps who transformed her womb into a promiscuous enclave of violence to be unleashed on her community.

Without question, it was time to rethink what her critics were saying. Force myself to tear away from her siphon and handle her more objectively so as to find out what changed her, what down-loads she had been reprogrammed with with hopes of getting her back on track. After all she is the seed of the Black community; the promise of Black unity and most def’ the means to great opportunity. This is what I have come to realize is the driving force that leads me to defend her despite her imperfections.

### **HER INFLUENCE ON ME**

*Ahhh... Yeahhh... This lil' J. and the Geto Boys in this mutha once again. And we kicked the door in just like I told ya we would in '91 and '92. But you know there's a lot of people mad about our success. Such as, the D.E.A., I.R.S and other wicked people in high places.*

*You know when I was growing up, people used to tell me how dirty the system was. But I refused to be controlled by an ungodly system. So now they mad. And I'ma tell ya why. I was born in the ghetto, but I didn't allow myself to be systematized by the welfare system and the poverty that they try to handicap us with in the ghetto. I worked my ass off. I pulled brothas off the street. And together we built a multi-million dollar record company in a few years. I did it the way it was supposed to be done; behind lawyers and accountants to make*

*sure everything was done legally. But, there's still one problem—I'm Black! So those people whom I referred to earlier feel like, uh, I done something wrong and escaped all the traps set for us in the ghetto.*

*They really uh, upset with me for helping my brotha get off the streets. Yeah, they would get down for theirs. So you know what they say, "Those guys at Rap-A-Lot must be doing something wrong. Because, uh, there's no way a group of niggas from the ghetto can run a multi-million dollar business."*

*But see, it's all a conspiracy against Geto Boys all over the world to keep us down. But cha know what? It's our time and we can't be stopped until "Death Do Us Part." So keep supporting Rap-A-Lot. Because the only kind of dope we selling is dope CDs and cassettes. Yo Beedoe, Scarface, Big Mike, and Bushwick give me some of that ghetto dope processed in 5th Ward Texas.*

**—James Prince  
CEO, Rap-A-Lot Records**

POP-LOCKIN', WINDMILLIN', AND DOING THE CENTIPEDE, there I was about nine or ten years-old and country as country could be. A childhood friend, Jason King, and I had squared-off on the corner with a small audience to do our thing. With cardboard box dance floors laid about, we popped, spun and fed our egos as the rawest of the raw when it came to breakdancing. I was Ozone and he was Turbo. It was the early '80s and if you weren't breakdancing you was a square. Herbie Hancock had set-it-off, taking jazz instrumentals and breaking them down to give us a beat to groove to. If these writings were score, hands down hip hop's anthem would be his dynamic instrumental song "Rockit." Some may argue it was DJ Cool Herc's Jamaican dance hall and turntable mixes that christened hip hop. Whether it was Herbie Hancock or DJ Cool Herc, they both were the evolutionists of the time whose technique caught on like a wild fire as other music producers followed suit and began sampling the instrumentals of every imaginable form of music from rock to reggae. Together, they gave birth to that funkified sound and bass line we would for years to come shake our ass to.

With this sound we needed an accompanying delivery to take to the mic. Inspired by the Godfather of Rap, brothers had long since been rapping on street corners, barbershops, and in the gambling halls. It was a hip thing. And to be hip was to be cool. To be cool was to have style. And having style wasn't just about fine vines and strutting. It was also about being able to articulate one's verbiage with the lingo and metaphors of the time. At first the MCs were simple, fun-filled house party type of guys. The Fat Boys, Whodini, Biz Markie, and many others had us on a light note with their humor-laced raps. Then came the playa types like Big Daddy Kane, Slick Rick and Kool Moe D who took it to another level narrating their exploits with women in the 'hood. It was all about being a playa. Everybody was strutting about and macking as many honies as their *Game* could pull. Opposition came in the form of Queen Latifah, Salt-n-Pepa, Yo Yo, MC Lyte, and other feminist rappers who set the record straight on matters of respect and that the girls could be playas too. Eventually, others like KRS-One, Public Enemy, EPMD, etc., took to the mic to narrate their take on the politics of the day and of course what was happening in the 'hood. Some of them were conscious, while the rest would in time come to put the "G" in gangsta rap with their gutter narratives of the reality before them.

By the mid to the late 1980s breakdancing had come to an end. The sound had changed along with the culture in the 'hood. It became more aggressive and violent

with the coming of crack-cocaine. It hit hard and it hit heavy. The fun evaporated from the music. If it wasn't about violence, it was about the Benjamins. *Girl* made the plays of yesterday today's knocks and the beautiful sistas—strawberries. They melted away like crack on stems.

There I was in the midst of all this. Posted on Pa Pa Daddy's tractor in the backwoods of Boley, Too Short's "What's My Favorite Word" rap song had my head bobbing up-and-down as if a bobble-head doll. His portrayals of pimpin' hoes and slammin' Cadillac doors had me anxious to see what that pimpin' was really about. Over in Wewoka I had already knew a pimp or two by age twelve. I would see them driving their thoroughbreds on Cedar Street eating up pavement for payment. They were shrewd hustlas pulling truckers from I-40 with their Cadillacs outfitted with CB radios. Every now and then they'd let me crack one: "Breaker, Breaker, this lil' Gezmo on the 20—Cromwell exit for all you boys looking for Lady Red." To this day, I do not believe Pa Pa Daddy and my family in Boley ever knew that I had an entirely different concept of a stable other than the one he had.

Which one influenced me more?—Too Short or Cedar Street, I honestly can not say. But, you best believe I played that tape as if it were an instruction manual before the ribbon popped. And to think, I question whether rap music has influenced me?

Not long ago I decided to inquire of several fellow prisoners the question if rap music had in any way influenced them or their crimes? The brothers my age said it had not. They were in denial. Yet there was a youngsta from San Francisco who responded: "Listening to Too Short as a kid made me go hard on a bitch!" That said, his response forced us to pause for a moment to reflect on the fact that while some of us were not as impressible as this young man, the fact of the matter was rap music, like all music, was influential in our lives in both negative and positive ways. This became undeniably so when another prisoner stated in response to the question: "Listening to Chicano gangbanging rap really got in my head and had me 'on one' when it came to getting active."

Looking back over the years, I cannot deny how Run DMC was a gravitating force which prompted my purchase of Adidas from head-to-toe. Or how "I'm Bad" was an attitude and swagger L.L. Cool J. enlivened my childhood with mischief and a love for Kangols. And of course there was the Geto Boys and Kool Moe D who prepped me for the Wild Wild West" (coast) N.W.A. made mainstream flaunting that "Niggas With Attitude" the South had so perfected.

Somewhere in the mix of all this I vividly recall when "We Want Easy" made its 1988 video debut on MTV. A childhood friend, Brian Cheoats, and I were in Seminole, Oklahoma, on our way out the door when it aired. Immediately, I came to a halt and was instantly mesmerized seeing Easy E strut about the stage with girls screaming as groupies do. He, Dre, Cube, Ren, and Yella were working the crowd with mic's in hand, khaki suits and locs. "Now that's gangsta," I recall thinking. Then Brian interrupted with a sarcastic, "You like that shit!" This was only the sort of comment I could expect of him and the other white boys I knew at the time. Their whole life experience was Rock-n-Roll, Harley Davidsons and muscle cars with big wheels on the back. They were the classic Hells Angel type.

While indeed my world was influenced by the Rock, Harleys and muscle cars they impressed me with, there were other influences in my life that made N.W.A. relatable. Another childhood friend, Gangsta, and I were living out the "Dope Man"

track off N.W.A.'s *Straight Outta Compton* album. There we were fourteen year-old kids working the door at one of Preston Reese's (RIP) trap-houses in Wewoka for a measly forty dollars a night. And we had to split that! Gangsta would eventually square up after a few failed attempts to clock dollars on the side. But I was determined to be the next Nino Brown.

By the time the '90s rolled around I was an interstate trap-star in the making as Scarface and Bushwick Bill's lyrical portrayals told of my drug dealing activities. By '94, I was an ambitious twenty year-old kid hittin' the highway—I-40 West—to the Bay Area to see what them prices C-Bo and E-40 were rappin' about was really about. A thousand-and-one-grams of A1 yola was the come-up at thirteen-five wholesale. I recall how anxious I was to make it back home. Dreading the long bus ride a head, if not for playin' the numbers over-and-over in my head—maximizing profit off every gram burnt up at \$100 per gram—I would not have had the nerve to pull it off as I skated across states with a kilo of cocaine in my duffle bag.

Prior to my departure I had an experience that would sit my sights on another career path. The scene was Club LA in Berkeley, California, New Years Eve (1994-95). My Aunt Joy had managed to get my cousin, Elrather, and I and a few rappers from East Palo Alto V.I.P. passes for the club's grand opening. It was a hip hop spot. D-Shot and a few other members of E-40's Click were the life of the party. However, in the spirit of hip hop it was open mic. I entertained the notion of making my presence known. Like many young Black men at the time I had a few raps in the repertoire. Though, there was one problem—stage fright! My cousin prodded and prodded me to join in as they took to it like it was second nature. And take to it they did as the crowd rained in with approval. I was utterly impressed seeing how lil' Cuz, having moved to Cali when we were kids, was now rockin' the mic. At that very moment I knew this was something I wanted to be part of. Thereafter, I jumped on the bus with plans to stack a hundred racks and return to the Bay to do my J. Prince.

About fifty \$ack\$ into the *Game* I got put on a three year hiatus. Snoop Dogg's "Murder Was the Case" stunted my J. Prince as reports sounded off in the jungle. "Gang War" in Wewoka was the headline for statewide news. I went from lil' Gezmo to O.G. Gezmo caught up with a murder case. My tilt was surrounded in the a.m. and the entire block was lit up like a Christmas tree as a multi-county task unit lead by Chief O.S.B.I. agent K.P. Larsh and Seminole County Sheriff Charles Sisco bull horned for me to come out with my hands up! Visions of Malcolm X posted at the widow with the choppa ran through my head as I entertained the notion of suicide by cop. There could be no gunfight, however, because my wife and kids were in the house.

Thirty-six months later I got that fresh penitentiary glow. I'm a buck-95 swell off 315 lbs of iron, jackin' my khakis on tha block again 'bout to set tha trap up in every city from the East to the West Coast; but first to the Left Coast! So there I was doing the schoolboy thing O.G. and momma put me up on to adjust to the real world and be successful. I squared up a bit and was back on my J. Prince. Dre and Cuz in the lab spittin' bars. I'm in the cuts absorbing that music production *Game* from KB and Pierre on 23rd & East 14th (International Blvd., Oakland, California) Occasionally, LaRoo tha Hard Hitta would slide through reppin' Rap-A-Lot blowing trees. If not in the studio absorbing *Game*, I was in class engrossed in music business management or on a train headed to the Central Valley—Fresno State University—

with a duffle bag full of CDs and “grapes.” Unfortunately, my first project flopped. I was to gain invaluable insight on the problems of managing artists who were not committed to their projects.

Nevertheless, I’m serious about my J. Prince. So I’m making the hectic commute between Fresno on the weekends and Oakland and the ‘burg during the week to complete my final semester at Los Medanos before transferring to Cal Hayward. In between classes I’d usually walk over to my grandfather’s house to pay my respects. He lived about a mile from the college. Little would I realize that by taking this stroll my luck would take a turn for the better. So there I am going about my business one day headed back to my afternoon class. I’m walking along Stoneman Ave. and I could see up the way about a block behind the 7-Eleven on Leland Blv. someone was having car problems. As I approached I could see it was a young brother under the hood of a late model scrapper. Knowing a little something about cars I did my good samaritan and assisted him to get it started. Next thing you know we off to the college, I’m like “Folks, I got them good ‘grapes’ and a 1-800 pager number...” And the rest of the story goes: The doors swung wide giving me access to the elite of Bay Area rappers. For that young brother just so happened to be rapper Fed X of C-Bo’s *Mob Figaz*.

Next thing you know I’m *eating* off the El Pablo Projects, a.k.a. “Tha Low,” with the Low Mob and Fed X like: “I need a manager folks!” I do not know what was going on in my head at the time, maybe I was still recuperating from my last project that went bust. But the point was I did not take him up on the offer. Though, we remained in touch. Matter of fact, he would later introduce me to the Jacka of the *Mob Figaz* after clownin’ my mangled fade compliments of a local barber shop. Here’s where things begin to take off.

I’ve always heard the world is a small place. But never would I have believed it as small as it is until that day I’m sitting in the garage at the Jacka’s grandma’s house. So we over there and son like touching up my maimed fade. We blowing trees and rapping and what have you when the Jacka up and ask me where I’m from having noted my country twang. I run it down and to our surprise he like, “My grandma from Oklahoma!” Whereabouts?, I ask. “Let me go get her!” Next thing you know here comes this lil’ ole lady with a big, warm southern welcome: “Boy!, what parts of Oklahoma you from?” I tell her my roots in Boley, Wewoka, Bristow, and a few other spots between OKC and Tulsa. “Bristow!,” she exclaims, “that’s my home town... my sister lives there... who’s yo people?”

As to be expected coming from a small town in the South she knew just about everyone in my family and I her’s. It was a rap after that as we say. I was in! Every day, thereafter, the Jacka and I would match up on the trees and do it moving to a thirteen unit trap-house and clothing store I was setting up in West Oakland. Eventually, I would meet the rest of the *Mob Figaz*: Hussla, AP-9 and Riddah J. Klyde. Occasionally, we’d put our freestyles on the triple beam and I’d deliver every time. I recall one secession as we drove to San Francisco. Along the way the battle ensued between Hussla and I. Off some good grapes and drink, I surprised even myself as I ripped a freestyle so raw that Hussla had to resort to reciting prerecorded verses. (Years later Hussla and I found ourselves locked in a battle of another sort—prisoners faced off in a bull-tank in Santa Rita. I had just been convicted of first-degree murder and he was about to receive some time for trafficking birds) The votes

were in as Jacka responded with a: “Folks, I know you just didn’t come off the head with that. You had to write it?” Truth was I hadn’t and damn sho couldn’t recite it had I been offered a million dollar contract. These were some surreal times. There I was a country boy from the backwoods of Boley and Wewoka, Oklahoma ambitious and hungry in the midst of artist who at the time had a national success with their debut *Mob Figaz* album—and I was rippin’ Hussla apart! “You need to come to the studio,” Jacka said. This wasn’t the first time I had been told this. KB used to try and get me on the mic after I had dropped a few bars while Dre and Cuz were recording. Thing was I had lost my passion to be a rapper. Prison had changed my focus. My sights were now more than ever set on learning the fundamental aspects of the music business from the position of management, promotions and CEO. Hindsight now tells me I passed up on an opportunity of a life time. Seems like everybody was trying to put me on: Jacka, KB, Black C (from the RBL Posse), and more. Yet I was adamant about my J. Prince.

With this (i.e., promotions) Jacka was most helpful. He put me on the phone with everybody from Messy Marv to Keak Da Sneak—all of ‘em ready to tour the Chitlin’ Circuit. This is where I wanted to be—behind the scenes. Because this was where the real money was at the time (1998-2000). A close friend to the family in Oakland (Will) would take me up under his wing and show me this along with the executive order of the business. His family, especially his brother Baye, and he were also instrumental in my becoming acquainted with the shady streets of Oakland. Will had been in the *Game* for a while; did some fed time and was at least ten years my senior. When I first met him in ‘94, he was one of those fly ugly dudes gated-up with a finger wave perm and a gang of bad bitches jocking his *Game*. And *Game* he had plenty of from plastic to paper.

A lot had changed with Will since ‘94. He had undergone a kidney transplant. Some said his health had slowed him down. But I couldn’t tell. Yeah, he had cut off the perm and turned the pimpin’ down a notch or two. But when I popped back up in Oakland in ‘98 after the three year hiatus, it was Will who first introduced me to the who’s who of Oakland’s “Ghetto Fabulous.” Of course, while in his company I was V.I.P. with Shock G., Num Skull, Ager Man, and every act that toured the town. Even his brother-in-law, Bobby, turned me on to *Lakeside*, who he had a long time relationship with lead singer Mark. We’d kick it down in L.A. at the famous *House of Blues*. And then of course their were the hustlas Will knew I won’t mention who over the years seemed to pop up as a headline in the *Oakland Tribune Newspaper* for major narcotic busts.

Absorbing *Game*, Will would expose me to the fact that the distribution and promotional aspects of the music business were essentially the same as the distribution and promotional aspects of the narcotics trade I was all too familiar with. About this time the internet was taking off like a spaceship. Companies across the nation were rushing to build websites to promote and distribute their products by the thousands daily. Seeing how popular this internet thing was becoming, I had come up with this half-baked concept for a website where artists could upload and distribute their music. In the years since, I have watched (from this prison cell) as digital music and movie download and distribution internet companies have sold for the millions. Every day I kick myself in the ass for not taking Armon Garrett, Sr., a friend and



computer tech Will had introduced me to, up on his offer to bring my concept to life for free.

Having Will to thank for exposing me to the fact that the distribution and promotional aspects of the music business were fundamentally the same as the distribution and promotional aspects of the *Dope Game*, so too would Will expose me to the fact that the music business was just as shady and dangerous. I come to learn the hard way that in the independent record business most of the label owners who put the money behind the artist, if that be the case, are not the suit and tie type that will take you to court for fucking off their money. Rather, they are the pistol totting, will *smack* you for fucking off their money type. They have no understanding when it comes to taking a loss. This was a lesson that nearly cost me my life on a project I had assumed the assistant manager position next to Will.

Ray, an independent record label owner and owner of Phat Fades Barbershop in Oakland, had lost \$50,000 behind a group, *Dirty Looks*, he had obtained the assistance of Will and I to promote and manage. From jump I made it clear to Ray that I was not responsible for the product (i.e., CD units, T-shirts, etc.) management and preferred not to be dealing with Will on this. In no certain terms I suggested to him that I be given my own product and logs to manage. But no!, he was adamant that I go through Will. I respected the fact that he was trying to be professional with the whole arrangement. But so was I.

After arranging some radio play in OKC and Tulsa, I get at Will for some units, etc., for the station to give away and place on consignment at a couple record stores in the area. Shortly thereafter I return to Oakland and Will informs me that the project with Ray done went bust and there was some funk that needed to be dealt with. He went on to explain that Ray was pissed because the product logs had come up short and that one of the artists had flighted Ray's ho catcha with a knuckle-sandwich behind his refusal to pay the artist's contract of \$10,000. This lead to a shoot-out in broad-day light and things were now funky between him and Ray. It wasn't difficult to figure out why everything with Ray had gone bad. He was dealing with starving artists and he assumed he had been swindled by his manager.

"Ray don't understand that in this business when you're tryin' to create a buzz, you have to pretty much give units away for free," Will explained. I knew what Will was saying was true. Yet, Ray had no understanding of this and assumed that Will was skimming off the top and the back of every unit sold—if not simply pocking all the money. So there I was in the midst of this shit thinking: "I ain't been out the pen a good year and here we go with the dumb shit! It's about to get real gangsta."

About a month or so later I'm holding down the trap-house in West Oakland and grooming a couple bundle-boys for plans to setup shop out of state. We had just returned from Moe's Corner Store on 23rd & Telegraph when Ray's white jeep hit the corner coming to a screeching halt. He jumps out all Deebo (as in the movie *Friday*) demanding to know where his units and "fucking money!" My bundle-boys go for the guns. "HOLD UP!," I shout seeing what was about to go down. Turn it down a notch! Ray, what the fuck man! You asking me about this shit? "Will said you got like \$15,000 of my product," he responded. Hold up man! My name ain't signed on none of the product logs. And I have the consignment sheets and locations of the "units" I took responsibility for in my office. That ain't but a few racks worth. This is exactly why I attempted to make arrangements with you to account for my

own product... But nawl, you said go through Will. So holla at Will about that fifteen racks folks! After making a few phone calls and seeing that my records were on point, Ray turn down the Deebo and fired up a blunt as a peace offering.

\* \* \*

There's no questioning the negative and positive values infused into my life through the music and culture of hip hop. Just as there's no denying the destructive paths traveled on account of rap music glorifying the street life played out before me. I cannot deny how it impressed upon me an apprenticeship necessary to develop my keen business sense. This was no posh corporate apprenticeship. It was live and direct with challenging lessons of life and death with no misgivings. For it not only taught me the invaluable lessons noted above, but it also taught me how to navigate the shadiest elements of the streets and music business. It has taken me on field trips across the nation and U.S. borders to market and promote commodities of every imaginable sort from flesh to violence.

Moreover, because hip hop has done just as much to inform me as to why our 'hoods are so tore up as rap music has to influence me to tear shit up—hip hop has facilitated within me growth enough to take all the ill aspects and experiences so many of us entertain from *Projects-2-Prison* and explain their causes and cures within the pages of this book. The opportunities it has afforded me, needless to say, has allowed for me to get in on the ground floor with a legitimate hustle. Unquestionably, working in the music industry assisted to connect the dots between hustling in the streets and business on the up-and-up. It was a hustle and assisted me to accept the fact that hustlin' by any other name—be it hustling clothes and shoes at *Ive's One Stop Hip Hop Shop* in Oakland or selling CDs in Fresno—is still hustling, even if I was the product and had to sell myself within the pages of this book. It's the same *Game* with the same steps: acquiring and developing the product, promoting it, and keeping tabs on your sales and consumer market. No wonder it was at one time considered the new "*Dope-Game*." A new *Dope-Game* that I might say inspired the likes of Jay-Z in 1998 to take a group of virtually unknown rappers on a 18 city tour, in 18 days, and rake in 18 million dollars with his "Hard Knock Life Tour."

## **THE VOICE OF THE PEOPLE**

*In the midst of all this, an underground sub-culture emerged out of the South Brox. This mighty movement was called hip hop, it became our generation's version of the Civil Rights Movement. After years of being controlled and treated like lab rats, the Black community and inner-cities had a powerful voice once again. Slumbered minds awoke, after Melly Mell dropped "The Message," the era of the conscious mind was in full effect. Things in the inner cities had gotten so bad, that police wouldn't go into certain neighborhoods. Crimes would happen all the time and never get reported. So, while mainstream media turned their backs and ignored the problems happening, such as police brutality, the drug epidemic, poverty, etc. Public Enemy's Chuck D put it best, "Hip Hop is our CNN...." Boy, were they [i.e., white America] surprised when the art form spread like wildfire, became a world wide phenomenon, and a multi-million dollar business. For the first time in the history of this country, large numbers of young blacks were rich beyond their wildest dreams....*

—Nilson Martinez

When viewing hip hop as if a political movement, the empowering, poetizing content has provoked how we think, feel, and behave in every aspect of political and social life. It has come to define popular culture unlike anything the world has seen. Without question, it has ushered in a new found conscious for many that has penetrated the hearts and minds of every race, culture, and religion. Moreover, it has assumed the role advocate explicitly pleading the case of the underdog. Because of hip hop every aspect of vileness within the ghetto—from misogyny to police brutality—has been catapulted onto the world stage of social and political debate. The deathstyles it has revealed to the world have noticed it to what we witness on a day-to-day basis in the ‘hood. More importantly, through the voices of Chuck D, KRS-One, X-Clan, Immortal Technique, Askari X, Dead Prez, Paris, and many other conscious rappers, we have learned why the ‘hood is so tore up. These artists speak more powerfully than any politician or preacher of our day whose been able or willing to do something about the hypocrisies of both Black and white in American culture.<sup>1</sup> Hands downs it is indisputable, hip hop has made society here and abroad most conscious of transparent American idealisms. It has created a worldwide forum of “truth talkin’” amongst the Pan-African community that has connected and informed each on a global level network telling of the struggles constantly faced at the hands of oppressive governments. As Chuck D notes:

When Public Enemy first came out we used to say “Public Enemy, we’re agents for the preservation of the Black mind. We’re media hijackers.” We worked to hijack the media and put it in our own form.... Every time we checked for ourselves on the news they were locking us up anyway, so the interpretation coming from rap was a lot clearer. That’s why I call rap the Black CNN.

Rap is now a worldwide phenomenon. Rap is the CNN for young people all over the world.<sup>2</sup>

Like it or not hip hop has let the cat out the bag, serving the world with the stench of it ass. It has been crowned “The Voice of the People” because it has recast the spotlight on the oppressive hands manipulating our deathstyle. To this end, Professor Dimitri A. Bogazianos explains in his book *5 Grams*:

Many critics now begin by proclaiming the “death” of civil-rights-era political involvement. According to media critic Todd Boyd, for example, the civil rights era “is past and people need to accept that and act accordingly.” Hip hop is then presented as the vehicle through which a new generation—the “hip hop generation”—can harness its as-yet-underrealized political power. In the words of activist George Martinez, “I believe that Hip Hop is the engine and cultural vehicle for the next phase of the civil and human rights movements. But we have to make a distinction between the rap industry and Hip Hop culture.... Because Hip Hop comes from the streets, our politics must come from the same place.”<sup>3</sup>

That the fact exists civil-rights-era politics are now obsolete and hip hop has claimed the title of the people’s voice, has everything to do with the fact that the

leaders of the Civil Rights Movement were in denial as to what they accomplished. Because of such denials, they largely ignored and thus exacerbated the travails of the Black lower class. Consequently, these hardships have remained only to resurface today in the voice and politic of hip hop. Writing of the matter, Norman Kelly explains:

The condition of black America is mixed: success and failure. While... what some people call the lack of “personal responsibility” in the black community, African American politics and society—the bonds of solidarity in chains—have collapsed, and blacks refuse to deal openly with their class chasm. African Americans are in deep denial or ignorance as to what has and hasn’t been accomplished in the last 40 years. Embarrassingly for today’s black middle class, hip hop music and culture has been the most dynamic but problematic creation that blacks have produced while effective black politics and leadership itself has come to a dead end.<sup>4</sup>

The dynamic Kelly speaks of is how hip hop has better delivered the “Dream” than King himself. It has provided the inspiration and hope the Civil Rights Movement failed to invigorate. Hip hop has created an opportunity, opened doors for the gutter cat, the average ‘hood cat with a little flow and a lot of hustle to get in where he fit in and stack chips off entertainment. Today, because of hip hop ghetto youth strive to build their own—that is, business of the sort exemplified by No Limit Records, Cash Money, Rap-A-Lot, Rockafella, Def Jam, and many other independent labels that have matured to stretch their wings beyond music onto industry of every sort ranging from oil drilling companies to finance. These entrepreneurial spirits, and what in many cases must be acknowledged as innovative minds, have proven again the world over the ability of our community to take chitlins and make a delicacy—that is, to create our own markets, economy and redefining of culture.

Frequently referred to as an intersection of race, sex, and rebellion against those who defy change, the culture hip hop has constructed has created its own definitions, purposes, and symbols which have reinvigorated the politics of Malcolm X. They are both proactive and reactive in shaping American cultural life. This is so because hip hop was bore from, and continues to be inspired by, the human experience. It does not exist nor did it come into existence, outside and independent of the collective human experience. The music is presumably reflective of Black life. However, Black music and culture in themselves have forcibly been engrossed in cultures of every kind. This melting pot of sound and culture has historically drew from the French, British, and African yoke of the Caribbean to that which the English, Portuguese and African adjoined with the indigenous influences of the Americas. Hip hop is an amalgam of diverse components which comprise Black life: the pains and sorrows as well as the joys and successes. From institutional racism to Black-on-Black crime, self-empowerment struggles to abusive police, unapologetic violence to childish jokes, the range of subjects and emotions, indeed are complex. At times it informs. At other times it entertains; makes us cry; makes us mad, etc.

Profound in its affect, hip hop has arisen to represent symbolically and operationally in the minds, hearts, and souls—and characteristically in the behavioral

orientations of society at large. It is now defined culture represented in our thoughts and feelings which express systematic ways (e.g., grassroots political movements, promotional gimmicks, the organization and disorganization of our communities, etc.) we attend, experience, categorize, evaluate, interact, and ultimately define what hip hop is. These expressions are represented in form of dance, graffiti, theater, clothing, idiom, technology, and just about every imaginable medium of social and cultural thought. It is “built on the tradition innately characteristic of Black Americans who have willingly found their own voices and perseverance with grace and dignity in face of adversity, as well as their solidarity with the downtrodden.”<sup>5</sup>

Honestly, I believe the world has yet to see hip hop’s full potential. One would think that after the outcome of the 2008 Vote Campaign launched by hip hop moguls Russel Simmons and Sean “P. Diddy” Combs, the world would recognize hip hop as the formidable tool of social control it is at achieving change. Simmons, Combs, and many other activist-entertainers have helped to energize the hip hop generation to partake in the political process that resulted in record Black voter turnouts across America. To great credit of Simmons, the Hip Hop Summit Action Network founded in 2001 has indeed harnessed the cultural relevance of hip hop music to serve as a catalyst for education advocacy and other societal concerns fundamental to the well-being of at-risk youth throughout the United States. It seeks “to foster initiatives aimed at engaging the hip hop generation in community development issues related to equal access to high-quality public education and literacy, freedom of speech, voter education, economic advancement, and youth leadership development.”<sup>6</sup>

In my opinion, such organizations are long overdo and in need of greater support and representation in the Black community given corporate forces which control, milk, and promote the destructive image of gangsta rap.

### ***GANGSTA’S PARADISE***

*She was now a prostitute with white pimps who transformed  
her womb into a promiscuous enclave of violence to  
be unleashed on my community....*

Just as I have credited hip hop for positive opportunities and being the voice of the people, I must acknowledge as well the destructive paths traveled on account of gangsta rap glorifying the street life. As I write this there’s a kid out there somewhere who, like the youngsta that was influenced by Chicano gangbanging’ rap, is to have his life destroyed by the misappraisals he has placed on some rapper’s portrayal of the life of a gangsta/dope-boy being glamour filled and without consequence. Here, he’s failed to put in perspective the fact that these squares often narrate my story without taking penitentiary chances. All he sees is their designer clothes, beautiful women and expensive cars and jewelry. To him this is the life. And if all it takes to obtain it is to be a gangsta/dope-boy, then he figures he can simply connect the dots between their world and the ‘hood. Thus the lyrics of Young Jeezy and T.I., for example, become the directive and the ‘hood a suitable apprenticeship. Like Rosetta Stone, gangsta rap teaches the language of the streets—violence. To his dismay, however, he eventually learns the hard way he’s been setup to embrace a deathstyle created by the capitalist hunter. Though, there are those who remain adamant and refuse to turn it lose even at this point. He’s in too deep; cultivated by an image that’s too powerful to relinquish. Sadly, gangsta rap and the culture it reflects upon and

inspires within him has become his mentor. It beats at the heart of his moral compass and too often fills the shoes of an absent father who wasn't there to teach him not to take life lessons from rap music.

That said, let us get into those aspects of gangsta rap, and I emphasize *gangsta rap*, that came to mistakenly define hip hop and of more importance, how it became a tool of social manipulation.

To begin, I believe it important to distinguish "rap" from "hip hop." Here, I again excerpt from Professor Bogazianos's work where he writes:

The distinction's importance can perhaps best be encapsulated in a now-famous line by pioneer rap artist KRS-One: "Rap is something you do, hip hop is something you live." In this conceptual schema, rap is believed to be only one, heavily commercialized, commodified, and appropriated element within a larger hip hop culture. Where hip hop is viewed as a broad culture efflorescence, rap is often seen as that which the entertainment industry has been able to profit from most efficiently. Thus, for many, the term "rap music" is automatically pejorative, while "hip hop" suggests something grander, more pure, organic, and authentic.<sup>7</sup>

For the average middle-age white American, hip hop and "gangsta" rap have always been inseparable but, for hip hop enthusiast, there was always something funky about the sudden appearance of "gangsterism" at a time when political hip hop was dominating the charts.<sup>8</sup> For decades there's been this conspiracy theory kicked around street corners and barbershops in the Black community that "Gangsta rap was a ploy to convince Black people to kill each other." While plausible given the destructive influence of the music, we should take a moment to reflect on how the increased dominance of gangsta rap came to push the politically conscious rappers to the fringes of the hip hop world—before jumpin' to conclusions.

Although hip hop was originally known as house party music, by the late '80s, it had evolved into a political movement that was instrumental in exposing a new generation of Black youth to the speeches of Malcolm X and Huey P. Newton.<sup>9</sup> We had just not long ago (during the 1960s) demonstrated our collective ability to place demands on a racist government to get some "act right!" and up the "tokenism." The lyrical content of conscious rappers endeavored to throw fuel on the flame and keep it lit so as to carry the torch of our revolutionary past onto our revolutionary future given the fact that we had yet to overcome the racist and capitalist forces which operated to suppress our social and economic development. The truth telling told by the conscious rappers of this era was powerful in their portrayals of Black suffering and resistance in America. For these political hip hop giants expressed the underground outlook of righteous indignation at the dogmas and nihilism of imperial America.<sup>10</sup>

Conscious rap, however, was damn near extinguished when gangsta rap came on the scene to take us, by happenstance or design, two, three, four, steps backwards. To this end, the highly controversial Professor Cornel West notes:

...hip hop was soon incorporated into the young American mainstream and diluted of it prophetic fervor.

With the advent of the giants of the next phase—Tupac Shakur, Ice Cube, Biggie and Snoop—linguistic genius and gangster sentiments began to be intertwined. Ironically, their artistic honesty revealed subversive energy and street prowess in their work and life. As the entertainment industry began to mainstream the music, that street prowess became dominant with racist stereotypes of blackmen as hypercriminal and hypersexual and black women as willing objects of their conquests.<sup>11</sup>

The “subversive energy” and “street prowess” West speaks of would, needless to say, work to make everything that was designed to destroy us seem cool and acceptable. Thus, the gangs, drugs, violence, and lack of respect for our people, especially our women, became something to glorify and exploit lyrically. This essentially christened our misguided sense of piety as ruffians in the extreme.

The forces behind these phenomenons have been traced directly to two cultural and economic occurrences in the Black community beginning in the 1970s: (1) the festering drug and gang cultures—which were stimulated by the second: the socioeconomic changes caused by the de-industrialization of America’s manufacturing sector which caused significant social and economic disorganization of the nation’s inner-cities beginning in the 1980s as a primary element in the emergence of crack-cocaine and the related violence. Needless to say, the declining job market and drugs and guns provided by the Contras made for an environment ripe for destruction. Black youth, such as myself, were without the revolutionary tempest of Black Nationalism and thus, without the communal force of the Village and family organization, engaged in the distorted exercise of pursuing an individualistic and destructive masculine identity. This entailed for us to not just simply embrace a savage approach to violence to regulate and stave off competition in the *Dope-Game*, but so too a callous attitude towards getting paper at the expense of poisoning our community with dope and lead.

It’s been said that whatever is happening in the streets dictates the content and direction of the music. Accepted as such, the rappers of the late 1980s onto the ‘90s went hard and heavy narrating what was happening in the ‘hood. This was a sound that soon proved to \$ale when N.W.A. went platinum. This success along with others inevitably made gangsta rap a “gangsta’s paradise” for corporate America. Here it was you did not simply have kids like myself relating to and living in the narrative, but, more importantly, white kids who caught the vapors and became the leading force driving consumer demand. Consequently, this pushed conscious rap into the margins of the entertainment industry. According to many observers, including Professor West:

The companies perceived that white kids were much more interested in the more violence-ridden, misogynist mode than in the critical, prophetic mode [of conscious rap]. This packaging for eager rebellious youth in vanilla suburbs—now 72% of those who buy hip-hop CDs and even more who illegally download them—lead to an economic boom for the industry, until its recent downturn.<sup>12</sup>

Professor West goes on to point out what a horrible irony it is that the poetry and critique of conscious hip hop could be co-opted by the consumer preferences of suburban white youths—white youths who long for rebellious energy and exotic amusement in their own hollow bourgeois world. He notes how the Black voices from the ‘hood were “the most genuine, authentic voices from outside the flaccid mainstream market culture that they could find. So the recording and fashion industries seized on this market opportunity.”<sup>13</sup>

The market opportunity that Professor West speaks of is the same market opportunity that, long before gangsta rap, corporate America had been capitalizing on with the violent portrayals of the Italian Mafia, which appeared first in book form, later movies. Italians got in on the action by writing and producing books and movie scripts to honor their gangstas. It was thus inevitable that Black Americans would follow suit. We went on to create an entire industry of Black exploitation films that showcased our pimp and gangsta cultures which were at their height during the 1970s. Without question, this influenced rap music and hip hop culture today.

With gangsta rap, however, the impact would have a far greater devastating consequence on the conscience of Black America. The mental health in the Black community was at its worst. Crack-cocaine and the rise of gang violence had taken its toll on the progressive culture that once strived. And to glorify the destruction was simply too much. Critics drew the line and began questioning the artists’ integrity. How could they rap about and praise the destruction of their own community? The fact of the matter was, every man had his price and some could be bought for less than others. In face of multi-million dollar record deals, fame and fortune prevailed over a rapper’s dignity.

With the demand for gangsta rap high and major labels like Universal and Capital Records giving up million dollar contracts, it was no questioning what message was going to be marketed and promoted or who was going to control it. Corporate America had stumbled across yet another medium by which to exploit society’s fascination with gangsters, drug dealers, thugs, and murderers. For gangsta rap was yet another form of entertainment that some people perceived to be exciting and dangerous. In this, corporate America would be forthright in grabbing a hold of that destructive energy created by the “Ghetto Fabulous.” It successfully captured the essence of the deathstyles in the ‘hood and capitalized on them by promoting mainstream surrogates who flew under the banner of “real”; portraying the deathstyle from a safe distance.

Consequently, corporate America had grabbed a hold of something that would be highly criticized by the Black community. For unlike the criticisms that befell the Black exploitation film industry, gangsta rap and the drug and gang culture it reflected upon had come to captivate and influence a far more impressionable Black youth. The issue then became: Was the corporate take over of hip hop a ploy to wreak havoc in the Black community?” There is no simple answer to the question. Though, such a conspiracy theory unquestionably gained momentum in face of the fact that

[m]usic... has always been one of the many driving forces of inspiration for the passion of culture and soul. From the powerful beat of the African ancestry drum to the penetrating tone of the European’s trumpet, there harmonies have signaled the intentions of war and peace,



fear and sanctuary. Literally, they were the most notable and effective tools of psychological warfare.<sup>14</sup>

To this end, there are many ways to which music has been used to psychologically organize or disorganized a people. Historically, African culture illustrates music is a part of every aspect of life from work to worship. Take for example how African Spirituals were vital to the mental health of our enslaved ancestors. These spirituals provided hope and lightened their toll. To this day music can be found in the work place for this very reason. In terms of play, music can make the game more pleasurable. Think about how much more of a pleasurable experience it is when and where there is a well orchestrated band playing at a football or basketball game, for example. The affect of which is comparable to how score is used in movies to set the mood of a particular scene. In terms of ceremony, music can make our celebrations more meaningful and more purposeful. And in terms of worship, it has power to make our praise more powerful.<sup>15</sup>

The magic of music is the power of the message. Words speak to the subconscious mind and the subconscious mind speaks to the conscious mind when we are seeking answers or inspiration. In that way, music can shape our attitudes about ourselves and those around us and our decisions and therefore the quality and characteristics of our lifestyles and lives. Music can shape our worlds by shaping one mind at a time.<sup>16</sup> Accepted as such, then it don't take a rocket scientist to figure out why President Reagan invited Easy E to the White House.

Clueless, Black audiences were further encouraged to subliminally embrace values of white hatred and violent aggression toward their own community. This became a more blatant norm by the message N.W.A. and other such groups promoted by glorifying the street life as a means to obtain status and respect. On the other hand, the likes of President Reagan, who knew full-well the influence of Hollywood and the entertainment industry, saw with the promotion of these values an already proven method by which to exploit the destructive outcomes of the message.

Here, I must digress to say unlike the gangstas of Wall Street or those that invaded Iraq and Afghanistan, and control Viacom and Universal Music Group, Blacks had no political clout. Thus it was foreseen that when we bit into this shit we would have no "safety net" to catch us and prevent us from falling into the traps set by the illusions of this entertainment.

Moreover, by controlling the content and image of what "gangsta" was to represent in the Black community—just as the ghetto was created by government and corporate business from which the rappers would narrate—the corporate take over of the hip hop industry would be in comparison to the take over of Black education and futures by white America during the Reconstruction era. Once again we tossed our pearls to swine because

[m]usic is about symbols and ultimately it is symbols that you evoke behavior from people. So when a culture creates symbols, those symbols are designed to evoke particular types of reactions, feelings and moods in its members. A culture establishes the potency of those symbols through rituals, through song and through dance.

One of the best ways to inculcate cultural values, a cultural spirit, is through entertainment. It's while members are being entertained, while they are feeling good, that the song is carrying the cultural values into the mind and into the body. The lyrics that represent the cultural interests and the cultural values are being carried on the vehicle of the music, carried through the vehicle of the poetry. The togetherness, the cooperativeness, the mutual movement together and the synchrony of the culture is being entrained through the music and through the rhythm of the dance. Therefore when you let another people take over your music, when you let another people take over your dance and attach their content to it, they will use your own music, your own dance, your rap lyrics, your poetry and your own cultural symbols to carry their message into your bodies and into your minds such that you can only respond to their beck and call and to their wishes. As a consequence they get you to buy those sneakers and other items by associating them with your music.

So they attach their content to our rhythm, their content to our songs. In this way they take our own instruments and turn them against the self.<sup>17</sup>

That said, given the content controls influenced by corporate America, gangsta rap would come to heighten cultural values distorted by a perceptual worldview of material gain over life willing to pimp and poison for respect. Because the music came to consist of status symbols derived from a skewed image of manhood and material wealth instead of community and spiritual wealth, those very aspects of respect and prosperity we sought to gain from commissioning the behaviors and attitudes gangsta rap promoted, served to defeat the objective. For obvious reasons this was so because the behavior and attitudes are antisocial, anti-community, anti-Black; thus, not only self-destructive and community-destructive, but at odds with our power base—the community.

And who better understood these values as forms of social control and, as such, forms of social power by which to gain influence over our community? Racist and capitalist thinking white America had long since understood the power of values which manipulated destruction were profitable. One only need lay in the cut to collect the spoils as they tumbled down from the carnage. And it did not take a marketing genius to come up with a plan to push this sound. Since the days Columbus was a stick-up kid, the nation's racists had taught us to love violence, drugs, ill-gotten gain, promiscuity, and fucking over people.

On that, I must again digress to note the irony and controversy hip hop has encountered in America's classrooms. A few years ago (2010) a Sacramento, California high school teacher was criticized for introducing to her class the lyrical content and poetry of Tupac Shakur. The local news, News 10, broadcasted interviews of parents who took offense to their kids studying Tupac in light of his violent deathstyle, lyrics and criminal history. "Hump! The nerve of these white folks," I thought to myself. Conveniently, they forget the atrocities Columbus brought upon the Americas—the rape, genocide, theft—a man who they teach their kids to admire with godlike sentiment. Hypocrites! In vilifying Tupac, neither the media nor the commentators sought to reflect on the fact that at the time he was murdered, he was out on bail appealing his conviction for rape. That the fact exists the court granted

bail speaks to the fact that he was not a threat to the public safety. Nonetheless, this situation with the teacher (and this has occurred elsewhere throughout the nation where Tupac and hip hop was introduced as a subject of study) was sad because the lesson she was attempting to convey was hip hop has never been about music or some act, its culture. A culture that unfortunately in the case of gangsta rap

...is a reflection of the society we live in... [and] a disappointment to its founders, as it is so filled with ignorance and hate. It has done exactly what those who oppose this culture have always wanted it to do—enforce self-hatred among its people. Somewhere in corporate America, someone is laughing at us—at how we degrade our women and poorly influence our youth. We, Black Americans, no longer have slave masters but have become slaves to ourselves through the Hip Hop industry’s recycling of the same ignorance and hate that brought us to this continent in the first place.<sup>18</sup>

### ***THE TRAGEDY OF TUPAC SHAKUR & B.I.G. IS IT BIGGER THAN EAST/WEST COAST RIVALRY?***

When will we wake up? And when will we learn the tactics, schemes, and plots of this unjust system in keeping the Black community in disarray, divided against itself, and fighting internally against each other rather than against the causes of its condition.

The Hip Hop Nation has risen to be a powerful social and economic resource, and means of producing the oneness we need as a people (mentally, spiritually, and physically) to stand independently on our own, as well as a way of educating and making others outside our community aware of the elements and conditions within our community.

Do you not think that the Hip Hop Nation could be under attack by the FBI and CIA, as well as other unidentified government agencies???

Wake up!!! And I do mean wake up! It has long been time for you and I of the Black community as a whole to take control of our life and be governors of our own

affairs rather than constantly be tossed to-and-fro as victims, by the whims of this unjust system.

The tragedies of Tupac Shakur and Notorious Big, two of the Hip Hop Nation's most talented entertainers—including the indictments against Rap-A-Lot CEO James Prince, Murder Inc. CEO Irv Gotti, and Death Row CEO Suge Knight—have the smell of covert ops by the FBI and CIA.

You remember the death of MLK, Malcolm X, and the fall of the Black Panther Party? I believe each has been proven beyond a shadow of a doubt that their destruction was through the provocation of the FBI and CIA.

What! You don't think that this could be the case in the deaths of Pac and Biggie? What! Is it so absurd as to think that they were victims of political assassination? Not to suggest that their tales of selling crack and gang violence had political overtones but suppose they, one day, decided to encourage their millions of highly impressionable—and heavily armed—"ghetto" fans to turn their arms on the cops. This was the very reason the Black Panther Party was infiltrated and destroyed. And let's not forget that Pac had returned to his roots as the son of a former Black Panther and had begun to partake in politics at the time he was murdered. Have you not read the FBI/COINTELPRO files? These are the tactics of the FBI and CIA.

This isn't to say that this is the case necessarily. But I sure wouldn't want to exclude it as a possibility. The truth is, none of us truly know. And like the files proving the FBI destroyed the Panthers were not made public until decades after the U.S. government had committed these acts, so too will we not find out what truly happened in the deaths of Pac and Biggie until some decades later.

Yet, we must ask ourselves why has the media been so adamant to hype this Pac and Biggie thing to be something it could very well prove not to be? We have every reason to believe that it's bigger than just a East/West Coast rivalry even though it is easy to believe this to be the result of ignorance.

One thing is for sure, until the facts have surfaced and been presented and examined by one of our own trustworthy representatives, our opinion at this point can only lead to further tragedy by not being wise and waiting out the truth.

—Michael Bransen (1997)

### ***WONDER WHY THEY CALL YOU BITCH***

When I began contemplating an approach to tackling the subject of hip hop's spellbinding love/hate relationship with its women, particularly Black women, I came to reflect upon the women in my early life who had the greatest impact. I reflected on how as a child my Great Grandma Rachael would join me to watch Sesame Street and how often it was that during these episodes her newspaper frequently landed on the back of my head for picking my nose or it was some other mischief I had gotten into afterwards. Seemed those newspapers never got read. Eventually, they came up missing! But the life lessons she imparted with in manners and respect for others, especially women, were never lost on my conscious. It was always "yes" and "no" ma'am with her and the many other women in my life who influenced me in much of the same way. My mother didn't just impart a great sense of responsibility and appreciation for education, she also instilled in me a high expectation of myself. There

was my Grandma Jean, Skippy and stepfather's mother, Big Momma, who provided a great sense of joy, confidence and love. They were supportive and always encouraged me to be comfortable in my skin; to try different things like dance school. I recall how during my eight-grade year my Grandma Jean was elated and very supportive of my decision to take my basketball coach's wife's offer to join her class in modern dance, tap, etc. She would faithfully and happily drive me to my weekly lessons. And had it not been for my Grandma Skippy reassuring me as a kid, I would not have had character enough to withstand the jokes my coach and teammates would barge me with for being in his wife's dance school with a bunch of girls. These women, along with *all* my aunts and female cousins and friends, were the women who as a child, adolescent, and man, provided me a tender heart and understanding enough to realize that I could never fully live out those ambitions of slamming Cadillac doors and pimpin' hoes "gorilla style."

That's not to say I didn't try my hand at it. After the three-year hiatus, I hit the bricks with an attitude that "I could get pussy when I couldn't get nothing to eat!" My daughter's mother had poisoned me. While I was literally fighting for my life, she was off on a dick hunt. Her performance, needless to say, was less than stellar when it came to court appearances. Long before the verdict was read, she had abandoned me. Her departing words came via letter. They were so hateful and callous that they sting to this day—"You're going spend the rest of your life on death row; I'm getting on with my life...." It took all the energy I could muster to keep my face from hitting the floor and not hanging myself. I was devastated to say the least. Her lack of faith in me after years of handling my business as a father to her son, a father to our daughter, a provider for our family, embittered me so. At that very moment it seemed all the love, all the respect and compassion that the women in my early life had imparted to me turned off like a switch. Instantly I became a misogynist.

When I hit the streets of the 'burg, Oakland, San Francisco, and Fresno it was all about pimpin'. At the height of my short-lived career as a procurer of this profession, I was seventy toes strong. Then came that PYT (as in the song sung by Michael Jackson), Nicaraguan with mistakenly Creole features. Unlike the other girls, who were certified track-stars long before coming into my stable, she was the first one I turned-out; had ready to put toes to pavement for payment. Just like I saw it done on Cedar Street, I did my *Greg Gordon*—Wewoka's most notorious pimp. My Aunt Joy pleaded with me not to "send" her: "She's too innocent... You're going to have that girl's blood on your hand when she gets killed." She was right. I knew I couldn't do it.

From the very moment I set eyes on her the switch flipped back on. I saw in her all the beauty and determination of my mother, grandmothers, and aunts. My ambitions of being the next "Goldie" would go up in the flame of her lions. I went "tender." I had returned from that cold abyss my daughter's mother had sent me to. It was time to take my pimpin' to another level. So instead of sending her to the usual trap-spots (i.e., on escorts, exotic dancing, etc.), I put her mind to work; exploited her beauty, clean record, and jovial personality by sending her to college to pursue a degree in banking and finance. It was a decision I look on today knowing it reflected the best of me and what the women in my early life had instilled in me. It was one that karma had forced me to make. In just a few months of taking instruction, she went from Safeway to Wells Fargo; from zero percent to 100% towards the kitty.

Often, thereafter, we would kid each other of being the next Bonnie and Clyde on the lam in Nicaragua having pulled off the biggest bank heist of all time.

There is another very special woman who, just as the others, had a significant impact in my life—my daughter. Before she came along I was full of myself with patriarchal views about a woman's place in the world. Southern culture had groomed me well from jump that a man was the "provider" and the woman the "homemaker." The nature of my aunts and grandmothers' marriages were an exemplification of this. However, my views began to change when karma did a number on me. My baby girl was the catalyst of change; the balance that constantly weighed on my conscience. How could I pimp? Was I so immersed in this abyss that I would deny even the appreciation and respect for her? Indeed, her mother had cut me deep! Yet she was a part of me. A part that I could not just shut off like a light switch. If not for her I would have never cared enough to see beyond the pain of her mother's betrayal; to see the fact that her mother had also been cause of my greatest joy. This woman, like my mother, had given me the gift of life, creation. I witnessed her bear the excruciating pain of childbirth—just to have my child! She was no accident. Rather, someone we decided to bring into this world with expectations of being the best parents we possibly could. Someone who, after seeing her mother struggle emotionally and financially while I was in prison due to her dependence on me (not that she should not have been entitled to depend on me; after all I did have a responsibility to my family)—and how this dependence led her to be physically and emotionally abused by other men—forced me to evaluate my sexist and patriarchal ways. There was no denying the fact that they were just as oppressive as racism. I could have none of this when it came to shaping my daughter's views about herself, her womanhood, and where her place was in this world.

Thank God I matured enough to see there is nothing attractive about a woman (or man) who does not have independence enough to support herself 100% emotionally, financially, and intellectually. Thank God I no longer believe that women were put on this earth to be subservient to men; to serve and praise the ground we tread upon. Thank God for my daughter.

\* \* \*

Sexism and misogyny in their myriad destructive forms permeates every aspect of American life from the church to the work force. As a man, I didn't realize just how white America's deep-seeded culture of hatred and prejudice toward women and people of color had warped my views and interplay with the opposite sex. For that much, I do not think many men have slowed down enough to take heed to how this culture objectifies and exploits our mothers, sisters and daughters. For one, it subjugates them by proclaiming they are the weaker sex. But any man who has witnessed a child being born knows better. Nevertheless, as a consequence of such beliefs that men are physically superior to women, women are exploited sexually. Rape, prostitution, and polygamy are but few examples of the exploitative nature of power relations that have arisen as consequence of such beliefs. Despite all the proclamations of equality, we live in a society that to this day denies women the right to live, to be free and make life choices in matters of child birth, contraception, and profession.

Being very much a product of this culture, hip hop has unapologetically exploited this love/hate relationship America has with its women. "[T]he positive

response to sexist and/or misogynist rap music (Fame, wealth),” writes bell hooks, “reinforces the reality that these attitudes and values will be rewarded in this society. If black males find that they can make much more money flaunting lyrics that are sexist and misogynist, it is mainstream consumer culture that creates the demand for this product.”<sup>19</sup> Just as the consumer demand had an impact on conscious rappers and the message they promoted, so too has this nation’s sadomasochistic sexist and misogynist culture done the same.

Very much like *Playboy’s* Hugh Hefner and *Hustler’s* Larry Flint, rapper/entrepreneur Luke “Skywalker” Campbell and the *2 Live Crew* would be the first to tap into this “mainstream consumer culture” that bell hooks writes of. With their 1989 debut rap song “Me So Horny,” *2 Live Crew* would gain worldwide fame for their mixture of hip hop and hedonism and their attempts to push the 1st Amendment to the limit by claiming that they could be “as nasty as they wannabe.” Today, because of their unprecedented success sexually explicit lyrics and provocative images of scanty-clad video-vixens are essential to the success of any music video, album, movie, or burger commercial. In addition, like Hefner and Flint, Campbell also opened doors for magazines like *King*, *Smooth*, *Blackmen*, and many others to gain tremendous circulation with the scanty-clad exposés of (predominately) curvaceous Black and Brown video-vixens, models and actors.

But at what expense has this fame and fortune cost the integrity and image of women? When I listen to the rap—and I’m not just referring to hip hop artists, I’m also drawing from the rap (i.e., talk and attitudes) on the prison yard, the rap in the ‘hood—I hear and see just how America’s sexist and misogynist culture has distorted our reference point when it comes to how we relate to and address our sisters and how they themselves relate and address each other. When I convene with the brothers on the yard I get the whole Willie D attitude: “Gotta Let A Ho Be A Ho!” It’s like when we rap, they rapping about a “gender war”; an act of self-defense to take the vantage point by abusing women before they get abused. The *Game* as they practice it is to “go hard on a bitch” and “it’s all on a bitch!” Conversely, they rap about their love for their mothers. Others rap about how their mothers emasculated them as men; poisoned them on their fathers, etc.

Of all stories, the one that greatly serves to illustrate just how intense this gender war is, is the one that my cousin tells of the day she learned she was HIV positive. Her story is one that many women have had to painfully endure due to treacherous interplay with a companion who sought to extract vengeance with a scarred phallus. In short, after some all-revealing blood-work, she hesitantly approaches her boyfriend with the results only to get hit with the whammy of all betrayals: “Yeah, I knew... I was infected years ago by one of you bitches, so I’m out to infect as many of you bitches as I can!” As I sat there listening to her sob and wearily plead her future demise, I was immediately overwhelmed with grief and anger. Questions began to flow non-stop one after another. Some were stupid to say the least: Weren’t you using protection? “No, this was my boyfriend,” she responded; What made you go get a checkup? “Something, something, just wasn’t right!” Maybe the test was wrong? “I’ve been tested three times—all were positive!”; So, run that by me again—what dude said when you told him... At that point my anger took over. Where yo brother at? And what the fuck! I know he headhunting, right? Somewhere in the back of my head illogic wanted to blame her. But the treacherous circumstances would not allow

such a notion. She had been hoodwinked by someone she trusted who unquestionably was caught in the wrath of circumstances that allowed for him to buy into the sickness of America's sexist and misogynist culture. Like that, what seemed to be a promising year-long relationship ended with devastation complimented with a turbulent future that has thus been riddled with various health complications garnered by intimate pleasures of love and hate.

The above instances of female/male relations are but few examples that foster the sexist and misogynist attitudes that today have reduced our reference point to women as mere objects and "bitches." And it's not simply a hip hop thing as critics have so wrongfully accused. They assail the artist for their often sexist and misogynist lyrics; when, in fact, it is not the artist that there is something terribly wrong with. Rather, it's the society that we live in. Again, hip hop is a reflection of American culture and values. A culture that I might add, promotes its sexist and misogynist values through television and other media with shows like "Don't Trust That "b" In Apt 23." And it's not just men who are pushing the letter. It's women too! Staff writer Apolonia Jordan writes of the matter:

It's not uncommon nowadays to walk down the street and hear young Black girls and women having a conversation speaking to each other disrespectfully and calling each other bitches and ho's... [W]e don't even get offended when these things happen because we have allowed it to seep into our culture and become a part of our basic language. We try to adopt the word bitch like Black people have adopted the word nigga....<sup>20</sup>

Initially, when I read Ms. Jordan's article I must admit the gravity of the matter did not weigh in on my conscience. But then shortly, thereafter, I was having a conversation with my baby sis and could not help but notice her frequent reference to our other sisters as bitches. It was bitch this and bitch that and that bitch this. I was like "HOLD UP!" What's this you referring to our sisters as bitches? Her response lead me to believe that she didn't think much of it; that it was simply colloquial language that did not carry derogatory or insulting connotations. Indeed, it was time for a Dr. Phil moment. So I explained to her that whether she intended to or not to insult or degrade them with such language, it was extremely derogatory and insulting, not to mention disrespectful. Moreover, I thought it important to point out to her that when such terms as "bitch" or "ho" are used to address our sisters, she was not only reinforcing sexist/misogynist values that were made to express contempt for women as human beings—but her *self* as well.

On another, yet related topic, society at large has long since had this problem of wanting to put women on this pedestal; that when they do not live up to the expectations and standards of our patriarchal society—we instantly jump to degrade them. Some simply refuse to accept the fact that like all things else, the image and role of women in the world has changed. Women are no longer mere child bearers, housekeepers, and sex objects. They are now business owners, clergy, soldiers, politicians, presidents, and other highly respected and leading professionals.

Consequently, the predominately male and competitive nature of professions which women have made tremendous gains in over the past 100 years has caused much of what we see today in terms of sexist and misogynist culture. As men, I



honestly believe that we are threatened so by these gains in professions which traditionally have appeased our ego and catered to our identity as the dominate sex. For this reason, and this reason alone some men, if not the majority, will never accept women as equals. Therefore, they will always be inclined to embrace sexist and misogynist attitudes so as to afford them some sense of security and identity. This, needless to say, is classic male, white supremacist behavior. They fear competition and know they are at a disadvantage due to the power (i.e., the power of the p€\$\$y) women have over their lives and their ability to create. Thus, it is only by keeping women in a subordinate position that they feel they can maintain leverage enough to force them to conform to their patriarchal, male white supremacist ways—the pimp of all pimps!

### ***THE N- WORD***

Having been called a nigger more times than I can count as a child, somewhere down the road I was forced to adopt the defense that it was not what they called me but what I answered to. Throughout history this has been a word, like many, that both Blacks and whites have gave meaning to in reference of an oppressive social and economic standing. As a child I recall how I would often give credence to this definition and thus control over my being as I spent off in a fury to assail the conveyor of the word. Having been robbed of my cultural esteem by European ideals and history forced upon me, I had no reference point as to who I was. I was confused! Lost! And informed early on that even the white blood that ran through my veins was worthless. I was a nigger defined by Webster’s Dictionary and America’s one-drop rule. Accepted as such, often I would ponder the question: If Blacks and whites were not working with feelings of inferiors and superiors, or if the social and economic positions associated with these complexes were to change—what significance would the word “nigger” have?

If words only bear significance when there is an acknowledged or factual belief associated with them, then without said association are they not meaningless? Here, I recall one of my white teenage friends having used the N-word in a casual conversation, then looking to me and questioning if I was offended. Having recognized the confusion on my face, after I responded that it was offensive, he jumped to explain in a fluster that he thought that Blacks were referred to as “niggers” having heard his parents use it. As for the confusion on my face? It was just that—confusion. In some odd way, I recall how I just sat there trying to figure out why, unlike those times I’d be up in arms having heard a white boy utter the N-word, I was not trippin’. Hindsight now provides that I had began to recognize the ignorance and meaningless of the word. Here it was this white kid and his family were poor as dirt and didn’t have a pot to piss in. While things weren’t necessarily peachy living with moms, my grandparents owned hundreds of acres of land, their home, vehicles, etc. They were self-employed, and while not rich, they were comfortable. Thus the way I saw it, by him referring to Black people as niggers, both his family and he were confused about who the real niggers were.

That said, with all the accounting for progress professed today in the Black community—from the social to economic—one area we have yet to progress in is the continual authorizing of white America to define the terms and experiences to which we respond to and allow to define our being. In doing so, we shadow our *so-called*

progress with a confidence that's easily shattered with the mention of the N-word. Because, if indeed values are created and transported by communication through the body of words, then we allow ourselves to maintain those very values by responding to them. In other words, our reaction to the N-word from an inferior mindset gives them the power to continue to define us as inferiors. As noted by author/activist/publisher Haki R. Madhubuti:

As long as we are reaching to other people's definitions and programs, pro-action among the knowers in the Afrikan-American community will be futile. Today Afrikan American people in the United States are a *majority people with a minority complex*, and this comes from the uncritical acceptance of other people's ideas, dreams, visions, and definitions. However, there is a significant number of Afrikan American people that will never go back to acting out the definitions of others....<sup>21</sup>

Taking the foregoing into consideration, I often wonder if there will ever be a time when the N-word will lose its utility and meaning within the context of white racism? Personally, I do not believe it will any time soon. It will always be tied to an era, which wasn't but a few generations ago, when Mr. Charlie's nigger-boy had to have permission to do this or that. This history will never be lost on the conscious of a Black man, woman or child. This is especially so given the oppression which gave the N-word meaning, thrives today. Yet there is hope.

Here, I must digress to say there seems to be promise for a radical shift in the makeup of the oppressed in light of projections that white America will lose their social and economic positioning as America's majority population over the course of the next forty years due to changing demographics in communities of color. If indeed there is merit in the saying: "There's strength in numbers" and white America losses its hold as America's majority, then it only seems logical the social and economic conditions they have created for centuries to oppress the Black community and other communities of color, will gradually disappear. Or will they considering the fact that most Americans, despite race, have adopted the capitalist spirit of white America as well as its bias views toward other races, especially Black Americans?

Arguably, there has long since been an effort to rid the N-word of its sting. Throughout history comedians such as Redd Foxx and Richard Pryor have notably built their careers on cracking profane and profound jokes about *Super Nigger*, bitches and hoes, and their own personal woes. To this day the terms nigga, nigger, honky, cracker, spic, wetback, and kike are frequently used catch-lines that have been floating around Black and white spaces since horsewhips were a legal means of boosting worker productivity.

For me personally, growing up watching Redd and Richard had me dying inside with laughter. Moreover, their wise cracks and mockeries about race made me realize there was something to laugh about when it came to racial stereotypes. Then too there was this odd sense being liberated from the sting of racial slurs where they give whitey the bird as successful "Niggas" who beat the odds. They seemed to accept being niggers in a white world. Be it Black niggers or Sand niggers, everybody was a nigger to the white man even his poor white trash. So, instead of setting around emotionally boxed in by the N-word, they embraced it, enthralled audiences with it

and, arguably assuaged the sting of it.<sup>22</sup> In doing so they took control of the power of it, transformed it into laughter, a term of endearment and exposed the comical and ignorant side of it.

To an extent, today's hip hop artists have followed suit. To this end, there's no shortage of crow on the plate for critics to feast upon. Just as they faulted Redd and Richard, critics ever assail the hip hop community's express usage of the N-word. "Today's hip hop artists are the epitome of yesterday's minstrel show," they argue.<sup>23</sup> Seemingly, it is a bulletproof argument. Yet hip hop has egoistically conferred upon the N-word an idiom, a syntax that is ahistorical. The word "Nigga" has become somewhat of an oxymoron to say the least. In a social context it symbolizes the attitude of the underdog having that story of the oppressed yet striving to succeed, or having actually succeeded despite the odds just as Redd and Richard had.

Undeniably, the N-word is powerful. It is explosive with an emotional range that can go from love to hate at the drop of a dime. It is a word that personally I struggle with. There *was* a time in my younger days when I felt an overwhelming sense of euphoria in greeting and being greeted with, "Whatz up my Nigga!" Hearing this today makes me cringe inside, especially when uttered in the presence of white folk. This never fails to remind me of the oppressive and racist implications of the word. To white people, and I have had them tell me this, Blacks calling each other "Niggas" affirms the psychological damage they have done to our self-image. This is something I personally have come to recognize through my years of arduous study on the question of race in America. Therefore, no matter what context the N-word is being used in, who uses it, etc., the encounters I have had throughout my life with racism will always remind me that it's associated it with Mr. Charlie's nigger-boy. And to hear Latinos, Asians and wiggas referring to themselves as "Niggas" only confuses me. When I hear this, I'm like what the fuck kind shit they on? I guess some real nigga shit—so they think!

## CHAPTER 7

### “THE WEB OF INJUSTICE” [THE INSTITUTIONALIZATION OF SOCIETY VII]

*Trapped by deception, freed by death,  
I'm gambling with my last breath.  
The remote razor wire spun to ensnare,  
Effectively nurses a predator's flare.  
Am I the insect now,  
trapped in society's flame?  
Or am I the hostage,  
bound by his own pain?  
Grafted by draconian malice, freed by zeal,  
the arachnid corrupts my appeal.  
Verdicts garnered by articulate men,  
take truth on an oscillating spin.  
Trapped by ignorance, desperate to win,  
hopes deteriorate, while the  
Wheels of (in)justice spin.*

**BLACK WIDOW,**  
—*Ivan Kilgore*

*The law is meant to be my servant and  
not my master, still less my torturer  
and my murderer....*

—*James Baldwin*

Each time I have stood before a jury to be judged there has been a prospective juror or two who voices the opinion that America has the greatest of all judicial systems in the world. Humph! I wonder where they get these people? Better yet, have they ever experienced a foreign or American judicial proceeding from my position as the criminally charged? I know they haven't because had they, they would not be amongst the pool of prospective jurors. So, how is it that these people can actually compare America's system of justice with those of other countries? Seemingly, they make these assertions in vain as if to proclaim America's moral superiority instead of measuring it by the ideals it has set yet failed terribly to uphold itself. Unquestionably, these perspectives have been warped by America's media and TV shows like *“Law and Order.”* They are myopic and thus reality dodges their conscience as the guile of the court (i.e., the judges, district attorneys, and defense lawyers) impairs their ability to determine the real.

Twice, I have stood before a jury to witness the theatrics play out. The experience, while intense, was no less entertaining. Seemingly, this, in part, explains why every day people line up to put life on pause just to tend to their civic duty. If only tickets could be sold for this event I'd bet it would be a Box Office Best Seller. For the stage performances had within the four corners of the courtroom are equally, if not more, confronting and entertaining than a Hollywood drama. So much so, they often inspire Hollywood. However, there is one screenplay that has yet to be written.

It is the one involving a plot that exposes just how easy it is for the innocent to be found guilty and the guilty to be vindicated. The star of this flick would be the usual suspect—Black, age 18-25, poor, uneducated, and with a criminal background. The setting would be *Real Life* (real charges, real prosecution, etc.). However, the crime is staged. It's been made to appear, for example, as if the victim's body has been disposed of. Scott Peterson all over again, except the victim is alive and in seclusion until the verdict is read—Guilty! Of course, there are many details to work out. Yet, visualize with me for a moment. For the camera can go anywhere the imagination leads it. Now, tell me you do not see shock waves around the world as the system attempts to save face and recapture society's faith.

That said, twelve men and/or women from everyday life are not infallible or wholly independent of the manipulation that occurs within the four corners of the courtroom. The fact of the matter can be seen in the 435—and counting—post-conviction DNA exonerations that have stained Sir William Blackstone's (1723-1780) judicial rhetoric: "It is better that ten guilty persons escape [conviction], than that one innocent suffer."<sup>1</sup> And that's not to mention the countless other convictions that have been overturned or simply thrown out because of issues like police and prosecutorial misconduct. Then, there are the many who remain fixtures behind prison walls that the streets know are innocent. Seems W.E.B. Du Bois hit the nail on the head where writing: "...the accused law-breaker is tried, not by his peers, but too often by men who would rather punish ten innocent Negroes than let one guilty one escape."<sup>2</sup>

How is it that society can be so passive in the face of the fact that ten to twenty-five percent of those incarcerated are actually innocent? (That's not to mention those of whom, while guilty of a crime, are not guilty of the crime they were convicted of.) The question is one that obviously begs of us to recognize the inherent contradictions of those ideals of justice, freedom, and equality for all. Seemingly, this injustice only becomes relevant when the convicted-innocent are caught in this web, then freed of it after decades of wrongful incarceration. The commotion this stirs, however, is short-lived because society, unaffected, discards the convicted-innocent as casualties of a failing "War on Crime." Needless to say, their apathy serves only to perpetuate such injustice.

It seems TV shows like *20/20*, *Frontline*, and the many other programs that pay lip-service to the foregoing avoid the question of how we got here—a system of criminal justice that fails on all fronts and convicts the innocent. It is a question that while many seem to be obsessed with it they have cared not to answer for fear of revealing the inner-workings of *The Web of Injustice*. Yet the question remains:

### ***TO SERVE AND PROTECT WHAT?***

Knowing that freedom and equality are truly myths and illusions in a capitalist society, I decided one day to prod a fellow prisoner with the question: "What is it going to take to make freedom and equality a reality for Black folk?" With a hint of humor, he responded: "For every Black man the world over to emulate Hitler, and exterminate all Caucasians and the institutions they have created." This, of course, was a comment given by a former Neo-Nazi prisoner who I had built a relationship with over the years that often allowed for me to antagonize him with such questions. There was no denying the truth of his comment. Matter of fact, it would lend itself to

a debate on freedom and equality beginning with the torching of AmeriKKK's most regarded document—the U.S. Constitution. This debate would bend many corners. Most of which, from the Black perspective, focused on the Constitution being a sinuous device designed to safeguard and diffuse power to America's powerful elite. Another prisoner interestingly argued how could it be that such a document written to safeguard the interests of the wealthy and preserve slavery was still relevant today—if not America remained intent on enslaving the people.

I decided this debate would make for a good subject to write on. So I began researching for information to support this premise. Having stumbled across Bob Avakian's pamphlet "U.S. Constitution: An Exploiter's Vision of Freedom,"<sup>3</sup> I realized it best suited the purpose and there was no way I could top it. So I have sought to rely on it extensively.

Avakian begins by pointing out the fact that the fourth President of the United States, James Madison, was the main author of the Constitution and an upholder of slavery and the interests of slave owners in America. Madison not only wrote strongly in defense of the Constitution, he also strongly defended the part of it that declared slaves only three-fifths human being (that provided for the slaves to be counted this way for the purposes of deciding on representation and taxation of the state—Article I, Sec. 2, 3 of the Constitution).

In writing this defense, Madison praised "the compromising expedient of the Constitution" which treats the slaves as "inhabitants, but as debased by servitude below the equal level of free inhabitants; which regards the *slave* as divested of two fifths of the man." Madison explained: "The true state of the case is that they partake of both these qualities: being considered by our laws, in some respects, as persons, and in other respects as property.... This is in fact their true character. It is the character bestowed on them by the law under which they live; and it will not be denied that these are the proper criterion." Madison got to the heart of the matter, the essence of what the *U.S. Constitution* is all about, when in the course of upholding the decision to treat slaves as three-fifths human beings he agrees with the following principle: "Government is instituted no less for protection of the property than of the persons of individuals."<sup>4</sup> Property rights—that is the basis on which outright slavery as well as other forms of exploitation, discrimination, and oppression have been consistently upheld. And over the 200 years that this *Constitution* has been in force, down to today, despite the formal rights of persons it proclaims, and even though it has been amended to outlaw slavery where one person actually owns another as property, the *Constitution* has always remained a document that upholds and gives legal authority to a system in which the masses of people, or their ability to work, have been used as wealth-creating property for the profit of the few.

Avakian goes on to explain the abolition of slavery through the Civil War meant the elimination of one form of exploitation and the further development and extension of other forms of exploitation. Despite the effects of abolitionists and the resistance and revolts of the slaves themselves—and their heroic fighting in the Civil War itself—it was not fought by the Union government in the North, and President Lincoln for the purpose of abolishing the atrocity of slavery in some moral sense. Lincoln would proclaim his "paramount objective in the struggle is to save the Union. If I could save the Union without freeing any slaves, I would do it."<sup>5</sup> Avakian explains that the motivating factor which led to the Civil War was the conflict between two

modes of production, the slave system in the South and the capitalist system centered in the North; this erupted into open antagonism, warfare, when it was longer possible for these two modes of production to co-exist within the same country.

The victory of the North over the South in the U.S. Civil War represented the victory of the capitalist system over the slave system. It represented the triumph of the capitalist form of using people as a means of creating wealth. Under a system of outright slavery, the slave is literally the property of the slave owner. Under capitalism, slavery becomes *wage-slavery*: The exploited class of workers is not owned by the exploiting class of capitalists (the owners of factories, land, etc.), but the workers are in a position where they must sell their ability to work to a capitalist in order to earn a wage. Capitalism needs a mass of workers that is “free,” in a two-fold sense: They must be “free” of all means to live (all means of production), except their ability to work; and they must not be bound to a particular owner, a particular site, a particular guild, etc.—they must be “free” to do whatever work is demanded of them, they must be “free” to move from place to place, and “free” to be hired and fired according to needs of capital! If they cannot enrich a capitalist through working, then the workers cannot work, they cannot earn a wage. But even if they cannot find a capitalist to exploit their labor, even if they are unemployed, they still remain under the domination of the capitalist class and of the process of capitalist accumulation of wealth—the proletarians (the workers) are dependent on the capitalist class and the capitalist system for their very lives, so long as the capitalist system rules. It is this rule, this system of exploitation, that the Constitution has upheld and enforced, all the more so after outright slavery was abolished through the Civil War.

But here is another very important fact that Avakian points to: In the concrete conditions of the United States coming out of the Civil War, and for some time afterward, wage-slavery was not the only major form of exploitation in force in the United States. Up until very recently (until the 1950s), millions of Black people were exploited like serfs on Southern plantations, working as sharecroppers and tenant farmers to enrich big land owners (and bankers and other capitalists). A whole system of laws—commonly known as Jim Crow—were enforced to maintain this relationship of exploitation and oppression: Black people throughout the South—and really throughout the whole country—were subjected to the open discrimination, brutality, and terror that such laws allowed and encourage. All this, too, was upheld and enforced by the *Constitution* and its interpretation and application by the highest political and legal authorities in the United States. And, [in the post-World War II era], when the great majority of Black people have been uprooted from the land in the South and have moved into the cities of the North (and South), they have still been discriminated against, forcibly segregated, and continually subjected to brutality and terror even while some formal civil rights have been extended to them.

Again, Avakian reminds us this all was in accordance with the interests of the ruling capitalist class and capitalist system. It is consistent with the principle enunciated by Madison: Government must protect the property no less than the persons of individuals. In fact, what Madison obviously meant—and what the reality of the United States has clearly been—is that the government must protect the property of white people, especially the wealthy white people, more than the rights of Black people. It must never be forgotten that for most of their history in what is now the United States of America Black people *were* the property of white people,

particularly wealthy plantation owners. Even after this outright slavery was abolished, Black people have never been allowed to achieve equality with whites: they have been held down, maintained as an oppressed nation, and denied the right of self-determination. Capitalism cannot exist without the oppression of nations, and this is all the more so when capitalism develops into its highest stage monopoly capitalism-imperialism. If the history of the United States has demonstrated anything, it has demonstrated this.

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In a subsection entitled “The Heritage They Won’t Renounce,” Avakian foregoes the diplomacy and gives it to us raw: The ruling class of the United States today—above all the U.S. imperialist, the large-scale capitalists and international exploiters who dominate the United States and most of the world—are indeed, as they proclaim, the direct and worthy descendants of their “Founding Fathers.” And this is why the ruling class and its political representatives, while they feel obliged to say that they are opposed to slavery today (at least in the United States itself), solemnly *praise* and *celebrate* slave owners and upholders of slavery who were so prominent among the “Founding Fathers” and played so central a part in the establishment of the system in the United States: men like George Washington, Thomas Jefferson, and James Madison.

These imperialists will never admit that their “Founding Fathers” established a system of government that, in its very foundation, is based on oppression and exploitation. They will never admit that the *Constitution* is the legal instrument for enforcing that exploitation and oppression. They cannot admit this, any more than they can admit their much-vaunted wealth and power has been established and built up by stealing land and resources from the indigenous people (and Mexico) through extortion and outright murderous means; by trading in human flesh and harnessing human beings in slave labor; by pitilessly exploiting immigrants in their millions as wage-slaves’ by robbing and plundering throughout the world, particularly Latin America, Africa, and Asia (what today is generally known as the Third World). They cannot acknowledge that, while the *forms* of slavery have changed, the United States has, from the beginning and down to today, remained a society where enslavement, in one form or another, has been at the very heart of the economic system and the very basis of the political structure.

There are many (including the [late] Supreme Court Justice Thurgood Marshall) who argue that, because of the upholding of slavery in the *Constitution*—and other injustices, such as excluding women from voting, and the treatment of the Indians—the *Constitution* was not such a great document when it was written, but it has been made great through the history of the United States and the struggles to create a more perfect Union and a more perfect *Constitution*. In other words, the *Constitution* may have had defects in some important ways when it was originally conceived, but the miracle of it is that the *Constitution* has within it the provisions for changing and improving it—for extending democracy and rights to those previously excluded. And, some will add, while the *Constitution* upholds property rights, it also upholds individual and civil rights (even the statement from Madison cited at the beginning of this segment stresses that, some might argue).

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Avakian urges us to look more deeply at the foregoing arguments in a subsection aptly entitled “Extension of the Constitution... Extension of Bourgeois Domination.” The extension of constitutional rights and protections to those previously excluded from them has gone together, in an overall way, with the extension of bourgeois (capitalist) relations and their dominance throughout the United States. *And*, at the same time, it has gone hand-in-hand with the *continuation* of the oppression of Black people, of Native Americans, of Latinos and immigrants from Latin America (and elsewhere), of the oppression of women, and other forms of oppression and exploitation. All this is not in contradiction to but is consistent with the fundamental principles on which the *Constitution* is based and the way in which it treats the relationship between the rights of property and the rights of individuals.

It is noteworthy that the 14th Amendment to the *Constitution* (echoing the 5th Amendment) has as its pivotal point the provision that no State may “deprive any person of life, liberty, or property, without due process of law; nor deny to any person within its jurisdiction the equal protection of the law.” Especially in the period since World War II, this amendment has been used as a major part of the basis to extend civil rights for Black people, for women, and for others discriminated against. Yet this amendment was passed right after the Civil War, in 1866; and for decades this amendment was not used to combat racial or sexual discrimination. Instead, “For many years the Supreme Court applied the due-process clause mainly to protect business interests against state regulatory legislation,” [as I shall detail elsewhere].<sup>6</sup> It was only beginning after World War I, and more fully after World War II, that the 14th Amendment was applied in a significant way to the questions of racial and sexual discrimination. Thus, “in a long series of cases” beginning in 1925, the Supreme Court “gradually expanded its definition of due process so as to include most of the guarantees of personal liberties in the Federal Bill of Rights and has protected them from state impairment. A similar development occurred with respect to the equal-protection clause.”<sup>7</sup> These changes in Supreme Court decisions were part of larger changes in ruling-class policy. But these resulted not from some brilliant new legal insight, nor from some sudden flash of moral awakening within the ruling class. Rather, they resulted from the changed situation of Black people in U.S. society and, more decisively, from the situation and needs of the ruling imperialists.

As noted earlier, the masses of Black people have undergone a dramatic change in their particular conditions of existence—and of oppression—in the United States. This began during and immediately after World War I, but developed fully during and after World War II. Demand for labor in war production and other strategic industry, followed after World War II by sweeping changes in Southern agriculture—called forth by technological changes and international economic competition—drove millions and millions of Black people from the South to the urban ghettos of the North and South, and into the most exploited sections of the proletariat. At the same time, the U.S. imperialist emerged not only victorious but greatly strengthened from world war that devastated those countries which were much more directly and centrally involved. So, after World War II U.S. imperialism was everywhere, scooping up the former colonial possessions of the prior colonial powers and establishing U.S. neocolonial domination in the name of freedom and (usually) in the guise of allowing formal independence. In this situation, it was not so necessary—nor was it so helpful—to openly and blatantly treat Black people as “second-class

citizens” in the United States itself. So, over the period of the next several decades, concessions were made to civil rights demands and struggles at the same time as deception, vicious repression, and the promotion of “loyal and responsible Negro leaders” were carried out to keep things firmly under the control of the ruling class and in the service of its larger interests. Similarly, recent decades have seen political and legal changes that have brought certain extensions of formal rights to women and certain concession to their battle against oppression. These have corresponded to significant changes in society and the world, including the fact that in only a small percentage of U.S. families is it any longer the case that the family is supported by just a man working. But, again, these concessions have been confined within limits that fundamentally conform to the interests and needs of the ruling class in the face of changing conditions in the United States and the world.

To this Avakian questions: Would anyone dare say that, because of these changes and concessions, inequality and injustice have been eliminated in the United States? The fact is, none of this has in any way eliminated, or come close to eliminating, discrimination against Black people, their overall conditions of oppression, their status as an oppressed nation. Nor have the ruling imperialists ceased to oppress the Native Americans—they have never even stopped trying to cheat and rob them of valuable land and resources. Nor have these imperialists ceased to discriminate against and viciously exploit other national minorities and immigrants. Nor, despite the constitutional amendment (i.e., the 19th, in 1919) giving them the right to vote and other concessions to women’s rights, have women been granted equality—there has been no end to the subjugation and degradation they have been subjected to: The oppression of women remains a foundation stone of U.S. society, as indeed it must so long as a system of class domination and exploitation is in force. Today, some 200 plus years after the United States *Constitution* first took effect, and after all the changes and amendments, no one can seriously and reasonably argue that the various kinds of oppression that Avakian has spoken to here do not exist or are only a minor aspect of the situation. No one can seriously and reasonably argue that they are not a basic and deeply rooted feature of American society.

The reason for this is rooted in the very reality and nature of the economic system in the United States and the political system that upholds and enforces this economic system, including the Constitution as the legal “cement” of the political structure. The fundamental reason why the “extension” of constitutional rights to those previously excluded from them has not put an end to exploitation, inequality, and oppression is this: The essence of the capitalist economic system is not the competition of commodity owners, all vying equally in the marketplace (equal opportunity for all). The essence is the exploitation of labor as wage-labor, the command by capital over labor power (the ability to do work) as a commodity—a unique commodity—that creates wealth through its use. (Here, Avakian cites a conversation with a dock worker who told him a telling truth in stating: “No one gets rich *working*; the only way to get rich is by making *other people* work for you.”) And the essence of the political structure that goes along with and protects this capitalist economic system is not freedom and democracy for all, regardless of wealth and social position. The essence is the *dictatorship* of the bourgeois class—its monopoly of political power and armed force—over those it dominates in the economic system, especially the proletariat. Thus, the right to vote and other formal rights for the

proletariat and other oppressed masses are in no way in fundamental opposition to the economic and political system of capitalism and bourgeois dictatorship.

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Bourgeois democracy presents itself as classless democracy: It proclaims equality for all. Thus, the United States *Constitution* does not say that different classes of people shall have unequal wealth and power; rather, it sets forth a charter that appears to treat everyone the same, regardless of wealth and social status. Yet there never has been, and never could be, a capitalist society without tremendous differences in wealth and power, without fundamental class divisions and antagonisms. In fact, a capitalist society without these things is not even conceivable. And in reality, democracy in capitalist society can only be bourgeois democracy. This means there is democracy—equal political rights *and* the power to make fundamental decisions—only among the capitalist class, the ruling class. For the rest, and for the proletariat especially, bourgeois democracy means dictatorship: It means being ruled over by the capitalist, even while being allowed to vote and even while being governed by a *Constitution* that sets forth laws that are said to be applied, equally, to all. “How can this be?,” Avakian questions.

First, as for voting, Avakian notes: On the most obvious level, to be a serious candidate for any major office in a country like the United States requires millions of dollars—a personal fortune or, more often, the backing of people with that kind of money. Beyond that, to become known and be taken seriously depends on favorable exposure in the mass media (favorable at least in the sense that you are presented as within the framework of responsible—that is, acceptable—politics)... By the time “the people express their will through voting,” both the candidates they have to choose among and the “issues” that deserve “serious consideration” have been selected by someone else: the ruling class. Avakian goes on to note: Fundamentally, to “get any where” once elected—both to advance one’s own career and to “get anything done”—it is necessary to fit into the established mold and work within the established structures.

But that is not all Avakian notes. If, however, the electoral process in bourgeois society does not represent the exercise of sovereignty by the people, it generally does play an important role in maintaining the sovereignty—the dictatorship—of the bourgeoisie and the continuation of capitalist society. This very electoral process itself tends to cover over the basic class relations—and class antagonisms—in society, and serves to give formal, institutionalized expression to the political participation of atomized individuals in the perpetuation of the status quo. This process not only reduces people to isolated individuals but at the same time reduces them to a passive position politically and defines the essence of politics as such atomized passivity—as each person, individually, in isolation from everyone else, giving his/her approval to this or to that option, all of which options have been formulated and presented by an active power standing above these atomized masses of “citizens.” [T]he very acceptance of the electoral process as the quintessential political act reinforces acceptance of the established order and works against any radical rupture with, to say nothing of the actual overturning of, that order. Here, Avakian reminds us that one of the main reasons for which the United States *Constitution* was “ordained and established,” as proclaimed in its “Preamble,” was to

prevent social upheaval and the overturning of the order upheld by that Constitution—to “insure domestic tranquility.”

The same can be said of the other aspects of bourgeois democracy and the kind of rights set forth in the United States Constitution (including its “Bill of Rights”): They have the purpose and function of reinforcing the rule of the bourgeoisie and keeping political activity within limits acceptable to the bourgeoisie. Thus, the much-vaunted freedom of expression in “democratic countries” is not in opposition to but is encompassed by and confined within the actual exercise of dictatorship by the bourgeoisie. This is for two basic reasons—because the ruling class has a monopoly on the means of molding public opinion and because its monopoly of armed force puts it in a position to suppress, as violently as necessary, any expression of ideas, as well as any action, that poses a serious challenge to the established order. The history of the United States, like the history of all other “democratic” bourgeois dictatorships, is full of graphic illustrations of just how true the above-mentioned is!

Formal equality—the treatment of all persons as equal, and specifically as “equal before the law,” without regard to wealth or social position—in bourgeois society actually cover over the relationship of complete subordination, exploitation, and oppression to which the proletariat and masses of people are subjected. If a small group—the capitalist class—controls the important means of creating wealth, then in reality they have the power of life and death over those who control little or none of these. To have such power over other people is, in essence, to hold them in an enslaved condition, whether or not the chains are literal and visible. Here, Avakian questions: In such a situation—which is the fundamental condition of capitalist society—how can there be anything but profound inequality economically, socially, and politically? And with such a fundamental division, and dictatorship.

With regard to the law, this will manifest itself in two main ways. First, those who dominate society economically will dominate in deciding, through the political structure, what the laws will be. They will insure that the laws serve their interests. And second, the actual application and enforcement of the law will discriminate in favor of those with wealth and power and against those without them—and even more so against oppressed nationalities, women, and others who are “the last of the last” in society. Everyday life in any capitalist society proves this over and over. Thus, once again, as with the right to vote and other constitutional rights in a bourgeois-democratic republic, formal equality before the law expresses itself, in reality, as profound inequality—and more—as something confined within and conforming to bourgeois domination and dictatorship.

The basic difference between the bourgeoisie’s view of freedom and democracy on the one hand, and the striving of oppressed masses for an end to oppressive conditions on the other hand, is sharply drawn [from historical] events in Haiti, the Philippines, and South Korea. The oppressed masses (and students and other revolutionary intellectuals) want[ed] some kind of fundamental change in the social system and a breaking of the chains of imperialist domination in their countries. But the bourgeois opposition leaders and parties want[ed] only the recognition of bourgeois-democratic provisions and procedures—with elections of highest expression of political activity. Most of all, they want[ed] the sharing of power more broadly and “equally” among the upper classes—really, they want[ed] their chance to hold the reins of power—while leaving the social system and imperialist

domination intact. As for the imperialist, where they become convinced of the need for change in such situations, they make every effort to keep it confined within the framework of imperialist domination and bourgeois rule. Indeed, they use such situations to strengthen and perhaps “refine” the apparatus of bourgeois politics—and, above all, or repression—in the countries involved.

This brings us to a most fundamental point that is often ignored or glossed over in discussions and debates about democracy in countries like the United States: The fact is that even the extent to which rights are allowed to the nonruling class in imperialist countries depends on a situation where, in large parts of the world under imperialist domination, the masses of people are subjected to much more open and murderous repression. In short,

[t]he platform of democracy in the imperialist countries (worm-eaten as it is) rests on fascist terror in the oppressed nation: the real guarantors of bourgeois democracy in the United States are not the constitutional scholar and Supreme Court justices, but the Brazilian torturer, the South African cop, and the Israeli pilot; the *true* defenders of the democratic tradition are not on the portraits in the halls of the Western capitals, but are Marcus, Mobutu, and the dozens of generals from Turkey to Taiwan, from South Korea to South America, all put and maintained in power and backed up by the military force of the United States and its imperialist partners.<sup>8</sup>

But, at the same time, the imperialist rulers and ardent worshippers of bourgeois democracy go to great lengths to try to cover over, or explain away, the brutal repression “at home” that is so essential to the functioning of the system and the maintenance of the established order: For there is vicious repression and state terror carried out continually—and not only in times of serious crisis or social upheaval—in the imperialist countries; it is carried out specifically against those who do not support but oppose the established order, or who simply cannot be counted on to be pacified by the normal workings of the imperialist system—those whose conditions are desperate and whose life situation is explosive anyway.

Avakian goes on to point out the fact that in the United States there are hundreds of police shootings of oppressed people, particularly Blacks and other minority nationalities—it is an amazing but true statistic that one out of every thirteen Black people in the United States will be arrested each year—and the widespread use of drugs, surgical techniques, and other means to repress and terrorize prisoners (as well as an astounding number of people not in jail, including allegedly recalcitrant children); the use of welfare and other so-called social services agencies to harass and control poor people down to the most intimate details of their personal lives; this, and much more, is part of the daily life experience of millions of people in the major imperialist countries. Along with all this, of course, is the use of the state apparatus for direct political repression. [In this respect the courts are part of the State’s apparatus to maintain the interests of the upper class. They are but mere tools of industry and repression.]

Through all this, while overt political repression by the state is in one sense the clearest indication of the class content of democracy—in the imperialist countries as well as elsewhere—in another sense the daily, and often seemingly arbitrary, terror

carried out against the lower strata in these imperialist countries concentrates the connection between the normal workings of the system and the political (that is, class) nature of the state.

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In a subsection entitled “A New Far Greater Vision of Freedom,” Avakian points out that in the course of this article—to which I have cited to the letter—so far, in speaking to some essential questions concerning the United States Constitution and the system it upholds, has answered some of the main arguments made in defense of this *Constitution* and this system, including the argument that the *Constitution*, if not perfect, is perfectible—that it can be continually improved and the rights it establishes can be extended to those previously excluded. Before concluding, Avakian uses this segment to briefly address some of the other main arguments made on behalf of—or in defense of—this *Constitution* and the principles and vision it embodies.

He notes how “This *Constitution* establishes a law of the land that is applicable to all—it establishes a government of laws, not of people.” This is closely linked to the principle of “equality before law.” What is meant by “a government of laws, not of people” is that no one is “above the law” and that what is allowed and what is forbidden are set forth before all, in one set of regulations binding on everyone, and this can be changed only through the procedures established for making such changes. A “government of people” refers to a notion of a government where it is the will and the word of certain people—a King, a despot, a small group of tyrants, etc.—that determine what is allowed and what is forbidden, and where this can and will change according to the dictates and whims of such rulers: There is no common and clearly spelled-out standard binding on all, even on the political leaders and the powerful and influential in society.

Like all principles of bourgeois democracy, this notion of “a government of laws, not of people” misses and obscures the essential question. Here, Avakian points out that first of all, “the rule of law” can be part of a dictatorship, of one kind or another, and in the most general sense it always is—even where it may appear that power is exercised without or above the law, laws (in the sense of a systematized code that people in society are obliged to conform to, whether written or unwritten) will still exist and play a part in enforcing the rule of the dominant class. Conversely, all states, all dictatorships, include laws in one form or another. Most fundamentally, the question is, as Avakian points: What is the character and the class content of the laws, what system do they uphold and enforce, which class interests do they represent—of which class dictatorship, bourgeois or proletarian, are they the expression and instrument—and toward what end are they contributing—the maintenance of class division and domination, exploitation, and oppression, or the final elimination of class divisions, of all oppressive social divisions, and of social antagonisms? In short, the essential question is not “a government of laws versus a government of people,” it is which people—which *class*—rules, and *what laws* are in force, in service of what *ends*?

“‘We The People,’ that is at the heart of this *Constitution* and the genius of this *Constitution*: It establishes a government of, by and for all the people.” As a matter of historical fact, this opening phrase of the *Constitution*, “We the People of the United States,” was not the product of some lofty desire by the “framers” of the *Constitution* to set forth some universal principle of popular sovereignty. It was the

product of their desire to overcome the problem of States posing their own sovereignty against that of the Federal Government—and the desire to avoid the specific problem of not knowing which States would ratify the *Constitution*: “The preamble of the Articles of Confederation had named all the states in order from north to south. How was the [Constitutional] Convention to enumerate the participating states without knowing which would ratify? In a brilliant flash of inspiration, the Convention began with the words, ‘We the People of the United States... do ordain and establish this Constitution....’”<sup>9</sup>

More importantly, notes Avakian, the larger historical context and the actual content of this proclamation—“We The People”—must be made clear. The founding of the United States of America as an independent country represented not just the breaking away from domination by foreign power. It also meant breaking away from a form of government that vested great power in the person of the monarchy—even while it ultimately served the interests of the bourgeoisie and the landed “nobility.” In general, the rights and the restrictions of power established in the *Constitution* of the newly founded United States revolved around preventing arbitrary rule by despots and the concentration of too much power in one person or one part of the government. The “separation of powers”<sup>10</sup> and the “checks and balances” of different branches of government was seen as a way of insuring that the government would serve the interests of the capitalist class and (at that time) the slave owners *as a whole*. It is in this light that “We the People of the United States,” in the “Preamble” of the *Constitution*, must be understood. Obviously, “We the People of the United States” did not include all those who were expressly excluded from the process of selecting the government and endorsing the *Constitution*. To this end Avakian notes: “Even on the most obvious level, how could the government of the newly formed United States, for example, be considered to have derived its powers ‘from the consent of the governed’ when, at the time of the formation of the United States of America, a majority of people ‘governed’—including slaves, Indians, women, men who did not meet various property requirements, and others—did not even have the right to vote, to say nothing of the real power to govern and determine the direction of society?”

Bourgeois ruling classes generally speak in the name of the people, all the people. From their standpoint, it may make a certain amount of sense: They do, after all, *rule over* the masses of people. But from a more basic and more objective standpoint, their claim to represent all the people is a deception. If it was a deception at the time of the founding of the United States and the adoption of its *Constitution*, it is all the more so now. For now the rule of the capitalists is in fundamental antagonism with the interests of the great majority of people, not just in a particular country, but all over the world. Now the decisive question is not overcoming economic and political obstacles to the development of capitalism and its corresponding political system. The time when that was on the historical agenda is long since passed. What is now on the historical agenda is the *overthrow* of capitalism and the final elimination of all systems of exploitation, all oppressive social relations, all class distinctions, through the revolution of the exploited class under capitalism, the proletariat.

To get a very stark sense of just how historically conditioned—how long since outmolded and completely reactionary—are the interests and the paramount concerns of the “Founding Fathers” and their descendants, the ruling imperialists of today,

Avakian directs us to consider the fact that, in writing the *Constitution*, Madison and others “For theoretical inspiration... leaned heavily on Locke and on Montesquieu’s *Spirit of the Laws*. Both writers had insisted on the need for separation of powers in order to prevent tyranny; in Montesquieu’s view even the representatives of the people in the legislature could not be trusted with unlimited power.”<sup>11</sup> In reading over Montesquieu’s *Spirit of the Laws* one cannot help but be struck by how thoroughly his frame of reference is that of a bygone age and his outlook that of exploiting classes whose period of historical ascendancy is long since past. As a glaring illustration, Avakian prompts us to consider the following passage from Montesquieu’s *Spirit of the Laws*:

If I had to justify our right to enslave Negroes, this is what I would say: Since the peoples of Europe have exterminated those of America, they have had to enslave those of Africa in order to use them to clear and cultivate such a vast expanse of land.

Sugar would be too expensive if it weren’t harvested by slaves.

Those in question are black from the tip of their toes to the top of their heads; and their noses so flattened that it is almost impossible to feel sorry for them.

It is inconceivable that God, who is a very wise being, could have placed a soul, especially a good soul, in an all-black body....

One proof of the fact that Negroes don’t have any common sense is that they get more excited about a string of glass beads than about gold, which, in civilized countries, is so dearly prized.

It is impossible that these people are men; because if we thought of them as men, one would begin to think that we ourselves are not Christians.<sup>12</sup>

Avakian concludes by emphasizing: *The Constitution of the United States* is an exploiters’ vision of freedom. It is a charter for a society based on exploitation, on slavery in one form or another. The rights and freedoms it proclaims are subordinate to and in service of the system of exploitation it upholds. This *Constitution* has been and continues to be applied in accordance with this vision and with the interests of the ruling class of this system: In its application it has become more and more fully the instrument of bourgeois domination, dictatorship, oppression, conquest, and plunder.

### ***AMERICA’S MAGIC SHOW***

There is no such person as a “criminal” in American society. Only what I am to describe as a dispossessed individual persecuted for his or her indiscretion that is commensurate to the capitalist spirit of this nation. Once defined as “a person with predatory instincts who has not the capital to form a corporation,” Howard Scott provided what ultimately distinguishes the criminal from the just. To this end, Attorney Clarence Darrow (1857-1938) explained to the prisoners of Cook County Illinois:



Some so-called criminals—and I use this word because it is handy, it means nothing to me—I speak of the criminals who get caught as distinguished from the criminals who catch them—some of these so-called criminals are in jail for their first offenses, but the nine-tenths of you are in jail because you did not have a good lawyer, and, of course, you did not have a good lawyer because you did not have enough money to pay a good lawyer. There is no very great danger of a rich man going to jail.<sup>13</sup>

That said, my only crime was being without resource enough to free myself of the predator's web once ensnared. Stung by the venom of poverty, it has seized authority over my being having fashioned my image as prey (i.e., the criminal). It has capitalized on that which it has created in me. Ironically, it then justifies my punishment in face of its criminal past. Here it is white America got a 400 plus year pass to commit crimes against the indigenous people of the Americas and African slaves. Yet a Black man cannot get pass the one! This confuses me so. Yet, I struggle to free myself of the contradictions of this beast—America, *land of the free, home of the incarcerated!*

In this struggle for freedom and understanding of the contradictions of this country, especially those within its system of criminal justice, my studies have directed me to the roots of its national character. Here, I have gained some insight as to why, in practice, this nation lives in stark contradiction of its ideals. That these contradictions exist I have concluded was a given considering many early American settlers were literally criminals and vagrants of the sort England and other European countries had banished to its shores.<sup>14</sup> The punitive transportation of large numbers of people from England, for example, facilitated the initial colonization of Georgia.<sup>15</sup> This fact seemingly escaped the pages of American history I was provided with from K-12 for obvious reasons. From this one can reasonably conclude the original Thirteen Colonies were established and governed by less than honest men. When considering, for example, the corrupt and destructive pillars upon which they built this nation, and what to many remains at the heart of America's endeavor to remain a global superpower, this becomes an inescapable truth. For the government they have been praised for creating we must remain mindful was developed in the infancy of African slavery,<sup>16</sup> Native genocide and outright theft of their lands, and the oppression of women and poor whites. America has an ideological interest in suppressing any memory of these atrocities. It is done not simply out of shame of its criminal history, but rather on account of the need to distract from the fact that the *Game* remains the same only the tactics have changed.

Since the day America's *so-called* Founders reined over the continent, nothing has changed. The spirit of the nation's character they gave life to—that someone's, some country's, or some class or race of people have to be oppressed or destroyed in order to fulfill the American Dream—has trickled down from one generation to the next as their fellow classmen have created one oppressive vice after another. This spirit, unquestionably, has come to bear upon and encourage the nation's criminal element.

That said, the people deemed crooks today were yesterday's Founding Fathers whose rogue spirit has been immortalized and embodied in the American cultural experience. What then does this say of the nation's beloved *Constitution*? With this

framing document America's Founders set forth a pretentious republic that allowed for them to shield themselves and their descendants from criminal reproach. By seizing the reins of statesmanship and the legislative control it bestowed upon them, they came into possession of the power—the official power of the government—to shape the distorted concepts of justice, freedom, liberty and the lot of other exaggerated ideals cast about society's conscience. In doing so they fouled the womb of Lady Liberty with seeds of nepotism. For the *Constitution* and the laws that have come of it were what Rousseau aptly described as “an invention of the strong to chain and rule the weak.”<sup>17</sup> The law as the Founders practiced it was devoid of the merest morality. Where they pillaged and killed, the *Constitution* would provide them a banner of protection by objectifying Africans, indigenous people and criminalizing those who sought to follow in their footsteps.

This was the genius of this document. The laws it fostered became their most effective tool of propaganda. They simply distorted the conscience of their fellows by allowing for their atrocities to be interpreted not as crimes against humanity, rather acts of patriotism righteously wielded against chattel, savages, and criminals. This is the power to which Locke spoke to where writing: “Great robbers punish little ones to keep them in their obedience; but the great ones are rewarded with laurels and triumphs, because they are to big for the weak hands of justice in this world, and have the power in their own possession which should punish offenders.” From this one can easily take away the fact that freedom, justice, liberty, and the lot of those other pretentious ideals are what power says they are.

Methodical in their exploits the authors of the *Constitution* simply gave life to a respiring politic that Avakian has detailed which created a pretext for tyranny and capitalist greed today. This, without question, has indeed made for the existence of two Americas. There is the America experienced by people of color and the poor. Then there is the America experienced by the upper class. The former being an experience best described by the term “tyranny.” The latter, exactly the opposite—*free to fuck over the lower classes*.

As with their forefathers, America's ruling elite possess an unchecked power that ever materializes, for example, in corporate America's ability to spark foreign wars solely to exploit the perspectives and lives of so many people and governments here and abroad. Needless to say, the fate of America's economy rests in the hands of these warmongers. Thus, it should come as no surprise why it is government officials are indebted to them and their interests. This, unquestionably, makes for a system of government that has always functioned within the perimeters of a plutocracy opposed to a democracy. It is a service industry that caters to the rich, plain and simple.<sup>18</sup> The effect this has on America's democracy undermines it so by rendering the ideals it proclaims illusive to the poor. How so? I believe Mumia best explains it where writing: “Perhaps we can shrug off and shred some of the dangerous myths laid on our minds like a second skin, such as the ‘right’ to a fair and impartial jury of our peers, the ‘right’ to represent oneself, the ‘right’ to a fair trial. They're not rights. They're privileges of the powerful and the rich. For the powerless and the poor, they are chimeras that vanish once one reaches out to claim them as something real or substantial.”<sup>19</sup>

That the fact exists the rights embodied in the nation's *Constitution* are real only to a select few who, like America's Founders, seize the reins of wealth and power—

is a telling critique of a system of justice that functions within the context of: No money? No connections? No Due Process! It is what it is—a service industry. And like any, you get what you pay for.

Further, the ideal of “self-government”—that the people are the ultimate authority and must have a voice in how they are governed—is flat-out bullshit at its finest. The people of the United States have been led to believe they are the ones making the laws of the land. Yet, as Avakian’s writings have pointed out, what role did they have in drafting and ratifying the *Constitution*? None! Seemingly, they forget that the *Constitution* “was written by men who feared government by the people and were trying to keep it at bay.”<sup>20</sup> Arguably, a logical stance to take considering the fact that then majority of Americans—as it remains today—were ignorant of how politics, law and government functioned to dictate society. Therefore, the people have been misled by such falsehoods and the hocus pocus of “majority rule.” To this end, they have been doped with illusions. How so? The illusive powers of democracy have

...successively taken each member of the community in its powerful grasp and fashioned him at will, the supreme power then extends its arm over the whole community. It covers the surface of society with a network of small complicated rules, minute and uniform, through which the most energetic characters cannot penetrate to rise above the crowd. The will of man is not shattered but softened, bent, and guided; men are seldom forced by it to act, but they are constantly restrained from acting. Such a power does not destroy, but it prevents existence; it does not tyrannize, but it compresses, enervates, extinguishes, and stupefies a people, till each nation is reduced to nothing better than a flock of timid and industrious animals, of which the government is the shepherd.<sup>21</sup>

Picasso once said art is a lie that tells the truth. In this regard, America’s democracy artfully tells a lie that today has become a truth postulated in more of the same deceptions used in the yesteryears to sway the favor of the people. Sure they vote, yet as Thoreau has suggested:

All voting is a sort of gaming, like chequers or back-gammon, with a slight moral tinge to it, a playing with right and wrong, with moral questions; and betting naturally accompanies it. The character of the voters is not staked. I cast my vote, per-chance, as I think right; but I am not vitally concerned that that right should prevail. I am willing to leave it to the majority. Its obligation, therefore, never exceeds that of expediency. Even *voting for the right* is doing nothing for it. It is only expressing to men feebly your desire that it should prevail. A wise man will not leave the right to the majority. There is but little virtue in the action of masses of men.<sup>22</sup>

In questioning the virtue of the masses Thoreau has set forth an observation that, while democracies by definition must respect individual freedoms, these freedoms can only be exercised in a meaningful sense when people are informed, engaged and

participating. Given the significant number of Americans who are ignorant of the nature of politics, law, etc., not to mention those who have been disenfranchised by other government devices, and those who simply do not partake in the whole political process—the people by no means have been left to govern themselves. Nor do they dictate the central issues of power<sup>23</sup> the American government falsely proclaims to be at the heart of public deliberation. As Avakian has indicted, those who control today's technology and media outlets (thus, the information society feeds on) possess the ability to shape that information (thus, society's conscious/conscience) to their favor. Thus there is little to question as to whether or not the average citizen's reason has been affected by distortions which influence his or her vote.

Here lies the tactful calculation of America's powerful elite who manipulate the people's will as if a glove puppet catering to their tyranny while providing it with the appearance of fair and just simply because the majority approve. It is but one example of many where those who exercise power transform their interests into a moral "right," a norm, a usual part of the order of things. To this end, the law being their most effective tool of propaganda becomes a symbolic instrument they exploit to the fullest. For the authority it carries has been embedded deeply in the conscious of every American. Sadly, many will never realize just how their conscience has been warped so by the concept of "majority rule." Like robots they have been programmed to abide by a system that reflects attitudes commensurate to the capitalist spirit of this nation. Yet they do not see the hypocrisy of their violence, injustice, inequality, etc, because capitalism blinds them so. But let us not forget the fact that majority rule (a.k.a. "Mob Rule") once held Africans as slaves, supported Jim Crow and women's suffrage. Mob rule endorsed *legal* genocide of Native Americans and theft of their land. And even to this day, mob rule murders innocent Iraqi women and children, and mass incarcerates communities of color. Surely, this gives considerable weight to yet another truth observed by Thoreau: "[A] government in which the majority rule in all cases cannot be based on justice..."<sup>24</sup>

This forces us to question whether something is right simply because it has been approved by the majority or enshrined in the law. Again, the law—particularly the abuses it has allowed—has excused injustices and criminalized (and ultimately capitalized on) people simply because of race, gender, economic interest and status. Case in point, during the probation period (1920-33) Al Capone and many others were criminalized and pursued vigorously by authorities for running 'shine. So many murders, so many lives lost behind something that today is legal. This, unavoidably, puts in context the fact that just because something is *made* illegal does not mean its going away. It just means it will now be run by criminals created and exploited by the system of capitalism. This is why it is wise to accept no idea as true simply on the basis it is the law or has been approved by the majority. Because laws are but opinion—a big asshole the majority have been squeezed into.

By keeping enough smoke and fire going society has been duped with illusions of justice, freedom, and equality while the ulterior motives of America's corporate flunkies—government officials—often go unseen. Like dogs chasing their tails, society has been misled, for example, with tough-on-crime initiatives and prison construction believing they will reduce or eradicate crime when crime is as American as apple pie. What would this nation be without it? Surely, not the America we know today! Again the spirit of this nation—its way of living, behaving, thinking and

feeling, as history has produced it—is cutthroat and criminal. As such, contrary to the belief that its laws provide for a harmonious society, America in all reality adopts its laws as commands to the spirit of the nation—CAPITALISM! Thus, where they are decided, we must not forget they are influenced greatly by what makes dollar\$ & \$ense in a capitalist society. This truth cannot be ignored in face of the fact that our society has been organized in the interests of exploiting the classes. What then does this say about our legislative and judicial counsels?

As in the past, today’s legislators strive to keep in place the exploitative practices of their forefathers. It matters little that these legislative bodies have been sprinkled with a touch of color. The thinking is all the same—assess a given set of circumstances, workout the laws necessary to sustain a capitalist form of government, and promote the kind of prosperity society can possess in those circumstances. As this suggests, the law determines how we as a people, a nation, will interact with each other, react to the law, manipulate it, and how the rule breakers will be capitalized on. The whole process of making laws reveals its capitalist and discriminatory intent. For example, although theoretically the law is supposed to apply to white and Black alike, in practice it never does. Here’s where the cross-burning ever resurfaces. Laws are created by swindlers, with the above-board *Game* simply serving as cover for various forms of unseen deception. Behind closed doors law makers craft, for example, legislation that targets and criminalizes the traits, behaviors, and characteristics of a particular people, group, etc., that has been deemed disposable.

Case in point, the Contra scandal of the 1980’s that flooded ghetto communities across America with tons of cocaine and high-powered assault weapons. Many young Latino and African-American males such as myself who became peddlers of this poison did not realize we were being set-up as peons on a long chain of government sponsored activity that extended itself to the guerrilla controlled cocoa fields of South America. Despite our relatively low position in this *Game*, we were elevated to the top of the food chain for criminal prosecutions and lengthy prison sentences. This of course came only after the government flooded our communities with dope and structured unemployment. This then allowed for politicians (i.e., legislators) to audaciously spark a pretentious War on Drugs aimed at capitalizing on and assailing further—as if the dope and guns were not damaging enough—our communities with mandatory prison sentencing and disparaging crack vs. powder cocaine statuses.

These statutes have been recorded as the latest Jim Crow laws in Professor Michelle Alexander’s highly acclaimed book *The New Jim Crow*. In both the book and a 2010 interview with Bill Moyers, she draws on Iris Young’s famous “birdcage” metaphor to explain how, in the years since America’s Founders gathered to draft the Constitution, legislators have abused their official power (i.e., the people they manipulate) to maintain white supremacy:

Academics have a tendency to use terms like structured racism to explain how people of color are trapped kind of at the bottom. But one way of thinking about these forms of structural disadvantage is to think about it as a bird cage. Not every wire of the cage needs to be intentionally designed to keep the bird trapped, right?

Now, the rules and laws that exist today, the drug laws and the ways in which they’re enforced, all of the forms of discrimination that people

who have been branded felons now face. All the forms of legal discrimination against them. These are all wires of the cage that serve to keep people of color trapped in an inferior, second-class status.

So...not every law or policy has to be adopted with discriminatory intent in order for it to function as part of a larger, and in this case, a literal cage for black people.<sup>25</sup>

She goes on to explain in the book that “[o]nly when we view the cage from a distance can we disengage from the maze of rationalizations that are offered for each wire and see how the entire apparatus operates to keep Blacks perpetually trapped.”<sup>26</sup> Professor Alexander has without question set before us the most compelling and detailed account of the inner-workings of the criminal justice system and how it has functioned throughout history ‘til today as a system of caste control in communities of color. She provides the following as a brief description illustrating how the system works to trap Latino and Black men in a virtual (and literal) cage:

...The War on Drugs is the vehicle through which extraordinary numbers of black [and brown] men are forced into the cage. The entrapment occurs in three distinct phases... The first stage is the roundup. Vast numbers of people are swept into the criminal justice system by the police, who conduct drug operations primarily in poor communities of color. They are rewarded in cash—through drug forfeiture laws and federal grant programs—for rounding up as many people as possible, and they operate unconstrained by constitutional rules of procedure that once were considered inviolate. Police can stop, interrogate, and search anyone they choose for drug investigations... Because there is no meaningful check on the exercise of police discretion, racial biases are granted free rein. In fact, police are allowed to rely on race as a factor in selecting whom to stop and search (even though people of color are no more likely to be guilty of drug crimes than whites)—effectively guaranteeing that those who are swept into the system are primarily black and brown.

The conviction marks the beginning of the second phase: the period of formal control. Once arrested, defendants are generally denied meaningful legal representation and pressured to plead guilty whether they are or not. Prosecutors are free to “load up” defendants with extra charges, and their decisions cannot be challenged for racial bias. Once convicted, due to the drug war’s harsh sentencing laws, drug offenders in the United States spend more time under the criminal justice system’s formal control—in jail or in prison, on probation or parole—than drug offenders anywhere else in the world. While under formal control, virtually every aspect of one’s life is regulated and monitored by the system, and any form of resistance or disobedience is subject to swift sanction. This period of control may last for a lifetime, even for those convicted of extremely minor, nonviolent offenses, but the vast majority of those swept into the system are eventually released. They are transferred from their prison cells to a much larger, invisible cage. The final stage has been dubbed by some advocates as the period of invisible punishment. This term, first coined by

Jeremy Travis, is meant to describe the unique set of criminal sanctions that are imposed on individuals after they step outside the prison gates, a form of punishment that operates largely outside of public view and takes effect outside the traditional sentencing framework. These sanctions are imposed by operation of law rather than decisions of a sentencing judge, yet they often have a greater impact on one's life course than the months or years one actually spends behind bars. These laws operate collectively to ensure that the vast majority of convicted offenders will never integrate into mainstream, white society. They will be discriminated against, legally, for the rest of their lives—denied employment, housing, education, and public benefits... People who have been convicted of felonies almost never truly enter the society they inhabited prior to their conviction. Instead, they enter a separate society, a world hidden from public view, governed by a set of oppressive and discriminatory rules and laws that do not apply to everyone else. They become members of an undercaste—an enormous population of predominantly black and brown people who, because of the drug war, are denied basic rights and privileges of American citizenship and are permanently relegated to an inferior status. This is the final phase, and there is no going back.<sup>27</sup>

Today, there are more black men in prison or in jail, and on probation or parole than were enslaved in 1850.<sup>28</sup> Where we once were denied full citizenship due to our skin color, today it's because we have been criminalized. Once charged with a crime there's a ninety-eight percent chance you're going to be branded as a felon whereabouts all the discrimination formerly outlawed now becomes again legal and enacted with impunity. Here, we find ourselves standing before a judge who treats our constitutional rights with "all the power and relevance of toilet paper."<sup>29</sup>

Every day, we walk into courtrooms around the nation with illusions of due process that I find comical yet painful to acknowledge as the attorney who mocks his client in the following passage:

"...come on brother, you didn't really come here today in chains like a slave, being treated like half a man, expecting justice, did you?"

"Nigga, did you just call me a slave?"

"No I called you brother the 13<sup>th</sup> Amendment calls you a slave."

You expect these white thinking lawyers to look out for you because you accept the illusion of...justice. While you take your own self-hate out on the streets, they're taking their well learned hate of you out on you here.<sup>30</sup>

And there it is there, like magic we find ourselves behind prison walls unveiling the magician's tricks which force us to recognize we've been had by the biggest damn racket in the nation—the *criminal just-us system!*

That said, who really is the criminal and what truly is just? America is one of the most powerful countries in the world. And it did not gain its influence with the humanitarian ideals and law governing the nation today. For there is nothing within them or the moral reasoning that comes of it that has not been systematically violated

past or present. Love it or leave it, America's history, just as its future, depends on the blood and sweat of injustice and oppression. They are what sustain this nation. So without shame, America and its system of criminal justice will continue to persecute the poor who have little, if any, resource and noose the necks of weak nations to feed this beast—CAPITALISM. Thus, many will continue to suffer wrongful convictions and other injustices which render America's promises of freedom, justice and equality empty.

As for the judicial rhetoric posited by Sir William Blackstone? This becomes preposterous in face of the fact it's a system driven by human nature. Justice, therefore, shall ever be suspended for personal gain. These are the many complex perspectives, egos, political agendas, biases, and other prevailing issues that taint the directive of due process. Thus, the law will ever serve capitalist purposes. For those who are prosecuted, we learn the hard way how it exploits us so while others prosper given they are in the circle of judges, lawyers, correctional officials and the sort who feed off the tit of society's corrupt endeavors.

### ***JUDICIAL WARFARE***

It's a fact, eighty percent or better of those charged with a crime are indigent and thus represented by a Public Defender.<sup>31</sup> Given the poor quality of this representation, the accused often enter the courtroom with a rope already around their neck. Here, the jury waits, mean-mugging as if a mob anticipating a lynching. Needless to say, when faced with an overzealous prosecutor, the accused is more likely to suffer conviction. Despite innocence or guilt, many know this and often settle or are coerced by their Public Defenders to take the deal. Thus, it's no mystery as to how the prosecutor is able to bolster a conviction rate of ninety-eight percent. Nor is it a mystery of how or why, once arrested, the presumption of guilt is strong. With such a high conviction rate, it becomes an effective propaganda tool bestowing the prosecutor with a near perfect image for bringing the bad guy to court. Thus, there's little a juror will question, assuming that the accused must be guilty otherwise he would not have been charged with a crime.

For those of us who refuse to surrender and take stance against the tyranny of this state apparatus, we literally become a one-man show left to our own devices. Here, our street savvy seldom produces results. What ability we prided ourselves on as ruffians, goons, and the lot of other 'hood stars, is reduced to a puppet in this arena. The exceptions are few. Yet there are those who are true defenders of *self*—those who adapt, get wit' the business, and come to grips with the rules of the *Game* at hand. This presses one to educate and litigate for himself, and navigate the political arena within the four corners of the courtroom. What is the first rule of the *Game*? Justice hinges upon manipulation. Thus, anything goes.

Here, we must keep in mind the law is sinuously devised by hypocrites with the intent of keeping it fluid so as they can demand of its favor where and when needed. This being the case, the late John Africa would poignantly state before a Philadelphia jury:

Everything in the courtroom is designed by the system for the economics of the system. There's nothing within it that one has not been made to be dependent on, including the officers of the court. You can't defend



yourself. You've got to depend on lawyers. The Bar Association is an industry that their not about to give up. Anybody who knows the principle of self has the means to protect self. The lawyer is not there to protect you. Rather, preserve the system of manipulation and its laws that feed him. Nonetheless, they will tell you that you must have a lawyer because that lawyer is part of the industry.<sup>32</sup>

The point Africa has placed in context is this: The average lawyer will not challenge the system. For he has been conditioned to play by the rules as they have been put to him. To this end, Thoreau aptly stated:

He well deserves to be called, as he has been called, the Defender of the Constitution. There are really no blows to be given by him but defensive ones. He is not a leader, but a follower. His leaders are the men of [1787]. "I have never made an effort," he says, "and never propose to make an effort; I have countenanced an effort, and never mean to countenance an effort, to disturb the arrangement as originally made by which the Constitution gives to slavery, he says, "Because it was a part of the original compact,—let it stand." Notwithstanding his special acuteness and ability, he is unable to take a fact out of its merely political relations, and behold it as it lies absolutely to be disposed of by the intellect.<sup>33</sup>

In the same respect that Thoreau's writings have served to illustrate a lawyer's complicity with yesterday's system, so too today's. For this remains a wicked system. And like any system, the components (i.e., the officers of the court, the legislative counsels, etc.) are conditioned for upholding the *Constitution*—that is, to hold in place the reigns of power that the law wields over society.

Here, I do not necessarily mean to blackball *all* attorneys as sell-outs. There are those who have been held in contempt of the system, lost their license to practice law, etc., because they came to despise it. Armed with the insight of its inner-workings, these are the ones that fight fire with fire and fight hard for their clients. But trust, they are rare and difficult to find. It's like looking for a needle in a haystack. They are the few and usually the most expensive. So often, more times than not, it's best to represent yourself. Because if that Public Defender jumps in the ring as your contender against the State, it's going to be a first round TKO—with the title going to the state and the punishment to the defendant every time. To illustrate, I provide the following narrative stemming from my 2003 murder trial.

Early on I was represented by a former Contra Costa County prosecutor (they make for the best defense attorneys for obvious reasons). During the course of one of our client/attorney conferences, I made mention of the O.J. Simpson trial. I cannot recall the point I was attempting to make by bringing it up, but whatever it was my attorney quickly dismissed it and bought to my attention the fact that O.J.'s acquittal had had a devastating impact on the rights of Blacks. What he pointed out was the fact that the acquittal made it that much more difficult for a Black man to receive a fair trial in California. It didn't take a rocket scientist to figure out that his comments rode the wave of utter disgust felt throughout white America, especially those who worked within circles of the criminal justice system. Here, the consensus was: A

Black man for the first time in history (with exception of the “green-light” issued during the Civil War for Blacks to kill whites) had gotten away with killing two white people. This, undoubtedly, inflamed those long held beliefs that there were racial boundaries that, in the case of O.J. Simpson, had been crossed.

Having absorbed what my attorney had put to me, I would later note that during the four years I sat in Rita fighting my case, out of the hundreds of murder cases tried, only two cases resulted in the accused *not* being sentenced to life in prison (and this was/is happening all over the state—the nation!). From this I came away with the notion I desperately needed to come up with a plan “B” seeing how it was the California courts had, in response to O.J.’s acquittal, constructed a web as effective as the spider’s to the assure convictions of young Black men. This would be no easy task. For it required of me to come up with a plan that would allow for the system to entangle itself in its own web of deception. After months of deep contemplation it finally came to me after my attorney would withdraw from my case and I was appointed another who made no concession she was eager to dump me. From jump she made it clear: “You got away with murder in Oklahoma, but you’re not getting away with shit in California!” She would brazenly inform the court of this in a hearing I later requested, to no avail, to dismiss her from my case.<sup>34</sup> There was no doubting her agenda or that of the court. Seemingly, they had it out to handle what the district attorney in Oklahoma could not achieve—putting me on the shelf for life!

Today, I spend a lot of time reflecting on the lessons my grandfather taught me in self-efficiency and how, somewhere, in the thick of this mess I had forgotten them. Here, I have to admit I was stuck on stupid believing the hype: “The one who acts as his own lawyer has a fool for a client.”<sup>35</sup> Thus I stumbled and failed to take hold of the reins of my defense.

There were many rules I broke. For example, where in the previous Oklahoma trial I refused to discuss the particulars of the homicide or admit my involvement up until the last moment—which allowed an element of surprise and for me to mislead the Oklahoma prosecutor to believe that I was going to deny my involvement as the shooter, and thus he mistakenly prepared his case to prove otherwise; obviously to his disadvantage when I admitted I shot the victim in self-defense—in the Oakland case, however, I made the tragic mistake of not only informing my initial attorney (I was appointed three in all) of the particulars of the homicide at the outset of the case, but also mistakenly made these concessions during a non-contact visit over the phone. (Years later it was discovered and reported in the *Oakland Tribune Newspaper* that the Alameda county prosecutor’s office routinely listened in on client/attorney discussions) Thus, ruining any chance of surprise.

Yet and still, all was not lost. I had studied thousands, literally thousands of legal cases which dealt with the appellate process. Through such study I had come to understand what grounds made for a successful appeal. Realizing that I was being setup for the long haul—a life sentence—I frantically began to set in motion those aspects of post-trial defense which were necessary for review at the appellate level.

Mind you, most criminal defendants do not want to contemplate doing time, any time, especially L-I-F-E in prison. Yet where one is faced with the real possibility of doing time, any time, the *Game* plan is to reduce the time served by either taking a plea bargain, or in my case where there was no deal on the table—coming up with plan to obtain freedom in the 33rd.

So there I was with what many would rightfully consider a crackpot of an idea. Yet it was my only resort. Sure I was about to go to prison for what possibly would turn out to be a considerable amount of time. I had told my fiancée possibly ten years. But it was not going to be on the terms to which the court and my attorney had orchestrated. It was a bet, not a gamble according to the dictionary. It was a *bet* because I was risking much for a *real* possibility of getting my conviction overturned at some point of the appellate process. It was not a *gamble* because to gamble means to “risk much in the *hope* of great gain.” The distinction here is one that law Professor Steven Lubet explains in *Lawyers’ Poker*: “All gambling involves betting, but not every bet is a gamble. It all depends on how much *control* you have over the result and how much you are willing to trust your luck.”<sup>36</sup> So at each court appearance I was able to muster a smile—my *Game* face, to which many found offensive. Nevertheless, walking in court each day with a plan gave me confidence enough to *control* those very aspects (e.g., inadequate counsel, bias, etc.) of the system which usually seal the fate of many criminal defendants.

March 2003, the stage was set to begin trial. Having been afforded the unfortunate yet insightful experience of my prior Oklahoma trial, it was too obvious by the scant performance of my attorney that she was intent on sabotaging my chances for acquittal: She was misleading me on matters of law; she refused to investigate the validity of my prior conviction (I was unconstitutionally advised in the Oklahoma case to accept a four sentence and time served when the jury was compromised and *made to appear* to have reached a verdict after being hung over a week); she switched defense theories in mid-stream from self-defense to mistaken identity, and so on and so forth she trucked throughout the trial. Notably, she trucked the pre-trial motion to exclude the prior for impeachment purposes. She intentionally misquoted my proffered testimony.

In the months leading up to trial I repeatedly informed her of my defense of reasonable self-defense—that I was shot at, that the Oakland Police Department had sold my car before the defense could substantiate this fact due to the bullet holes in my car, and that I shot back in self-defense.... She refused to raise the issue of destruction of evidence, and when she submitted the proffer it portrayed to the court a defense theory of imperfect self-defense—that I saw a gun, shot first only to question later the imminent danger.

After having read the motion at the beginning of the hearing, I immediately noted the error and insisted that the proffer be corrected. Initially, she blew me off stating: “It’s irrelevant.” But as the hearing progressed, the proffer became the primary focus of the trial judge to admit evidence from the Oklahoma case. By that time I was on the verge of exploding and made it clear that she best straighten out this *so-called* mishap. It was too late! The ruling was forthcoming and adamantly so given the trial judge’s snide comment: “Anyone else have a plot they want to put on the record!” Of course, this comment was made after my attorney had attempted to acknowledge to the judge that the proffer was mistakenly written. Despite the prior not involving moral turpitude—I actually shot in a belief of the need for self-defense with no ill intent or malice—the misquoted proffer likened the Oakland defense with the prior defense and thus, as the trial judge jabbered: “Established a possible M.O.”

Here’s where the situation got even shadier. Thereafter, my attorney turned-up the deception in an attempt to seal the deal by discouraging me from taking the stand

in my defense.<sup>37</sup> Peep the technique. She again misadvises me as to the unlimited leeway that the prosecutor has to explore (before the jury—thus poisoning them) the particulars of my Oklahoma case. She goes to great extremes to emphasize to me that everything (i.e., alleged gang ties, drug dealing activities, my collecting of high powered assault rifles, etc.), despite its material value, was going to be admitted. When I suggested that she file a motion to determine the relevance of this other evidence, she cannonballed into her usual profane and irate self stating I was no “fucking lawyer” and “unless I wanted to spend the next ten years appealing a conviction,” I’d best get wit’ the program—not testify—and take her advice to change the defense to mistaken identity in the midst of trial.

Hindsight leads me to believe that the prosecution’s case was falling apart given her antics and the fact that—even with the damage that was done in presenting conflicting defense theories of self-defense and mistaken identity—it took the jury almost two days to render a verdict—Guilty!

In light of my attorney’s shifty performance, I had long since realized that I was going to be convicted no matter what defense I chose. It could have been Jesus standing before that jury and the outcome would have been the same. I was destined to be crucified because, as I later discovered, the victim’s family had ties with the court. She had assumed the role of surrogate prosecutor. My options? One, I could go forth with the initial defense of self-defense—to which she had trucked. Or two, I could go for the okey-doke, as crazy as it sounds, and use her eagerness and that of the court’s to dump me to trip them up in their own deception and possibly create some solid appellate grounds. There was, however, a hurdle or two to jump with the latter of these options.

If I did not testify, my right to appeal the trial judge’s unconstitutional ruling regarding the admission of the Oklahoma prior evidence would be forfeited. This was yet another aspect of law that my attorney was jaw-droopingly upset to know I was aware of. I’ll never forget the look on her face when I made this known to her. There was no questioning the fact that she did not have my interest at heart. So I set about preserving an adequate record for appellate review.

Generally, a criminal defendant can not effectively challenge issues of ineffective assistance of counsel (IAC, hereafter) or the court’s evidentiary rulings unless: 1.) The record of the trial proceedings disclose counsel’s tactical explanations for his or her actions or omissions; 2.) The defendant testifies under oath, thus affording the appellate court the opportunity to weigh the prejudicial impact of the admitted evidence. In most cases of IAC, the appellant (i.e., the defendant) petitions the appellate court for an evidentiary hearing with hopes that it will be granted so as to obtain counsel’s tactical explanations. Such petitions have about a one percent chance of being granted. Having foreseen this, I had a trick up my sleeve to get around these hurdles.

Thanks to my extensive legal research I had stumbled across a late 1980s case authority—*People v. Fosselman*.<sup>38</sup> In short, *Fosselman* gave precedent to non-statutory due process violations being valid grounds for a motion for new trial hearing at the trial stage, not the appellate stage.<sup>39</sup> This includes, but is not limited to, claims of IAC. Again and again, I was misadvised by my attorney that I could not do this. Even the trial judge chimed in in agreement with her. There was no denying it—it was me against the world. Yet I persisted with my argument and prevailed. I

convincingly argued to the trial judge that the law, as set forth by *Fosselman*, mandated a hearing be held at this juncture of the trial proceedings. Thus the trial judge, after doing some face-saving backpedaling and admitting I was correct, was forced to appoint separate counsel and hear the matter.

Sure I wasn't going to get any action at this point. After all, the judge was eager to extract vengeance for the decessé's family. Yet this was not the point of requesting this hearing. Realizing that my chances at the appellate stage were slim, next to none, in obtaining an evidentiary hearing, I rode *Fosselman* as if a bronco. In doing so, the subsequent hearing would afford me the opportunity—an opportunity that my trial attorney had attempted to swindle me of—to establish an adequate record for review for the appellate court to consider my claims of IAC and the trial court's unconstitutional evidentiary ruling. Not only did I testify at this hearing—thus preserving an adequate record of my anticipated trial testimony, but so too was my trial attorney made to take the stand to explain her tactical decisions.<sup>40</sup>

After extensive efforts were taken to better my chances on appeal, I was confident I would prevail at the first stage. But little did I realize the California Court of Appeals, my trial judge and court-appointed appellate attorney had a few tricks up their sleeve as well.

Presiding over my trial was the Honorable Judge Kenneth Kingsbury. He was a clean-cut version of a many rednecks I had known in the backwoods of Oklahoma. His face had all the jolliness of ole St. Nick, though he was no bearer of gifts, despite the usual small talk we had prior to the arrival of my trial attorney and the prosecutor.

These little talks often would be peppered with legal advice to which he would say in no certain terms he was “legally barred from doing.” Looking back on these little secessions, I would like to believe in all honesty he was trying to help me because it was just too obvious that my trial attorney wasn't. I guess my persistent willingness to challenge him and my attorney impressed him at times and pissed him off at other times. The whole thing with his admitting my prior, for example, we would go back-and-forth, as if cats and dogs, arguing: “Let the appellate court deal with it... This court admitted the evidence for purposes of credibility...” So you did not admit it pursuant to Evidence Code §1101(b)? “No!” was his final say.<sup>41</sup> It must have been unnerving to have a defendant before the court who actually knew a little something about the process—whereas the majority get the wool pulled over their eyes. So when I spoke he listened. Often, to his dismay, he would double-back and check the issues I'd raise; all the while doing everything in his power not to express panic. But even with my prior trial experience, I still got bamboozled.

“APPELLANT WAS DENIED FAIR AND INDEPENDENT APPELLATE REVIEW BECAUSE THE PRO TEM JUSTICE WHO WROTE THE COURT OF APPEAL'S OPINION IS A SUPERIOR COURT JUDGE FROM THE SAME COUNTY AS THE TRIAL JUDGE WHOSE DECISION WAS BEING REVIEWED”—was the caption of the fourth argument made in my petition for review to the California Supreme Court after the Court of Appeals had denied my appeal on grounds that did not accurately reflect the record of proceedings in the trial court. I had been blindsided by none other than Kingsbury's colleague and fellow judge, Thomas Reardon. What occurred could only be explained with the actual argument submitted to the California Supreme Court:

This is an Alameda County case. The trial judge was Alameda County Judge Kingsbury. The Court of Appeal opinion was written by a pro tem justice, Judge Thomas Reardon, who is also an Alameda County Superior Court judge. Judges Kingsbury and Reardon regularly sit in the same Alameda County main courthouse at 1225 Fallon Street, Oakland... There are approximately one dozen Alameda County Superior Court judges in that building.

Appellant's motion to recuse Judge Reardon on this basis was denied.

Judge/Justice pro tem Reardon should not have been allowed to rule on this appeal, let alone write the opinion, because it is inappropriate, and gives the appearance of bias and undue deference, for one Superior Court judge to review at the Court of Appeal the actions of another Superior Court judge from the same court in the same building. Such assignment fails to provide for sufficient independence between the trial court function and the appellate function.

In May 2001 an Ad Hoc Task Force established by the Judicial Council submitted a report called "Report to Appellate Process Task Force on the Superior Court Appellate Divisions"<sup>42</sup> That committee examined the problem "that the appearance of impartial appellate justice at the Superior Court level is seriously threatened in many counties because of (1) negative perceptions associated with 'peer review' (i.e., judges on the appellate division of the Superior Court reviewing decisions by their colleagues in the same Superior Court)..." The committee cited a Law Revision Commission report with the following warning: "The primary concern with appellate jurisdiction within the unified court is the problem of conflicts of interest arising in peer view. A judge should not be in the position of having to reverse a judge of equal rank. There may be a collegiality or deference on the court that will destroy the independent judgment necessary for a fair review."

Because Judge/Justice pro tem Reardon sits in the same court and same building as trial judge Kingsbury, this situation presented the identical problem identified by the Appellate Process Task Force, namely, "the problem of conflicts of interest arising in peer review. A judge should not be in the position of having to reverse a judge of equal rank. There may be a collegiality or deference on the court that will destroy the independent judgment necessary for a fair review."

California Code of Judicial Ethics, Canon 2, states "A judge shall avoid impropriety and the appearance of impropriety in all of the judge's activities." California Code of Judicial Ethics, Canon 3(E)(4)(c) provides that an appellate justice should disqualify himself if "the circumstances are such that a reasonable person aware of the facts would doubt the judge's ability to be impartial."

A decision by a biased judge violates the due process clause of the 5th and 14th Amendments. Tumey v. Ohio (1927) 273 U.S. 510.

Accordingly, review is warrant because the independence of appellate review was compromised here.<sup>43</sup>

There was no question as to why Judge Reardon was appointed to decide and write what would be a compromised opinion to deny my appeal. Again, Judge Kingsbury had made an unconstitutional ruling by admitting evidence from my prior Oklahoma trial. Seeing the obvious violation and prejudice this ruling caused in my trial, Judge Reardon would attempt to salvage what very well could have been a blotch on Kingsbury's political career. For in the world of judicial politics such a blatant and unconstitutional ruling can literally tarnish a judge's reputation as fair and impartial. Moreover, Kingsbury himself being a pro tem justice and having opined and partook in a many appellate decisions, obviously had ambitions of joining the highly profitable ranks of the California Court of Appeals. Every day the justices of this court issue rulings that cater to the business interests of some of the nation's largest corporations. The implication being, they are in a position to benefit substantially from the "kickbacks" attached to their rulings. These ambitions would have not only been jeopardized by a favorable ruling on my appeal, but would also have had a domino effect causing more damage and scrutiny to all the decisions Judge Kingsbury had previously decided. The controversy this would have caused we are all too familiar with. Remember all the fuss made when President Obama appointed Justice Sonia Sotomayo? She had one such blunder on her record. Thus Judge Reardon would step in to contort Kingsbury's evidentiary ruling so as to give it constitutional validity.

Close to two years would elapse only to have my hopes of winning my appeal at the first stage doused with evidentiary fabrications which danced around the unconstitutional ruling (and Kingsbury's transcribed dictation that the prior evidence "WAS NOT ADMITTED PURSUANT TO CAL. EVIDENCE CODE SECTION 1101, SUBDIVISION (b)) as if it were a chameleon not bound by law<sup>44</sup> and could change colors given the weather, or in my case—the sake of a judge's political career. The unpublished opinion<sup>45</sup> issued by Judge Reardon would read in part: "... the trial court [i.e., Judge Kingsbury] did not abuse its discretion in concluding that the Oklahoma evidence WAS ADMISSIBLE PURSUANT TO EVIDENCE CODE SECTION 1101, SUBDIVISION (b)..."<sup>46</sup> Here the actions taken by Judge Reardon reflect the kind of thinking once expressed in the opinion of U.S. Supreme Court Chief Justice Robert Taney who declared in 1857: "A black man has no right that a white man is bound to respect."<sup>47</sup>

\* \* \*

While the foregoing tyranny is unlikely to concern my reader, it is this type of apathy that allows America's criminal justice system to shit on those *so-called* constitutional assurances set forth by the U.S. Constitution that safeguard American citizens from the tyrannical devices of the State. Here, the injustice I have outlined above is one that Tocqueville cautions Americans to take heed of because

...no citizen is so obscure that it is not very dangerous to allow him to be oppressed; no private rights are so unimportant that they can be surrendered with impunity to the caprices of a government. The reason is plain: if the private right of an individual is violated at a time when the human mind is fully impressed with the importance and the sanctity of such rights, the injury done is confined to the individual whose right is infringed; but to violate such a right at the present day is deeply to corrupt

the manners of the nation and to put the whole community in jeopardy, because the very notion of this kind of right constantly tends among us to be impaired and lost.<sup>48</sup>

After years of bobbing and weaving in the corrupt state appellate system, my appeals were denied. I had been foretold by the attorney who represented me at the hearing for new trial to expect this. Little did I realize at the time just how important those previously mentioned records that were withheld from my appellate attorney were in getting my conviction overturned.

Years later, while researching topics for this chapter, I decided to pose the following survey question to some of the nation's top attorneys, law schools, and judges: If you were a defendant with little to no resource, charged with a serious crime (pick your poison), stuck with a public defender looking to sale-you-out at trial, what traps would you attempt to lay (i.e., load the record with) or look to capitalize on in order to maximize your chances of overturning your conviction on appeal? In conducting this survey I was to receive several responses from attorneys, who were simply astonished, if not offended, by the audacious nature of such an inquiry. Most simply refused to respond. There were several, however, who did. Of which, Los Angeles attorney David H. Goodwin and San Francisco attorney Kent Russel, whose responses did more to assist my efforts to obtain my freedom than providing material for this chapter.

Mr. Russel would suggest that a defendant needed to make an official record before the trial court of everything his defense attorney had or had not advised him of.<sup>49</sup> I had done just that! With his letter in hand, I recalled vividly how I stood before the court just days before my trial was to begin and submitted seventeen pages of notes, eight of which were a motion to substitute my attorney due to her misconduct. The motion was filed, denied, and sealed by the court without inquiry into many of the issues I attempted to raise. Notably, these records were not provided to my appellate attorney as mandated by law. Bingo!

It would not be until sometime in 2009, after having received Mr. Goodwin's response that I began to realize that the court had made a major blunder in my case. Goodwin suggested that a defendant needed something that was clearly a fundamental right so as the standard of review on appeal would be less stringent. This sent me back to the lab (i.e., the prison law library) to do some homework.

My appeal and hopes had been crushed not only by Judge Reardon's maneuvering, but so too the stringent standard of review he applied to deny my IAC claims under U.S. Supreme Court case authority *Strickland v. Washington*. This standard of review is almost impossible to hurdle because it requires a defendant to convince the reviewing judge that his attorney's performance (or lack thereof) was reason for his conviction.<sup>50</sup> When making this assessment the judge(s) always look to the evidence that supports the conviction and thus they usually conclude that while the attorney's omissions were error, they were not of the magnitude that had bearing on the verdict in light of overwhelming evidence of guilt. One would think that in light of the previous mentioned activities of my trial attorney—especially her having presented to the jury contradictory defense theories of self-defense and mistaken identity, the implausibility of such presentation in itself and the prejudiced this caused to my defense—my case would have easily met the prerequisite to *Strickland*. Not!



What I did not realize was there were literally thousands of cases where trial attorneys were found to be asleep, drunk, suffering from mental illness, etc., at trial and the judge was hard in the paint—affirming their convictions under *Strickland*.<sup>51</sup> Here’s where Goodwin’s letter woke my *Game* up and made me highly suspicious of my appellate attorney’s performance.

Hindsight now explains why after sealing the records connected to my attempts to substitute my trial attorney prior to trial and not providing them to my appellate attorney to review on appeal—to which he was aware of the fact that they were not provided as mandated—why it was that Judge Reardon and he were appointed to oversee my appeal. The trial court had fumbled in more ways than previously mentioned. After spending months in the lab, I came to find that in denying my pre-trial motion to substitute my trial attorney, the court had committed a structural error by not hearing in full the issues I had submitted to review. Thus the error requires automatic reversal of my conviction. Common sense now tells me that the court was obligated by law to hear in full these issues before denying my motion. It had again fumbled and in realizing this thereafter sought to seal my fate by attempting to withhold the very records that entitled me to a less stringent review on appeal.

Moreover, by withholding these records—and this is why I’m suspicious of my appellate attorney’s failure to obtain them when the minutes of the court proceedings indicated they were sealed and not provided as mandated—the trial court realized that by the time I discovered this I would be procedurally barred from raising the issue because the incomplete record provided to my appellate attorney would not be given to me until after he had completed the appeals process. Fortunately, the *Game God* was looking on me with favor in providing me an angle to get back in federal court with the issue.

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There’s an old saying that experience is priceless. When considering those I’ve had with the court system there’s no questioning I’ve learned some very important lessons. Notably, the whole trial setup is more about theatrical performance and story telling than a search for the truth. In this respect, a verdict, then, symbolizes the product of an attorney’s persuasive ability to articulate the events and evidence surrounding a case. For the evidence usually has multiple interpretations.

That said, the outcome of a murder trial, for example, is largely left to a trial attorney’s ability to manipulate the jury’s interpretation of the evidence. Here’s were the “gamblers” let the dice roll. Sometimes they roll sevens—and the guilty go free. Sometimes they crap-out—and the innocent get convicted. As noted by Professor Lubet:

A jury trial is always a gamble, even for a powerful case.... If the defense lawyer believes that the prosecution case is overwhelming... a jury’s unpredictability becomes a benefit to the defendant, especially since it only takes one not-guilty vote to produce a hung jury. And beyond that, anything might happen, including a lightning strike or an outright acquittal....<sup>52</sup>

As this suggests, justice does not mean that the bad guy goes to jail. It just means someone gets charged for the crime, if indeed there ever was one committed. If words could better explain this charade, Mumia hits the nail on the head where writing:

We often think of trials as nice, neat, and polite proceedings where solemn gentlemen discuss issues of weight and importance with intricate fairness and equity. What we see as trials today are descendants of other, older Saxon rituals in England, such as trial by ordeal, known as *Judicium Dei*—“judgment by God”—which meant trial by fire, or trial by water. These ordeals were based upon a person’s social rank, fire for people of higher rank and water for common folk. Under the fire ordeal, the accused would take up in his hand a red-hot iron one to two pounds in weight, or walk barefoot over nine red-hot ploughshares. There was a hot-water ordeal as well as a cold-water ordeal—both were harrowing. The hot-water ordeal requires one to plunge a bare arm up to the elbow into boiling water, with emergence unharmed proof of innocence. In the cold-water trial, one was cast into a river or cold-water pond. If one floated (without swimming) this was evidence of guilt. If one sank, s/he was acquitted. The Norman conquest of England in 1066 brought with it the Norman trial, such as “wager of battle”, which, as the name suggests, meant a battle between the accuser and accused. To begin this ritual, both accuser and accused made the vow to the assembled judges: “hear this, ye justices, that I have this day neither eat, drank, nor have upon me, neither bone, stone, nor grass, nor and enchantment, sorcery, or witchcraft....”<sup>53</sup>

This history continues in today’s trials, albeit through words, rather than physical ordeals. Yet hidden in these unusually claim words is the same stunning violence.<sup>54</sup> Because of this not one officer of the court would trust his or her fate to a jury if charged with a crime. They are all too familiar with the sorcery of the court and how it can easily manipulate a jury to convict just as easy as it can to acquit. They, more than the average, understand the dynamic in play which impairs and constructs the “correctness” of the verdict—that is, the outcome of a trial may indeed not be based on truth, rather the truth as represented in the verdict.

As noted at the outset of the chapter, twelve men and/or women from everyday life are not infallible or wholly independent of the manipulation within the four corners of the courtroom. One’s take on the truth, we know, can be manipulated. From day one, people are manipulated by their parents’ truth, their friends’ truth, and ultimately those institutions mentioned in the course of these writings. While individual jurors bring to their deliberation qualities of human nature and different experiences, the range of which is unknown and perhaps unknowable. The one experience they’ve yet to have is that within the four corners of the courtroom where nothing, absolutely nothing or no one, is what it has been made out to be. This I’m sure Blackstone was well aware of when he idealistically and manipulately posited:

[If the administration of justice] be entirely intrusted to the magistracy, a select body of men, and those generally selected by the prince or such as enjoy the highest offices in the state, their decisions, in spite of their own

natural integrity, will have frequently an involuntary bias toward those of their own rank and dignity: it is not the interest and good of *the many*. On the other hand, if the power of judicature were placed at random in the hands of the multitude, their decisions would be wild and capricious, and a new rule of action would be every day established in our courts. It is wisely therefore ordered, that the principles and axioms of law, which are general propositions, flowing from abstracted reason, and not accommodated to times or to men, should be deposited in the breasts of the judges, to be occasionally applied to such facts as come properly ascertained before them. For here partiality can have little scope: the law is well known, and is the same for all ranks and degrees; it follows as a regular conclusion from the premises of fact pre-established. But in settling and adjusting a question of fact, when intrusted to any single magistrate, partiality and injustice have an ample field to range in: either by boldly asserting that to be proved which is not so, or by more artfully suppressing some circumstances, stretching and warping others, and distinguishing away the remainder. Here therefore a competent number of sensible and upright juryman, chosen by lot from among those of the middle rank, will be found best investigators of truth, and the surest guardians of public justice. For the most powerful individual in the state will be cautious of committing any flagrant invasion of another's right, when he knows that the fact of his oppression must be examined and decided by twelve indifferent men, not appointed till the hour of trial.<sup>55</sup>

In a perfect world this all makes sense. However, given the imperialist drive of the English, it's easy to conclude here that Blackstone having noted public disapproval of a magistrate's authority to decide the "facts," cleverly handed this responsibility over to an unperceptive jury that could easily be manipulated all the same had it been the judge passing judgment on the accused. Moreover, the illogic of Blackstone's reasoning—and this applies to today's appellate process—is further demonstrated in his trusting of a magistrate to uphold the "principles and axioms" of the law. If a judge could not be trusted enough to determine the facts before his court and a jury was thus appointed for this purpose, then how in the hell could a judge be trusted to uphold the law? Despite the fact that the "general principles" of the law are known to the practitioners of this profession, they are largely unknown and, indeed, purposefully withheld from jurors at the trial phase. I've said all that to say, there is no process to caution a panel of appellate judges from "committing any flagrant invasion of another's right" to competent counsel or a fair trial for example. This begs of us to ask: Why is there no examination of this "oppression" to be "decided by twelve indifferent" men and/or women at the appellate stage? I'll tell you why: The sure genius of the system is setup to hide its despotism behind a jury's verdict.

Thus, where a jury trial is the pretext a determining factor, or obstacle to say, for the defense and prosecuting attorneys is to select from the pool of prospective jurors those who are naïve to the fact that the manipulation and deception they have encountered throughout life is "KING" within the four corners of the courtroom. Most jurors just sit there unaware of the fact that they are actually attending a magic show opposed to a search for the truth. (However, there is occasion where someone will

request to be excused because they recognize the farce of lawyers attempting to outsmart the truth.) The truth as presented to them is often anything but. For how can truth be ascertained where facts are open to interpretation? The mere nature of this question reveals the “gamble”—if, indeed a jury trial can be considered one. This is why the courts leave it up to the jurors to ascertain the facts—however, they may be construed—while the court enforces the law derived from their conclusion.

There are many other variables that go into this ruse. There is expert testimony, for example, that often bares its weight in gold. Conversely, this sort of evidence has repeatedly been found to be flawed. Take for example, how during the late 19th century the majority of U.S. Supreme Court decisions were premised on Charles Darwin’s social theories of evolution which classified Blacks and other people of color as biologically and intellectually inferior to whites. It would not be until the early 20th century that these theories and others made by Darwin’s followers would be discredited by German anthropologist Franz Boas (1858-1942).<sup>56</sup> Due to the advances made by Boas and others in science and technology, it has been proven beyond doubt that “forensic evidence is wrongly assumed to be infallible.”<sup>57</sup> The truth as told by these scientists has for quite some time been under scrutiny and found outright misleading on numerous occasions.<sup>58</sup> This should come as no surprise considering both the prosecution and defense experts slant their testimony to favor the silver spoon feeding them.

Another, more important, example is the nature of the relationship between the officers of the court (i.e., judges, lawyers and prosecutors) and the potential benefit a client may receive by having the *right* attorney. Case in point, in 2010 *The Journal with Bill Moyers* aired a program entitled “Justice for Sale.” It was an all revealing exposé of the high level of corruption that had made its way through the Texas and Louisiana state court systems. In short, favorable rulings were being handed down where trial lawyers, business lobbies, etc., had made considerable contributions to the presiding judge’s election campaign. This was something I was all too familiar with and had actually, by happenstance, taken advantage of during my Oklahoma trial.

As noted in chapter five, ninety-five percent of my pre-trial motions were granted. Here, the nature of my trial attorney’s (Jack Sr.) relationship as the trial judge’s campaign manager played a vital role in these rulings and ultimately the verdict. Never in the history of pre-trial litigation has the defense been granted such a favorable percentage of motions. Yet, I had hit the *Jack*-pot on this one gaining the favor of the judge by mere happenstance of the attorney I was appointed. Needless to say, the pull Jack Sr. had with the trial judge infuriated the prosecuting attorney. He had grown too accustomed to having it his way. I used to get a kick out of seeing him pucker up and get all red in the face when the judge ruled against him. Again, this was not the norm. Prosecutors pretty much always get it their way in the courtroom. But not this time. In addition, because of my attorney’s relationship with the judge, he was able to make some very impressive and extraordinary moves. For instance, never in the history of U.S. jury trials has the Chief District Attorney been compelled to testify as a defense witness in a case that his office was prosecuting. Yet, in making power moves, Jack Sr. made it happen. Imagine the mixed signals this sent to the jury. Here it was the assistant D.A. was prosecuting me for murder yet his boss, the Chief District Attorney, was compelled to testify on my behalf that the victim had a reputation for extreme violence in the community. After the trial judge made that

ruling the D.A. was ready to throw in the towel. Jack Sr. had the *juice* indeed. He had also done an excellent job lacing his son, Jack Jr., with the rules of the *Game*.

It was Jack Jr. who would lace me as to how the *Game* was really played. Or should I say he confirmed a lot of what I already suspected about the system. Up until his father and he were appointed to my case, I had been firing attorneys left and right and had remained tight-lipped about the particulars. These attorneys were sellouts who could not be trusted. So I did not talk to them because I knew whatever I said would find its way back to the D.A.'s office. They even placed several suspected snitches in my cell whose interest in getting me to talk about my case was just too obvious. So I fed them misinformation which led them to misinform the D.A. I was denying my involvement.

When Jack Sr. and Jr. came along I was my usual tight-lipped self. Then Jack Jr. said something my previous attorneys had not that got me to thinking that maybe, just maybe, I could trust these cats. I had this line of questioning that I use to this day when it comes to trying to feel-out an attorney's objective—that is, whose team they are playing for: mine or the D.A.'s. So I would play Perry Mason and interrogate them with questions like: What was to be gained by them winning or losing my case?; Was the chump change they were receiving to represent me going to effect the quality of their representation?; How many murder cases had they tried, won and lost?; How long had they been practicing law?; and so on and so forth the interrogation would go. So Jack Jr. and I were having one of these secessions when I decided to lay into him with my ole *Kangaroo Court* theory. However, before I could get warmed up he stopped me in mid-stride and expressed with all sincerity: "Look I may be new at this, but that's not a game I'm interested in playing." He went on to explain that he was out to make a name for himself by vigorously defending his clients' interests. And that this meant staying free of arrangements of the sort I had hinted at where the D.A.'s office has the power to treat a case like a bingo game.

This was a messy *Game* his pops had laced him on that gave enormous power to the D.A. To rely on such a method would allow for the D.A. to control his ability to obtain favorable results in a case. Thus some unsuspecting fool is going to get "sold-out" when their attorney's number is up. Needless to say, these are the sort of arrangements that construct a web as effective as the spider's. For the attorney's—like those of the sort who represented me in the Oakland trial—role is to prosecute, judge and hand down a verdict.

*Pundits of American jurisprudence hold society to standards of law they themselves ignore. They pretentiously claim to be good people who balance the scales of justice for rich and poor alike. But underneath their smiles and legal jargon perpetuates more crimes of inequality to which they are charged with to adjudicate. The myth of an equal America is a lie evidenced when looking into its prisons which are filled to the brim with people of color.*

—Mumia Abu-Jamal

## **RETRIBUTIVE VS. RESTORATIVE JUSTICE**

In 2007, a writing class I attended here at New Folsom was afforded an opportunity to correspond with Ithaca College Professor Tom Kerr. The subject?—RETRIBUTIVE VS. RESTORATIVE JUSTICE.<sup>59</sup> His class requested of us to

expound on our views regarding these two polarizing approaches to America's failing criminal justice system and how the latter approach could be more effective than the former. In all there were twenty-four questions posed to us that ranged in inquiry from the lost social value in Tookie's execution to the economic benefit of prison construction in rural America. Collectively, we responded with two-hundred plus pages of material that captured our personal, political, and social views. Of this, the students chose six of our many excellent letters to respond to. Some seventy pages would be produced by them which revealed an undeniable truth that otherwise, had this exercise not occurred, would have left these students to draw conclusions about people in prison from the distortions made by corrupt politicians. Many would come to recognize just how it was that their views had been tainted so by bias perspectives cultivated by media, stereotypes, and, most important, a lack of any real involvement with people in prison.

It was their genuine naiveté that affected me so and prompted this segment which draws on their responses. It is with great hopes that this experience will not simply become another forgotten class project or just another topic in a book long forgotten. For it was an experience that, had it not occurred, many of the students simply would have went through life oblivious to the deteriorating social impact of America's retributive approach to criminal justice. On this, Ithaca student Andy notes:

The American justice system takes a "quick fix" approach, throwing convicted people into cells for an amount of time deemed appropriate in accordance to the crime committed. The inmates are then left to their own devices, as to whether or not they have to fight to survive, or are somehow able to rise above and legitimately change. How is this benefiting anyone? It's getting supposedly "criminals" off the street, but it's not helping the much larger problem. Rather than dealing with the inmates, discovering what landed them in prison and trying to reshape their way of life so that they can go back out into the world and do good, the inmates are simply put away and, to a large extent, ignored. If we merely lock prisoners up in anger an ignore them, they aren't all going to be inclined to learn from their mistakes. Yes, there are some that will reenter the world and stay out of trouble for fear of going back, but there are just as many (if not more) that become so angry leaving prison that they're inspired to commit more crimes. Why would you take someone you consider a threat, lock them away for a few years and leave them alone, and then expect for them to wander the streets once more, this time with a newfound positive attitude? It just doesn't make sense....

Andy's comments were inspired, in part, by fellow prisoner Jimmy, who speaks for most where he writes: "I'm not part of your society. I cannot consider myself a part of any group that shuns me; that locks me away and offers me nothing to better myself. And then when it does see me trying to do just that, when I take the time to try, they purposefully throw stumbling blocks in my path. Who cares if I break my neck? Not the world. Not this country." In addition, Andy's comments were further inspired by the letters of Rick Misener and Jack Boyle. Misener writes:

“...punishment in the form of deprivation, separation, or physical abuse only further conveys that harsh treatment is endorsed and preferred by our society.” Without question, these retributive forms of punishment have an ailing effect on the offender given the reinforcement of treatments that likely mimic the very conditions that created the menace in the first place. This is a subject I’m again to reiterate and expound upon further in the following chapter in hopes that people will wake up to the fact that prisons are churning out the very monsters they’ve been charged to reform. Boyle’s comments make this abundantly clear where he writes: “...aside from the fact that retributive justice has an actively negative affect on the offender, it also does not do anything positive and may in fact prevent positive interactions from taking place.” He brings the point home in further stating: “Prison has changed me completely. I’ve went from normal (by society’s standards) to white supremacist hate-filled killer to with the flow of becoming normal, slowly.” He goes on to explain the complications of his recovery: “I’m in constant struggle to maintain, let me tell you. I do not have a lot of support from peers or cops [i.e., correctional staff]. They don’t seem to want me to better myself.”

On that, Misener explains: “When I am told every day [by correctional staff and society] that I am trash and that I am an animal, like a small child I will start to buy into that and react to the world from that place.” Ithaca student Nicole’s response to this was rather poignant: “If society tells people that they are nothing, that they will never be anything, and gives them no resources to better themselves, then they are going to commit crimes against that society. They are going to do what they feel is necessary to attain that position in society that they feel everyone else has. And who could blame them? They want the best for themselves just like any other human being, and no one has given them what they need to achieve things; in their mind they must get those things any way that they can.”

The foregoing certainly allows us to grasp the fact that retributive justice does not solve the problem of crime. Rather, it contributes to the social deterioration of society. For it provides little to no assistance to the convicts who are more likely than not to reenter society embittered which consequently leads them to commit more extreme crimes. As Nicole points out: “...the convicted are not taught the proper way to assimilate into society....” This comment was prompted by the writings of fellow prisoner Mark Hauser who wrote: “I strongly believe that if we were taught that we were an integral part of our communities and society from a young age and we were instilled with that sense of responsibility, then our actions would be more in line with the moral values of our society.” As I have repeatedly stated throughout these writings, the principles written on our belief windows, which direct and cause our antisocial behavior, are the product of our social environment—prison included. Circumstances, either as they have naturally befallen or been manipulated, have created within us a whirlwind of destructive behavior.

Reflecting on her own childhood deviance and the abuse linked to it, Ithaca student Tina explains that crime persists in American society because: “We simply do not understand the criminal!” Conversely, I believe the criminal element in American society is better understood than Tina realizes or cares to admit. Seemingly, the following passage written by her reflects this. It also provides us something of value in the context of the foregoing argument.

We fail to uncover where [criminals] came from or how they were created and instead, we transform them from living creatures to problems that requires jailing. Instead of fixing “the problem before it begins, we tell that “problem” it is stupid by not offering it equal opportunities through education. We tell that “problem” it will never amount to anything when we turn a blind eye to our crumbling communities and the truth of... inequality. Without asking why, we lock that “problem” away in a cage where it can continue to be stupid, continue to amount to nothing, and continue to be misunderstood. By locking up the voices of the misunderstood, their voices remain silent and unable to spark change. Silencing them encourages perpetuation of the system because it makes good economic sense. If there are more criminals, more prisons will *need* to be built. More prisons equal more jobs. This good economic sense reflects the capitalistic values of our American society. Our capitalistic values reveal the... [true] morals of our country, a failure to live up to the claim that “all men are created equal....”

“I was immediately caught by the power of having a voice—however in this case, it was a matter of [the prisoners] being permitted to have a voice,” writes Ithaca student Nghi. She goes on to heighten the fact that: “Society is quick to shut prisoners out and forget they exists the moment they are put away.” Having found herself surprised by the keen insight expressed in our two-hundred plus pages of material, Nghi’s prior beliefs and prejudices about prisoners being “animals” simply vanished. She was consumed by the fact that we *do* think about our regrets, our dreams, our past, our outlook on life and society and how we can change it and become better people ourselves. However, there are many of us who are psychologically inhibited from drawing on the conscience in such a way due to the harshness to which life and the scales of injustice are unforgiving. As for those of us who have indeed sought to initiate this transformation, the harshness of these walls often stagnate for years this search for inner peace with the wrongs we have committed. Here, the writings of Jack Boyle serve to heighten the point in context: “I have done a lot of reflecting and I have been given an opportunity to look at my past behavioral patterns... I have gained this huge amount of compassion. I want to save the world instead of rob the people and rape the land. I want everyone to help each other; unlike before when I was glad to see war and destruction.” Boyle has unquestionably gone from one extreme to another. He draws on these extremes and their affect where writing: “Prison has harmed my peers in a serious and possibly permanent way. It has made men hard far beyond the norm. Desensitizing men by having them witness so much hate and unwanted violence. Seeing and experiencing the injustice done to them by correctional officers. Men being abandoned by their so-called friends and family.” Nghi, deeply impacted by these comments, would write:

There is no way I could ever truly understand this kind of grim reality, and perhaps in part because of this, I was surprised at how I quickly related to these socially invisible people—whom I admit had previously been pretty invisible to me as well. Aside from a couple of heartfelt interviews on nationally-known cases with wrongly-convicted prisoners



I've seen aired on news programs like *20/20* or *60 Minutes*, this was really the first time that I felt an emotional connection with those our society has deemed criminals. People might look and decide that these prisoners don't deserve society's compassion, after all they are there by their own fault, they have committed crimes. At one point, a switch did go off in my head as if to remind myself, "Wait, these are criminals that you're sympathizing with." I know that if I were in the victim's position, I would want the criminal behind bars, suffering and miserable, sorry that they had ever hurt or violated me. Even if I was curious, out of hatred and vengeance I probably wouldn't want to hear their sop-stories or anything they might have to say. With one of the letters, I envisioned myself as the victim reading the thoughts of my offender. Even with this imagining in mind, it was heart-breaking. Of course, I don't claim that I'll know what the real effect would be unless I was really a victim in the circumstance. But as I read on, even while denying, to an extent, the sincerity of the words based on an ingrained sense of caution and skepticism I didn't realize was there, I was completely absorbed by all of their interesting, even eloquent, writing and I gained a penetrating view into their provoking ideas. Despite their crimes, from the letters one thing was undeniable: their humanity. How anyone from the outside could think that these people... are no longer human once... put in prison, is both amazing and frightening to me....

Nghi's comments reveal just how easy it has been for society to be manipulated by prejudices which at times distort a prisoner's image. The fact that we are people: husbands, brothers, fathers, mothers, etc., generally escapes society's conscious which allows barriers to be placed between "us" and "them." As Hauser points out: "This 'us' and 'them' mentality perpetuates an increasingly more aggressive and finalistic punishment for offenders to the point where many are simply 'thrown away' indefinitely as a way of assuaging the vindictive emotions to the victims of the crime." In many cases, especially after cross-cultural conflicts, the social norms created by "us" come to be perceived as superior and "more human" than those of "them" in a power-based system as that in which we exist in capitalist America. The "losers may be intentionally humiliated in an attempt to destroy their standing as legitimate humans."<sup>60</sup> As I'm to detail further in the following chapter, the "criminal image," which encompasses the prisoner image, must be so ill-tainted that it effectively propagates justification of the inhumane treatment we as prisoners suffer.

As an incarcerated writer, the above-mentioned "power-based system" is one that I'm all too familiar with given my experience and study of the various institutional structures and cultural forces which operate in American society to support the *Web of Injustice*. They are cause for broken homes, abuse of all sorts, neighborhood gangs, poor education, etc.—all aimed at creating pipelines to prison. Ironically, there is something to be gained from this if we as prisoners and society are attentive to the lessons taught within these walls. To this end Nethra notes:

In prison, they confront the dark face of the justice system: indefinite prison sentences, prison abuse, lack of rehabilitative programs, lack of healthcare, and no second chances given, even to those who have changed.

This misery no doubt urges them to question the justice system and political structures of American society. The environment, through its harshness, reveals to them deep schisms within the political [and] economic system[s] of [our] “democratic” country. Although we study politics and economics in college, our understanding, in this comfortable and sterile environment, is limited. In this sense, the writers [at New Folsom] I refer to, see more than we do, and are driven with more urgency to understand and navigate the political, historical, and cultural forces that operate in society.

The insight and experience Nethra speaks to is one that makes us as politically conscious prisoners dangerous to the myth projected in those ideals of liberty and justice for all. Further, it serves to justify our political disenfranchisement. That we have been excluded from voting or partaking in political professions has little, if anything, to do with the fact we have been made out to be crooks. After all are not most politicians? Rather our exclusion has been premised on both the need to maintain exploitative systems and deter the threat posed by our insightful perspectives. Simply put, we see beyond the social and political manipulation; beyond the veneer; beyond that thread of trust which so many in society desperately cling to with hopes and faith in the promises spoken by their elected officials. We see those other “crooks” for what they are plain and simple.

To error is human. It’s only to be expected that people will make mistakes in a world full of ideologies, opinions, and fickle laws. Moreover, it is our mistakes that make us human. Everyone makes them—some more serious than others. That said, most people have acted out of spite; have committed crimes they have not been caught for; or have done something wrong to another person. This I hear daily from braggadocios officers in law enforcement who frequently remind us as prisoners what they have done and can get away with. Moreover, as kids and young adults, we are prone to mistake. From them we learn, we mature. Though, where a retributive criminal justice system arbitrates, the lessons are clouded in bitterness, unfairness, bias, and a lack of forgiveness. I believe the words of fellow prisoner and mentor Spoon Jackson best illustrate the point in context: “When I came to prison I thought it would be fair punishment, and that my incarceration would be over in ten years, after ten, I thought fifteen, after fifteen, I thought twenty—now it has been over 30 years. I am a first termer who showed remorse and regret from the start and then growth and restoration... When is enough, enough?” It would be an understatement to say that, as with Spoon and many other prisoners sentenced to life without the possibility of parole and having spent decades in deep reflection and commitment to righting their wrongs—they have had to hopelessly endure a justice system that is not receptive to positive change or reparation. The contradiction here is glaring: There is no incentive for rehabilitation or change. Even those on the outside recognize this flaw. Ithaca student Lou writes of the matter: “These people get locked up, deservedly so, for committing crimes that have a negative effect on society. However, these “criminals” get sentences that... effectively negat[e] the impact prison has... on their lives.... If we are constantly punishing everyone and locking them up too long, nobody will learn from their mistakes and the same thing will continue to happen....”

As noted in previous chapters, American culture socializes its citizens with a retaliatory conviction. Revenge, undeniably, has been binding on the progress of American society. This thirst for blood has been a driving force behind the intense level of vindictiveness that consumes American families. Take for example the families of Ron Goldman and Nicole Brown Simpson. They were the victims O.J. Simpson was acquitted of murdering. “The love they held for that which they lost,” writes prisoner R. Dim, “has been replaced with a malice that eats away at them more with each passing year.” Here, Ithaca student Tahleen provides us something of substance to build on:

[The Goldman, Simpson, and Brown families] were not given the opportunity to make peace after the deaths of their loved ones; since their lives were taken so viciously, they want justice. They want the people who hurt them and their family to pay for what they’ve done. This just illustrates the mindset of our culture—restorative justice is not an American concept. In general, Americans want criminals to be punished... and usually won’t consider another resolution... Americans don’t really know how to forgive grievous offenses, and many are never actually presented with the opportunity to do so..., we [are] never actually forced to confront those people; we were free to ignore the problem if we wanted to, without any kind of resolution.

Here, it is important that we observe how the very malice harbored by the Goldman and Brown families was the very malice that killed their loved ones. The healing power restorative justice undoubtedly is much needed in their lives. Without it, they will continue to spend the whole of their existence seeking blood for blood.

The obsessive culture of vengeance and hate that Tahleen speaks to unquestionably poisons American society and reflects upon the degree of civility within it. It is contradictory to the nation’s idealism. How is it America, the greatest of all nations, is more consumed with punishment and exacting vengeance unlike any nation in the world? The nature of this question evidences the fact that America is not simply a nation of contradictions, but a nation of people at lost and living in an illusion as to what makes good for social policy in modern society. No one, absolutely no one, can honestly say that a criminal justice system operating to balance blood on the scales of revenge makes for good social policy. Furthermore, if one is to believe in this nation’s idealism, then it only seems logical that America’s system of criminal justice is over due for a change in direction. For it has long proven dangerous to confuse vengeance with justice because it works against a productive and harmonious society as the foregoing has illustrated.

*The battle of good and evil has been written on the  
Scrolls of time.  
Echoes of the fallen scream within my mind,  
While looking to the sky, I know who has mine.  
So I stand absolute 360 degrees complete,  
And fear no evil because I know you're obsolete,  
And I don't fear the dark side because I recognize deceit.  
Since day one I knew we would meet, and I  
Would stand victorious because I know no defeat.*

**—UNKNOWN**

## CHAPTER 8

### “THE ZO”

#### [THE INSTITUTIONALIZATION OF SOCIETY VIII]

*Cell blocks flourish,  
And the dwellers of them stagnate.  
And despite three meals a day,  
There's no food on the plate.  
The blueprint reveals,  
Social ills,  
That are designed to kill  
Gradually,  
And casually  
Prisoners of this war.  
Feast on generic food for thought,  
And each other.  
Searching for redemption?  
No time for time-outs,  
To examine the famine.  
The TV is on too long;  
Blasting minstrel music;  
Quarrelling and gambling.  
Keep yourself entertained,  
While the system is planning  
And as you ponder this  
Prison beds are expanding  
Instead of consciousness.  
But if you look closer and see,  
The science in the script,  
You'll see one electrical fence  
With prisoners on both sides of it.  
Society is on lockdown  
And they don't even know it.  
Out of necessity  
Prisoners become poets.*

**SNEAK PREVIEWS,**  
—*Heru Tehuti Ra EnKami*  
(a.k.a. “R.L. Glass”)

**B**ack home, I recall that first county jail bid. It was a learning experience. Though, not the kind one immediately warms up to. My first lesson was to learn to repress that general sense of claustrophobia one experiences when feelings of being trapped begin to settle in. Despite my attempts, often the panic of this acquired madness would get out to rattle the cage. Fortunately, there were friends and family who would occasionally pass through the jail as I awaited trial. They had had the misfortunate experience of doing time at the Big House. And through them I quickly learned that prison was called the *Zone*, the “Zo” for short, due to all the weird shit that played out behind the walls and razor-wire. The stories they told and

the reality I, myself, in time would come to possess, would-be screen writers could better suit material for T.V. shows like *The Twilight Zone* instead of those of the likes of *Prison Break*.

The popular episodes I've come to find that have made prison movies and TV shows smash hits are deficient mediums that for too long have served only to entrance society with mock and fantasy. I find this so, "because the rhetoric of imprisonment and the reality of the cage are often in stark contrast."<sup>1</sup> These dramatizations, while real at times, tend to only focus on the obvious and entertaining aspects of prison violence while the mental violence seldom plays out on the silver screen. The reality of this unseen spectacle too often blurs and confuses the real. To the average viewer it's all titles—warden, guard and prisoner—appropriately fixed with expectations. Situated as such, their character is not. There's a power differential, for instance, that tends to take shape with each role as expected. However, given a shrewd mind it is capable of oscillating between characters. And where god-like authority over life is given, physical and mental abuse lingers. Remember the Stanford Prison experiment?<sup>2</sup> Monsters were created. They became almost impossible to identify despite titles and garb.

All bullshit aside, the insanity that comes of this makes for a good circus act. Often, I find myself on the yard posted up as if a birdwatcher with my binoculars focused on my fellow prisoners and the people who work here as well. Because we go to great lengths to be conscious of those around us, I study with detail their beliefs, habits, responses, defensive egos and other complexes. At times, many times, it's as if I'm at a circus being entertained by clowns and freaks. Some cats are funny clowns, gangsta clowns, sensitive clowns, girlie clowns, militant clowns and of course there are the power freaks.

Here, young and old alike are driven insane when attempts to psychologically manage these traps fail. Every day, I see cats line up at the pill-line to get that "gunpowder" as we call it, which fries their brain like rabies. Ironically, the administration partakes in the formation of this madness. For they feed inmates psych meds as if they were Halloween candies. The consequence of which—the psyche ward. Whereabouts, the mentally debilitated exist as if zombies drawling and defecating on themselves as if the untrained child. It's a touching scene given my family's history of mental illness. Here, as well as in any state ran mental facility, I'd imagine its worse—tenfold—treatment wise. Heavily medicated, the condition renders the prisoner docile and the only sign of resistance to his dope-peddler's Mickey takes shape in an occasional mud pie tossed at the administrating nurse.

The junkies amongst us are most terrible. Instead of attempting to wean them of their addiction, like animal control, prison medical staff rush to tame their monkeys (the prisoners') with a fix of prescriptions better than the blow-up on the street. Real talk! The trap-stars on the yard can not even get their *work* off because the administration's dope is A1. The pharmaceutical companies (gangs) got the yard on lock. Unquestionably, this is the preferred method to control the inmate population. Yelp! Feeding 'em psych meds and keeping 'em high on dope makes 'em easy to manage.

As for the remaining population? We become drugged with "negativity" ever seeking conflict to vent. For prison is an extremely manipulative environment fueled with the negative and most miserable elements of society—and I'm not just talking

about the convicts. A sense of numbness and hatred seems to invade the soul of every man, woman, and child connected to it. For it's often accepted as gold not to feel. Except with the homosexuals and their "lovers' quarrels." They become the unnatural order of things because sexually deviant behavior is promoted by administrative constraints on natural relations. And while I'm a firm believer of "to each his own," in here, do not let this sterile breeding game cross races where they are segregated. It's like something out the early 1900s where an African was found to be having relations with a white woman—an all out riot! For the brothers and I who do not "use," we now have our safety put at jeopardy all behind a homosexual desiring some shit on his dick.

If only these walls could talk, the real they would tell. For this cage breaks the weak and builds the strong—their hearts, their minds and souls. There's no doubt about it, it will make you more of what you were before you came in. And it is relentless to kidnap the youth lost in the soulless eyes of a graying fool *trapped by deception, freed by death*. His face tells a story all to its own. One of unrealized potential, punishing consequences and possibilities of success that no longer exist. When he looks in the mirror he sees this potential but knows it will never come. Behind his eyes there's always something rustling—clamoring emotion pent-up in a small space. When he speaks it's often with anger, anguish, and bewilderment. And he often pauses in his speech only to drift off, a troubled soul. He's contagious with bitterness that condemns the dreamy conversations of other prisoners. For us these conversations are healing, pulling us out of our suffering and setting the future before us as a concrete thing. As we imagine ourselves back in the free-world, we will a happy ending onto our ordeal and make it our expectation. With these talks, we create something to live for. Yet, we are the few who persevere given a circumstance where, for example, the C/Os (correctional officers) seek to deprive us of something that sustains us even as all else seems to be lost without freedom—dignity. This self-respect and sense of self-worth is the innermost armament of the soul. It lies at the heart of our attempts to maintain our humanness. To be deprived of it is to be dehumanized, to be cleaved from, and cast below, mankind.

In prison I have learned that men subject to dehumanizing treatment experience profound wretchedness and loneliness and find that hope and dignity are almost impossible to retain. "Without dignity, the identity is erased. In its absence, men are defined not by themselves, but by their captors and the circumstances in which they are forced to live. Dignity is as essential to human life as water, food, and oxygen. The stubborn retention of it, even in the face of extreme physical hardship, can hold a man's soul in his body long past the point at which the body should have surrendered it. The loss of it can carry a man off as surely as thirst, hunger, exposure, and asphyxiation, and with greater cruelty. In prison, degradation can be as lethal as a bullet."<sup>3</sup>

And to think this is a place where America's Juvenile Court is housing youngsta's by the tens of thousands, and then has the audacity to expect them to mature and be functional citizens. Needless to say, this is no place for a kid to do so because when subject to this sort of treatment, like animals we behave.

From *Projects-2-Prison* the brutality associated with prison effectively distorts the rationale as if the caged animal pronged and irritated by an inescapable trauma that inevitably prompts us to be at each others' throat. This is a reality I witness daily

on the yard. Crammed in prisons (both on the bricks and behind brick walls) we cannot breathe. Frustrated, we kill and we fight. We self-destruct. There is no place to articulate or constructively vent.

Because of the danger this presents, one is forced to isolate himself from the impulses of fear and love and call on the inner-beast to survive. This arms us with both the instruments of destruction and the ego to follow through. Yet and still, my heart is in my ears. The moment of truth usually arrives in form of a menacing ploy that delivers me to the threshold of reckoning.

Boom! Next thing you know there's 200 plus prisoners in the yard at each other's throat. Shanks are out. Someone is stabbed. If not two or three.... Rubber bullets and canisters of tear gas are indiscriminately hitting everybody. Backs are stinging, eyes are burning, coughing, and some fool's teeth are lying on the ground. A warning shot is fired! Then someone dies. He's carted out on a gurney. And the only truth in all this madness is he has no friends to tell him who his enemies are as he lies lifeless having donated his efforts to nothing.

Nonetheless, fear for the next becomes strapping and constant to the point it forces his back up against the wall. He's no punk! So insecurity keeps him in the ring reppin' the 'hoods twisted values. He's all "extra'd out." He strides about the yard with his chest poked out and fist clutched as if dynamite ready to explode. He lives by the rule: "I'll never turn down a fade"—even if it kills him. Understandably so because in prison, as in the streets, his ego can stand no blows of others perceiving him as weak. Thereby, his very behavior is premised on maintaining an image projecting the "wrong cat to fuck wit" to those he himself considers a threat. As if an Australian frilled lizard, he maintains a façade of potentially dangerous. Though, make no mistake about it there are those who are wit' the business of violence in all extremes. Generally, they are the ones distinguished by a confidence that airs no pretense. They are the ones that the fool with his chest all poked out often misreads only to find himself the victim of his own folly. Here, the fool becomes the mark (i.e., the "demo") that others recognize stepped to the wrong cat. Though, this is not always the case because this sort of man, who is secure within himself, has neither had reason for nor mastered the art of intimidation. Thus, he's likely to be the fool all the same because he will constantly have to resort to violence to prove a point—he's the wrong cat to fuck wit'. As such, the challenges keep coming and coming because he has failed to manipulate the "threat" of violence he's capable of. Where he wins, he becomes reputable. And while this may bestow him with a certain degree of respect that may give pause to those who contemplate transgressing him, there ever remains another fool who views his confidence as a target to build his rep.

Moreover, at the end of the day there's this dick of a C/O whose life outside this slave provides him no respect. So he demands it from a prisoner simply because of the costume he wears. Okay! So it's all about mind games now. True to the form, the wise con plays the *Game*, so as the C/O can "get the fuck on" like Andre 3000 to the next cat that might bite into his bullshit.

Trapped from being less than perfect, he's kenneled into a minefield (the yard) where there are no new faces, least none he cares to see. No stimulating conversation, just the same ole talk about "the man" or some ole hag everybody reckless eyeballing. So he attempts to escape—the chapel. Only to witness the preaching of God to the mentally ill who cannot digest his grace without seroquel. Hands down, prisons are



indeed asylums for the mentally ill. For we clap and praise the sky as if slaves seeking freedom through prayer and spirituals, instead of the guns and steel that rest on our backs. Can a man find his lost moral compass in such a place? Most cannot, some do.

\* \* \*

Guess it goes without saying, the above commentary is the sort of hype society at large marvels at with amusement. Yet this is not the tone of discussion I seek simply to impart with. I have a different story to tell. One that involves a deception kept locked away behind prison walls. In essence, it requires for us to question the true degree of civility in American society. Do prisons effectively capture the raw and unchecked nature of man's brutality? In answering this question, I've had an entire yard of subjects ranging from C/Os to murderers to study. What I've come to discover in answering this question is there is nothing moral or civil about the nature and administration of prison. Here, the keepers become just as criminal as the commitments.

Case in point, guards become sex offenders. Women prisoners get it the worst. They're frequently forced into a sex trade for the little extras. For me, a member of the male gender, my *bat* ain't so appealing so the molestation becomes most subtle. Instead, I'm ordered to get naked, lift the jewels, turn around and spread my cheeks until the crest of my rim appears. Ain't that a crime? Surely, there's a commitment (i.e., a prisoner of the sort) whose mirrored behavior landed him a stiff prison sentence. And to think, somehow society has accepted the notion that the most effective approach to deterring its criminal element is to barrage it with the very inhumane treatment it seeks to deter.

As bad as it may seem, I can honestly say it gets worse. Take for example the "Potty Watch" experience. It entails being bound in a paper jumpsuit and duct tape. It's a hostage situation. Whereas, as the days of inhumanity pass a C/O stands post playing in your dung anticipating the discovery of contraband. I know plenty cats on the yard who received a 25-to-life sentence for a hostage situation. The staff is into robbery too. Aside of the petty material items they chose to take from me, it's the 211 of my mentality—both good and bad—they seek. For example, they attempt to displace the work ethic my grandfather taught me with this quasi-slave system. I refuse to partake in it. So they call themselves punishing me by taking my idiot-box (i.e., TV). Their idea is that I'm to benefit or be rehabilitated in some sense by slaving for a nominal wage, if any, in the government's multi-billion dollar prison industry. In the same breath, they attempt to chalk-up the slave labor as punishment. All this seems like gorilla pimpin' to me. And here it was I, like many Americans, thought pimpin' and pandering was illegal.

I must admit it's been simply too easy to be overwhelmed by such circumstance. Sure, there's a story to tell. However, what I've come to discover and experience is simply profound. Because, where we find the term prison, as defined by various glossaries to be any place of confinement of persons accused or convicted of crime, the reality is this definition is genuinely lacking in meaning. Thus arresting a clear-cut understanding of what a prison truly entails. If words could describe the situation, the definition should read:

**Prison** (priz'ən), n. [1] A compound composed of present day mentalities which founded this country; [2] A medium used to mask present day enslavement; [3] A social device facilitating class and racial hierarchies within the makeup of American society; [4] A place of isolation designed to silence one's voice and influence; discourage family and community ties, support; and a process of natal alienation; [5] A state of mind constraining the ability to constructively think, act or make decisions conducive to a prosperous and fulfilling life. Syn. 1.) Incarcerate. 2.) Imprison.

Perhaps, given more detail to this definition society will come to realize that America's penal institution becomes the most effective tool of *Domestic Genocide*. Thus, an attempt must be made to connect the dots between the sociopolitical beneficiaries of incarceration and it's byproducts. Thereby, the above definition will serve as an outline for the remaining topics discussed in this chapter.

### **DEFINITION [1]**

*A compound composed of present day mentalities  
which founded this country....*

Fyodor Mikhailovic Dostoyevsky wrote in *Capital Punishment*, "The degree of civilization in a society can be judged by entering its prisons." To this end, prisons, we know, have frequently been referred to as microcosms of the greater society from which prisoners hail. For everything, without exception, is interrelated and influences the direction and development of everything else around it. Joseph Stalin best captured the meaning of this in his *Dialectic and Historical Materialism*, stating:

No phenomenon in nature can be understood if taken by itself, isolated from surrounding phenomenon.... Any phenomenon in any realm in nature may become meaningless to us if it is not considered in connection with the surrounding conditions. Any phenomena can be understood and explained if considered in its inseparable connection with surrounding phenomena.<sup>4</sup>

That said, nothing—not a prison, a school, or a hospital—exists in total isolation, separate, and independent of those other objects and phenomena around it which it is interconnected with, be it organic, inorganic, social development, or the development of human thought and knowledge.<sup>5</sup>

Considering America's social development—that is, its developed human thought and knowledge supporting its capitalist infrastructure—it pays to revisit the work of Professor Reiman because his writings are informative where they cast a light on what drives many people to commit crimes. In referencing criminologist William Bonger, Reiman informs us that competitive capitalism produces egotistic motives and undermines compassion for the misfortunes of others and thus makes human beings literally *more capable of crime*—more capable of preying on their fellows without moral inhibition or remorse.<sup>6</sup> The theory here, is one that has been an underlying theme throughout these writings as cause for the intense insensitivity and

high levels of crime found within American ghettos. This includes the crime perpetuated against ghetto residents that has been well constructed by an ill-socioeconomic politic.

To this end, Professor Reiman further informs us that the criminal justice system relieves those who benefit from the American economic system of the cost of that system. By holding those who have been criminalized individually responsible, “we can forget that the motives that lead to crime—the drive for success at any cost, linked with the beliefs that success means out doing others and that violence is an acceptable way of achieving one’s goal—are the *same motives* that powered that drive across the American continent and that continues to fuel the engine of America’s prosperity.”<sup>7</sup>

In referencing the work of David Gordon, Reiman quotes: “that nearly all crimes in capitalist societies represent perfectly *rational* responses to the structure of institutions upon which capitalist societies are based.”<sup>8</sup> He goes on to provide that “[l]ike Bongor, Gordon believes that capitalism tends to provoke crime in all economic strata. This is so because most crime is motivated by a desire for property or money and is an understandable way of coping with the pressures of inequality, competition, and insecurity, all of which are essential ingredients of capitalism.”<sup>9</sup> Quoting further the work of Gordon, Reiman emphasizes:

[Capitalism depends] on basically competitive forms of social and economic interaction and upon substantial inequalities in the allocation of social resources. Without inequalities, it would be much more difficult to induce workers to work in alienating environments. Without competition and a competitive ideology, workers might not be inclined to struggle to improve their relative income and status in society by working harder. Finally, although rights of property are protected, capitalist societies do not guarantee economic security to most of their individual members. Individuals must fend for themselves, finding the best available opportunities to provide for themselves and their families. Driven by the threat of economic insecurity and by a competitive desire to gain some of the goods unequally distributed throughout the society, many individuals will eventually become “criminals.”<sup>10</sup>

From this, Reiman gives a telling critique of America’s economic system:

To the extent that a society makes crime a reasonable alternative for a large number of its members from all classes, that society is itself not very reasonably or humanely organized and bears some degree of responsibility for the crime it encourages. Because the criminal law is put forth as the minimum requirements that can be expected of any “reasonable man,” its enforcement amounts to a denial of the real nature of the social order to which Gordon and the other point. Here again, by blaming the individual criminal, the criminal justice system serves implicitly but dramatically to acquit the society of its criminality.<sup>11</sup>

On that, economist Glenn Loury poses the question: “Are we willing to cast ourselves as a society that creates crimogenic conditions for some of its members,

and then acts-out rituals of punishment against them as if engaged in some awful form of human sacrifice?" I believe the foregoing has not only answered this question, but has also cast a spotlight upon a major flaw in society's general disdain for its criminal element. Americans hypocritically condemn and demonize people who *get caught* breaking the law. All the while, few citizens go through life without violating it themselves.

A significant number of Americans cheat on their taxes, steal from their employers, receive stolen goods, purchase illegal cable boxes, illegally download music, use illegal drugs, or participate in many other illegal acts. Hardly a day goes by without a newspaper story about corporate executives indicted for fraud, insider trading, or price fixing. Politicians are arrested and convicted for selling or accepting bribes. The most prestigious Wall Street firms have engaged in large-scale illegal trading practices. Some of our most successful and idolized entertainment figures are indicted for shoplifting, domestic violence, drunk driving, possessing drugs, and molesting children. Policemen are filmed using excessive force on citizens, make arrests based on racial stereotypes, deal in drugs, plant evidence on innocent people, and lie under oath. Sports figures are accused [and convicted] of rape, assault and taking steroids. Priests are charged [and convicted] with child molestation. Doctors bill Medicare for procedures they did not perform. Each day thousands drive while legally drunk, with sometimes fatal consequences.<sup>12</sup>

That said, it has been reported that over ninety percent of Americans have committed crimes that, had they been caught, would have landed them in prison. This comes as no surprise considering the fact that only 40% to 60% of crime is ever solved. According to Andy Rosenzweig, a former lieutenant in the New York Police Department, 60% of all murders go unsolved.<sup>13</sup>

Arguably, then Americans are offended so because those of us who get caught committing crimes are a constant reminder that smack in the face the façade and hypocrisy to which they attempt to tuck away behind prison walls. Needless to say, the fallacy of which enables a facade that constructs, for example, society's delusional belief that prisons deter, protect and seek retribution from those likely to victimize it. This begs of us to ask some very serious questions: How can society rid and deter itself of the very malignancy its system of economy creates?; and how much of a deterrent could prison be when every day people both in prison and the people who work at prison are committing crimes? These questions are obviously of a sarcastic nature. For the moral pretensions which serve to fuel America's penal institution are an outright hypocrisy given the extreme harshness to which a capitalist society operates to maintain its standing.

Having cited elsewhere the political history of this nation and how it came to be a global superpower, we can now properly put in context the fact that America's *so-called* Founding Fathers were, by any standard—today's or otherwise, hypocrites and savages. They raped, murdered, plundered and enslaved in the name of the U.S. Constitution. So when we hear white America praising the authors for the creation of this document, what we must acknowledge is their tipping of the hat to savages and

thieves for setting the stage for them to dominate the world with much of the same violence and theft.

That having been said, when I look about the prison yard I see more of the same personality wise that gave birth to this nation. I see people who are drunk with power or desperate to obtain it. And like America's Founders, I see people who are willing to rob, steal and kill to obtain it. So just as they raped, murdered and plundered to get theirs, we as society's criminally convicted do only the same and for the same reasons. However, we get read the riot act for trying to follow in their footsteps. And just as the Founding Fathers enslaved by the droves, so too has the Department of Corrections.

### ***DEFINITION [2]***

*A medium used to mask present day enslavement...*

Here it is the twenty-first century and yet slavery remains very much alive and ever thriving to subjugate the descendants of Africa and other people of color. It's been said history has a tendency of repeating itself. Given my current situation, as well as that of millions of other prisoners trapped in America's gulags, we certainly realize that slavery never ceased to exist. Never before my incarceration would I have believed that such a reality could be had or even legal some 150 years after the Emancipation Proclamation was issued. That was until I came to grips with the consequences of the Thirteenth Amendment. Having now been branded a criminal and banished to a plantation like setting, I've come face-to-face with a well hidden truth that slavery is, and very much remains, just as viable an industry today as it was 150 years ago. And like all things American, we've did it the best by refining its image and standing in society to accept under the guise of criminal conviction.

As a prisoner, the experience has again been profound and compelling. It has provoked me to seek understanding and compare with great detail slavery in its rawest form (i.e., chattel slavery) and its concomitant—penal slavery. As time passes and wisdom finds me in my darkest hour, my studies regarding the moral indignities and origin of slavery, viz. penal slavery, has taken me on a journey throughout the historiographies of distant lands—France, England, Spain, Rome, Africa, and many other countries. Here, the art of subjugation has served as biblical inspiration for that which has given birth to today's industrial prison grid. To give a brief account of the history of slave-holding societies and the origins of penal slavery, I quote at length Orlando Pattern's *Slavery and Social and Death*:

In France, Spain, England, and the Netherlands a severe form of enslavement of Europeans by Europeans was to develop and flourish from the middle of the fifteenth century to well into the nineteenth, this was penal slavery, beginning with galley slavery and continuing with its replacement by the Bagnes, or penal slavery in public works. Both were slavery in every sense of the term. They developed as substitutes for the death penalty at a time when there was not a prison system in Europe to accommodate the huge number of persons found guilty of capital offenses.

The enslavement of criminals who had committed capital offenses and other serious crimes was practiced in the great majority of premodern slave systems and in several European states down to the nineteenth century. Among a number of primitive peoples it ranked as the primary source of slaves—usually only where slavery existed on a small scale. It was an important source, for example, among the Ibos of West Africa and Goajiros of northern South America... In ancient Greece penal enslavement existed but was largely confined to metics, foreigners, and freedmen in central Greece; it was never a significant source of slaves. In Hellenistic Egypt it was of more economic importance; but since the main crime for which people were enslaved was insolvency to the state, the difference between this source of slaves and enslavement for debt was slight.

In Rome penal slavery was a far more established institution: a person convicted of a crime and sentenced to one of certain ways suffered *capitis deminutio maxima*, and became a slave. It was essentially capital punishment, and the *capitis deminutio* had all its ordinary results. Not all forms of capital punishment involved the reduction to slavery and only some categories of persons were affected (usually lower-class freeman). Only when the sentence was LIFE long was it slavery, and a distinction was drawn between temporary penal servitude in the mines and permanent slavery.

One variant in Rome harks back to the most primitive roots of slavery: persons who were condemned to die became penal slaves during the interval between their sentence and their execution... It must be emphasized that in Rome the enslavement of criminals was essentially a penal matter: as a source of slaves it was insignificant. Penal slaves did perform economic roles—mainly in the mines—but their contribution to the Roman economy was slight.

In several Oriental societies penal slavery was a significant source of both public and private slaves. It provided the bulk of slaves among the ancient Vietnamese, for instance, although slavery was never any real importance there. In Korea, which had the most advanced slave system in the Orient—and one of the most developed anywhere in the pre-modern world—penal slavery was never a major source of slaves.<sup>14</sup> It was of greater significance in Japan. Here, prior to the sixth century A.D., the two primary sources were prisoners of war and kinsmen of criminals (as well as the criminals themselves). However, as slavery gained in economic significance during the sixth and seventh centuries, these were replaced by poverty and destruction as the principle sources.

In China penal enslavement was the foremost source of slaves... Significantly, those prisoners of war who were enslaved were first assimilated to the status of convicts. Unlike Rome, the strong emphasis on familial responsibility in China meant that a person's wife and kinsmen were fully liable for his criminal actions. The number of such kinsmen varied but at times the law became draconian, involving the entire clan of a convicted person... [P]enal slavery, being the origin of both public and

private slavery in China, gave the institution its name, and influenced Chinese conceptions of the nature of slavery and, as such, base (*chien*) and subject to physical mutilation.

[T]here was a threefold relationship between slavery and the penal system in the history of Europe. First, slavery remained a form of punishment throughout the Middle Ages... Second, over the medieval centuries the nature of punishment of free persons was strongly influenced by the kind only on slaves. Slavery, in other words, had an increasingly retrogressive effect on the treatment of convicted persons. [Third], penal slavery became from the Middle Ages down to the nineteenth century a means of recruiting labor for the mines, the galleys, and other public works, especially in Spain, France, Italy, and Russia... Punishment for crimes was the source or nearly all the vast number of public slaves who worked in the mines and developed the Siberian hinterland.

Slavery was often a punishment for capital offenses, whatever these might be... In some societies UNSCRUPULOUS RULERS [like today's politicians] WERE OCCASIONALLY TEMPTED TO INCREASE THE NUMBER OF CRIMES FOR WHICH PERSONS MIGHT BE EXECUTED OR ENSLAVED. In West Africa the list grew with the expansion of the Atlantic slave trade. A number of Africans who ended up on the shores of the Americas were tricked into slavery. A common practice was for several of the many wives of an unscrupulous chief to seduce unwary young men, then accuse them of committing the capital offense of adultery with the wife of the chief...<sup>15</sup>

That said, let's fast forward to the period leading up to America's Civil War. History has provided that the conflict which gave birth to this war was rooted in the South's desire to expand the institution of slavery west to newly acquired lands. Northern industrialists were in opposition of this given the unfair competition had in the South's advantageous slave regime. The advantage here was a given. The South's reliance on slave labor significantly reduced the overhead cost of industry compared to that of the North's reliance on free labor.

Long before the war, Southern slavers realized their focus on cotton and other agricultural crops had marginalized their potential gains in other industries. Thus, cotton and tending Massa'a fields were not the sole burden of the slave. Mining, manufacturing, lumbering, and just about any industry that required physical labor would come, just as those in ancient Rome, to dominate and thrive off the blood and sweat of the slave. These industries were beginning to flourish at the brink of the war. Undoubtedly, Southern interests were at stake. Conflict was inevitable and thus forthcoming between the North and South. Arguably, if not for this conflict, Blacks would have remained as chattel slaves well into the late 1800s, if not the early 1900s. Nevertheless, the conflict would only serve to transform chattel slavery into "peonage."

Where the passage of the Thirteenth Amendment came to outlaw slavery in its rawest form, the "loophole" discussed in previous chapters, would take form in the shape of peonage. Here, the history of Europe, China, Africa, and Rome had made racist and capitalist thinking white America masters in the art of enslavement and

reshaping its image and acceptance within American society. Seizing the opportunity created by this pretext (i.e., peonage), which allowed slavery to remain in tact under the guise of criminal conviction, the white power structure in the South frantically raced to reinstate its slave regime. Black Codes were enacted which were a categorizing of crimes that were not criminal in the slightest. Essentially, these codes were an offshoot of Slave Codes the Union would eventually overrule. However, this did not hinder the ambitious efforts of Southern whites to revive the very institution that provided them a lifeline to wealth and hegemony. By the end of the reconstruction era (1867-1877) all southern states had gone back and passed laws that weren't called Black Codes, but essentially criminalized a whole array of activities that made it impossible for Blacks to avoid being criminalized.<sup>16</sup> Needless to say, these laws often led to a sham trial and harsh punishment or fine that most could not pay. To the dismay of Blacks there was little, if any, reflection of a judicial process necessary to hide slavery behind a guise of prisoners working off legal penalties for these fabricated debts and crimes. As such, many were banished to prison labor camps where their labor was then sold to local industry owners for the cost of their debt which divisibly could never be paid and many were again enslaved 'til death.

Considering the South's long and dependent history on slavery and the bustling industries that had begun to take shape prior to and after the war, the labor these prison camps provided was in great demand. Despite legislative attempts to criminalize Black life, the demand for prison labor far exceeded legislative production. Thus white America resorted back to the ways of its not too far removed ancestors—Blacks were literally kidnapped again and forced into labor.

Too often, to date, Blacks have found themselves powerless in face of racist and capitalist thinking white America's efforts to preserve their wealth and hegemony which has utilized the criminal justice system as a tool to achieve this objective. The history of which is well documented in the ledgers of American jurisprudence. In a 2008 interview Douglas A. Blackmon, author of *Slavery by Another Name: The Re-Enslavement of Blacks Americans from the Civil War to World War II*, elaborated on the grandiosity of this racket:

...it was everywhere in the South. These forced labor camps were all over the place. The records that still survive, buried in courthouses all over the South, make it abundantly clear that thousands and thousands of African Americans were arrested on completely specious claims, made up stuff, and then, purely because of this economic need [for prison labor] and the ability of sheriffs and constables and others to make money off arresting them, and that providing them to these commercial enterprises, and being paid for that.<sup>17</sup>

It would not be until after the turn of the twentieth-century that decisive action was taken to set in motion the grinders that would eventually put an end to this moral indignity. Laws against peonage begin to pop up all throughout the South. Though, they were rarely enforced. For they came during a time when most white Americans had little, if any, sensibility for the plight of Black Americans. Thus the resulting prosecutions and trials for peonage ended with guilty pleas exchanged for insignificant penalties or deadlocked.



However, by the 1920s the issue of prison labor had ignited war between the North and the South once again. Though, the combatants of this war were not the Union and Confederate soldiers, rather the attorneys representing Confederate conglomerates such as (Andrew) Carnegie Steel Company, Tennessee Coal, Iron & Railroad, and other commercial enterprise owners who were pitted against the U.S. Attorney General's office due to mounting complaints pertaining to the ruinous and unfair competition of prison labor. As this suggests, the force behind this war had little, if anything, to do with morality or the constitutional assurances guaranteed to Blacks. Politics and economic competition had again compelled the U.S. government to take action.

In 1924, the U.S. Secretary of Commerce, Herbert Hoover, held a conference on the ruinous and unfair competition between prison-made products and free industry and labor (70 Cong. Rec. S656 [1928]). As a result of the conference, an advisory committee was formed to study the issue. After a four-year investigation, in 1928 the committee issued its report to Congress whose legislative response led to some very important federal laws regulating the manufacture, sale, and distribution of prison-made products. Congress enacted the Hawes-Cooper Act in 1929, the Ashurst-Summers Act in 1935 (now known as 18 U.S.C. § 1761(a)), and the Walsh-Healey Act in 1936. Walsh controlled the production of prison-made goods while Ashurst prohibited the distribution of such products in interstate transportation of commerce. Both statutes authorized federal criminal prosecutions for violations of state laws enacted pursuant to the Hawes-Cooper Act. Thus, for several decades to come, the manufacture of prisoner-made products for public or private sale and distribution was prohibited.

By 1979, however, codified at 18 U.S.C. § 1761, the Prison Industries Enhancement Certification Program (PIECP, or "PIE" as it is commonly called) was implemented. PIE laxed the restrictions imposed under Ashurst and Walsh Acts, and allowed for the manufacture, sale, and distribution of prison-made products across state lines.<sup>18</sup>

\* \* \*

Today, not much has changed. Black Americans are still being hoodwinked with crafty legislation and forced into prison labor camps. Of course, there are many variables in play considering the oppressive and manipulative circumstances that influence us to accept such a compromise. Notably, we as prisoners often find ourselves trapped by our own ignorance and lack of discipline and self-worth that leads to our being exploited so. For many it has not resonated within them to take control of the situation. This we can credit to nothing other than the learned helplessness discussed in chapter two.

Knowing this, today's prison administrator has sought to perpetuate and advance our exploitation with a system designed to not only capitalize on our dysfunction, but to further it as well. Undoubtedly, they seize upon the opportunity created by our lack of discipline and resource (n.b., politically, intellectually, and economically). Thus, be it for purposes of retribution or perpetuating such manipulation so as to capitalize on our human resource, prison conditions have been fashioned in a manner that produce the desired effect of alienation from oneself and servitude. To accomplish this, administrators simply play on vulnerabilities (e.g., lack of family support, financial security, education, work history, etc.) exacerbated by the

prison setting and the already existing inferior complexes many inmates have been strapped with prior to incarceration. The affect of which is profound given the significant number of prisoners who willfully partake in their own exploitation. Sadly, they have conceded to the role of slave forced upon them by a system that persistently reinforces the learned helplessness the administration abuses as if a tyrant.

Furthermore, as prisoners we condone such a compromise considering that the majority of us spend the whole of our incarceration scrounging about like peons chasing the meager necessities of prison life (e.g., drugs, *so-called* job assignments and privileges, cosmetics or whatever else serves as a medium of exchange to fulfill our materialistic cravings) that are no more than a carrot-on-a-stick and scraps scrapped off the administrator's plate. That said, if it is one thing that I have learned from my prison experience it is not to pursue the meager desires and ambitions set forth by the prison culture. Like much in life they are but distractions that rarely amount to anything of significant value.

Prison officials having a keen insight as to how controlling circumstances which limit one's opportunities and psychologically condition the individual or group, ever thrive to impose their tyrannical arrangements on the prisoner, who because of his dysfunction is docile and ultimately in compliance with the belief that he is powerless and deserving of such indignity. Needless to say, the social distrust that arises as consequence of this abuse forces the prisoner to reckon with not only his inferiority, but the insignificance society has strapped him with to accept such a compromise.

So as to further manipulate and control the prisoner population, they are divided into multiple groups: Privileged and cooperative inmates, neutral and partially privileged inmates, and dangerous, militant, rebellious and therefore unprivileged inmates.<sup>19</sup> (That's not to mention the various groups we as prisoners divide ourselves into.) The strategy here is classic of slave owners who practiced numerous techniques to kindle distrust and keep slaves in fear of unifying. By simply dividing inmates into privileged and unprivileged groups the dynamic and affect which comes to bear on the collective conscious of the inmate population is astounding and reflects the classic "House Nigger" and "Field Nigger" dichotomy. This form of brainwashing, as with slaves, divides the inmates' loyalties and convinces many that it is in their best interest to distance themselves from the more militant and rebellious prisoners (or they attempt to thwart their efforts by ratting them out). As described by Demico Boothe, author of *Why Are So Many Black Men in Prison*, a major component in constructing this disunity is

to have men with small time and nonviolent offenses housed directly with the men with big time and violent offenses. [The administration's] logic is that it would be much harder for the inmates to form a large consensus and galvanize for the purpose of rioting or demonstrating under those circumstances because the ones who are going home soon would probably be discouraged or at least not participate in such an activity since they would have too much to lose and nothing to gain, verses the long timers who had very little or nothing to lose...<sup>20</sup>

Weaved into this system of control is the quasi-slave labor that serves more as a definitive system of prisoner management opposed to any chimeras of

rehabilitation. Seriously, how can you train, treat, or rehabilitate people to live normal lives in such an abnormal setting?<sup>21</sup> This is especially so when the Department of Corrections concept of instilling work ethic is paying a grown man a child's allowance for his chores. As for the rehabilitative effect? We can look to the *so-called* work ethic, skill training, etc., pretentiously publicized by prison industrialist having rarely amounted to gainful employment upon release. To this end, *Justice Journal* reports: "The unemployment rate of people with felony convictions is currently [2010] seventy percent." (We can rest assured that number has drastically increased in the years since the recession.)

Here lies the flaw in the rhetoric of rehabilitation.<sup>22</sup> The dots simply do not connect to willful employers. Therefore, this arrangement misleads not only society, but so too the prisoner who is misled to believe there's a job, an employer who is willing to overlook his criminal past. Again, he's been hoodwinked to accommodate a circumstance that has capitalized on his dysfunction; thus, compounding the very social neglect which has led to his incarceration in most cases. In other words, he has simply kept with the order of things or circumstances that have been put to him to accept. That said, there's no purpose this arrangement serves other than to perpetuate his lack of esteem where the exchange of his labor for those meager comforts of prison life tell of a devalued self-respect forced upon him. Under such circumstance, true rehabilitation can never be had because the individual constantly has to be coerced by circumstances which if absent do not compel him to seek gainful employment (i.e., entrepreneurship).

To this day a many legal and penal scholars persist with the age-old rhetoric that America's penal institution serves a rehabilitative purpose. Such propaganda not only ignores high recidivist rates, but, more importantly, evidences the deception upon which this institution was built. To give a brief history, I borrow from Professor Angela Y. Davis's *Are Prisons Obsolete?*:

The penitentiary as an institution that simultaneously punished and rehabilitated its inhabitants was a new system of punishment that first made its appearance in the United States around the time of the American Revolution. This new system was based on the replacement of capital and corporal punishment by incarceration.

Imprisonment itself was new neither to the United States nor to the world, but until the creation of this new institution called the penitentiary, it served as a prelude to punishment. People who were to be subject to some form of corporal punishment were detained in prison until the execution of the punishment. With the penitentiary, incarceration became the punishment itself. As is indicated in the designation "penitentiary," imprisonment was regarded as rehabilitative and the penitentiary prison was devised to provide convicts with the conditions for reflecting on their crimes and, through penitence, for reshaping their habits and even their souls....<sup>23</sup>

Thus born the concept and irony of prison rehabilitation. The irony being that which Professor Davis points where stating: "...the contention that prisoners would refashion themselves if only given the opportunity to reflect and labor in solitude and

silence disregarded the impact of authoritarian [slave] regimes of living and work.”<sup>24</sup> Here, she illustrates the point in context by citing the following excerpts from Adam Jay Hirsh’s *The Rise of the Penitentiary: Prisons and Punishment in Early America*:

Advocates of incarceration... hoped that the penitentiary would *rehabilitate* its inmates. Whereas philosophers perceived a ceaseless state of war between chattel slaves and their masters; criminologists hoped to negotiate a peace treaty of sorts within the prison walls. Yet herein lurked a paradox: if the penitentiary’s internal regime resembled that of the plantation so closely that the two were often loosely equated, how could the prison possibly function to rehabilitate criminals?

\* \* \* \*

One may perceive in the penitentiary many reflections of chattel slavery as it was practiced in the South. Both institutions subordinated their subjects to the will of others. Like Southern slaves, prison inmates followed a daily routine specified by their superiors. Both institutions reduced their subjects to dependence on others for the supply of basic human services such as food and shelter. Both isolated their subjects from the general population by confining them to a fixed habitat. And both frequently coerced their subjects to work, often for longer hours and for less compensation than free laborers.<sup>25</sup>

That said, realistically, prison labor serves no other purpose than exploiting and degrading mankind. For, if indeed work is linked to a number of values such as achievement, success, progress—then it is without merit where made detestable by slavery. To this end, Raymond Aron notes: “Man is essentially a creature who works; if he works under inhumane conditions, he is dehumanized, because he ceases to perform the activity that, given the proper conditions, constitutes his humanity....”<sup>26</sup> Thereby, work not only loses its human quality where made detestable by slavery, but also alienates the prisoner from learning the value of work ethic. This is so because to work in a prison setting is either punishment or a hardscrabble effort to obtain the “scraps” he’s been so convinced are necessary to maintain the illusionary comforts of prison life. So, instead of his efforts being viewed as an expression of maturity, of responsibility, they have been reduced to an instrument of punishment, a means to exploit which objectify him. Thus he comes away with nothing other than a sense of objectivity when defining self and others.

Furthermore, this is the sort of prisoner who potentially tarnishes the integrity and efforts of those who have dignity and resource enough to resist such a compromise and bring about true rehabilitation. For we are frequently disabled with the heterodox labels: militant, rebellious, problematic, etc., and thus targeted with stigma and repression by a pool of individuals (both prisoner and staff alike) who believe in and accept abject laws such as the Thirteenth Amendment. To this I say two wrongs do not make a right! For as we have learned, the context to which crime is often defined does not necessarily reflect with logic or justice the behavior criminalized.

True to the scheme of capitalism, prison administrators have long since recognized the likelihood that the prisoner’s lack of self-esteem, education, and work

history often is accompanied with a lack of understanding as to the value of his labor. Again, because of this he is easy to manipulate and control. And while he may have been stripped of his humanity, he nonetheless remains a thing of value to exploit in this way.

### **DEFINITION [3]**

*A social device facilitating class and racial hierarchies within American society.*

In the prior reference to Professor Davis's work, she prods us to question: "What is the relationship between these historical expressions of racism [i.e., chattel slavery, lynching, segregation, denial of voting, jobs, education and housing rights] and the role of the prison system today?"<sup>27</sup> She goes on to state: "Exploring such connections may offer us a different perspective on the current state of punishment industry. If we are already persuaded that racism should not be allowed to define the planet's future and if we can successfully argue that prisons are racist institutions, this may lead us to take seriously the prospect of declaring prisons obsolete."<sup>28</sup>

In chapter five, I discussed the fact America's educational institutions are vital in the formation of a proletariat class who are to be exploited by the ruling class. The previous chapter discussed how American jurisprudence functions all the same. Here, I shall attempt to detail the exploits of which are anchored in America's penal institution that facilitates class and racial hierarchies. As to be noted, they far exceed the mere examples I have thus provided. For there remains an aspect to which the penal institution functions hand-in-glove with the law to facilitate and ultimately impose racist and capitalist thinking white America's well-hidden tyranny.

We begin by recalling those intense social and political upheavals of the 1960s. As noted throughout previous chapters, the Civil Rights and Black Power movements effectively channeled the aggressive psychological energy pent up in the Black community into a well organized political force that posed a formidable challenge to the existing institution of racism (i.e., the existing order set in place by capitalist). Consequently, this would make the ghetto youth of today subjects of State<sup>29</sup> repression for reasons best described by Christian Parenti's characterization of "social dynamite":

The other segment of surplus population—"social dynamite"—are those who pose an actual or potential challenge. They are that population which threatens to explode; the impoverished low-wage working class and unemployed youth who have fallen below the statistical radar, but whose spirits are not broken and whose expectations for a decent life and social inclusion are dangerously alive and well. They are the class that suffers from "relative deprivation." Their poverty is made all the more unjust because it is experienced in contrast to the spectacle of opulence and the myths of social mobility and opportunity. This is the class from which the Black Panthers and Young Lords arose in the sixties and from which sprang the gangs of the 1980s....

...[S]ocial dynamite is a treat to the class and racial hierarchies upon which the private enterprise system depends. This group cannot simply be swept aside. Controlling them requires both a defensive policy of

containment and an aggressive policy of direct attack and active destabilization. They are contained and crushed, confined to the ghetto, demoralized and pilloried in warehouse public schools, demonized by a lurid media, sent to prison, and at times dispatched by lethal injection or police bullets. This is the class—or more accurately the caste, because they are increasingly people of color—*which must be constantly undermined, divided, intimidated, attacked, discredited, and ultimately kept in check with what Fanon called the “language of naked force.”*<sup>30</sup>

In the years since 1965 we have witnessed the unveiling of one dirty political ploy after another aimed at achieving what Parenti has put to us. We have witnessed on all fronts from the impact of globalization (i.e., the loss of manufacturing jobs in Black America) to the social-political manipulations of the Contra scandal that demoralized ghetto youth and led to a pretentious “War on Drugs” built on media dramatizations of crack babies and mendacious comparisons between street gangs and the Italian Mafia. To the watchful eyes of the world these machinations would effectively cast upon those confined in the ghetto an image as menacingly evil and thus the ghetto came to symbolize “a bivouac from which urban predators terrorized the city.”<sup>31</sup> Needless to say, such maneuvering had the desired effect of exacerbating both public fear and the call for the hunt and capture of young Black males.

The corral effect this would have would lead to a massive prison construction boom around the nation. California, for example, has written much on the subject of the Gold Rush of 1848. However, I find many who do not know of the Gold Rush of 1980-2000. During this period California underwent a massive expansion of its prison system which expanded from eleven prisons to thirty-three. The phenomenon is one that was emulated around the nation due to the fact that aggressive policing within ghetto communities resulted in “one [out of] nine Black males between the ages of twenty and thirty-four being captured and caged by 2007.”<sup>32</sup> The capitalist hunter had effectively procured society’s fear and transfigured it into capital with the assistance of tough-on-crime initiatives which, in all reality, were *defensive policies of containment and aggressive policies of direct attack and active destabilization* of young Black males.

Here, government officials simply barrowed a page from the history of race targeted draconianism such as Black Codes and Jim Crow. Racial profiling, three-strikes, crack vs. powder cocaine sentencing disparities, drive-by shooting legislation and other mandatory sentencing mandates were tailored specifically to collar the resulting mayhem stirred up in the ghetto by the nation’s political and corporate elite. This, needless to say, had the desired effect of increasing prison terms and the number of Black males entering the prison system due to the fact that only our communities were targeted to fill the newly constructed prisons.

If ever there was truth in the saying “there’s money to be made in war,” then there is no questioning the fact that America’s pretentious “War on Drugs” prompted the most profitable wars of all times. For it created a prison market estimated at roughly sixty billion dollars a year. That’s not to mention all the monies funneled into the police and court systems to carry out this diabolical scheme.

Moreover, while predominately young Black males were being rounded-up to feed this industry, predominately white males were given mid- to upper-level incomes

to oversee this *so-called* “dangerous class.” It is in this way that the hyperincarceration of these young men has furthered the tyranny of racist and capitalist thinking white America and deferred and secured monopoly over economic competition, and disabled the Black collective, *legally*, so as to repress the activities which threatened the white power structure. For the upward mobility of these young men been stagnated and condemned to a status of second-class citizenship upon conviction. This now allows for discriminatory practices that *legally* exclude them from obtaining, for example, gainful employment or public funding for higher education.

As noted by Glen C. Loury, “The mass incarceration of predominately Black... males has... become a vehicle for the reproduction of racial hierarchy in our society.”<sup>33</sup> Here, I believe Loïc Wacquant stated it best in his examination of the incarceration rates of Black Americans in recent years:

To understand these phenomena [i.e., the hyperincarceration of African Americans], we first need to break out of the narrow “crime and punishment” paradigm and examine the broader role of the penal system as *an instrument for managing disposed and dishonored groups*. And second, we need to take a long historical view of the shifting forms of ethno-racial domination in the United States. This double move suggests that the astounding upsurge in black incarceration in the past three decades results from the obsolescence of the ghetto as a device for caste control and correlative need for a substitute apparatus for keeping (unskilled) African Americans in a subordinate and confined position—physically, socially, and symbolically.<sup>34</sup>

Here, it pays to revisit the work of Professor Alexander who makes the most compelling argument on the point Wacquant has placed in context, stating: “The fact that more than half of the young black men in many large American cities are currently under control of the criminal justice system (or saddled with criminal records) is not—as many argue—just a symptom of poverty or poor choices, but rather evidence of a new racial caste system at work.”<sup>35</sup> She goes on to provide:

Like Jim Crow, mass incarceration marginalizes large segments of the African American community, segregates them physically (in prisons, jails, and ghettos), and then authorizes discrimination against them in voting, employment, housing, education, public benefits, and jury service.... [Moreover], [m]ass incarceration, like Jim Crow, helps to define the meaning and significance of race in America. Indeed, the stigma of criminality functions in much the same way that the stigma of race once did. It justifies a legal, social, and economic boundary between “us” and “them”.... This dynamic, which legal scholar Reva Siegel had dubbed ‘preservation through transformation,’ is the process through which white privilege is maintained, through the rules and rhetoric change.<sup>36</sup>

Without question, “the prison system is erected upon an unjust, imbalanced, and unfair structure.”<sup>37</sup> Here, I must digress to again place emphasis on those

“inalienable,” otherwise “natural,” rights which the U.S. Constitution endeavors to proclaim for all men that ironically are defined by racist, capitalist thinking white men who ever seek to change the law as if it were the climate. This, we know, is done to suit the interests of those in power who aim to maintain it by stripping those without it of the opportunity their rights or the law may afford them in their endeavor to obtain power themselves. For just as men devise laws to empower men, no sooner the ink dries, they are contemplating other laws and circumstances to strip men of that very power.

**DISENFRANCHISED VOTERS (2004)**

STATE	ALL VOTERS	AFRICAN AMERICANS
Iowa	5.39%	33.98%
Kentucky	5.97%	23.70%
Nebraska	4.77%	22.70%
Wyoming	5.31%	20.03%
Virginia	6.76%	19.76%
Delaware	7.54%	19.63%
Rhode Island	2.50%	18.86%
Florida	9.01%	18.82%
Washington	3.61%	17.22%
Alabama	7.37%	15.30%

Source: The Sentencing Project, Washington, D.C.

To illustrate, the above chart represents the percentage of the Black community that has suffered voter disenfranchisement since the passage of the 1965 Voting Rights Act. Since its passage, one-by-one, members of the Black community have been targeted and swindled of the right to vote. Ensnared by the *Web of Injustice*, predatory laws have effectively paralyzed those who, in suffering conviction, have been stripped of their rights and thereby their collective influence at the polls. It is in this way that the criminal justice system and the mass incarceration of Blacks has had “the most damaging manifestation of the backlash against the Civil Rights Movement.”<sup>38</sup>

This troubling trend has resulted “in one of every eight adult black males being ineligible to vote.”<sup>39</sup> In light of the fact that Black Americans only makeup thirteen percent of the population, the numbers represented in the chart reflect a significant portion of this community that has been restricted from partaking in democratic processes which afford, for example, a forum for the average Black man to articulate his take on (and change) the political landscape which affects his community. If he does not vote, then he gets voted out when laws pass that are designed to oppress and exploit him. And while it may seem I’m contradicting myself here regarding the power of the vote in light of previous statements pertaining to the vote of the masses being influenced by those who control the flow of information through the media, etc.—people who have been incarcerated or suffered injustices at the hands of the law tend to possess a more in-depth insight on the hidden costs and agendas of unscrupulous politicians. That said, unquestionably, a convict’s insight is invaluable to the process of democracy. “Those in power know this,” explains Mumia, “which is precisely why so many people are routinely disenfranchised because of their time in prison.”<sup>40</sup> He goes on to quote Ed Mead and a frequently cited fact that, “If [convicted persons] could have voted in the 2000 elections, George Bush would not



[have been] president, [and] 100,000 and more Iraqi women and children civilians would not be dead...” (n.b., Mead was making specific reference to the potential impact of ex-felons in Florida alone.) Moreover, Mumia points to the fact that in post-apartheid South Africa ex-felons and imprisoned persons still have access to the national franchise.<sup>41</sup>

The foregoing serves to illustrate the fact that America has yet to overcome its segregationist thinking. It seems to eat at the mind of those who assume important roles in the nation’s system of government—this includes those Uncles Toms, who endeavor to recreate ways to maintain control of Black America. To this end, Professor Alexander explains:

Since the nation’s founding, African Americans repeatedly have been controlled through institutions such as slavery and Jim Crow, which appear to die, but then are reborn in new form, tailored to the needs and constraints of the time... Following the collapse of each system of control, there has been a period of confusion—transition—in which those who are most committed to racial hierarchy search for new means to achieve their goals within the rules of the game as currently defined....<sup>42</sup>

Seemingly, this would put in perspective the fact that if men can so easily recreate such repressive systems (e.g., America’s criminal justice system), then it is only logical not to give certainty to the functions they project to society as serving (i.e., deterring and punishing criminals). This is especially so given the fact that the laws which fill prison beds are capricious and influenced by an uninformed or mislead vote and the state’s capacity (i.e., the state’s availability of resources—MONEY!) to hold “X” amount of offenders.

Case in point, California has recently amended its “three-strikes” law so that offenders with two nonviolent “strikes” against them cannot henceforth receive a life sentence for a third strike that is petty or nonviolent. It should be noted here that when the people of California initially voted to pass this initiative they were misled to believe it was going to effect only the most dangerous of criminal offenders. However, in the years since the law was passed (1996) cats have been struck-out for petty offenses such as stealing a slice of pizza. Moreover, now that the law has been amended the state looks to save \$100,000 million a year in wasteful criminal justice spending.<sup>43</sup> As this indicates, the sweeping change in California’s tough-on-crime initiative, as well as others around the nation, was prompted by the poor economy and thus the lack of *capacity* to operate the world’s largest industrial prison grid.<sup>44</sup> Here, it is important that we observe how for decades these initiatives have operated to fill prison beds with young Black men so as to create job security and profits by the billions. The setup here illustrates just how ingenious, sinister, and effective the political and corporate elite of racist and capitalist thinking white America have been in pulling the wool over our eyes. As Boothe points:

Whoever originally came up with the idea to industrialize and then capitalize off the criminalization and incarceration of millions of Black men could arguably have their names mentioned in the same breath as the Henry Ford’s, John Rockefeller’s, and Bill Gate’s of the world, but more

befittingly with the Hitler's, Stalin's, and Mussolini's. The overall grand scheme of it, with its societal probability hedges that keep the revolving doors of prisons swinging with the more-likely-than-not entrance and return of the Black and disenfranchised, is ingenious in its setup and sinister in its purpose. The penal system is indeed being utilized as an economy stabilizing tool for the nation and as a predatory entity against the Black men of America. That fact is especially obvious when you're on the inside looking out....<sup>45</sup>

Without question, prisons are where America's job programs, housing programs, and social control programs merge into a dark whole; and where those already outside of the game can be exploited and utilized to keep the game going.<sup>46</sup> As Professor Alexander points: "... as the systems of [social] control have evolved, they have become perfected, arguably more resilient to challenge, and thus capable of enduring for generations to come...."<sup>47</sup> She goes on to explain:

Because this new system [i.e., mass incarceration] is not *explicitly* based on race [like previous cast systems], it is easier to defend on seemingly neutral grounds. And while all previous methods of control have blamed the victim in one way or another, the current system invites observers to imagine that those who are trapped in the system were free to avoid second-class status or permanent banishment from society simply by choosing not to commit crimes. It is far more convenient to imagine that a majority of young African American men in urban areas freely chose a life of crime than to accept the real possibility that their lives were structured in a way [n.b., failing schools, economy, and the assault on their community social structure] that virtually guaranteed their early admission into a system from which they can never escape.<sup>48</sup>

The foregoing, unquestionably, is a prime example of how society's fears have been conflated, procured, and exploited by the political and corporate elite of racist and capitalist thinking white America to preserve class and racial hierarchies. Moreover, one would think the mere fact that America's elite ever propose novel means by which to strip further the Black man, the prisoner, and convicted persons of their rights, their humanity, their partaking in democratic processes effecting their communities and livelihood—would sound the alarm as to the tyranny I have given voice to. Yet society, like a herd of sheep, generally has not been endowed with the necessary experience (i.e., working at or being confined in prison) or education which allows for insight enough to dissect the shepherd's propaganda. Thus the majority of people in society (both Black and white) are easily misled in their belief that prisons deter and protect them from those likely to commit crimes against them. In fact, it is the political and corporate elite of racist and capitalist thinking white America who are harming them the most. This is a truth that has repeatedly been voiced by criminal justice scholars like Professor Reiman:

...Americans have been effectively deceived as to what are the greatest dangers to their lives, limbs, and possessions. The very persistence with

which the [criminal justice] system functions to apprehend and punish poor crooks and ignore or slap on the wrist equally or more dangerous individuals [i.e., middle- to upper-class crooks] is testimony to the sticking power of this deception. That Americans continue to tolerate the comparatively gentle treatment meted out to white-collar criminals, corporate price fixers, industrial polluters, and political-influence peddlers while voting in droves to lock up more poor people faster and longer indicates the degree to which they harbor illusions as to who most threatens them.<sup>49</sup>

Having bought into the hype, society is generally ignorant of the age-old fact spoken by a many political scientists and other philosophers, who stress the true ambitions of those in power having nothing to do with preserving ideals of freedom, equality, fairness, and the lot of other idealisms and virtues characteristic of a democracy. Rather, it is the maintenance of class structure and political regimes that serve to institutionalize the safeguards preserving and increasing their fortunes that consumes them. Both America's legal and penal (and educational) institutions effectively serve these purposes. For they not only institutionalize absolute social control and conformity with the norms and values ascribed by the ruling class, they also silence political dissent which threatens to disrupt the established order as Parenti's characterization of "social dynamite" has allowed.

\* \* \*

I have cited the above sources only to give account and credibility to the aims and success of political and corporate America's "War on Communities of Color." It did not take me, or the millions of other women and men currently under the custody and control of D.O.C., to have to read the foregoing sources to conclude we are engaged in a war with a capitalist hunter who seeks to *contain, crush, confine, warehouse, and at times kill us with police bullets and other State sanctioned terrorism*. This reality came upon me when I was engaged with racist prosecutors in Oklahoma who sought to terminate my existence with a three-drug cocktail of lethal mixes: Sodium thiopental, pancuronium bromide, and potassium. Since that near fatal encounter I have witnessed nothing but the deliberate destruction of communities of color at the hand of State sanctioned terrorism.

It was in the streets of cities like Oakland and Compton, and on the tiers of prisons like San Quentin and Folsom, that what I have written about becomes abundantly clear. Literally, there is tier upon tier filled with nothing but young Black men who have been warehoused in America's death houses. San Quentin is the largest in the world with over 700 death row prisoners—the majority of which are Black. And that's not to mention the gloom it inspires being on the mainline. Stacked five tiers high in 5'x 9' steel bared cells, cold cement, and rusty bunks, prisoners are confined in two man cells that take on the appearance of decrepit mausoleums. Santa Rita is another example next to Los Angeles and Cook County. It is the nation's third-largest county jail. Of the 4500 prisoners it holds, ninety percent of them are Blacks from Oakland—a city that is roughly forty percent Black!<sup>50</sup> Here, the conscious brothers within Rita, San Quentin, Folsom, and other prisons throughout the state tell of a predicament that comes of the socio-political manipulation (i.e., the social and political constructs that Professor Alexander speaks of) that goes into making our

communities explosive. As can be expected, we are mad. Mad, not inasmuch as angry. But *mad* as in having been driven to the point of pure insanity and sure desperation given what this manipulation has created within us. The dope, prostitution, robbery, and high homicide rates affirm this. They are predictable outcomes of an environment that, from *Projects-2-Prison*, has been created to cater to the institutional evils of capitalism.

**DEFINITION [4]**

*A place of isolation designed to silence one's voice...  
A process of natal alienation....*

The foregoing has taken into account many issues that unquestionably deserve more public attention. That the fact exists America's penal institution has come to function primary as a system fostering racial caste and works to exacerbate the criminal element within this nation by barraging it with more of the same inhumane treatment that it developed in—clearly speaks to the deteriorating social impact of this institution. Its grasp is far reaching, extending itself to the hearts, minds and communities of the entire nation. For this reason alone, I believe it important that we explore further the effects of this institution's perverse reliance upon practices (characteristic of the institution of slavery) which serve to alienate and dehumanize not only the prisoner from himself, but his family and community ties as well.

As the institutionalization process proceeds beyond the surface of a prisoner's confinement, his "natal alienation" from self, family, and community becomes the sole objective of his captors. For it is the *social death* of the prisoner that authorities ultimately seek. Moreover, because to be punished has come to symbolize being treated like a slave, this neoslavery has had an increasingly regressive affect on the rehabilitation and psyche of incarcerated persons, their families and communities.

Moreover, this slavish treatment transfigures into not just a social deterioration, but also a moral deterioration of society in general. For those who embrace this baseness of treatment embrace as well the inseparable amorality that ineradicably inheres to an institution (slavery) that aims to destroy lives. As a wise man once noted: "Slavery was, and still is, a criminal institution, that is: crime en masse. No matter what form it takes: subtle rules and policies, apartheid, etc., slavery and oppression of human rights stand as major crimes against God and humanity. Therefore, to relegate or change the state of such criminal deeds by means of vague legislation and noble euphemisms [e.g., the process of 'incorporeal transformation' described hereafter] gives an honor to horrible commitments that is totally inappropriate."<sup>51</sup>

From *Projects-2-Prison*, there is a continuation of conditions, or treatments, which psychologically and physically mimic America's idiosyncratic slave regime. Again, Patterson's work is of great assistance in illustrating the point in context.

If the slave no longer belonged to a community, if he had no social existence outside of his master [D.O.C.], then what was he? [Property!] The initial response in... slaveholding societies was to define the slave as a socially dead person [by stripping him of his alienable rights and thus changing the nature of the relationship between persons]. [Claude] Meillassoux argues, slavery must be seen as a process involving several

transitional phases. The slave is violently uprooted from his milieu [cf. the prisoner being removed from his community]. He is desocialized [cf. the prisoner's isolation from general society] and depersonalized [cf. the prisoner's name among other things such as his garb being replaced with a number to identify him—Mr. V31306; his head is shaved, for example, to distort his identity verification process]. This process of social negation constitutes the first, essentially external, phase of enslavement. The next phase involves the introduction of the slave into the community of his master [cf. the prison compound], but it involves the paradox of introducing him as a nonbeing [i.e., an inmate]. This explains the importance of law, custom, and ideology in the representation of the slave [i.e., the convict/prisoner] relation [with society]. Summarizing his own views and those of his associate Michael Izard, Meillassoux writes: "The captive always appears therefore as marked by an original, indelible defect which weighs endlessly upon his destiny [cf. the stigma of being a felon]. This is, in Izard's words, a kind of "social death." He can never be brought to life [or full citizenship] again as such since, in spite of some specious examples (themselves instructive) of fictive birth [cf. pardon, reversal of conviction, etc.], the slave will remain forever..."<sup>52</sup>

Here, I must elaborate further on the additions interjected into the excerpt. The above noted action of stripping the slave, or convict/prisoner in this case, of his alienable rights is a symbolic gesture aimed at assailing the conventional legal explanation of a human being, who by law is entitled to certain inalienable rights and freedoms.<sup>53</sup> Building on what Siegal has dubbed as "preservation through transformation," while it may seem simple enough—a criminal becomes his crime—the reduction of a person to an act is not a simple process. The reduction takes place in language and culture and typically beneath conscious awareness.<sup>54</sup> Giles Deleuze and Felix Guattari describe the phenomenon in which we can be transformed by language, by discourse, as "incorporeal transformation":

In effect, what takes place beforehand (the crime of which someone is accused), and what takes place after (the carrying out of the penalty), are actions-passions affecting bodies... but the transformation of the accused into a convict is a pure instantaneous act or incorporeal attribute that is expressed in the judge's sentence.<sup>55</sup>

Such a transformation of a citizen into a convict/prisoner via a conviction expressed in language (i.e., the statement read in the court, "Guilty as Charged") essentially changes the relationship between the individual and society forever, particularly in the way action (What did he do?) and identity (Who is he?) are conflated; a convict, guilty or innocent, thus becomes his crime, and it is very difficult, if not impossible, to disentangle the person from his criminal conviction.<sup>56</sup>

Legally condemned, the convict/prisoner becomes a socially dead person whose existence has no legitimacy whatsoever. Politically detached of those rights, which prior to conviction were inalienable and served as protection against inhumane treatment, his conviction and transition to the convict/prisoner status renders him

devoid of society's civil conscience. Unattached, flexible, and uprooted from one status to another, the process serves to make everything publicly acceptable with regard to the disenfranchisement and cruel and demeaning treatment he is to suffer. Needless to say, this transition from human/civilian status to convict/prisoner (nonhuman) status must be so ill tainted and cast about society's conscious that it disguises the penal institution's very own beastliness and criminality. Thus to make palatable to society its inhumane treatment of the convict/prisoner, the entire system is grounded in the concept of "identity repression" as described hereafter which affects both the prisoner and society by manipulating them to disregard the fact that we are people: Fathers, uncles, brothers, etc.

Drilled in the concept that we as prisoners are nobodies, that we are property to be auctioned and traded in private (prison) markets, that we are to ever remain stigmatized as a slum-class—America's penal institution is a coercive organization that furthers the above-mentioned transformation process by fiercely attacking a prisoner's personality structure. To this end, sociologist Erving Goffman explains:

[The prisoner] comes into [prison] with a conception of himself made possible by certain stable social arrangements in his home world. Upon entrance, he is immediately stripped of the support provided by these arrangements... He begins a series of abasements, degradations, humiliations, and profanations of self. His self is systematically...mortified.<sup>57</sup>

This depersonalization process is identical to the process of making a slave as previously noted in citations to Patterson's work. For instance, the above-cited act of shaving a prisoner's head aims to repress the symbolism associated with his identity and cultural esteem. Note the cultural and spiritual significance Native Americans and Rastafarians associate with their locks. "The forced act of shaving one's head was traditionally cultured in slave-holding societies as a mark of the slave and the indignities associated with his nonhuman status [and] an assault on any cultural value the slave may have held or represented with his locks or particular style connoting identity or membership to a tribe," explains Patterson.<sup>58</sup> Holding firm to tradition, it thus goes without saying the adoption of this forced act by the prison administration aims to assail the prisoner's identity verification process and to notice him to his new slave status.

I needn't even get into the pink dunt-da-duns prisoners have been made to wear solely to emasculate us. This degradation we can credit to an eighteenth century prison reformer who advocated prisoner clothing be "comfortable, yet humiliating."<sup>59</sup> As for the prison garb stenciled with bright colored letters: "D.O.C. PRISONER," this is yet another gesture symbolizing property (slave) of the Department of Corrections. It, as well, derives from a long history of slave-holding societies.<sup>60</sup> Here, it is not solely for the prisoner to ingest this manipulation. When transferred to outside medical providers, for example, my prison garb mocks me as if the dangerous zoo pet for all to marvel at in fear. I can literally at times see people cringe and shift their gaze away from me. For this "uniform of contempt" provokes them to think the worse of prejudices about me.

Hidden from the public eye, however, is the nexus of literal chains with the invisible but no less restrictive prejudices manipulated by this system. The garb only enforces the greater stereotype that encompasses the criminal image. As these writings have thus suggested, the mere label of “criminal” in itself has psychological implications that too often allow for greater society to stop viewing the prisoner as a human being. For just as people are socialized into what it means to be a student, friend, or worker—so too are they socialized into what it means to be a criminal. As this may suggest, this applies to the criminal himself as well. They learn the meanings of a role identity in interaction with others in which others act toward the self *as if* the person had the identity appropriate to their role behavior.<sup>61</sup> Thereby, the transformation process previously described by Guattari and Deleuze becomes a vital element in supporting the penal institution’s livelihood. Because, as I have previously pointed, if the role identities and relationship interaction between those labeled as criminals can be manipulated—that is, be viewed as relationships between objects and people (or the classic “us” against “them”)—the manipulation can then replace social responsibility and compassion. Needless to say, the indifference that comes of this allows for a system debasing the criminal and thus justifying his being inhumanely treated.

Further, it’s been said that the control of communication formulates authority by limiting, if not discontinuing, contact between prisoners and society. As this may suggest, part of the transformation process involves depriving the prisoner of all, almost all, contact, as much as they can, with the outside world. For this reason prisons are purposefully designed for holding inside not just men, but also the mechanisms—both the physical and mental secrets—in which administrators administer their poison. The intense level of isolation prisoners are subject to is a matter of policy. Inmates are neither expected nor encouraged to have more than a modicum of healthy contact with the outside world.<sup>62</sup>

This, unquestionably, creates a host of difficulties, not least of which tied to the family and community. These ties, needless to say, are treated by the administration as if criminal themselves. They are made to suffer the indiscriminate routine and inhumane treatment of the prisoner. It’s as if they are doing time themselves. Consequently, this creates an atmosphere of discomfort and alienation from their incarcerated loved ones. As can be expected, the discouragement weakens social bonds and thus causes a loss in support from the community and family base. Unfortunately, this is a predicament that befalls ninety-eight percent of prisoners within the first thirty-six months of being incarcerated.<sup>63</sup>

It has been well stated at this point that the penal institution has embodied the core tenants of the institution of slavery. Very much like this institution, it has purposefully been designed to decimate the Black family and community structure. Note how chattel slaves were frequently and with great violence uprooted and dispatched to plantations far away from their family. For centuries, African mothers saw their sons and daughters auctioned off never to be seen again. Couples were routinely visited upon by the horrors of their master’s sadistic brutality—whippings, rapes, lynchings, and separation of spouses.

Today, the penal institution operates in much the same way. Prisoners are routinely dispatched to remote prison compounds that are purposefully located at inconvenient distances from their homes and family. In the backwoods of rural

America where many of these compounds have been constructed to provide employment to predominately white communities—that have had little interaction with communities of color—these would-be otherwise poor whites assume roles of masters and overseers with often the same sadistic brutality of their forefathers.

However, now that their blatant acts of whipping, rape, etc., are no longer acceptable, they have mastered the art of psychological terrorism. These are those Gestapo tactics that, in addition to those previously noted, strive to rupture supports that allow prisoners to undermine the tyrannical prison regime:

- Use of cooperative prisoners as leaders.
- Prohibition of group formation that is not in the interests of the prison administration.
- Development of information gathering techniques on prisoner activities.
- Convincing prisoners that they can trust no one.
- Treating cooperative prisoners in lenient and otherwise attractive ways.
- Systematic distribution/withholding of mail and visiting privileges (especially with outsiders having anti-prison views).
- Building the conviction among all prisoners that they deserve to be (and have been) abandoned by the good citizenry.
- Prevention of any serious emotional ties among prisoners.
- Permitting access to as few disrupting publications and reading material as possible.
- Moving prisoners that are resisters from one prison to another whenever they act up.
- Use of techniques of character assassination to discredit and endanger uncooperative prisoners.
- Making jailhouse lawyers pay for their suits against prison administrations & conditions.
- Rewarding submission to prison discipline and religious guilt, feelings & subservience.

Having underwent such treatment, the psychological effect has us as prisoners foaming at the mouth like rabid dogs by the time we are released back into that other cage—the ghetto. After years, if not decades, of being tormented, humiliated, and isolated from our loved ones, we are extremely insensitive, volatile, embittered,



sexually deviant, and shell-shocked (PTSD) having been shot-up by block guns and bombed with explosive canisters of tear gas. As this suggests, by humiliating and brutalizing us as prisoners society stands to increase our potential for aggressive violence.

The foregoing has made clear the fact that the administration of *just-us*, particularly the function served by the penal institution, has been instrumental in disrupting the moving parts of Black community life (i.e., the people) and corroding its capacity for self-regulation and regeneration of constructive social constructs (i.e., the Village). This is especially so given the intense level of instability created by the “revolving door” effect of prison recidivist rates. The incarceration and defunct reentry process practiced in most state prison systems operates to destabilize both the prisoner and receiving family who often bare the social and economic burden of supporting the prisoner/parolee who is likely to return home with a host of psychological and financial hang-ups.

Here, it pays to revisit the work of Professor Todd Clear’s *Imprisoning Communities How Mass Incarceration Makes Disadvantaged Communities Worse*. From his work one can easily deduce the fact that prisons have purposefully been designed to churn-out highly unstable and poorly functioning Black men. In so many words, Clear points to the fact that the grand scheme of mass incarcerating large segments of the Black community operates to inflict “... a kind of ‘coercive mobility’<sup>64</sup> destabilizing neighborhoods by increasing the levels of social and economic disorganization.”<sup>65</sup>

When reflecting on the impact this has in maintaining class and racial hierarchies, the hard numbers reveal:

- One in 87 working-age white men is in prison or jail, compared with 1 in 36 Hispanic men and 1 in 12 African American men.
- More young (20 to 34-year-old) African American men without a high school diploma or GED are currently behind bars (37%) than employed (26%).
- Serving time reduces hourly wages for men by approximately 11%, annual employment by 9 weeks and annual earnings by 40%.
- By age 48, the typical former inmate will have earned \$179,000 less than if he had never been incarcerated.
- Incarceration depresses the total earnings of white males by 2%, of Hispanic males by 6%, and Black males by 9%.
- Of the former inmates who were in the lowest fifth of the male earnings distribution in 1986, 2/3s remained on the bottom rung in 2006, twice the number of those who were not incarcerated.

- Only 2% of previously incarcerated men who started in the bottom fifth of the earning distribution made it to the top fifth 20 years later, compared to 15% of men who started at the bottom but were never incarcerated.
- 54% of inmates are parents with minor children (ages 0-17), including more than 120,000 mothers and 1.1 million fathers.
- 2.7 million children have a parent behind bars—1 in every 28 children (3.6%) has a parent incarcerated, up from 1 in 125 just 25 years ago.
- One in 9 African American children (11.4%), 1 in 28 Hispanic children (3.5%) and 1 in 57 white children (1.8%) have an incarcerated parent.
- Previous research has shown that having a parent incarcerated hurts children, both educationally and financially.
- Children with fathers who have been incarcerated are significantly more likely than other children to be expelled or suspended from school (23% compared with 4%).
- Family income averaged over the years a father is incarcerated is 22% lower than family income was the year before the father is incarcerated. Even in the year after the father is released, family income remains 15% lower than it was the year before incarceration.
- Both education and parental income are strong indicators of children's future economic mobility.<sup>66</sup>

It is not simply the outside world that prison administrators seek to isolate the prisoner from. Within these walls men are held in total isolation. Across the nation there are literally thousands of such prisoners who are kept for years, if not decades, in administrative segregation and Security Housing Units (SHU) and other special isolation units designed to tightly regulate, monitor, and drastically limit, if not eliminate, any physical contact or communication with other people—be they staff, other prisoners, members of family, etc. As this suggests, these isolation units were created with the specific purpose of breaking people—their hearts, mind, and spirit. That the fact exists the administration of prison operates on the premise of sanctioning the use of such physical and mental violence to enforce the law, seemingly contradicts civility. For isolation is a favored weapon of psychological terrorists.

Of the many reasons that may be cause for such isolation, the one that has been highly controversial over the years, is the isolating of those prisoners who possess leadership qualities and have *mistakenly* demonstrated their ability to effectively organize the prisoner population to act against the oppressive prison regime. These are those prisoners who scream on and threaten most this tyrannical arrangement. They are the militant, rebellious, but more importantly—the “HIGH FUNCTIONING.” Unlike the majority of prisoners, they are often reputable gang members or affiliated with criminal, political, and legal organizations, voter leagues,

have press and media connections, and, as to be expected, they are well versed in their speaking, writing, and intellectual abilities (ranging from psychology to law).

As the foregoing has suggested, just as prison administrators discourage solidarity with friends and family outside these walls, so too they discourage solidarity within them amongst prisoners. Any activity (e.g., exercising in groups of more than four (4), congregating in groups more than four (4)) that expresses solidarity is classified as “misconduct” and subject to disciplinary action. Such measures, we must note, promote the very antisocial behavior that will eventually visit upon society in its worst form. That said, in the context of prison—as in the greater social one as well—unity is feared; isolation is favored.<sup>67</sup>

Unquestionably, this system is intent on institutionalizing conformity with an incarcerated way of life striped of family and community ties so as to create within the prisoner a crippling subservience, dependence, and a fear that conforms him to the demands of this tyrannical arrangement. For as Mumia as so accurately stated: “Prison is a form of state terrorism, designed to instill terror in the poor and the powerless.”<sup>68</sup> It is for this reason that prisons are brutal and arbitrary places. They are designed to destroy people (and their families and communities) by pressing upon them an experience which forces one to become alienated from his family and community and a stranger to himself.

Mr. V31306 no longer belonging to God, rather D.O.C. no longer recognizes himself in his activity or productions be they criminal or otherwise. Having no source of affection to draw upon, a view into his afflicted soul reveals a calloused heart rejecting society—a misanthrope if you will.

No longer belonging to a community—that is, having no social ties beyond these walls—the prisoner becomes engulfed in an environment that, from *Projects-2-Prison*, is innately familiar to most though undetected. As time slips into years, decades, eventually the heart grows cold. Cold as if the concrete and steel that surrounds it.

Undoubtedly, the circumstance has a way of working a man to the point he is hardened or delirious, if not both. Slowly, and with indifference, the administration has broken him. Now get a rope so he can do for them what their machinations have led to—a lynching!

Where suicide fails, here is where they remain. Worthy of this defeat, freedom becomes an abstract to them. It becomes picture-like and illusive as if a mirage. Though, it is not an oasis they take refuge in or hope to find, rather it’s the visits, letters, and phone calls to family and friends, they look forward to if fortunate to receive them. For those who do not, the only escape they contemplate takes shape in the form of a book, a movie, a magazine pin-up of some “paper pussy.”

Another link on the chain of a mind ever incarcerated, natal alienation and isolation have worked collectively to create an effective control within the conscious of a population made bereft of ties, a sense of power, and identity. Incarceration having settled upon the mind has created a mental barrier that will not allow for it to venture beyond the prison walls. When the gates open, if they open, their mind has been retarded so that they carry about as if a dog on an invisible leash—stagnated from years of institutionalization. Prison, therefore, becomes a suitable arrangement for them. Here, the lodgings, meals, and other amenities find them complete, accomplished, and relieved of the responsibility of freedom. Sadly, many will remain

oblivious as to what or who has robbed them of the desire to live beyond ghetto and prison walls.

### ***“THE HUMAN ANIMAL”***

You cannot treat a man like an animal and then not expect that same man not to act like an animal. I have been up in here (i.e., prison) being treated like an animal and living like an animal. How can anyone out in the real world, who consciously made no type of contribution to insure that I wasn't forced to live in here like an animal, actually expect for my attitude towards them to consist of anything other than an animalistic type of animosity? Do not misconstrue what I'm saying here as some feeble excuse or failure on my part to take responsibility for both my actions and the subsequent incarceration that resulted from them. My purpose here is to increase your understanding about a situation that exists within American society.

As I write this, I stand as one of two million men and women behind bars in this country. The United States of America has more people under lock and key than any other country in the world. Doesn't that sound weird, especially considering it has some of the lowest crime rates? The land of the free has locked-up a higher percentage of its people than any other nation on earth!

Furthermore, many people have lost sight of the fact that human beings are animals. The human animal is just cognizant enough to think and conform its behavior in accordance to its thoughts. Whereas, the lower animals cannot and thus their actions are predetermined by their basic instincts and drive to survive. However, while we are cognizant, the human animal possesses those same instincts and drive to survive as that possessed by the lower animals. The difference between the human animal and the lower animal is humans possess the ability to respond consciously to circumstances instead of just reacting to them instinctively.

Moreover, the caging of any animal creates an “unnatural” environment. The unnatural environment of human incarceration is deliberately designed to strip the human animal down to the point it functions primarily on the basis of instinct and its animalistic drive as a secondary basis of rationale or consciousness. To reinforce this mental regress, prison officials are systematically trained to treat their fellow human beings as animals. Stripped of their former humanity, the human animal reverts to his or her animalistic nature. This human now reacts (instead of responding) to the circumstances in his or her world. Once this occurs the system had achieved its goal of dehumanization, which is frequently referred to as a process of institutionalization.

On those occasions where inmates subject to this process are released from prison, typically they go out into the world seeking to satisfy their most basic of needs and desires: eating and sexual gratification. Most are no longer capable of functioning on a level where they are able to think or reason in the conventional sense or have empathy for their fellow human beings. Instead, they live among and prey upon other human beings as if they were lower animals. They are incapable of peacefully co-existing with other human beings. Eventually, after preying on their community and causing havoc they are again hunted down, captured and placed back into the prison cage—a place where society has been convinced the human animal righteously belongs. At this point, the human animal has become just another hopeless, unsalvageable statistic lost in a seemingly unbreakable cycle of recidivism.

The unseen force behind this “intelligent design” rejoices, while the Black community, for example, suffers a loss of potential human resource that could positively contribute to society. All is not lost however. I recognize that some individuals have drug problems or other issues which prod them to go afoul of the law. However, every individual who makes a mistake or bad decision and winds up in prison does not have to succumb to becoming an animal. And every individual subject to the institutionalization process does not have to become institutionalized.

The individual, who is conscious of the perils of institutionalization and how it intentionally aims to reduce him or her to the lower animal has the capacity to resist such a transformation. The human mind conscious of this process has the ability to retain its humanism. This also applies to those who have been institutionalized. For their conscious salvation lies in regular interaction with compassionate human beings in the world who display genuine affection. Their genuine acts of kindness and concern for their incarcerated fellows allows for the prisoner to remain in touch with his or her humanism. Either of the two prisoners mentioned here has the ability to learn not to surrender their humanity. Those few who succeed (through knowledge of self and mastery of self) achieve the reward of an ability to balance both sides of their human nature. This equilateral balance will not only allow them to walk in both worlds (if and when absolutely necessary), but also by becoming fully acquainted with the animalistic qualities they have been hard-wired with to survive, they acquire the consciousness to transcend their inner animal in exchange for their humanity.

Lastly, if you were to take a happy, healthy dog, then tie it up on a chain in your back yard, neglect it and abuse it through verbal, physical and mental abuse, never feeding it, and never taking any time out to show that dog any type of genuine love and affection—then how in the hell could you possibly have the audacity not to expect that same dog not to try and rip your throat out if and when it got loose? That said, depending on whether or not people in society made any effort to make sure that incarcerated persons were able to retain their humanity, the example of the dog serves to illustrate the predisposition of the human animal that people never realize they have the very real potential to come face-to-face with and deal with upon that individual’s release from this mad house.

If sharing any part of this first-hand account has in any way enlightened you, enhanced your overall understanding of this situation, or at the very least provoked you to think, then I have succeeded in achieving what I initially intended to accomplish.

—DeAndre Derritt.

## ***DEFINITION [5]***

*A state of mind constraining the ability to constructively think...*

Shackled from head to toe, I peered out the bars of the 4’ x 6’ cell at the top floor of the Alameda County Court house. The thoughts had and happenings carried about in this building had been etched on the walls: “Tick” 2/14/89—20 years; “Raybo” E.S.O. (Eastside Oakland) 25-to-life; My balls smell like rotten fruit and my armpits

like cat piss!; Give ‘em crack, make ‘em lose their monkey minds. Put gun & liquor stores on every corner—just keep on killing yourselves. The whole white power structure—feel it in your bones; Murder Dubs; Asian Crip; M.O.B.; and so on and so forth the names and profanity read. Looking back on that day, superstition forbid I add to the graffiti my fate. For I have always been led to believe that the man who writes his name on prison walls will always be captive to them. Believe me you, when I was later found guilty of first-degree murder and the judge pronounced my fate with the use of letters instead of numbers, I damned to hell very cat who ever wrote my name on a jailhouse wall or otherwise.

Prior to my trial in Oakland, there were a many a days I shifted about with one hand cuffed to a belly-chain foolishly hoping to find one name—Huey P. Newton.<sup>69</sup> He had also resided in this hellhole during the 1970s for killing an Oakland police officer. During the two years he spent fighting the system before eventually being acquitted of all charges, a volume of Black Panther history would be scripted from within these very walls—if not the very cell I was in. History forever held time as Huey fought and gazed out of those very windows, as I, to see a world of ants in motion surrounding the Lake Merit area. The account he wrote told of his criminal keepers attempts to break him—mentally, spiritually, and struggle wise. Though never in all his accounts or any for that matter which detail the horrors of incarceration could one compare to the madness ever etched into my mind as I awaited court that dreaded day.

Three years into many frivolous court appearances and the accompanying bull-pen therapy, it was within the last few months of 2003. The exact day I cannot recall. Yet as I stood there, caged and chained like Kunta Kinta fresh off a slave ship, an approaching voice helplessly cried out: “Help!” “Help!” “Someone please help, I’ve been kidnapped!” I began to laugh believing that a fellow prisoner was cracking jokes. “They’ve chained me up,” he continued to shout. “Help!” “Help!” “I’ve been molested.” “Help....” His voice got louder and louder as it drew near. I sat there laughing as he carried on. Eventually, I began to think: “Enough is enough, that the joke was funny, but come on man, enough said.” About that time I could see who it was making all the fuss. The deputies had under their escort a mentally ill prisoner from the J-cat dorm at Santa Rita. He was giving them the blues as he struggled and kicked at the officers who drug him, each with an arm hooked under his. “I’ve been kidnapped, please help,” he continued to cry out frantically as they threw him in the cell next to mine. He went on and on as if a broad screaming rape....

Today, I sit in this prison cell wondering who really was crazy—him or me—for not acting out as he given the stark reality of our situation being in essence a kidnapping. This often forces me to put in context this shadow of content that attempts with each passing year to extinguish the light at the end of the tunnel. Better yet, I struggle with this beast that attempts to cast this subhuman veal upon me as a criminal. It seems as if an uphill battle. For its one I’ve yet to defeat petition after petition.

For most, being incarcerated for any extensive period of time retards the will to fight for freedom. And that’s taking in account they understand what “fighting” for freedom entails. Many have simply been defeated by circumstances from *Projects-2-Prison*. Needless to say, they have suffered a loss of vision early on in life, if ever they had a chance to develop one. Circumstances simply stripped them of all hope and willpower to face adversity. So they willfully accept plea deals for life in prison.

Having found themselves up against the powers that be, most prisoners know little, if anything, about how to challenge these powers. All they have been accustomed to is fighting with their fist and guns. They have no mental fight in them—that is, endurance, tact, confidence, etc. For them the proverbial saying, “The mind is a potent weapon,” is mere rhetoric without understanding or action. Again, I find this largely attributed to the fact that circumstances as they have been manipulated in their early life has not wired them to be confident and optimistic, rather doubtful and pessimistic as to their ability to challenge this system.

Considerably, our backgrounds and experiences have given us opposing convictions about our capacity to overcome adversity. Though we all bring our life experiences to bear upon our predicaments, our differing perceptions about ourselves shapes our fate. For those of us who have been hard-wired for optimism ever strive to kindle hope despite it being emotionally taxing and seemingly impossible given our plight. Hope for us serves to displace fear and insecurity and thus inspires us to work towards our survival, our freedom, our success. And with each success we witness where a life sentence is overturned, for example, our physical and emotional vigor renews. As for those amongst us who are hard-wired pessimist? Their hopeless resignation paralyzes them causing less and less participation in the struggle for freedom. And this just does not apply to prisoners. It applies to people in the world as well when it comes to life and living.

Considering the fact that optimism and hopelessness are self-fulfilling, the form of action or inaction one may adopt is to a large extent a function of their attitude. This, needless to say, can result in the difference between living a life without limitation or living it in incarceration. For it is a common saying that prison is a state of mind—that is, a mental trap that operates as if a physical constraint. In the case of the pessimist, his hopelessness works to confine his worldview. The manipulation of which creates his social isolation and failure filled reality. His vision has been debilitated. He’s been dumb-downed.

Too often this distortion facilitates the aims and ambitions of another. Every day, I see men and women in prison (both on the bricks and behind brick walls) who have accepted life on the terms put to them by others simply on account of the legal and moral postulations society at large has accepted and therefore forced upon others out of some need of conformity. Here, I must digress to reiterate on a topic of the previous chapter that discussed the affects of the law. Considering the fact that it is ever changing and thus changing society’s take on what is criminal or not, this in turn has a profound affect on society’s conscience, needless to say. Here, we must acknowledge the “reality” the law in itself creates. Without question, the manipulation of which comes of it is simply profound in its affect to restrict and thus control human behavior.

Seldom do either society or convicted persons ever put in context the fact that the law (as well as our sense of morality) is a tenuous form of contemporary political institutionalization. Of which, we commonly come to view what’s right or wrong based solely on the manipulation we have been subject to. Further, to acknowledge such manipulation unavoidably places into context the fact that majority of people in society and convicted persons lack understanding as to the nature and function of the law and its aims to define crime for all purposes and intent to make it functional for

society. This has been demonstrated with the aforementioned history of Black Codes, Jim Crow, etc.

While the law is considerably one of the most effective means by which our social and moral reality is constructed, the subject is more complicated and illusive than the mere affects of legislation. This is a given, especially were we to begin to evaluate and distinguish what is real, moral, or simply capitalist culture from an objective point of view. But is this even possible considering the likelihood of such an effort being tainted by the perspective product of our socio-political indoctrination? Again, it is our social, political, and cultural experiences that, for many of us, are too often definitive, unchallenged, and thus limiting on our worldview. This, in itself, is incarcerating. And while I have primarily focused on the manipulation that operates within the ghetto, or in the instant case—prison, it is the fundamental aspects of such manipulation that is of chief importance for us to recognize here. For just as people in the ghetto and prison are institutionalized, manipulated, and confined to circumstances which oppress and exploit them, so too are people in larger society. Heru's poem speaks to this where it reads: "*The science in the script you'll see one electrical fence with prisoners on both sides of it.*"

That said, is prison simply a state of mind? Are we living in an illusion of freedom when in all reality we are imprisoned by mere belief? If so, then reality is often the prison of another's making which controls the social and political development of our respective environments which in turn shapes us as criminals, squares, etc.

*There are two kinds of prisons. One is built with concrete, steel, and razor wire. The other is built in the dungeons of our minds. It may be that none of us can escape from the 'solitary confinement' we've condemned ourselves to out of fear, pride, and social inertia. We construct actual prisons as bitterly as we construct our individual places of detention, building them on ruins of other epochs, accepting as viable failures of other societies, even other centuries. When everything else we have put our hands fails to solve the problems of our individual and collective consciences, the limestone and steel cemented by our pitiless morality will remain as a monument....*

—**Joseph E. McCormick (1993)**



*Over here I dream of comfort  
And acceptance in the Motherland of  
Eve  
First mother to breathe  
Thoughts of Africa  
Bless my mind's landscape  
And all its weaklings  
Sorrows I hold when dust swept  
Sudan  
Falls prey to those who pray  
And are forced to migrate  
For safety like the Exodus was  
yesterday*

*With my light brown eye  
I leap with the Masai  
Smile and grin when the T.V. sends  
Me pictures of bright lit  
Tight knit colors of others  
Like my sisters and brothers*

*But what if Africa don't accept my  
dreamy fair skin smiley vision  
What if as soon as I step off the plane  
The heat takes my breath away  
The women don't see a man  
And the mosquitoes tell me to die  
What if the sun burns me back to my  
junior high dance?  
I know I'm more American than  
African*

*Culture wise I'm something special,  
acceptable  
At your dinner table  
From Georgia to Jamestown  
400 plus years same ground  
But what then?  
Trans-Atlantic world wind  
I don't resemble my tribe mental  
Physically out of touch with the  
temple  
Culture shock made simple*

*I don't want to sneak back into  
My own home  
I'm not a thief  
I was thieved*

*And I know who Linus and Schroeder  
is  
Pop-Tarts and Eggo's  
Saturday morning cartoons  
Wonder twin powers active all day  
After these messages we'll be right  
back  
I know that  
But I don't know you Miss Africa  
I speak more Spanish than Swahili  
So this means what?  
The African medallion that swung  
from my neck  
In High School was made in Korea  
I also love the Lakers  
Any Laker fans in the Kalahari?  
Our President comes from Kenya  
My ancestors come from Virginia  
My dad was a Teamster member  
Veteran Day is in November*

*I was born in a hospital  
Grand dad in a shack  
If I write you Miss Africa  
Will you write me back?*

**MY BLACK  
MISUNDERSTANDING  
—Harry Grant**

## CHAPTER 9

### “IMPROVING THEIR REALITY” [THE INSTITUTIONALIZATION OF SOCIETY]

*Would I sacrifice my life for my people? Absolutely!  
Would I flinch in the presence of an oppressor eager to shoot me?  
Absolutely not!*

*Why?*

*Because death is a natural phenomenon awaiting us all,  
So with the blessings of life I will bring awareness to destructive flaws,  
And provide instruction to heal our wounds.*

*Why?*

*Because it's my Afrikan obligation to bring truth to humanities' womb!  
In attempts to return the Black man, woman, and child to civilization.*

*Why?*

*Because I say ashé to fallen in daily ceremonies of liberation!  
Can anyone or anything persuade me to cease my aspirations?  
No because that means efficacy has been acknowledged, so persuasion is exacerbation!*

*Why?*

*Because by any means necessary is a concrete affirmation,  
Never to fade from memory,*

*Like a panther image painted by brotha Emory!*

*I was once a soldier, who became a warrior then a king,  
A brotha who can fathom Martins mentality the birthplace of his dream!*

*Why?*

*Because I'm willing to die,*

*Before I see another sista submit to feed her esteem!  
I'm willing to embrace "Tookie's" execution with no desire to vocally scream!*

*Why?*

*Because I don't want Black Men in institutions learning to become better criminals!  
But intelligently motivated, directly connected to God and not in a way that's subliminal!*

*Why?*

*Because we are not a worthless breed,*

*And for that notion to be translucent I'm willing to profusely bleed!*

*Because knowledge not void of self is what we need!*

*I vow to die in the course of uhuru, allow my demise to proceed!*

*Why?*

*Because this is where my thoughts always and rarely coincide,  
The physical spirit of Huey P. Newton lives with me and Revolutionary Suicide!*

**REVOLUTIONARY SUICIDE,  
—MP**

**I**n *Souls of Black Folks* Du Bois tells of the story of John Jones, a happy-go-lucky Negro from the small town of Altamaha, Georgia. John is a free spirit who's always laughing, smiling, and singing. He's loud and boisterous. Unfortunately, John is not very productive in his endeavors. Of all people, John's family arranges for him to attend college. His family and the greater community of Altamaha have pitched in to cover his expenses and tuition. John happily accepts the scholarship and off he goes North.

Being his usual self, John does not take college seriously. Consequently, he fails terribly at his lessons and his boisterous demeanor lands him a suspension. This, he realizes, will bring his family and he great shame. His family and the community have gone to great pains to afford him the opportunity to attend college. The shame he anticipates has forced him to realize for the first time he has done his family and community a great disservice. In a desperate attempt to correct his wrongs, John pleads with the dean of the school not to report his misdeeds to his family. He assures that if he is allowed to return the following semester, he will get some “act right!” The dean, realizing John’s fear of shaming his family has awoken in him the seriousness of his mistake in taking for granted his education, reluctantly agrees to allow John this final opportunity.

Indeed, John would return the following semester and hold true to his word. He becomes so engrossed in his studies he doesn’t notice the changes in his demeanor. No longer is John the happy-go-lucky Negro from Altamaha. He’s now focused and intrigued with the various subjects he’s elected to undertake: the fall of Rome, Greek mythology, the stars and planets, and the plight of Black America. Slowly, John’s education has changed him. He has now become a well-read scholar with ideas and aspirations. Unfortunately, however, he has become arrogant with his newfound knowledge. He believes he’s too good for Altamaha. Because of his arrogance, he conveniently finds excuse after excuse to prolong his return home. His family is eager to see him. His mother writes often inquiring as to his return. Yet, John puts them off. His dread of returning to Altamaha threatens his sense of prestige and privilege due to its abject poverty. John’s education and being in the North have afforded him some indulgence in the arts, politics, and other events customary to the parvenu.

Yet Jim Crow remains. It slaps John squarely in the face with reality. Because he is Black, he is to be excluded from white privilege. This, needless to say, frustrates him so. The rage it inspires within him provokes him to challenge Jim Crow dead-on by attempting to force himself onto white society. He is rejected time and time again. The greater his exclusion in obtaining equality, the greater he feels oppressed. He grows more and more militant by the day. His passions are inflamed so now he realizes his calling to uplift his people from the mire of racism, inequality, and poverty. After years of putting off return to Altamaha, John finally has reason to return.

As the train rounds the bend into his hometown, John sees the town with new eyes. The immense level of poverty in which his fellow Altamahans are forced to live takes him aback. His observations are not simply based on what he sees, but moreso what he has learned of how these conditions are created. They strike at his heart for he knows the people of Altamaha are blinded by their oppression. Removing these blinders will be his greatest challenge. Strapped with this knowledge and the perceived wherewithal, John is full of hope and fight. He’s a bit too optimistic however.

His family and the Black community of Altamaha receive John with open arms. However, hostility lingers by their white counterparts who suspect correctly that John has become an uppity nigger full of ideas to change the plight of Black Altamaha. Despite the hostility, a celebration ensues. The town folk have rolled out the red carpet. There’s a parade and other festivities. The church has been dressed with all

the bells and whistles. A formal ceremony is held to honor Altamaha's first Black recipient of a college education. Though the celebration would be short-lived.

Those closest to John begin to notice that this was not the John of the past—the happy-go-lucky Negro. No, this John was rather distant with ice in his eyes. When time came for him to address the community, John stood atop the pulpit and shocked the congregation by denouncing Christianity as a vice used by the oppressor to make Black folk mental slaves. He spoke fiercely of nation building amongst the Black masses, oppression, and a new educational directive to uplift Blacks from the mire of racism. He went on for quite sometime yet without approval from his audience. When done, only his sister would applaud him. The rest of the congregation sat speechless.

Where John had sought to enlighten his people, he offended them with his brilliance and ideas. Notably, his condemning of Christianity struck at the heart of Black Altamaha. They were god-fearing people who could tolerate no such blasphemy. John's concepts of nation building and Black-centered education were too complex for his unschooled audience to understand. John may have well been talking Chinese.

Frustrated that neither he nor his message was received, John fled the church to a nearby beach. There, he sat stirring into the sunset with anger in his heart. He couldn't see beyond his fury enough to understand where he went wrong. Distracted by rage, he had not noticed his sister take pursuit. She now appeared before him as a ghostly shadow to inquire further of his ideas and educational experience. "John," she asked, "does it make everyone unhappy when they study and learn lots of things?" he paused and smiled. "I'm afraid it does," he responded. "And, John, are you glad you studied?" "Yes," came the answer, slowly but positively. She continued to watch the flickering lights upon the sea, then said thoughtfully, "I think I am, a little, John."<sup>1</sup>

That John's little sister was able to somewhat grasp his message speaks to what Frederick Douglass once said of the fact that, "It is easier to build strong children than repair broken men." In the case of the people of Altamaha, they were broken from centuries of oppression. This made it almost impossible for them to relate to John. Notably, he failed to present his concepts in a way that would allow for them to understand where he was coming from. Consequently, he isolated himself from them due to his superior intellect. What took John years of study and change in habit to free his mind of the oppression that once held him mentally captive, he attempted to part with in a sermon. Just as he was to study for years and gain a profound insight on the world before him, so too the need for his people. So begins the process of cultivating vision.

Vision builds on knowledge, as does success. Without it people cannot aspire to new horizons because they cannot see where the journey before them will lead. Nor can they interpret the message of those who seek to push them in a new direction. While it is often said of mankind that we were created to believe and not to doubt, people tend not to be faithful to anything until they understand why they should. In the case of the Altamahans, they could not divest faith in John's vision because of their lack of understanding and knowledge. Needless to say, this prevented them from galvanizing around his ideas. As noted, where John was once a student of vast studies, he failed to realize that, as a teacher, he was to gradually elevate the Altamahans' conscious understanding of their predicament and its causes. This entailed, first and foremost, getting them to see their condition as a problem and not their natural lot in

life. It entailed the realization that the blame for their condition rest squarely on their shoulders.

That the Black community in Altamaha was to blame for their condition was the reality that they feared. They feared accountability for the construction and preservation of their own social, political, economic, and religious institutions. Notably, they had grown to rely on the institutions of their oppressors. Because of this, they were to blame for their condition and, to a large extent, the oppressed people that they had come to be.

The story of John and the people of Altamaha is the story I have told of Black America, especially those who reside in the ghetto—myself included. Having personally undertaken the pursuit of knowledge, as had John, I have come to know of the misery associated with gaining a more in-depth insight on the world before me and the challenge of enlightening the less endowed. The more I learn of the various institutional forces that operate in American society, the more iconoclastic I become. My studies have made me conscious of the fact that we live in an artificial society created by these forces that shape our reality. Too often, I encounter those who, like the Altamahans, are afraid to “wake up” to this very fact and assume accountability for their predicament. They are discouraged from reaching beyond their circumstance. Their intellectual ability to challenge themselves, their circumstances, and the insecurities that hold them hostage have been hindered by the reality created by their oppressor’s institutions. They have been affected by a design intent on keeping them mentally impoverished. As long as people are mentally impoverish and ignorant of the impact of this institutional design, they will ever be easy to manipulate into living a life of crime and poverty.

That we are poor, without social, political, or economic power is not necessarily the fault of those who create the *Blueprint*. Rather, it is our fault. Obsequious thoughts by power-thinking people create the ghetto. Again, we allow this design to affect our lives due to our ignorance of its inner-workings, which in turn allows for people outside our community to control the institutions that oppress it; that make for the destructive elements that we embrace as a deathstyle. For these reasons the blame for our condition falls squarely on our shoulders. Only when we accept this fact then, and only then, will we begin to “move on” eliminating those problems of mass incarceration, violence, poor education, drug economies, broken homes, and unpromising futures.

As this suggests, the problems before our communities will not disappear until we up and take control of our systems of education, economy, law enforcement, and other social and economic factors that contribute to our community development. If we continue to run from this truth then we will continue to see an assortment of individuals and groups that milk the chaos for what its worth. Their faces we are all too familiar with. They are the nation’s politicians who, prior to their election, are full of hope. They dupe us with promises to correct wrongs, to provide solutions to society’s ills, and to put things in order. Yet the very moment they step into office, their pledges are long forgotten. History has proved this time and time again. It proves the fact that they are simply chasing the money train. That the problems before the ghetto persist in face of all their problem-solving initiatives, is a tell in itself that the game is being thrown so as they can collect on their bets and lip service.

Notably, the solutions they advocate are prescribed by the very establishment that stands to benefit from the problem. For example, the same people who control the school system control the prison system. They advocate better education yet their schools are the pipeline to prison. It is for this reason that any solution that comes from the top-down and not the bottom-up must be rejected. For they are intended only to scratch at the surface of the problem so as it persists as a viable source to political and economic ambitions. These solutions are but mirages—the War on Poverty, the War on Drugs, the War on Terrorism, Better Education for the Poor, etc. Then, like hypocrites they audaciously condemn those who fall victim to the traps they set by reducing school budgets, off-shoring jobs, “green-lighting” drug trafficking, and decimating organizations that prevent gang violence. These are the politicians who are heavy on the throttle to systematically impose those very systems of education, law, and economy that I have written of within these pages that destroy our community. In all their problem-solving initiatives they act as if the game is not rigged in capitalist America where big fish eat little ones and those at the helm of the ship steer it in the direction of making crime, for example, functional for society.

That said, it is of no surprise as to why problems persist in the ghetto. If anything has been gained from the previous chapters, I hope it’s the fact that social and economic problems persist in the ghetto because of the immense level of political activity (and arguably the lack of it on our part) aimed at keeping the poor poor and the rich rich. That’s the plan, plain and simple. Chapters 1 through eight are but mere examples of the social, economic, and cultural occurrences that come of this political gamesmanship.

So how do we protect ourselves, our families and communities from this design that makes for the competitive society in which we live? What of solutions, if any, to the continual problems it causes in the ghetto? These are but frequently asked questions that everyone seems to have on their lips to provide an answer to. Even I myself have had such questions put to me. Of course, I do not have all the answers. Nor is there any one solution to the number of problems before the ghetto. However, that’s not to say there is no solution to each problem. After all, they have their causes.

Theoretically, solutions are quite easy to come up with. In fact, the answer to a number of problems before the ghetto have been provided by committed scholars such as Marcus Garvey, Malcolm X, Dr. Na’im Akbar, Paulo Freire, Amos Wilson, and the many others cited throughout the course of this work. Notably, the solutions they advocate are grounded in the concepts of nation building, which center on cultural and economic organization. Where problems before the ghetto persist, it is because those experiencing them are not willing to accept the solutions provided by our Black scholars. Then too, people are simply not willing to make the necessary sacrifices and they lack discipline in all matters, which places them at an intellectual disadvantage.

It has been said that what we do not know by way of knowledge, we will be exploited by! Accepted as such, the forging scholars point to the fact that problems before the ghetto (n.b., poor Black communities) can be traced to our educational disorganization. It would only seem logical then that our focal point for solutions begins with the search for a true educational experience as they suggest. As with Malcolm, this experience is more likely to be had within a prison cell than a college classroom for reasons articulated in chapter 5.

Be that as it may, I see more of the world through my narrow prison window than most people walking around in it because my worldview is clean and visionary like a window pane. No longer is my intellectual development constrained by the clutches of America's perverse educational institution. Like shutters it operated to control the degree of clarity and vision I attained in insight and hope. It distorted the quality of light that beamed through the window plane of my worldview. No doubt, the darkness it created within me was deconstructive and a detriment to my community. Yet there has been inspiration found in the small beams of light provided by our great African scholars whose insight on the educational process has allowed for me to push back the shutters and clean the debris from the window plane. This has allowed for me to receive the full radiance of factors impinging on my growth and development. Immediately, as if I changed the lenses to which I viewed the world, my environment began to change as I became aware of the factors that allowed for me to make it a product of me instead of the other way around. As the light dominated the newfound reaches of my mind, I found myself no longer stumbling in the dark of my ignorance. No longer am I ignorant of the fact that American schools function primarily within the perimeters of "banking" and "training" concepts of education that, for example, operate to solidify the class positions of racial groups and to allow the elite to control the masses. No longer am I ignorant of the fact that these institutions function to indoctrinate an imperialist ideology that systematically works to destroy the norms, values, traditions, and languages of non-Europeans. This is the objective of the Dick Sloans of America.

That there is a near 50 percent high school dropout rate amongst Black children and less than eight percent of American students attend college is of no happenstance. Contrary to popular belief these figures do not represent a failing educational system.

Failure, we know, is a matter of perspective. If we look at the system as "wanting" to provide a quality education to American kids, it is an abysmal failure—and we cannot understand it. If, however, the objective is to utilize public education and state ran universities to control the flow of human capital made available to man the corporations and various government agencies set in place by America's ruling class, then the above statistics represent a howling success. If we can understand this, the system's "failure," as well as its obstinate refusal to change its broken-down colonial model, becomes perfectly understandable.

Furthermore, when Black people in particular give credit and crisis to these statistics we affirm our deafness to "our" scholars who have been telling us for the past 100 years or so that the American educational institution was not designed to teach the oppressed anything other than how to remain oppressed. Said differently, the system was not designed to teach the oppressed to become the oppressor. I'll spare the details of repeating chapter 5 and just say this with regards to colonial education: **IT WAS DESIGNED TO FAIL US!**

That said, that 50 percent high school dropout rate is screaming at us to do something other than what we've been doing since "1863." It's screaming at us to quit circling the wagon and chasing after diplomas and degrees to certify our "deposits" of Eurocentricism. It's screaming at us to restore ethnocentric models of education. It's screaming at us to take a serious look at our HBCs that have been playing the game according to the rules and playbook written by a historical enemy. Naturally, the question comes to mind: How is it we are to compete in a capitalist

society when our playbook is written by our competition? The proposition is so very clear that it seems ridiculous to take any pains to prove.

No one playbook in the NFL is the same. Each has been designed to allow for the advantages of their unique strategies. Where victorious, strategy is at the heart of their success. No one team would have the advantage over the other without it. If every NFL team played by the same playbook there would be no competitive edge. That is, unless the plays devised were written by one team that in turn did not play by its own rules.

Case in point, our white competitors have broken every rule in the book by legitimizing their theft of native and foreign lands and resources with the U.S. Constitution; they control our concept of education; they control the power of labeling; instill values and beliefs through their institutional structures of family, marriage, law enforcement, etc.—all designed strategies that have been written in *their* playbook to afford *them* the advantage over us!

When we look to the playbook scripted by America's public education system, without question it has been written by a team that does not play by its own rules. "Separate but Equal" and "No Child Left Behind" are but a testament to the fact that "[t]here is no such thing as a neutral educational process."<sup>2</sup> Education either functions as an instrument of domination used to indoctrinate the ideals, culture, and practices of the status quo, or "it becomes 'the practice of freedom,' the means by which men and women deal critically and creatively with reality and discover how to participate in the transformation of their world. The development of an educational methodology that facilitates this process will inevitably lead to tension and [class] conflict within [American society]."<sup>3</sup>

If I have read our philosophers correctly, what they are saying is: We must become authors of our own playbook so as to create the strategies that allow for our social, economic, and political advantage. Strategy is at the heart of education just as education is at the heart of economic prosperity. If what we are being educated (i.e., trained) in does not possess the strategies necessary to create circumstances enough to capitalize on human and natural resources, as have our white competitors, then there is little, if any, chance of us prevailing as a people in a capitalist society.

As the forging has suggested, in order for our children to succeed in capitalist America we're going to have to change our educational directive. The point has been well-stated, American schools

construct our taken-for-granted beliefs about education and not, as we would like to believe, ourselves who develop those beliefs purely on the basis of objective evidence as to the academic abilities of students. Our educational reality is largely constructed for us by the education institution. According to Machiavelli, it was most important for a prince to seem "merciful, faithful, human, sincere, religious." But as long as such appearances were maintained, it was not necessary for him to actually be so. If we define a leader as good or education as effective, then by so doing we have released certain powerful forces in society—forces which may easily become dysfunctional for the political and educational institutions.<sup>4</sup>



Seemingly, I have contradicted myself in making many of the foregoing points that are of a different tune considering the experience I detailed regarding my college experience. It wasn't that I did not learn anything while attending college. Rather, it was what I already knew prior to attending that assisted my understanding as to why I was there. Unlike many kids who are sent off to these institutions with no life experience, I was 24 years old and had already gone through a series of life changing events that prepared me to think, to question, and analyze the nature and intent of the instruction I was to receive there. When awarded the academic scholarship, Assistant Dean Barry Goldstein, who wrote the letter of recommendation, would comment to the fact that I was one of the few students who sought understanding beyond the appearances and certifications associated with a degree. My response was if only he knew what I had gone through to become so insightful.

Notably, I pointed out to him the fact that when I graduated from high school, intellectually I was bankrupt with exception to what I learned from my grandparents and the streets when it came to providing for my family and I. However, adhering to what I was taught in high school had me bouncing to-and-fro from one slave to another at one point of my life trying to make ends meet. Indeed, college provided me insights I did not possess in some aspects. Though, it was not until I found myself back in prison with the luxury of a life sentence that I discovered the freedom Malcolm X spoke of in developing his "home-made" education. The truth extracted from my self-studies adjusted my focus to the fact that my government education (i.e., training) was like a 12-step brainwash camp that did not teach anything

but how to be slaves and work hard for white people to build up they shit, make they business successful while they exploiting us. And they ain't teaching us nothing related to solving our own problems... They ain't teaching us how to get crack out the ghetto. They ain't teaching us how to stop the police from murdering us and brutalizing us... They ain't teaching us how to get our families to better interact with each other. They just teaching us to build they shit up....<sup>5</sup>

Our existing Black educational institutions must remove themselves from this straitjacket. This is that "training" that has dominated much of our classroom pedagogy for the past 150 years, which has caused us to major in the minor and fail in our understanding of what is major opposed to what is minor.

*Educational establishments are as much a part of the defense establishment of a people as is their army. A people bereft of educational institutions dedicated and designed to defend their interests and to solve their problems, are essentially a defenseless people, a people vulnerable to the exploitation of other peoples as well as vulnerable to annihilation. We cannot advance or appropriately defend our interests and lives as an Afrikan people if we place the fate of our community in the hands of the educational establishments of our oppressors and enemies, and in the hands of those Afrikans educated in them.*

—Amos Wilson

## **UNDERSTANDING THE MAJOR**

The present effort has taken into consideration a number of issues that affect the quality of life we attain in our respective environments—namely, the ghetto. The

subject matter has been broad. Though, a few basic themes have ran their course. Of these, the most significant has been the affirming of a lack of organization within these communities and the institutional framework that impinges upon their ability to organize socially and economically in a more constructive fashion. The institutional forces of the criminal justice system, for example, fosters a “Culture of Poverty” and violence that anticipates the disorganization of ghetto residents by perpetuating an institutional design aimed at assailing informal social controls. Consequently, the social and individual competence of these communities have been weakened due to the fact that the structural changes that come of this design

has removed the individual from association with those points that are central and crucial to the operation of society and from which one can see an overall view of society or phenomena within it. “Sunk in their routines, they do not transcend, even by discussion, much less by action, their more or less narrow lives. They do not gain a view of the structure of their [community] and of their role within it... Each is trapped by his confining circle...” [Philosopher and economist John S. Mill (1806-73)] brings together the phenomenon of the decline of community and the increasingly bureaucratized centralized character of rationalized structures in regard to their consequences for the individual in his observation that “this loss of any structural view of position is the decisive meaning of the lament over the loss of community.”<sup>6</sup>

Every aspect of improving community life depends upon a strong community fabric. This entails for all the pieces of building a prosperous community to be in place: family, investment, committed neighborhoods, public safety, schools, etc. Notably, the social and economic investment decisions made by previous generations (or the ones we fail to make) greatly impact the world in which we live today. Missing even one piece, for example ethnocentric education, jeopardizes the entire development process. Consequently, the absence of any one of the foregoing variables leads to what George Kellings and James Q. Wilson described metaphorically as “Broken Windows.” They explain that community stability begins and ends where the social impact of a

[s]table neighborhood of families who care for their homes, mind each others’ children, and confidently frown on unwanted intruders [has] change[d], in a few years or even a few months [to affect a generation in the way to which the underlying social and economical factors contributed to the crack-cocaine epidemic and subsequently changed the ghetto into] an inhospitable and frightening jungle. [Because] a piece of property is abandoned, weeds grow up, a window is smashed. Adults stop scolding rowdy children; the children, emboldened, become more rowdy. Families move out, unattached adults move in. Teenagers gather in front of the corner store [because there are no community programs to provide them constructive alternatives]. The merchant asks them to move; they refuse; fights occur. Litter accumulates. People start drinking in front of the grocers.<sup>7</sup>

What Wilson and Kellings have put to us here is essentially the concept of it takes a Village to raise a productive community. This entails for community participation on all fronts from informal social control to industry. Moreover, the importance of participation in decisions affecting one's community resides not merely in the ability to influence the character of events in which one is impacted but, equally significant, the establishment of a sense of commitment, a condition for the growth of self-esteem, the development of individual wisdom, capacities, and the *self*. Here, the educational and cultural directives we embrace will determine whether or not these objectives will be attained.

Culture, we have learned, is both manufactured and socially transmitted. It is "the handiwork of both deliberate and coincidental human social collusions and interactions."<sup>8</sup> As this suggests, culture is a human product that in turn manufactures social products such as poverty and violence. However, in the context of achieving the above-cited objectives, culture can also be a powerful tool in organizing a community, as was the case with conscious hip hop. Here, Amos Wilson is again informative in providing us something of significance to aid in our understanding of how culture operates:

One of the most important contexts in which the alignment of individuals and groups is utilized to generate and exercise social power is that of culture. A culture is a type of "power system" which includes all of its members and the various groups and institutions which constitute it. A society or culture as a power system may be subdivided into a number of smaller and smaller power systems nested within, or organically related to, one another. The overall power systems which may include familial, kinship, communal, regional, and other types of social and institutional organizations.<sup>9</sup>

Elsewhere, Wilson writes: "Culture is a way of thinking. [It] is a means by which a group of people organizes the way they think, organizes the way they believe, organizes the way they see the world so as to create a consciousness which they can cooperate in achieving certain ends such that they can mutually aid each other and gain ends they cannot gain as separate individuals. Thus, culture is an instrument of power."<sup>10</sup>

When speaking to the different institutional framework and worldviews between traditional African culture—which notably established Black America's concept of a Village—and that of Europeans', Kobi Kazembe Kalongi Kambon has built on what Wilson has provided us in adding:

Being an institutionalized process means that the worldview system is so thoroughly pervasive and subtle that people pay little or no attention to it in any overt or highly conscious sense, even-though it is the driving force in their collective life. The prescriptions of the worldview system are simply experiences that members of the culture take for granted through their habitual or customary functioning in accordance with them. The worldview system, then, determines and reflects the normative way of

believing, thinking, feeling and behaving for those indigenous members of the culture.<sup>11</sup>

In the chart on the following page, Kambon provides the different institutional frameworks between African and European culture. Notably, he points to the fact that

[most] Afrikan people lack true racial-cultural consciousness, our so-called educated people are intellectually incarcerated by Eurocentric definitions, values, attitudes, and visions of the world, and our leadership as well is merely imitative of the European survival thrust. Despite this tragic condition of being practically on the brink of self-destruction as a racial-cultural group, most Afrikan people seem unconcerned (if not totally unconscious of it), unalarmed, and quite comfortable, relatively speaking, with this insidious form of collective pathology, or what has been called “Mentacide”—the virtual depletion of the cultural mentality of a people.<sup>12</sup>

European/ European-American Worldview		Afrikan/ Afrikan American Worldview
—Control/Mastery over Nature		—Oneness/Harmony with Nature
	<b>Ethos</b>	
—Survival of the Fittest		—Survival of the Group
—Exclusiveness/Dichotomy		—Inclusiveness/Synthesis
Competition-Individual Rights		Cooperation-Collective Responsibility
—Separateness-independence		—Corporateness-interdependence
Materialism-Ordinality	<b>Values &amp; Customs</b>	Spiritualism-Circularity
Intervention-Oppression And Aggression		Complimentarity-Understanding
—Individualism	<b>Psycho-Behavioral Modality</b>	—Groupness
—Uniqueness-Differences		—Sameness-Communality
European/White Supremacy (Racism/Anti-Afrikan)		Humanism-Religious

Kambon, in conjunction to arguments made throughout these writings, also points to the fact that: “the European worldview on Afrikan reality in America, in particular, has been most pervasive throughout all areas of so-called Afrikan American life. Through its powerful institutional tentacles, it pervades and dominates

Afrikan educational life... religious life... economic life... aesthetic expressions... politics... family, community and social life, and obviously Afrikan psychological life and physical survival life in general in America.”<sup>13</sup> These are the major areas of Black life that manifest cultural misorientation. He goes on to illustrate:

- **AFRIKAN AMERICAN EDUCATION:** Afrikans in America depend on Europeans for their education and accept white supremacy/Eurocentrism as the philosophical core of every educational discipline which results in miseducation and an anti-Afrikan orientation among Afrikans in America. Therefore, the knowledge base and skills development of Afrikans in America promote white supremacy/Eurocentrism, and independent Afrikan-centered institutions are few in existence, unpopular and poorly supported;
- **AFRIKAN AMERICAN RELIGION:** Afrikans in America accept and practice white supremacy/Eurocentrism as the core of their religious beliefs and activities, be they Christian, Jewish, Muslim, or some other non-Afrikan form. Therefore, non-Afrikan cultural values, icons, labels, language, etc., are predominate in the religious beliefs, symbols, practices and rituals of Afrikans in America;
- **AFRIKAN AMERICAN ECONIMICS:** Afrikans in America accept and practice white supremacy/Eurocentrism throughout their economic/business activities. Thus, the consumer/dependency orientation, as opposed to the producer/owner orientation, and the dominant practice of spending money outside of our own community/group dominate Afrikan economic practices in America;
- **AFRIKAN AMERICAN MEDIA:** Afrikans in America accept white supremacy/Eurocentric/anti-Afrikan reality/imagery projected through the media by depending upon it for Afrikan affirmation, by overwhelmingly patronizing European media, and by perpetuating it in our own media was well;
- **AFRIKAN AMERICAN CULTURAL ICONS: IMAGES & SYMBOLISM:** Afrikans in America accept and utilize white supremacy/Eurocentric/anti-Afrikan images and symbols as their own. Therefore, Eurocentric images and symbols are pervasive throughout the Afrikan community in American; i.e., on our person, in our homes and churches, our schools and businesses, our recreation and entertainment, and in our thoughts and ideas. Their names and physical characteristics also dominate our personal self-imagery/self-definition;
- **POLITICAL ACTIVITY:** Afrikans in America accept and utilize white supremacy/Eurocentric/anti-Afrikanness in all conventional methods/strategies and actions geared toward social/group/racial empowerment. The political priorities and objectives/goals of Afrikans in America are therefore Eurocentric in nature rather than Afrocentric, i.e., prioritizing achieving social/racial integration with Europeans and access to European institutions, resources, etc., over developing Afrikan independence, institutions and self-determination;
- **SOCIAL ACTIVITY:** Afrikans in America accept and utilize white supremacy/Eurocentric values, images and definitions/anti-Afrikanness in

relating to each other, and by requiring European acknowledgment, recognition, involvement-participation, approval and legitimacy in all areas of life, and by ascribing deity-like status to those who are successful in attaining it.<sup>14</sup>

In order for us to improve on our reality we are going to have to take a serious look at each of the above areas and ask ourselves some even more serious questions as to how this acculturation has worked to our disadvantage as a people? In doing so we are not simply revisiting the age-old debate of assimilation. For acculturation differs from assimilation in that the former is an instrument of imperialism while the latter is to merge two or more cultures, disciplines, etc., into one. That said, I honestly believe that if we approach this question with the understanding that the social and economic disorganization that comes of this acculturation has been responsible for much of our past and present struggles, it will become clear as to why our advancement in many of the above areas has been minimal, if not stagnate.

Therefore, it only seems logical, in light of all that has been said within the course of this work, that we must cease with the directives and solutions provided by the status quo, and start thinking for ourselves so as we can develop the necessary strategies for a successful playbook to prevent the intense level of violence, poverty and miseducation in our communities.

### ***UNITING THE BLACK FAMILY***

*That all men are created equal before the eyes of God and the U.S. Constitution is of little, if any, importance before the eyes of men who measure equality in terms of political and economic power. It is through the educational process that this sort of power is either constructed or deconstructed.*

—*Ivan Kilgore (2013)*

ALTHOUGH I HAVE BEEN HIGHLY critical of the Black educational directive and American institutions, a major breakthrough for me has been learning of the fact that they were created by men and therefore can be changed. In an effort to bring about this change, all proceeds generated from this book shall be donated to the establishment of the *United Black Family Scholarship Foundation* (UBF, hereafter). This foundation will be dedicated to organizing and empowering Black social and economic life here in America with hopes of extending our programs to the pan-African community.

Naturally, the focal point of the UBF will be to rewrite our playbook and change the educational directive of our HBCs and urban schools so that they develop the necessary strategy to build and improve on our social and economic needs.

For those interested in joining this organization *friend* us at [Facebook.com](https://www.facebook.com/UnitedBlackFamilyScholarshipFoundation)—  
THE UNITED BLACK FAMILY SCHOLARSHIP FOUNDATION.

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**CHAPTER 1 ENDNOTES**

<sup>1</sup> Academic American Encyclopedia: Deluxe Library Edition, Vol. 9, p. 167.

<sup>2</sup> A “Sundown town” is any organized jurisdiction that for decades kept Blacks and other people of color from living in it and was thus “all-white” on purpose. See James W. Lowen’s *Sundown Towns: A Hidden Dimension of American Racism*. Touchstone, 2005, p. 4. Up until the late 1980s, many lily-white towns and communities across America enforced written and unwritten ordinances that forbid Blacks and other people of color from taking residence or being within city limits after dark. Lynchings, torching of homes, and brutal beatings by white mobs were unleashed on Black Americans who dared to defy the color line. There was a common saying that my elders told of that Lowen wrote of that was true of the townships that surrounded Wewoka: “Nigger don’t let the sun go down on your Black ass before leaving town.” This saying was posted on signs on the outskirts of Okemah, Weleetka, Allen, and several other towns throughout the state.

<sup>3</sup> During the Great Depression, President Franklin D. Roosevelt implemented a series of domestic social and economic programs to boost the struggling economy. The Social Security Act of 1935 would pave the way for social assistance programs: Aid to Dependent Children (a.k.a. “Welfare”) and Old Age Assistance (a.k.a. SSI). These programs along with a series of government subsidiaries and contracts to white business owners became known as the New Deal Era Programs. For the next three decades the government excluded, for the most part, people of color, particularly Blacks, from benefiting from these programs. They were designed with the intent to solely uplift unemployed and poor whites. Consequently, this would give rise to a predominately white middle-class and predominately Black lower-class. The New deal programs did, however, create scores of poor whites that were locked into a state of government dependency. It would not be until President Kennedy was elected into office in 1961 that the crisis of America’s poor—people of color included—prompted a series of antipoverty programs in an attempt to ameliorate the travails of the Black masses. However, his assassination deeply affected the direction and progress of these programs. His successor, President Lyndon B. Johnson, having been pressured by leaders of the Civil Rights Movement to address Black poverty, would pretentiously jump-start a failed and rhetorical campaign against poverty entitled “The War on Poverty.” Notably, leaders of the Black community believed equal access to America’s welfare programs, for example, would ameliorate Black poverty. Here, they ignored the perverse incentive built into the programs, which had already proven to trap scores of poor whites. They ignored the proverb: “Beware of the free lunch.” Consequently, Black generations, to date, would be conditioned welfare dependants.

<sup>4</sup> Quadagno, J. *The Color of Welfare: How Racism Undermined the War on Poverty*. Oxford University press, 1994, pp. 90-96.

<sup>5</sup> Alexander, M. *The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness*. The New Press, 2010, p. 191.



<sup>6</sup> The term used today is “Surplus population.” Surplus population, as described by UCLA Professor Ruth Gilmore, is that sector of society that falls outside the expectations of productive society. Generally, this sector is composed of the under- and unemployable, uneducated, and crime prone. So as to effectively manage this sector and to decrease its impact on depleting resources within the economy, urban residents are tucked away behind the walls of American gulags. See Gilmore, R. *Golden Gulag: Prisons, Surplus, Crisis, and Opposition In Globalizing California*. University of California Press, 2007 pp. 70-78.

<sup>7</sup> Young, A. *An Easy Burden: The Civil Rights Movement and the Transformation of America*. HarperCollins, 1996 p. 442.

<sup>8</sup> Walter, E.V. *Mass Society: The Late Stages of an Idea*. Winter 1964.

<sup>9</sup> Stryker, S. and Anne Statham. 1985 “Symbolic interactionist frame,” pp. 3-28 in the *Handbook of Social Psychology*, J. DeLamater (ed.). New York: Kluwer Academic/Plenum, cited from Peter J. Burke and Jan E. Stets’ *Identity Theory*. Oxford University Press, 2009.

<sup>10</sup> Clear, T. *Imprisoning Communities: How Mass Incarceration Makes Disadvantaged Neighborhoods Worse*. Oxford University Press, 2007.

<sup>11</sup> Informal social controls are, for example, a religious institution or our parents and the values and mores that they instill in us. A “formal” social control is, for example, the law, a police officer or prison. Informal and formal social controls are also referred to as “indirect controls,” which are persuasive and voluntary in nature; and “direct controls,” which are coercive in nature. See Walsh, A. and Craig Hemmens. (2008). *Law, justice and Society: A Sociolegal Introduction*. Oxford University Press, 2008 pp. 212-214.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid.

<sup>16</sup> Collective efficacy is the capacity of a group of people—be they family or a community—to come together to solve the problems before them.

<sup>17</sup> Fusfeld, D. R. and Timothy Bates. *The Political Economy of the Urban Ghetto*. Chicago: Southern Illinois University Press.

<sup>18</sup> Bender, F.L. (ed.) *Karl Marx: The Communist Manifesto*. W.W. Norton & Company, Inc. 1988.

<sup>19</sup> Biko, S. *I Write What I Like: A Selection of His Writings*. HarperSanFrancisco, 1978 p. 68.

<sup>20</sup> *Bay View National Black Newspaper*. “Decolonize Your Mind.”

<sup>21</sup> The term “Skinner Rat” was coined after Burrhus F. Skinner (1904-90). In the 1930s Skinner posited the same basic laws of learning apply regardless if it is a rat learning to run a maze or a child learning long division. It is a simple process of reward and punishment that determines the meanings attached to the behavior.

<sup>22</sup> Wilson, A. *The Falsification of the Afrikan Consciousness*. Afrikan World Info Systems.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid.

<sup>25</sup> McCoy, A.W. *The Politics of Heroin: CIA Complicity in the Global Drug Trade*. Lawrence Hill Books, 2003 pp. 487-500.

- <sup>26</sup> Mumia Abu-Jamal. *Jailhouse Lawyers: Prisoners Defending Prisoners v. the U.S.A.* City lights Books San Francisco, 2009.
- <sup>27</sup> McCoy, *ibid.*
- <sup>28</sup> Alexander, *ibid.* p. 77.
- <sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, citing Blumenson, E. and Eva Nilson. "Policing for Profit: The Drug War's Hidden Economic Agenda." *University of Chicago Law Review* 65 (1998): 35, 45.
- <sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, citing Radley Balko, *overkill: The Rise of Paramilitary Police Raids in America.* Washington, D.C.: Cato Institute, July 17, 2006 p.8.
- <sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 73, citing Megan Twohey, "SWAT Under Fire," *National Journal*, January 1, 2000, 37; Balko, *Overkill*, p.8.
- <sup>32</sup> *Ibid.* pp. 75-76.
- <sup>33</sup> Wacquant, L. (2002, April/ May). "Deadly Symbiosis." *Boston Review*, pp. 23-24.
- <sup>34</sup> Unknown.
- <sup>35</sup> Davis, A. *Are Prisons Obsolete?* New York: Seven Stories Press, 2003.
- <sup>36</sup> Quadagno, *ibid.*
- <sup>37</sup> Zarefsky, D. *President Johnson's War on Poverty, Rhetoric and History.* University City, Alabama: University of Alabama Press, 1986 p. 107.
- <sup>38</sup> Phillips, B.S. *Sociology: From Concepts to Practice.* McGraw-Hill, 1979.
- <sup>39</sup> Lewis, O. "The Culture of Poverty." *Scientific American*, 215, 19-25, October 1966.
- <sup>40</sup> Dodson, H. "One year of Obama... Is the hope being fulfilled." *New African Magazine*, January 2010. No. 491.)
- <sup>41</sup> Smith, A. *The Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations.* Oxford University Press, (reprint) 2008 p. 222.

## **CHAPTER 2 ENDNOTES**

<sup>1</sup> Vygotsky, L.S. (1978) *Mind In Society: The Development of Higher Psychological Process.* Cambridge, Ma. Harvard University Press.

<sup>2</sup> Myss, C. *Anatomy of the Spirit: The Seven Stages of Power and Healing.* Three Rivers Press, 1996.

<sup>3</sup> The term "anomic" was used by French sociologist Emile Durkheim to refer to a mental state of normlessness, of being without values to structure one's behavior. His mental state or attitude is one of normlessness, and he has a sense of meaninglessness and futility in life, the frame of mind suggested by Housman's famous lines about finding himself "a stranger and afraid in a world [he] never made." Furthermore, he's in a situation in which the norms that usually regulate behavior...and thereby describe the expectations made upon one "for" his behavior are entirely absent or have become ineffective. Thus the anomic individual lives in a world without direction or purpose or sense of any concern of others for his actions, and he may sink into a state of apathy and despair. A necessary consequence of anomie is isolation from others (whether physical or mental); estrangement from group membership with its reinforcing functions of support and solidarity, and its norm-providing behavioral expectations. Primarily, the anomic personality doesn't know how to behave or what to do with himself because no one cares how he behaves or expects him to behave in any particular

way. Secondly, the personality is unable, largely for lack social reinforcement and support, to regulate and organize his own behavior. This anomie is a situation where the social controls, the regulatory principles, normally provided by membership are absent. When they are absent and the individual is unable to meet circumstances through his own resources of character or moral strength, he has become anomie. See McGee, R. *Social Disorganization in America*. Chandler Publishing Company: San Francisco, California, 1962.

<sup>4</sup> I use the phrase “functional models” given the fact that our means of production (e.g., drug-dealing, prostitution, robbery, etc.), while legitimate in the strict sense of capital gain, often come at the expense of our lives.

<sup>5</sup> Wilson, A. *Black-on-Black Violence: The Psychodynamics of Black Self-Annihilation In Service of White Domination*. Afrikan World Infosystems. New York, (reprint) 1994.

<sup>6</sup> Tocqueville, A. *Democracy In America*. Vintage Books, (reprint) 1985.

<sup>7</sup> Interview with the author. See Meredith May, “Deadly Legacy.” *San Francisco Chronicle Newspaper*, December 9, 2007.

<sup>8</sup> Malinowski, B. *Argonauts of the Western Pacific*. New York: Dutton, 1922.

<sup>9</sup> Kohlberg, L. (1969) *Handbook of Socialization Theory and Research*. Chicago: Rand McNally.

<sup>10</sup> Of course Dr. Kohlberg’s stage theory was criticized. Dr. Carol Gillign believed his system was built around a central focus of justice influenced by testosterone. She felt gender played a significant role in morality do to her observations of women subjected to the investigative techniques of stage theory founded by Dr. Kohlberg. Despite her views, the medical community believes there’s a thin-line between men and women’s moral reasoning. Nevertheless, Gillign is given credit for a second contribution to judging morality. She proposed that caring was also a major element of moral reasoning based on her studies of women who faced real-life dilemmas. See Gillign, C. (1982) *In A Different Voice*. Harvard University Press.

<sup>11</sup> There has been close to 100,000 murders in the United States since the War in Iraq begun. Of which, a disproportionate number have been young Black males between the ages of 18-25. During the Iraq War some 6,000 soldiers were killed.

<sup>12</sup> Bigger, who is poor, gets a job as a chauffeur for a rich white couple. After a night out on the town across the tracks, he accidentally suffocates their drunken daughter with a pillow in an attempt to conceal her slurs from being overheard by her blind mother as he placed her in bed. He then, out of fear that he will be accused of murder, incinerates her body in the family’s furnace. He flees after stealing the dead girl’s pocket change; touching off a massive police manhunt. He is eventually captured, tried, and convicted of murder and rape, becoming the savage archetype feared by white America. See Wright, R. *Native Son*.

<sup>13</sup> Thomas, C. *My Grandfather’s Son*.

<sup>14</sup> Wilson, A. *Black-on-Black Violence: The Psychodynamics of Black Self-Annihilation In Service of White Domination*. Afrikan World Info. Systems.

<sup>15</sup> Since 2000, the Oakland police department has opened fire on at least 117 people, hitting at least 88 and killing 39. See Peele, T. “Police Too Quick on the

trigger?: 39 fatalities since 2000, but public rarely learns what happened.” *Oakland Tribune Newspaper*, May 2, 2013.

<sup>16</sup> Pretty Ricky, a street level drug dealer in the movie “Belly,” snitches on an out-of-state drug racket that had set up shop on his turf. In dropping a dime on the other racket he essentially employed the police to do his dirty work to eliminate the competition who had been stepping on his toes. Despite this being a movie, it’s real talk in the everyday gutter life of the streets.

<sup>17</sup> Jacob, J. *The Death and life of Great American Cities*. 1961.

<sup>18</sup> Our plans would shortly be interrupted three weeks later when the feds kicked in Big Dave’s door in connection to a 18 month investigation stemming from a drug-ring out of Stockton, California. The jury would sentence him to 211 months in federal prison on a finding of conspiracy to distribute 60 kilos of cocaine after being caught with 34 ounces of powder cocaine and over 40 something assault rifles and hand guns.

<sup>19</sup> The term mentacide was first coined by Dr. Bobby Wright to describe “the deliberate and systematic destruction of a person or group’s mind.” See Wright, B. *The Psychopathic Racial Personality: And Other Essays*. Third World Press, 1984, p. 22. This process entails filling one’s head with mistruths about their history, identity and historical place at the nadir of human society and his value in that society.

### **CHAPTER 3 ENDNOTES**

<sup>1</sup> Moore, R. and Douglas Gillette. *King, Warrior, Magician, Lover: Rediscovering the Archetypes of the Mature Masculine*. Harper Collins, 1990.

<sup>2</sup> Park, R.E. and Ernest W. Burgess. *Introduction To the Science of Sociology*. University of Chicago Press, 1921.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> McGee. R. *Social Disorganization In America*. Chandler Publishing Company. San Francisco, California. 1962.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

<sup>6</sup> The recognition of force being a practical application in the organizing of society we can credit to 18<sup>th</sup> century sociologist Auguste Comte (1798-1857). Society, Comte theorized, was conceived as a way of organizing activity, was dominated, and could not help being dominated, by force. See Raymond, A. *Main Currents In Sociological Thought: The Sociologist and the Revolution of 1848*. Vol. I. Basic Books, 1965.

<sup>7</sup> Taking into account Park and Burgess’s theory on conflict being intermittent in nature to be expansive of energy, I add the principle of the conservation of energy as applied in physics. It details that energy may be changed into different forms but is never created nor destroyed. It was first argued by German physicist Hermam von Helmholtz that physiological events could also be explained by the same principles that had been so successful in physics. Sigmund Freud (1856-1939), founder of psychoanalysis and an enthusiastic devotee of Helmholtz, would thereby postulate that humans were also closed energy systems. Building from the conservation of energy principle, Freud applied it to the energy of the id (i.e., the libido—Latin for lust) describing that if a forbidden act or impulse was suppressed, its subconscious energy will seek an outlet somewhere in the system

of human behavior for the need to be expressed. Thus suppressed impulses of aggression, feelings of racial anguish, the stress of poverty, etc., can be displaced and expressed through gang violence.

<sup>8</sup> Bender, F.L. (ed.). *Karl Marx: The Communist Manifesto*. W. W. Norton & Company, INC. 1988.

<sup>9</sup> Many observers of the behavioral sciences have incorrectly credited Charles Darwin (1809-82) for coining the phrase “survival of the fittest.” To the contrary, it was social philosopher Herbert Spencer who advanced both the idea and phrase “survival of the fittest.” Spencer coined the phrase to advance his own ideas about the *so-called* favored races of humanity. Spencer used Darwin’s natural selection to advance his own ideas about human progress, which he argued resulted from “more fit” of favored human societies and groups prevailing over less fit and less favored societies (i.e., his opinions that Caucasians are mentally and biologically superior to people of color). See Lassiter, Luke E. *Invitation to Anthropology*. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. Altamire Press, 2006 pp.11-12.

<sup>10</sup> Bagehot, W. *Physics and Politics Or Thoughts on the Application of the Principles of ‘Natural Selection’ and Inheritance To Political Society*. NuVision Publications, LLC. (reprint, 2008).

<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

<sup>12</sup> McGee points out the fact that it was Niccolo di Bernardo Machiavelli (1469-1527) who initially recommended the creation of an external threat as a device to permit the Prince to consolidate his power over a people, and tyrants have used the principle for ages. However, he credits Bagehot for coining the concept as the very few laws of human social behavior.

<sup>13</sup> Williams. S. T. *Blue Rage, Black Redemption*. Simon & Schuster.

<sup>14</sup> Incorrectly, it has been documented the Crips were the offshoot of the Black Panthers, No Panther Party member has ever mentioned the Crips (or the Baby Crips) as being a spin-off of the Panthers. It is also untrue that the Crips functioned under the acronym C.R.I.P.—Community Revolutionary Inner-City party. See Williams, *ibid*.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid.

<sup>16</sup> It’s been said that when the Crips initially formed there was no directive, doctrine or objective calling for a uniform structure organized by by-laws or a hierarchy. This gang was formed by neighborhood kids who bonded together for purposes of protection from the larger more established gangs. Thus, they had no inclination instrumental to organizing themselves. It would not be until the mid 1980s that the Consolidated Crips Organization (CCO), the Blue Notes, Blue Magic and United Blood Nation (UBN) were formed in the California state prison system that an attempt would be made to structure these gangs. However, they were unsuccessful.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

<sup>18</sup> COINTELPRO is an acronym for Counterintelligence Program. This was a FBI subdivision launched to disrupt, misdirect, discredit, or otherwise neutralize the Civil Rights, Black Liberation, Puerto Rican Independence, anti-war, and student protests of the 1960s. Details of which can be found in Ward Churchill and Jim Vander Wall’s *The COINTELPRO Papers: Documents from the FBI’s Secret Wars Against Dissent in the United States*. This book provides the actual

documents that delineate the U.S. Government's unlawful and subversive activities that stifled the efforts to organize poor and oppressed people and the movements of the Black Panther Party (BPP), Dr. King, the American Indian Movement (AIM), and countless others around the nation that sought to disrupt the status quo. Of the many tactics that were employed, the infiltration of these organizations with government agents was the most successful. These agents would infiltrate these groups and then sow discontent amongst the ranks. Here, it is important that we observe how this activity by the government served to create the gangs that would come of the splinter groups that broke from these organizations. Take for example how in infiltrating the BPP the government would create the conflict that would lead to BPP leaders Huey P. Newton and Eldridge Cleaver failing out. This dissent would eventually carry over to the BPP's political prisoner faction—the Black Guerrilla Family (BGF). From this, BGF would splinter into another group—the New Black Man; then 415 Kumi, the Wreckin' Crew and so on and so forth. With each split these organizations, as well as others around the nation, would move further away from their original pro-community platforms to become criminal gangs.

<sup>19</sup> Newton was shot and killed on August 22, 1989, in the streets of West Oakland by 22-year-old Tyrone Demetrius Robinson, a BGF foot soldier. The two reportedly argued over 14 vials of crack and \$160.

<sup>20</sup> Mumia Abu-Jamal. *All Things Censored*. Seven stories Press, 2000.

<sup>21</sup> North Coast Press: See also A.W. McCoy's *The Politics of Heroin: CIA Complicity in the Global Drug Trade*. Lawrence Hill Books, 2003.

<sup>22</sup> *The Daily Oklahoman Newspaper*, May 20, 1996.

<sup>23</sup> Here, I often have to explain to those who have never experienced a Black Rodeo that it embodies much more than the immediate thought allows. Sure there's cowboys, bull riding, etc. However, the event is a festival by all accounts. They are annual events that are populated by the tens-of-thousands that travel far as Nebraska, Houston, ATL and from coast-to-coast to regale in elaborate parades where drill-teams stomp-danced long before it went mainstream. There are sideshows of all makes of candy-coated whips that give birth to Vogue smoke. As the tru's spin, so too would the motorcycles smoke up the block. Africans dance and enjoy the pig and other Southern eatables that could be had from the local Black entrepreneurs. The parades of elegantly draped and trained thoroughbreds are also a sight to see. They perform as if motorcycles under the command of the their jockeys.

<sup>24</sup> Criminal organizations based out of Chicago belong to one of two gangs: Folks and Peoples. The Vice Lord Nation is a Peoples organization composed of numerous "sets": 2-2 Boys, Almighty Latin Kings Nation, Bishops, Black P. Stone Nation, Blackstone Rangers, the Reneges, Spanish Lords, El Rukins, and many others. The Folks organization also has many factions: Black Gangsters, the Gangster Disciples, the Black Disciples, Spanish Gangster Disciples, Latin Disciples, etc.

<sup>25</sup> To compare the Crips and Bloods with the Italian Mafia was to overstate the nature of a street gang's structural make-up. The Mafia is a structured criminal organization. There are a number of differences between the two. The following are just several:

- Unlike the Mob, the typical street gang has no structured hierarchy of leadership.
- Violence is considered bad business to the Mob and thus avoided at all cost; and when it occurs efforts are in the making to bring it to an abrupt end for the sake of business. The typical gang member has no inclination of such a concept or its application to business except in the case of drug-related turf wars. These are the few who are often involved in drug trafficking beyond the war zone where his fellow gang members are killing simply for the love of praise.
- Unlike the Mob, the exploits of criminal activities are not divided amongst fellow gang members (unless they were part of the lick) or passed along to secure the structure.
- Unlike the Mob, street gang members do not typically pool their resources together. It's every man for himself. And there is no tax to be paid to the kitty.
- There's little, to no, sense of obligation to those who get caught up behind criminal activity. Most street gang members leave their fellow comrades to hang dry. If a member of the Mob gets pinched each member of the family contributes a share to his legal expenses and sees to it that his family is straight in the event he winds up doing a bid. Moreover, the Mob moved on whoever or whatever they had to to fix the jury or push a witness out of existence to free their comrade. And would set him up financially when he was released.
- Unlike the Mob, majority of street gang members are cutthroat in their dealings with each other. As a matter of tradition it was a killing offense for a member of the family to cross another member.
- Unlike the Mob, most street gang members are antisocial. Important to the Mafia's criminal enterprise was the need to be sociable with all criminal factions.
- Unlike the Mob, the nature of street gang activity and membership is pretty much an open book. They do not even attempt to conceal their criminal activities or affiliations from authorities. Moreover, the Mob "compartmentalizes" and conceals its leadership structure so as the right hand doesn't know what the left hand is doing. Status and rank of Mafia members is generally unknown to the foot-soldiers who are most likely to become government informants.

<sup>26</sup> In the early 1990s the foot-soulja addition (i.e., the Sureños) to the Mexican Mafia would take advantage of their increasing numbers in the California state prison system. This gave them leverage over the Mexican Nationals, a.k.a. the Boarder Brothers, who were an integral part of the Columbian drug cartels. With the growing presence of the Sureño gang in California's prison system they would attempt to coerce the Boarder Brothers to redirect the drug pipeline catering to the Crips and Bloods so as the Sureños now controlled the flow of drugs being distributed in southern California. Their intent was to force Blacks out of the wholesale business. Despite their efforts, the Boarder Brothers were not easily persuaded. Their continued business dealings with Blacks in southern California would prompt reputed Mexican Mafia leader Joe Morgan, who was incarcerated at Pelican Bay, to issue a directive to the Sureños to wage war against the Crips

and Bloods to takeover the drug markets in LA. This call to action has been credited for causing the *Black & Brown War* that continues to plague the streets and prisons of California to this day. See Quinones, S. and Richard Winton, "51 people indicted in attacks on blacks in Azuas." *Los Angeles Times Newspaper*. June 8, 2011.

<sup>27</sup> According to *Need To Know*, a PBS program that keeps tabs on social and political events which shape American society, seven million manufacturing jobs have been lost to overseas operations since 1979. Two million of which were recently lost during the recession.

<sup>28</sup> Juvenile Justice Bulletin Report, "The Youth Gangs, Drugs, and Violence Connection." January 1999. Available at <http://www.ncjrs.gov/html/ojjdp-171152/page1.html>.

<sup>29</sup> Choles, T. "Oakland's Young Don Darryl Reed." *Don Diva Magazine*. Vol. 8, issue 29.

<sup>30</sup> Reed, D. *Weight*. Concrete Jungle Books, 2010 p. 67.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid.

<sup>32</sup> Choles, *ibid*.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid.

<sup>35</sup> Contrary to popular belief, Black Nationalism is not Black supremacy. Rather, the philosophy of Black Nationalism sought/seeks to re-educate the Black masses in the importance of organizing our communities in a manner that allows for us to control the politics and economy, which greatly influences our social life. This meant/means controlling our own businesses and developing them into industry enough to create employment for ourselves. It meant/means keeping Black dollars in the Black community by patronizing Black businesses. This was the philosophy of Marcus Garvey; the philosophy of the Honorable Elijah Muhammad; the philosophy of Malcolm X; the philosophy of the Black Panther Party. Black Nationalism established institutional structures pertinent to the educational needs of Black America. It established progressive social and economic directives such as the Black Panther Ten Point Program and the Community Breakfast Programs that assured ghetto children around the nation a healthy meal; community policing programs to rid the Black community of drug dealers; and vanguards to deter police corruption and abuse.

<sup>36</sup> *In re Elmer Gerard Pratt* No. b113866. Available at [http://web.lexis-nesix.com/universe/document?\\_m=8b32286a990950e2cf81119f776c5210](http://web.lexis-nesix.com/universe/document?_m=8b32286a990950e2cf81119f776c5210).

<sup>37</sup> Minister of Information JR. "Black Panther Party revolutionary education: an interview wit' Black Panther Ericka Huggins, director of the Oakland Community School." Available at <http://www.blockreportradio.com>.

<sup>38</sup> Williams, *ibid*.

<sup>39</sup> Rick Ross. *Rich Forever* CD "Triple Beam Dreams." 2012 (emphasis added).

<sup>40</sup> The term "horizontally," as used herein, means to apply equally or uniformly to all individuals in a group.

<sup>41</sup> Sholnick, J.H., et al. "Gang Organization and Migration: Drugs, Gangs, and Law Enforcement." Office of the California Attorney General's Office; citing "The Social Structure of Street Drug Dealing." Sholnick, 1988.

<sup>42</sup> The term "vertically," as used herein, means of, relating to, or comprising persons of different status.



<sup>43</sup> Ibid.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid., p. 3

<sup>46</sup> Howell, J.C. “Youth Gang Drug Trafficking and Homicide: Policy and Program Implications.” Available at <http://www.ojjdp.ncjrs.org/jjournal/jjournal11297/gang.html>.

<sup>47</sup> Report, “2005 National Gang Threat Assessment.” National Alliance of Gang Investigators.

<sup>48</sup> Chandler, S. “Gangs built on corporate mentality; Adopting best business practices permitted drug trade to flourish.” *Chicago Tribune Newspaper*, June 13, 2004.

<sup>49</sup> Chandler, S. *ibid*.

<sup>50</sup> *Don Diva Magazine*. “Larry Hoover: Gangster Disciples.” Vol. 11 Issues 40, 10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary edition.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid.

<sup>52</sup> Keen, J. “Chicago Vows Fight As Killing Rise: Leaders Seek To Shake Title of ‘Murder Capital.’” *USA Today Newspaper*, October 29, 2008.

<sup>53</sup> Skolnick, *ibid*.

<sup>54</sup> Howell, J.C. “Youth Gang Drug Trafficking and Homicide: Policy and Program Implications.” Available at <http://www.ojjdp.ncjrs.org/jjournal/jjournal11297/gang.html>.

<sup>55</sup> Raymond, A. *Main Currents In sociological Thought: The Sociologist and the Revolution of 1848*. Vol. I. Basic Books, 1965.

<sup>56</sup> Major General Smedley D. Butler in John M. Swomley, Jr.’s *American Empire, The Political Ethics of the Twentieth-Century Conquest*. New York: The Macmillan Co. 1970, p. 150.

<sup>57</sup> Skolnick, *ibid*.

<sup>58</sup> Metanoia: Greek term for a radical change of consciousness.

<sup>59</sup> Rose, A. *Theory and Method in the Social Sciences*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1954 pp. 23-24.

<sup>60</sup> This doesn’t necessarily imply violence. For no genuine relationship is possible where violence is the ultimate sanction. There can be no trust, genuine sympathy or loyalty.

<sup>61</sup> Tradition has a powerful hold on the psychology of any people and they obey traditional authority because it is often invested with a kind of quasi-divine inspiration.

## **CHAPTER 4 ENDNOTES**

<sup>1</sup> Johnson, K. “Mayors to explore roots of violence: Experts: U.S. getting numb to killings.” *USA Today Newspaper*, April 9, 2009.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> Crouch, S. “Stop the carnival.” *Sacramento Bee Newspaper*, December 15, 2007.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> Poussaint, A. F., M.D. "Why Blacks Kill Blacks: Psychiatrist finds ghetto violence against its own residents poses major threat." *Ebony Magazine*, October 1970, pp. 143-150.

<sup>6</sup> Wright, B., M.D. *The Psychopathic Racial Personality: And Other Essays*. Third World Press, Chicago, 1984.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

<sup>9</sup> Given mankind's persuasive ability to shape society's conscience, the individual life is thus of little, if any, value were it fails to comport with his interests or expectations. This is irrespective of race, ethnicity, or class. Mankind's pretentious regard for life becomes all the more apparent where his actual behavior reflects his contempt of it. For example, he will cut from the womb the unwanted child; He will label the innocent casualties of war; He stockpiles biological, chemical, and nuclear weapons; He sanctions capital punishment; injects himself with addictive toxins; commits suicide; and so on he pollutes the world with cancers of every imaginable sort. Here, I can only wonder if man's detachment with himself and life correlates with his greatest dread knowing of his own mortality. Considering it is the ethereal part of death that troubles him the most—that is, the unpredictability, the uncertainty of the process, the failure to understand what the end will be like—it seems his infinite acts of infanticide, fratricide, and genocide are efforts made either in an attempt to ascertain his premonitions of the afterlife or a distorted panacea—a kind of mad scientist who has created a pretext to justify the experimenting with "Gods work" as religious folk say.

<sup>10</sup> "Marine takes plea deal in killing of 24 Iraqis" *USA Today Newspaper*, January 24, 2012.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

<sup>12</sup> Barkan, Steven, and Lynne Snowden. 2001 *Collective Violence*. Boston: Allyn and Bacon; Braver, Jurgen. 2003, "On the Economics of Terrorism." *Phi Kappa Phi Forum*, Spring pp. 38-41.

<sup>13</sup> Mooney, L.A., David Knox and Caroline Schacht. *Understanding Social Problems*. Seventh Ed. Wadsworth, Cengage Learning, 2011 p. 571.

<sup>14</sup> Wilson, Brenda. 2008. "Who Estimates Iraqi Death Toll at 151,000." January 9. Available at <http://www.npr.org>

<sup>15</sup> In 2009, a random sample of U.S. adults was asked: How worried are you that you or someone in your family will become a victim of terrorism? Of the respondents, 36% said that they were "very worried" or "somewhat worried"—a sharp drop from 59% shortly after the 9/11 catastrophe. See Moony, et al. *ibid*, citing Lymari Morales. 2009 (July 2) *Americans Worry About Terrorism Nears 5-Year Low*. Available at <http://www.gallup.com>.

<sup>16</sup> Farren, M. and J. Gibb. *Who's Watching You?: The Chilling Truth About The State, Surveillance, and Personal Freedom*. Disinformation Co. Ltd. 2007.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

<sup>18</sup> Jesse Venture with Dick Russell. 2010 *American Conspiracies: Lies, Lies, and More Dirty Lies that the Government Tells Us*. Skyhouse Publishing.

<sup>19</sup> Che Guevara, the Cuban revolutionary, instructed in his book *Guerrilla Warfare*: "There is one point very much in controversy in opinions about terrorism. Many consider that its use, by *provoking police oppression*, hinders all

or less legal or semiclandestine contact with the masses and makes impossible unification for action that will be necessary at a critical moment. This is correct; but it also happens that in civil war the repression by the governmental power...is already so great that, in fact, every type of legal action is suppressed already....” See Guevara, Ernesto C. *Guerrilla Warfare*. Barnes & Noble Publishing, 2007, p. 18 (emphasis added).

<sup>20</sup> Gentile, Carmen and Jim Michaels. “A Decade of war: International coalition relying on Afghans to carve out a safe and stable country for themselves.” *USA Today Newspaper*, October 7-9, 2011.

<sup>21</sup> Wilson, A. *Black-on-Black Violence: The Psychodynamics of Black Self-Annihilation In Service of White Domination*. Afrikan World Info. Systems.

<sup>22</sup> Mooney, et al. *Ibid.*, citing Bruce Porter (1994) *War and Rise of the State: The Military Foundation of Modern Politics*. New York: Free Press.

<sup>23</sup> In December 2011, *USA Today* reported U.S. investment and other business in Iraq have quadrupled this year... U.S. companies reached deals worth \$8.1 billion through December 1, up from \$2 billion last year, according to Dunia Frontier Consultants, which studies emerging markets.... The article reads elsewhere, Iraq’s oil industry is attracting U.S. and other foreign companies, and Iraq’s government is spending billions to upgrade infrastructure.... To illustrate, reporter Jim Michaels provides: Hill International, a New Jersey based construction management company, recently won a \$100 million dollar contract to build a 30,000-seat sports arena. See Michaels, J. “Foreign business in Iraq quadruples in ’11.” *USA Today Newspaper*. December 29, 2011. Moreover, what American businessmen strive to maintain in their exploits of foreign markets is a “stable economy” at home. Here, I use the phrase “stable economy” euphemistically to represent the necessary economic exploitation of these foreign resources to provide Americans the financial luxury to make discretionary purchases of goods and services provided by the capitalist sector. Thus the exploitation of foreign oil, for example, allows for a more stable or affordable gas price. Otherwise, the continual rise in the cost of a gallon of gas would “siphon cash from other discretionary purchases.” See Shell, A. “The bull turns 3. Is the end near?: optimists still outnumber pessimists, but 5 things could kill market’s streak.” *USA Today Newspaper*. March 8, 2012. For “[e]very 25-cent rise in a gallon of gas reduces other consumer spending by \$25 billion a year and lowers economic growth by 0.2 percentage points.” *Ibid.* What this represents in real numbers is, for example, where “[t]he average price of a gallon of gas is [currently(March 2012)] \$3.76, up 28 cents from a month ago, if gas rises to \$4—like it has in three states already—consumer spending would take a roughly \$50 billion hit.” Thus the very consumption of consumer goods and services ranging from entertainment to your daily household odds-and-ends will be impacted in a manner which not only drastically effects the spending habits of your average household, but, more importantly, curbs the profit margins of capital gain. Therefore, Big American business strives to instigate wars to maintain its profit margin.

<sup>24</sup> Laqueur, W. 2006 “The Terrorism to Come.” In *Annual Editions 05-06*, Kurt Finsterbusch, ed. (pp. 169-76). Doboque, IA; McGraw-Hill/Duskin.

<sup>25</sup> May, R. *Love and Will*. Dell Publishing Company, 1969.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, citing Anthony Storr. *Human Aggression*. New York, Atheneum, 1968.

<sup>27</sup> Here I emphasize there is a difference between being violent opposed to being driven to violence. Seemingly, this is semantics at its best. However, the distinction being the former tends to be more aggressive and without provocation—proactive; whereas, the latter is more defensive and reactionary.

<sup>28</sup> Pitts, L. “And this is how we die.” *Sacramento Bee Newspaper*. December 3, 2007.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid.

<sup>30</sup> Arnold, M. ed. *Steve Biko: Black Consciousness In South Africa*. 1979, pp. 140-141.

<sup>31</sup> Wright, B.E. *The Psychopathic Racial Personality: And Other Essays*. Third World Press, Chicago, 1984.

<sup>32</sup> Freire, P. *Education For Critical Consciousness*. Continuum 1974, 2005, p. 17.

<sup>33</sup> Freire, P. *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. Continuum 1970, 1993, 2000, p. 55.

<sup>34</sup> Burrell T. *Brainwashed: Challenging the Myth of Black Inferiority*. Smiley Books, 2010.

<sup>35</sup> Tocqueville, A. *Democracy In America*. Vol. II. Vintage Books, reprint 1945, p. 270.

<sup>36</sup> Burrell, *ibid*.

<sup>37</sup> Here, the late Dr. Bobby Wright cautions us: “Black intellectual enlightenment does not always lead to genuine insight and it can be very damaging to the intellect as reflected by the behavior and attitudes of many eminent Black scientists.” He cites Poussaint as an example where he has provided the above explanation of why Blacks kill Blacks, and goes on to add: “[Poussaint] ignores the wide-spread genocidal programs directed against Blacks... Blacks kill Blacks because they have never been trained to kill Whites, therefore it is outside their [social] experience. Historically, the European system has encouraged the killing of Blacks. Because Blacks have been led to believe that they are part of the [white] psychopath’s system, they simply follow the practice.” See Wright, B. *ibid.*, p.3.

<sup>38</sup> Poussaint, A. “A Negro Psychiatrist Explains the Negro Psyche.” *New York Times Magazine*, August 20, 1967.

<sup>39</sup> Williams, T. *ibid*.

<sup>40</sup> Wilson, A. *ibid*.

<sup>41</sup> What is even more telling about these pretentious security protocols is a prisoner can be classified as a high security inmate, thus restricting him from partaking in rehabilitative programs, yet released into society tomorrow without any reintegration assistance or benefit the available programs may have provided.

## ***CHAPTER 5 ENDNOTES***

<sup>1</sup> Woodson, C.G. *The Miseducation of the Negro*. Africa World Press, Inc. 1998 10<sup>th</sup> print.

<sup>2</sup> Shortly before trial I was offered a 20-year deal with 17 years suspended on the condition that I provide incriminating evidence on some of Wewoka’s most prominent and wealthiest families—the Kincaids, Sipes, Rice, and several others, including the local bank president. The D.A. assumed that because they had petitioned the court in my favor, and that I had money enough to hire the state’s top attorney, etc., they must have been tied in some way to my aspiring criminal

enterprise. The day Jack Sr. relayed this offer, I looked him directly in the eye with a straight face and told him that I would rather pick 12 instead of being carried by six for dropping a dime on those who had come to my aid! Needless to say, after the hung jury, the D.A. was forced to offer me 4 years with time served without any strings attached.

<sup>3</sup> Du Bois, W.E.B. *The Souls of Black Folk*. Dover Publications, INS. New York. 1994, p. 20.

<sup>4</sup> Fuller, H. W. *Black World*. May 1974.

<sup>5</sup> W.E.B. Du Bois. *Darkwater: Voices From Within the Veil*. Dover Publications, Inc. 1999, pp. 22-23.

<sup>6</sup> Aubry, L. "Slavery's History and Legacy Not Unchanged." Prt. II. *Los Angeles Sentinel Newspaper*. January 17, 2013, p. A-6.

<sup>7</sup> Wright, B. *The Psychopathic Racial Personality: And Other Essays*. Third World Press: Chicago, 1984.

<sup>8</sup> Freire, P. *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. Continuum, 1970, p. 72.

<sup>9</sup> Akbar, N. (1984) *From Miseducation to Education*. Jersey City: New Mind Productions.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid. pp. 73-76; citing Simone de Beauvoir, *La Pesée de Droite, Aujourd'hui* (Paris); ST, *El Pensamiento político de la Derecha* (Buenos Aires, 1963), p. 34; and Jean-Paul Sartre, "Une idée fondamentale de la phenomenology de Husserl: L'intentionalite," *Situations I* (Paris, 1947).

<sup>12</sup> Wright, B.E. *ibid.*

<sup>13</sup> Cokely, S. "Spittin' On Secret Societies, Their Purpose and How They Started." Pt. II. *Bay View National Black Newspaper*.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid.

<sup>16</sup> Willie Lynch was a British slaver who in 1712 posited the mind-mastering controls that cordially outlined the mechanics to psychologically disassemble the cultural esteem, unity, and family structure of imported African slaves in the Caribbean. By utilizing terror, instigating distrust and envy amongst the African slaves, Lynch and his fellow slavers, effectively controlled the plantations. One of Lynch's foremost pronouncements was the necessity of the slaves to trust and depend "only" on the white race.

<sup>17</sup> W.E.B. Du Bois, *ibid.*, pp. 122-23.

<sup>18</sup> Wilson, A. *Blueprint for Black Power: A Moral, Political and Economic Imperative for the Twenty-First Century*. Afrikan World Info Systems, 2005 (Fifth printing).

<sup>19</sup> Halebsky, S. *Mass Society and Political Conflict: Towards A Reconstruction of Theory*. Cambridge University Press, 1976.

<sup>20</sup> Zucker, L. "The Role of Institutionalization in Cultural Persistence." *American Sociological Review*, 42, 726-743, October 1977.

<sup>21</sup> Malcolm X and Alex Haley. *The Autobiography of Malcolm X*. Random House, Inc. 1964.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid.

<sup>23</sup> Breitman, G. *The Last Year of Malcolm X: The Evolution of A Revolutionary*. Patherfinder Press, 1967, p. 6.

- <sup>24</sup> Garvey, M. "Whether We Will Accept Civilization As It is or Put It Under A Right Examination to Make It What It ought to be As Far as Our Race is Concerned." *The Negro Newspaper*, August 5, 1922, cited in *The Philosophies & Opinions of Marcus Garvey, Africa for the Africans*. Vol. I 1923.
- <sup>25</sup> Wilson, A. *Afrikan-Centered Consciousness Verses the New World Order: Garveyism in the Age of Globalism*. Afrikan World Info Systems, 1999. Second print 2003.
- <sup>26</sup> Ibid., citing Theodore Cross. 1987. *The Black Power Imperative: Racial Inequality and Politics of Nonviolence*. New York: Faulkner Books.
- <sup>27</sup> *Final Call Newspaper*. "How White People Got So Rich." Vol. 30, No. 34, May 31, 2011, p. 17, pt. I.
- <sup>28</sup> Rudy M. and E.U. Essien-Udom. "Malcolm X: An International man." In John H. Clarke, ed. *Malcolm X: The Man and His Times*. Africa World Press, Inc. 1990.
- <sup>29</sup> *The Journal with Bill Moyers*. April 2, 2010. Available at <http://www.pbs.org/-moyers/journal/04022010/transcript3.html?print>.
- <sup>30</sup> Mumia Abu-Jamal. "Paul, the magnificent!" *Bay View National Black Newspaper*, April 23, 2008, p. 7.
- <sup>31</sup> Chimrenga, T. "Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.: A Presidential Impact." *Los Angeles Sentinel Newspaper*, p. A-9, January 17, 2013.
- <sup>32</sup> Akbar, *ibid*.
- <sup>33</sup> Madhubuti, H. R. *Black Men: Obsolete, Single, Dangerous?* Third World Press, Chicago, 1991, p. 133.
- <sup>34</sup> Patterson, O. *Slavery & Social Death: A Comparative Study*. Harvard University Press.
- <sup>35</sup> Ogburn, W. F. *Technology and the Changing Family*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1955; Parsons, T. *Family, Socialization and Interaction Process*. New York: Free Press, 1955; Homans, G. C. *The Human Group*. New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1950.
- <sup>36</sup> W.E.B. Du Bois. *Souls of Black Folk*. Dover Publications, INC. New York (Original Print 1903, reprint 1994.).
- <sup>37</sup> Wilson, *ibid*.
- <sup>38</sup> Burke, P. and Jan E. Stets. *Identity Theory*. Oxford University Press, 2009.
- <sup>39</sup> Wilson, *ibid*.
- <sup>40</sup> Dye, T. *Power and Society*. 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. Monterey, CA: Brooks/Cole, 1983, p. 58.
- <sup>41</sup> Wilson, *ibid*.
- <sup>42</sup> There's ignorance at all levels of the educational structure. The lower one is—that is, the less informed one is—the easier to exploit. This, however, does not mean that those at the top of the educational structure are not necessarily exploited themselves. They are simply rewarded a little better yet exploited all the same. For nothing or no one escapes the invisible hand of capitalism. That said, we can assume that education has its limits. There is, for example, "the higher literacy." Here, we discover the illiteracy not of those who were confined to the lowest track in school but of people who have actually obtained doctorates. This suggests that the difference between the 'well educated' and the 'poorly educated' are often little more than a matter of differing credentials." See Phillips. B. *Sociology: From Concepts to Practice*. McGraw-Hill Books, 1979.

<sup>43</sup> Wilson, A. *Blueprint For Black Power: A Moral, Political and Economic Imperative For the Twenty-First Century*. Afrikan World Info Systems, 2005 (5th Print), p. 148, citing Peter W. Cookson, Jr. and Caroline H. Persell, *Preparing For power: America's Elite Boarding Schools*. New York: Basic Books, 1985, pp. 24-25; G. William Domhoff, *Who Rules America Now? A View for the '80s*, p. 24.

<sup>44</sup> Phillips. B. *Sociology: From Concepts to Practice*. McGraw-Hill Books, 1979.

## CHAPTER 6 ENDNOTES

<sup>1</sup> West, Cornel. *Democracy Matters: Winning The Fight Against Imperialism*. Penguin Books, 2004.

<sup>2</sup> Chuck D. with Yusuf Jah. *Fight the Power: Rap, Race, and Reality*. 1996.

<sup>3</sup> Bogazianos, D.A. *5 Grams: Crack-cocaine Rap Music, and the War on Drugs*. New York University Press 2012, p. 61, citing Todd Boyd, "Intergenerational Culture Wars: Civil Rights vs. Hip Hop (interview by Yusuf Nuruddin)," *Socialism and Democracy* 18, no. 2 (2004): 50. See also Todd Boyd, *The New H.N.I.C.: The Death of Civil Rights and the Reign of Hip Hop* (New York University Press, 2002); and George Martinez, "The Politics of Hip Hop (interview by Ron Hayduk)," *Socialism and Democracy* 18, no. 2 (2004): 196.

<sup>4</sup> Kelly, N. "Virtual Equality, Virtual Segregation." *Society* Vol. 43, No. 5, July/August 2006, pp.15-21.

<sup>5</sup> West, *ibid*.

<sup>6</sup> *The Covenant with Black America*. Third World Press, 2006, p. 133.

<sup>7</sup> Bogazianos, *ibid*. p. 59, citing KRS-One, "Hip Hop vs. Rap," on "Sound of the Police," vinyl single (Jive Records, 1993).

<sup>8</sup> Minister Paul Scott. "Alicia Keys' Hip Hop Conspiracy Theory." *Bay View National Black Newspaper*. April 16, 2008.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid*.

<sup>10</sup> West, *ibid*.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid*.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid*.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid*.

<sup>14</sup> Unknown.

<sup>15</sup> Christian, M. A. "The Positive Power of Music." *Jet Magazine*, April 10, 2006.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid*.

<sup>17</sup> Wilson, A. *Afrikan-Centered Consciousness Verses The New World Order: Garveyism in the Age of Globalism*. Afrikan World Info. Systems, 1999. Second Print 2003.

<sup>18</sup> Steffans, K. *Confessions of a Video Vixen*. Harper-Collins.

<sup>19</sup> hooks, b. *Killing Rage: Ending Racism*. Owl Books: New York. 1995, p. 94.

<sup>20</sup> Jordan, A. "Black Women: Eliminate the word 'bitch'." *Bay View National Black Newspaper*.

<sup>21</sup> Madhubuti, H.R. *Black Men: Obsolete, Single, Dangerous?* Third World Press, 1991, p. 249.

<sup>22</sup> Psychologists have long observed that when people feel hopelessly stigmatized a powerful coping strategy—often the only apparent route to self-esteem—is embracing one’s stigmatized identity. It’s not just Blacks who adopt this coping mechanism. All races do this including poor whites. Since being in prison in California, I’ve come to know poor, racist white boys who proudly refer to and do not mind being referred to as “peckerwoods” and “honkies” they even go to the extreme of tattooing alongside their “white power” and “swastika” tattoos these traditionally offensive phrases.

<sup>23</sup> Minstrel shows were comedy sketches and songs performed during the 19th and early 20th century by both Black and white performers who blackened their faces with makeup for extra effect. Minstrels projected a greatly romanticized and exaggerated image of Black life on plantations with cheerful, simple, grinning slaves always ready to sing, dance, and please their masters.

## **CHAPTER 7 ENDNOTES**

<sup>1</sup> Blackstone, W. *Commentaries On The Laws Of England*, Vol. 4, University of Chicago Press.

<sup>2</sup> Du Bois, W.E.B. *The Souls of Black Folk*. Dover Publishing, Inc. New York. (reprint) 1994.

<sup>3</sup> Avakian, B. “U.S. Constitution: An Exploiter’s Vision of Freedom.” Chicago: RCP Publications. 1987.

<sup>4</sup> All quotes from Madison are from the Federalist Paper No. 54 in *The Federalist Papers*. New York: New American Library, 1961, pp. 337-341.

<sup>5</sup> Dye, T.R. and L. Harmon Zeigler. *The Irony of Democracy, An Uncommon Introduction to American Politics*. Belmont, California: Duxbury Press, 1972, p. 73.

<sup>6</sup> Smith, E.C. *The Constitution of the United States with Case Summaries*. New York: Barnes & Noble Books, 1979, p. 18. all citations in this segment are from the essay “The Origins of the Constitution.”

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 18-19.

<sup>8</sup> Wolff, L. *The Science of Revolution: An Introduction*. Chicago: RCP Publications, 1983, p. 184.

<sup>9</sup> Smith, *ibid.* p. 12.

<sup>10</sup> French political philosopher Charles Montesquieu (1689-1755) has been credited for developing, although not inventing, the idea of “separation of powers.” In theory each branch of government—the executive, legislative, and judicial—have been divested with equal and independent powers which act as a check on the exercise of power by the other two. Notably, this arrangement has served throughout the nation’s history as a barrier to abuses of each branch’s power. Conversely, the Antiterrorism and Effective Death Penalty Act (AEDPA), signed into law in 1996 by President Clinton, has effectively removed these barriers. In short, the AEDPA allowed Congress (the legislative branch of government) to limit the way the federal courts (the judicial branch) decided their



cases. Prior to the AEDPA, federal courts had unlimited leeway to grant a *state* prisoner's petition for writ of habeas corpus based on established *federal* law. Needless to say, that leeway has now been drastically reduced to now allow a *state* conviction to be overturned by the federal courts only on the basis of U.S. Supreme Court law or an unreasonable application of it by the state courts. (Here, it is important the reader understand state and federal courts are independent of each other and thus have their own set of governing laws [i.e., legal authorities, statutes, etc.]). Thus where, for example, the state court may violate or change its own laws to uphold a conviction, the federal courts can no longer intervene to grant habeas relief unless the violation was a clearly established precedent set by the U.S. Supreme Court. In this regard the U.S. Supreme Court seldom rules on trivial matters before the lower courts and thus there are many issues that the state courts make ironclad decisions with no chance of intervention by the higher court where these rulings clearly serve the interest of tyrants. And where these violations are in violation of the U.S. Supreme Court, the U.S. Supreme has no obligation to review them. Thus such violations are swept under the rug.

<sup>11</sup> Smith, *ibid.* p. 13.

<sup>12</sup> Montesquieu, C. *The Spirit of the Laws*. Book 15, chapter 5, "On Enslavement of Negroes." Paris: Garnier, 1927.

<sup>13</sup> Darrow, C. *Attorney for the Damned: Clarence Darrow In His Own Words*. Arthur Weinberg forward William O. Douglas; See also Darrow, C. *Criminal and Criminal, Address to the Prisoners in Cook County Jail*. Simon & Schuster, 1957.

<sup>14</sup> Hughes, R. *The Fatal Shore: The Epic of Australia's Founding*. New York: Vintage, 1988.

<sup>15</sup> Hirst, John, "The Australian Experience: The Convict Colony," cited in *The Oxford History of the Prison: The Practice of Punishment in Western Society*, (ed) Norval Morris and David J. Rothman. New York, Oxford University Press, 1998, p. 244.

<sup>16</sup> I use the phrase "the infancy of African slavery" to bring attention to the fact that chattel slavery was only the beginning of what today has evolved into a more refined system of exploitation to fuel the institutional evils of capitalism.

<sup>17</sup> Durant, W. *The Story of Philosophy*. New York: Simon & Schuster, 1961.

<sup>18</sup> As noted previously in Avakian's work, through its rulings after the Civil War the United States Supreme Court has played a vital role in this ruse by providing a constitutional basis for corporate America's unchecked economic power. A majority of the court's justices have been Republicans who believed in laissez-fair capitalism, and they have been left to interpret the Constitution in ways that frustrated government attempts to regulate business activity. In 1889, for example, the court in *Minneapolis and St. Louis Railway Company v. Beckwith*, decided that corporations were "persons" within the meaning of the 14<sup>th</sup> Amendment and thus their property rights were protected from substantial regulation by the states. See Lesle F. Goldstein, "Judicial Review and Democratic Theory Guardian Democracy vs. Representative Democracy," *Western Political Quarterly* 40(1987):39-412. The irony was inescapable. A constitutional amendment that had been enacted to protect the liberty of newly freed slaves was ignored for this purpose but used instead to protect fictitious persons-business

corporations See Thomas E. Patterson, *The American Democracy*, 8<sup>th</sup> ed. McGraw Hill, 2008, p. 80. Over the years the courts have made one ruling after another to strengthen corporate America's grip on the American economy and people's lives. In a recent opinion issued by Justice M. Kennedy in the infamous *Citizens United v. Federal Election Commission, U.S.* (Case No. 08-205) case, the court ruled that the 1<sup>st</sup> Amendment's Free Speech Clause protects corporations in the same way as it does individuals in terms of their ability to spend money independently of candidates to *influence* campaigns. What this essentially boils down to is the tipping of the scales further in the favor of making America an absolute plutocracy by allowing the nation's largest and most wealthy corporations to contribute unlimited funds to finance their flunkies' political campaigns.

<sup>19</sup> Mumia Abu-Jamal. *All Things Censored*. Seven Stories Press, 2000.

<sup>20</sup> Woodruff, P. *First Democracy: The Challenge of Ancient Idea*. Oxford University Press, 2005, p.4 of introduction.

<sup>21</sup> Halebsky, S. *Mass Society and Political Conflict: Towards A Reconstruction of Theory*. Cambridge University Press, 1976, p. 22.

<sup>22</sup> Thoreau, Henry David, *Civil Disobedience And Other Essays*. Dover, Inc. (Reprint) 1993.

<sup>23</sup> The term "power" as used herein refers to the ability of persons or institutions to control public policy. See Harold D. Lasswell and Abraham Kaplan. *Power and Society*. New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1950, pp. 75-77. Public policy is a decision by government to follow a course of action designed to produce a particular outcome. Persons or institutions with sufficient power can determine which side will prevail in policy disputes. See Paterson, *ibid.*, p. 24.

<sup>24</sup> Thoreau, *ibid.*

<sup>25</sup> April 2010 interview of Professor Michelle Alexander of Ohio State University. Bill Moyers Journal; <http://www.pbs.org/moyers/journal/042008-/transcript-4.html?print>.

<sup>26</sup> Alexander, M. *The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness*. The New Press, 2010, pp. 180-182.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, citing Marc Maur and Chesney-Lind, eds. *Invisible Punishment: The Collateral Consequences of Mass Imprisonment*. New York: The New Press, 2002; Jeremy Travis, *But They All Come Back: Facing the Challenges of Prisoner Reentry*. Washington, D.C.: Urban Institute Press, 2005.

<sup>28</sup> *The Final Call Newspaper*, "How White People Got So Rich." Vol. 30, no. #7. June 21, 2011, p. 33.

<sup>29</sup> Mumia Abu-Jamal, *ibid.* p. 201.

<sup>30</sup> Muhammad Bashir, "Raw Law: Room For One More..." *Don Diva Magazine*, Vol. 7, Issue 30.

<sup>31</sup> New York Bar Association, *Re-entry and Reintegration: The Road to Public Safety, report and recommendations of the Special Committee of Collateral Consequences of Criminal Proceedings*, 2000.

<sup>32</sup> Mumia Adu-Jamal. *Jailhouse Lawyers: Prisoners Defending Prisoners v. The U.S.A.* City Lights, 2010.

<sup>33</sup> Thoreau, *ibid.*

<sup>34</sup> It would not be until years later, after the denial of my appeal, that I found out that the trial court had intentionally had the record of this hearing withheld from

the record of appeal and my appellate attorney. The gravity of the court's actions I shall detail momentarily.

<sup>35</sup> So as to preserve the “lawyer industry” it has long since been a tool of propaganda that the “one who acts as his own lawyer has a fool for a client.” This may very well be so given one has no understanding of the dynamic in play within the four corners of the courtroom. Nevertheless, Mumia provokes us to challenge this belief where asking: “Of the millions who dwell in U.S. prisons, what percentage of that vast number represented themselves?” That said, how many of us wish we could turn back the hands of time and do it ourselves after having been sold-out by a public defender or dump truck attorney? Moreover, for those of us who have indeed stepped to the plate, we must understand we serve to constantly remind the practitioners of this profession of the need to mock and ridicule those “who at times seemingly depreciate their years of extensive training and education in law by winning a case,” as Mumia points out.

<sup>36</sup> Lubet, S. *Lawyers' Poker: 52 Lessons That Lawyers Can Learn From Card Players*. Oxford University Press, 2006, p. 20.

<sup>37</sup> Here, I find it noteworthy to mention the fact that although many defendants choose not to take the stand in their own defense for a number of reasons, it usually weighs against them. I have stood before two juries. In the Oklahoma trial I gave testimony and explained my actions, and it resulted in a hung jury in my favor. In the Oakland trial, well I'm going to allow the reader to continue with the chapter 7 to see where I went wrong. But peep the outcome of not testifying—Guilty as charged! Hindsight provides what many attorneys fail to inform their clients of—there are great consequences when you choose not to testify. Despite, the court giving instructions that the jury is not to take anything negative from a failure to testify, the consequence of which leaves many jurors to wonder why a defendant does not speak for himself when attorneys are arguing in front of him about what he was thinking or feeling. For jurors, especially in a murder trial, need to understand a crime is less sensational and certainly more redeeming. They want to understand why a person did what he did—perhaps to reassure themselves that they would not do the same thing. Thus, they will study every detail of a defendant, from his face to his clothes, to try to understand him in the absence of testimony. It is not simply a search for guilt or innocence. There is a great desire to understand a heinous crime on a personal level. Jurors (and many on lookers) want something more profound—and often less attainable—than simple proof of guilt or innocence. Arguably, this desire for understanding is more about the individual juror than either the defendant or the victim. There is a deep insecurity that they try not to admit—a suspicion that they are capable of murder under the right circumstances. For some of them, it takes more than others. Most of them live between lines of the law—resisting impulses great and small. Then here it is the opportunity presents itself to be a member of a jury ultimately confronted with someone who may have broken all the rules and, thus, shatters their assumptions. See Turley, J. “Huguely's failure to speak.” *USA Today Newspaper*, February 29, 2012.

<sup>38</sup> *People v. Fosselman* (1983) 33 Cal. 3d 572, 582.

<sup>39</sup> Pursuant to California Penal Code, Section 1181, there are only nine statutory grounds which authorize a motion for new trial. Unbeknownst to a many court

officials and criminal defendants, any due process violation is a valid ground for such a motion.

<sup>40</sup> Note, the prerequisite that a defendant “must testify” so as to preserve an adequate record for appellate review, does not specify at what stage of the trial proceedings a defendant must testify. Thus I exploited the loophole and successfully prevailed on the exclusionary rule at the appellate stage.

<sup>41</sup> Pursuant to California Evidence Code, Section 1101 (b), prior offences such as my Oklahoma case can be used as proof to some element of the charged offense. However, the statutory requirements to admit acts from the prior must prove similarity between the cases (such as motive, plan, identity, etc.). In this particular case, the trial judge ruled that the cases *were not* similar enough to admit the prior pursuant to Section 1101 (b). Thus inadmissible for purposes of “credibility.”

<sup>42</sup> See [www.courtinfo.ca.gov/reference/4\\_12courtssupct.htm](http://www.courtinfo.ca.gov/reference/4_12courtssupct.htm).

<sup>43</sup> *The People of the State of California v. Ivan Kilgore*, Case No. S146916; denied December 13, 2006.

<sup>44</sup> In *United States v. Real Estate Boards*, 339 US 485, 495, the United States Supreme Court held, “a state appellate court cannot substitute its interpretation of the evidence for that of the trial court simply because the reviewing court might give facts another construction, resolve ambiguities differently, and find a more sinister cast to actions which the trial court apparently deemed innocent.”

<sup>45</sup> The courts mask their tyranny behind unpublished opinions and rulings that the public seldom, if ever, discover because the majority of criminal defendants do not have resources enough to create the sort of buzz and attract media attention.

<sup>46</sup> *People v. Kilgore*, Case No. A106142. Opinion filed August 30, 2006.

<sup>47</sup> *Dred Scott v. Sandford* (1857) 19 US 393, 407.

<sup>48</sup> Tocqueville, A. *Democracy In America*. Vintage Books, 1945 reprint.

<sup>49</sup> Attorneys often and intentionally mislead their clients. Thus, if you believe that your attorney is not properly advising you of your rights or the law it is best to request of the court an “in-camera” (i.e., closed to the public) hearing so as to put your attorney on the spot.

<sup>50</sup> *Strickland v. Washington* (1984) 466 US 668.

<sup>51</sup> See, e.g., *People v. Badia* (1990) from Roger Daroff, “Effective Assistance Ain’t Much,” *American Lawyer* (January-February 1995) and *Harper’s Magazine*, March 1993; *Vines v. Unites States* (1994) 28 F.3d 1123, 1129 (trial attorney with mental illness no IAC); *Johnson v. Norris* (2000) 207 F.3d 515; *Rickman v. Bell* (1997) 131 F.3d 1150, 1159 (trial attorney was surrogate prosecutor no IAC).

<sup>52</sup> Lubet, *ibid*.

<sup>53</sup> Mumia, *ibid*.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid*.

<sup>55</sup> Blackstone, *ibid*.

<sup>56</sup> Lassiter, Luke E. *Invitation to Anthropology*. 2nd ed. Altamira Press, 2006.

<sup>57</sup> Biskopic, J. “Court weighs nature of lab evidence.” *USA Today Newspaper*, November 11, 2008.

<sup>58</sup> See e.g., Robert Tanner, “State crime lab problems spark calls for changes” ; Andy Furillo, “State’s crime lab overseers decide to fold” ; John Solomon, “Prosecution alerted to alleged perjury before execution,” *Sacramento Bee Newspaper*, May 1, 2003; matt Clarke. “Crime Labs in Crisis: Shoddy Forensics

Used to Secure Convictions,” *Prison Legal News*, Vol. 12 No. 10, October 2010, pp. 1-22.

<sup>59</sup> Retributive justice functions on the premise an “eye for and eye.” In general, Americans believe that “only punishment is able to correct social transgressions, and when imposed, will ‘cure’ the problem.” See Clark, M.E. “Skinner vs. The Prophets: Human Nature and Our Concepts of Justice.” *Contemporary Justice Review*, Vol. 8, No. 2, June 2005, pp. 163-176. Here, we must remain mindful of those famous words uttered by Mohandas Gandhi, “An eye for an eye leaves the whole world blind.” Thus, the question becomes: “If we punish everyone as harshly as the crime they have committed, what exactly has been achieved? The answer I believe was well articulated in the group discussion I’m to describe in this final segment. Restorative justice, on the other hand, as defined by the Restorative Justice Consortium’s *Manifesto*, “seeks to balance the concerns of the victim and the community with the need to integrate the offender into society.” See Wright, M. “The Paradigm of Restorative Justice.” VOMA Research and Practice.

<sup>60</sup> Clark. *Ibid*.

## **CHAPTER 8 ENDNOTES**

<sup>1</sup> Morris, Norval and David V. Rothman, (ed.). *The Oxford History of Prison: The Practice of Punishment in Western Society*. Oxford University Press, 1995 VIII.

<sup>2</sup> In 1971 Stanford University conducted an experiment where students were divided into two groups. One group posed as prisoners and the other as guards, both in a makeshift prison setting. The six-day experiment resulted in a barbaric transformation in attitude among those students role-playing as prison guards, resulting in termination of the experiment. This was a scaled-down version of the full-blown madness behind these walls where some of the most sadomasochistic minds belong to guards. Some of the people working in prison undergo a Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde metamorphosis. Their family members and friends would be appalled to discover how odious, conniving, mendacious, perverted, insidious, and animalistic they can be at work. Or perhaps they would not. See Williams. S. T. *Blue Rage, Black Redemption*. *Ibid*.

<sup>3</sup> Hillenbrand, L. *Unbroken: A World War II Story of Survival, Resilience, and Redemption*. Random House, New York. 2010.

<sup>4</sup> Stalin, J. *Dialectic and Historical Materialism*.

<sup>5</sup> Landrum, C. “Commentaries on Imprisonment: On the Question of Integrated Celling.” *Prison Focus Magazine*, Vol. 34 Spring 2010.

<sup>6</sup> Reiman, J. *The Rich Get Richer and The Poor Get Prison: Ideology, Class, and Criminal Justice*. 5<sup>th</sup> ed. Allyn and Bacon, 1998. pp.161-162.

<sup>7</sup> Reiman, *ibid*.

<sup>8</sup> Reiman, *ibid*. citing David M. Gordon, “Capitalism, Class and Crime in America,” *Crime and Delinquency* (April 1973), p. 174.)

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid*.

<sup>10</sup> Gordon, *ibid*.

<sup>11</sup> Reiman, *ibid*.

<sup>12</sup> “Unlocking America: Why and How to Reduce America’s Prison Population.” The JFA Institute, November 2007, p.7.

<sup>13</sup> Gomez, A. “More cold case squads are in fight for life and funding: Police shift burden of unsolved murders.” *USA Today Newspaper*, February 1, 2008.

<sup>14</sup> Enslavement as a punishment for crime was more common in earlier times. Among the laws believed established by Ki-ja in the twelfth century B.C. was one that made enslavement the punishment for those who committed theft or adultery. See Cornelius Osgood, *The Koreans and Their Culture* (New York: Ronald Press, 1951). During the period of the Three Kings (57 B.C. to A.D. 660) the families of persons guilty of treason were enslaved. Other crimes so punished included robbery and the killing of valuable domestic animals. The number of crimes for which enslavement was the penalty decreased over the centuries; by early Yi, persons were enslaved only for armed robbery and treason.

<sup>15</sup> Patterson, O. *Slavery and Social Death: A Comparative Study*. Harvard Univ. Press, 1982.

<sup>16</sup> Blackmon, D. *Slavery by Another Name: The Re-Enslavement of Blacks Americans from the Civil War to World War II*. Anchor Books, 2008.

<sup>17</sup> *Bill Moyers’ Journal*. June 6, 2008. <http://www.pbs.org/moyers/journal/06202008/transcript-5.html?print>.

<sup>18</sup> Bob Sloan, “The Prison Enhancement Certification Program: Why Everyone Should Be Concerned.” *Prison Legal News*. March 2010, Vol. 21, No.3.

<sup>19</sup> Irwin, J. *The Warehouse Prison: Disposal of the Dangerous Class*. Roxbury Publishing Company, 2005.

<sup>20</sup> Boothe, D. *Why Are So Many Black Men In Prison: A Comprehensive Account of How and Why the Prison Industry Has Become A Predatory Entity In the Lives of African American Men, and How Mass Targeting, Criminalization, and Incarceration of Black Male Youth Has Gone Toward Creating the Largest Prison System in the World*. Full Surface Publishing. 2007, pp. 33-34.

<sup>21</sup> Canter, D. *Forensic Psychology: A Very Short Introduction*. Oxford University Press, 2010.

<sup>22</sup> To make a sincere effort to educate and rid the prisoner of his dysfunction goes against the grain of job security. For example, to rehabilitate remotely even ten percent of California’s prisoner and parolee population, which (as of 2010) had an estimated 295,000 prisoners and parolees under their supervision and employed some 69,000 correctional and parole officers and other prison administrators—would result in some 12,000 jobs lost given the prisoner-parolee to staff ratio being roughly 4.3 prisoner-parolees per persons employed by CDCR.

<sup>23</sup> Davis. A.Y. *Are Prisons Obsolete?* Seven Stories Press, New York, 2003, p. 26.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>25</sup> Hirsh, A.J. *The Rise of the Penitentiary: Prisons and Punishment in Early America*. New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1992, p. 84; Professor Davis notes that as Blacks were integrated into southern penal systems during the post-slavery era—and as the penal system became a system of penal servitude—the punishments associated with slavery were also incorporated into the system. “Whipping,” as Matthew Mancini has observed, “was the preeminent form of punishment under slavery; and the lash, along with the chain, became the very emblem of servitude for slaves and prisoners.” (*Ibid.* p. 31, citing Matthew

Mancini, *One Dies, Get Another: Convict Leasing in the American South, 1866-1928*. Columbia, S.C.: South Carolina Press, 1996, p. 25) The U.S. Supreme Court upheld the whipping of inmates well into the late 1960s. In *O'Neil v. State of Vermont*, the Supreme Court declared circumstances in which laws forbidding cruel and unusual punishment could be circumvented by simply “not imposing excessive lashes.” (*O'Neil v. State of Vermont*, 144 U.S. 323, 340) In 1968, inmates in the Arkansas State Prison system successfully petitioned the Supreme Court to put an end to the practice. (*Jackson v. Bishop*, 404 F.2d 571, 573) However, the chains remain as can be expected. Every day, back-and-forth, between and even within these walls, prisoners are escorted and transferred by van, bus, and plane in restraints. In ancient Athens, one term for the local prison literally meant “the place of chains.” (Edward M. Peters, “Prison before the Prison: The Ancient and Medieval World,” cited in *The Oxford History of the Prison*, *ibid.*, p. 5) And it’s not always that we are made to “cuff-up” for security reasons. In California’s notorious Security Housing Unit (SHU) or during the frequent lockdowns on maximum security yards, we’re restrained for no apparent reason when showering in an already secured area where the only potential contact you have with others is your cellmate.

<sup>26</sup> Aron, R. *Main Currents In Sociological Thought: The Sociologist and the Revolution of 1848*. Vol. Basic Books, 1965.

<sup>27</sup> Davis, *ibid.*

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>29</sup> Karl Marx explained: “The state is a special organization of force: it is an organization of violence for the suppression of some class... The exploiting classes need political rule to maintain exploitation....” See Bender, F.L. (ed.) *Karl Marx: The Communist Manifesto*. W.W. Norton & Company, Inc. 1998, p.133. To this end, Chairman Omali Yeshitela explains: “You have the emergence in human society of this thing that’s called the State. What is the State? The State is an organized democracy. It is the police department. It is the Army, the Navy. It is the prison system, the courts and what have you. This is the State! It is a repressive organization. But the State, and people as you know it, you got to have the police because if there were no police, look at what you would be doing to yourselves. You’d be killing each other if there were no police. But the reality is, the police become necessary in fluent society only at that junction of society where it splits between those who have and those who have not.” See *Dead Prez* “Lets Get Free” CD, interlude by Chairman Omali Yeshitela. In the Marxian analysis, the state is necessary only in a class society of inequality where the struggle over scarce resources is organized—by force, if necessary—to favor the ruling class. Therefore the most libertarian of bourgeois democracies is a dictatorship in the sense that the economic wealth and power of the rich contradicts the theoretical political equality of all citizens. See Bender, *ibid.*

<sup>30</sup> Parenti, C. *Lockdown America*. New York, 1999, p. 46.

<sup>31</sup> Irwin, John. *The Warehouse Prison: Disposal of the New Dangerous Class*. Roxbury Publishing Co. 2005, p. 237.

<sup>32</sup> “One in 100: Behind Bars in America 2008.” PEW Center on the States. February 2008.

<sup>33</sup> Loury, G.C., Pamela Karlan, Tommie Shelby, and Loïc Wacquant. *Race, Incarceration and American Values*. MIT Press.

<sup>34</sup> Wacquant, L. "Deadly Symbiosis." *Boston Review*, April/May 2002, p.23.

<sup>35</sup> Alexander, M. *The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness*. The New Press, 2010, p.16.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.* p. 17-21, citing Reva Siegel, "Why Equal Protection No Longer Protects: The Evolving Forms of Status-Enforcing Action," *Stanford Law Review* 49 (1997): 1111; see also Michael Omi and Howard Winant, *Racial Formation in the United States: From the 1960s to the 1990s*. New York: Routledge, 1996), 84-91).

<sup>37</sup> Mumia Abu-Jamal. *Jailhouse Lawyers: Prisoners Defending Prisoners v. the U.S.A.* City Lights Books, San Francisco, 2009.

<sup>38</sup> Alexander, *ibid.*

<sup>39</sup> "Expanding the Vote: State Felony Disenfranchisement Reform, 1997-2010." The Sentencing Project, 1705 De Sales Street NW, 8th Floor, Washington, D.C. 20036.

<sup>40</sup> Mumia Abu-Jamal, *ibid.*

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>42</sup> Alexander, *ibid.*

<sup>43</sup> Eugene Jarecki, "Voting Out the Drug War." *The Nation*, December 3, 2012.

<sup>44</sup> Criminal justice policies in the United States are based in large part on capacity—that is, the capacity of state and federal prison systems, as well as sentencing and parole policies that govern the number of people entering prison and being released. The need for bed space created by America's bloated prison population has outstripped existing capacity, leading states and the federal government to go on a prison building binge during the 1980s and '90s and, when that solution failed to accommodate growing numbers of prisoners, to overcrowd correctional facilities by double-or-triple-bunking cells and installing beds in prison gyms, classrooms and even chapels. Now that this all no longer is affordable, it's back to the basics—changing of the policies that send people to prison. See Friedmann, A. "The Societal Impact of the Prison Industrial Complex, or incarceration for Fun and Profit—Mostly Profit." *Prison Legal News* January 2012

<sup>45</sup> Boothe, *ibid.*

<sup>46</sup> Mumia Abu-Jamal. *All Things Censored*. Seven Stories Press, 2000, p. 45.

<sup>47</sup> Alexander, *ibid.*

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>49</sup> Reiman, *ibid.*

<sup>50</sup> According to a Justice Policy Institute report, Alameda County (the county Oakland resides in) was found to be one of the most disproportionate of California counties studied that incarcerated Black Americans at 35 times the rate of whites. In Alameda County, 159 per 100,000 people are admitted to prison each year for drug offenses. Of those, whites are imprisoned at a rate of 23 per 100,000 white people, while blacks are incarcerated at a rate of 797 per 100,000 black people. See *Bay View National Black Newspaper*, December 5, 2007. Similar demographics can be found around the nation due to the fact that urban communities have been targeted for the majority of the nation's crime reduction programs. Here, it is important to note the fact that the same drug crimes that



Black Americans are being targeted and arrested and convicted for, occur in white community as well. People of all races use and sell illegal drugs at remarkably similar rates. See Alexander, *ibid.*

<sup>51</sup> Breitman, G. *The Last Year of Malcolm X: The Evolution of a Revolutionary*. Citing Malcolm X's "Basic Unity Program Organization of Afro-American Unity." Pathfinder Press, 1967, p. 122.

<sup>52</sup> Patterson, *ibid.*, citing Meillassoux, C. *L'esclavage en Afrique précoloniale*. Paris: Franç Maspero, 1975.

<sup>53</sup> The notion of the individual's inalienable rights and liberties was memorialized in the French and American Revolution. "Liberté, Egalité, Fraternité" from the French revolution and "We hold these truths to be self-evident: all men are created equal..." from the American Revolution were new and radical ideas, even though they were not extended to women, workers, Africans, and Indians. Before the acceptance of the sanctity of individual rights, imprisonment could not have been understood as punishment. If the individual was not perceived as possessing inalienable rights and liberties, then the alienation of those rights and liberties by removal from society to a space tyrannically governed by the state would not have made sense. Banishment beyond the geographical limits of the town may have made sense, but not the alteration of the individual's legal status through imposition of a prison sentence. See Davis, *ibid.*

<sup>54</sup> Champion, Steve. *Dead to Deliverance: A Death Row Memoir*, cited from the introduction by Professor Tom Kerr. Split Oak Press, 2010.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*, citing Deleuze, G. and Felix Guattari. *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*. Translated by Brian Massumi. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1987, pp. 80-81.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>57</sup> Goffman, E. *Asylums*. Garden City, New York: Doubleday Anchor, 1961.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>59</sup> McGowen. *The Well-Ordered Prison: England, 1780-1865*.

<sup>60</sup> Patterson, *ibid.*

<sup>61</sup> Burke, P.J. 1980. "The self: Measurement implications from a symbolic interactionist perspective." *Social Psychology Quarterly* 43: 18-29.

<sup>62</sup> Hylton, W.S. "Sick on the Inside Correctional HMOs and the Coming Prison Plague." August 2003, cited in Tara Herivel and Paul Wright's (ed), *Prisoner Profiteers: Who Makes Money from Mass Incarceration*. The New Press: New York; London.

<sup>63</sup> *Bay View National Black Newspaper*. "Behind Enemy Lines: Give Us Our Mail!" May 7, 2008.

<sup>64</sup> The coercive mobility hypothesis holds that high rates of incarceration, targeting poor Black communities, will destabilize social networks in the Black community, thereby undermining the potential impact of human capital in the shaping of informal social controls. The effect of which produces the social and economic instability that leads to more crime, and more family and community disorganization.

<sup>65</sup> Clear, T. *Imprisoning Communities How Mass Incarceration Makes Disadvantaged Communities*. *Ibid.*

<sup>66</sup> These statistics are cited from The PEW Research Center (2010) report, "Collateral Cost: Incarceration's Effect on Economic Mobility."

<sup>67</sup> Mumia Adu-Jamal. *Jailhouse Lawyers: Prisoners Defending Prisoners v. The U.S.A.* City Lights, 2010.

<sup>68</sup> Ibid.

<sup>69</sup> I was placed on high security due to pending federal charges and thus left chained in the holding cell while awaiting court appearances, etc.

## **CHAPTER 9 ENDNOTES**

<sup>1</sup> Du Bois, W.E.B. *The Souls of Black Folk*. Dover Publications, INS. New York. 1994, pp. 141-149.

<sup>2</sup> Freire, P. *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. Continuum 1970, 1993, 2000. Forward, Richard Shaull, p. 34.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> Phillips, B. *Sociology: From Concepts to Practice*. McGraw-Hill Brooks, 1979.

<sup>5</sup> Stic Man of Dead Prez. *Lets Get Free* CD, track No. 3 "They Schools." 2000.

<sup>6</sup> Halebsky, S. *Mass Society And Political Conflict: Toward A Reconstruction of Theory*. Cambridge University Press, 1976, p. 42.

<sup>7</sup> Wilson, J. Q. and George Kellings. "Broken Windows." *Atlantic Magazine*, 1982.

<sup>8</sup> Wilson, A. *Blueprint for Black Power: A Moral, Political and Economic Imperative for the Twenty-First Century*. Afrikan World Info Systems, 2005 (Fifth printing).

<sup>9</sup> Ibid. p. 56.

<sup>10</sup> Wilson, A. *Afrikan-Centered Consciousness Verses the New World Order: Garveyism in the Age of Globalism*. Afrikan World Info Systems, 1999. Second print 2003, pp. 112-13.

<sup>11</sup> Kambon, K. *The Afrikan Personality In America: An Afrikan-Centered Framework*. Nubian Nation Publications, 1992, p. 6.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid. citing Wright, B. *The Psychopathic Racial Personality: And Other Essays*. Third World Press: Chicago, 1984.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid. p. 150.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid. pp.151-53.