

# *The Black August Contradiction*

AUGUST 1, 2018

STRUGGLESSESSIONS

## **Black National Liberation and Proletarian Revolution**

We must view August as a contradiction. It is a dark month as well as a month of glory. It's a bloody month of death as well as a time of life and rebellion. It is a time of national oppression as well as a commemoration of the Black National Liberation Struggle and the proletarian revolutionary movement. But it is also squarely within the International Communist Movement, and therefore is an indispensable lesson

for Communists to study and learn from – something that doesn't get acknowledged enough.

Black August is remembered and dedicated as a time to honor the lives of the revolutionary Black/New Afrikan martyrs George Jackson, his younger 17-year-old brother Jonathan Jackson, W.L. Nolan, James McClain, William Christmas and Khatari Gaulden, slain by the barbarians of the Marin County Civic Center and the annihilation zone of San Quentin State Prison. The U.S. capitalist, by design, creates martyrs out of revolutionaries. In this way, it also creates its very own destruction.

In 1960, 18-year-old George Jackson was charged with armed robbery at a gas station, stealing \$70, and sentenced to one year in Soledad State Prison. His initial one-year sentence would prove to be life-changing as he immersed himself in serious study of Marxism, with a strong gravitation toward Mao's military writings. Huey P. Newton would meet with Jackson and grant him membership to the Black Panther Party for Self-Defense.

His one-year behind bars would later turn into more than a decade with the allegations that he and two other Black inmates exacted revolutionary vengeance on a white prison guard who killed three Black inmates during a prison riot. Jackson, Fleeta Drumgo and John Cluchette were later known as the Soledad Brothers.

On Aug. 21, 1971, George Jackson led a rebellion and escape attempt from San Quentin State Prison along with Hugo Pinell, Willie Tate, Johnny Larry Spain, David Johnson, Fleeta Drumgo and Luis Talamantez – which later would be dubbed the San Quentin Six. This was a joint Black and Brown (two of the participants were Latino, Pinell and Talamantez) coordinated military action which resulted in the death of three prison guards, one of which was a targeted revindication assassination. Spilt blood for split blood.

Ever since the 1970s, August has been remembered as a month of so much spilled blood, bold prisoner resistance and armed confrontation. Marxism – and specifically Maoism – is unimaginable without all three of these aspects. Jackson knew this. In an interview<sup>[1]</sup>, less than two months before the prison rebellion,

Jackson explained what prisons, at their deepest core, functioned for: “...isolate, eliminate, liquidate:”

*...We have to destroy its effectiveness, and that's what the prison movement is all about. What I'm saying is that they put us in these concentration camps here the same as they put people in tiger cages or “strategic hamlets” in Vietnam. The idea is to isolate, eliminate, liquidate the dynamic sections of the overall movement, the protagonists of the movement. What we've got to do is prove this won't work. We've got to organize our resistance once we're inside, give them no peace, **turn the prison into just another front of the struggle** [my emphasis – C.I.], tear it down from the inside. Understand?*

The revolutionary does not cease to be a revolutionary once in prison. Their arena of struggle simply changes. A Communist guerrilla – a revolutionary – must adapt to all changing conditions.

If you've noticed the recent articles on struggle-sessions.com talking about the Communist position on prisons, it's not empty and random waxing political. As the principally Maoist movement in the U.S. continues to grow and develop (growth and development also includes strategic retreats), the more we will see the state's fangs and claws come out. As we militarize ourselves and the masses around us, we will surely (and in many cases, have already) experience this.

This universal truth, in part, is what motivates me in writing and exploring more on the nature of prisons and how Communists must utilize them.

Supporters and observers of Black August have commemorated the month of struggle in different ways. Some, like the Malcolm X Grassroots Movement encourages a sort-of personal reflection and alteration to one's daily customs[2]. Such as fasting, exercising, soft boycotts of corporations, not watching TV or excluding certain stations or programming, not listening to the radio, visiting or writing to prisoners, holding public events, and more. While these suggestions are noble, and some are worthy of countrywide implementation, how do we evaluate them as effective methods of commemorating martyrs? What is commemoration?

What should the Communist form of it be? There is a subjective quality, or aspect, but then there is an objective aspect in Black August. Subjectively, we want the world – its oppressed nations and the international proletariat – to know of the White capitalist state terror raining down on the Black, Chicano and indigenous nations, but principally the Black Nation in August. We want the ICM to bare witness to the revolutionary struggle of Black anti-revisionist Marxists-Leninists (prior to Maoism) who fought hard in two-line struggle both in the New Communist Movement and the Black Power Movement, who gave their lives for the advancement of the class struggle in the U.S. and national liberation of oppressed nations.

George Jackson never minced his words or dispensed with his politics. In an article published in the Black Agenda Report website[3], authored by journalist and former Panther Kiilu Nyasha, it shows that he always went for the revisionist jugular, even the throats attached to Black Marxist or nationalist “turncoat idiots:”

*I'm just a young slave....but every time I think of [Gloves] Davis, Jess B. Simple, Karenga and the rest of these murderous turncoat idiots, my trigger finger fairly itches! Non-persons like Karenga, LeRoi Jones [Amiri Baraka] and the other right-wing blacks are intelligent enough to know what they are doing. We cannot excuse them with the ease that we can excuse the average brother who has had no opportunity or inclination to search. The mantle of ignorance doesn't cover their behavior. [my emphasis] They have to know that when they attack socialism, the communist ideal, and revolution that they are not logically...attacking all that is white, etc. They know that Ho Chi Minh isn't white or Chairman Mao, or Nkrumah, Lumumba and Toure. They know that there isn't but one fight going on across this planet, the one between the imperialist forces of capitalism and its victims. They know that it was for work that we were kidnapped – what else do you feed a slave for? These Black, Black, Black, Black men (if you can swallow their shallow shit) have had time to study, some have traveled, they 'know' that it was capitalist agricultural economics that first caused our pain, and that the only change since then is the decline of the agricultural elite and the rise of the modern bourgeoisie. A sweat-shop displaced the plantation. [In 2012, it's the prison industrial complex and outsourcing. – K.N.] Could it have escaped their notice that*

*all the African states that really liberated themselves booted out the foreign businessmen and are now socialist states? [Unfortunately, the 'foreign businessmen' returned and there are no African states that remained socialist – K.N.J].*

Remember Jackson, like we do Chairman Fred Hampton, as the Black Communist he was. Don't let the revisionists, the nationalists or the academics dispense with his politics, like they try with W.E.B. De Bois and the entirety of the Black Panthers. Honor fallen Communists. Pick up their gun from where it fell and continue on.

How do Communists honor the memory and legacy of our fallen comrades? The aspects – because they are only aspects – can be, probably should maintain to be, cultural and political, existing in the personal lives of the masses and revolutionaries. Most of the suggestions of MXGM are appropriate, save for the reformist and confusing soft boycotts. Personally, the exercising, reaching out to political prisoners and public events are the most appealing.

But what about the struggle George Jackson, Jonathan Jackson, W.L. Nolan, James McClain, William Christmas and Khatari Gaulden died for? It was for armed revolution in the U.S. to be led by the Vanguard Party. Jackson, like many other Black Panthers, called the Panthers that Party – but the Black Nation, or the Black masses. While the Panthers were certainly one of the leading revolutionary Black organizations of the New Communist Movement, their fatalistic error was two-fold 1.) the substitution of the revolutionary proletariat by the lumpenproletariat, and 2.) Huey P. Newton's betrayal of Marxism and the liquidation of national oppression with the revisionist thesis of "Revolutionary Intercommunalism." But an analysis of the Panthers is another article for another day.

Jackson founded the political prison organization the Black Guerrilla Family in San Quentin for the purpose of militarizing Black inmates and politically developing them into Marxists. After his death, the organization devolved into a solidly lumpenproletariat drug-dealing gang. But Jackson maintained that armed revolution was a mandatory vehicle for the coming revolution. He never separated

the political prisoner movement from the Party Building movement; you couldn't have one without the other, and the latter is primary.

Black August must be seen as the continuation of war against white supremacy and U.S. capitalism-imperialism, the world's greatest enemy, standing in the way of proletarian emancipation and national liberation. It won't get out of the way. It must be confronted.

There is a reason George Jackson is a central figure in Black August. He illuminates a path before us, and in particular Black revolutionaries in the U.S. prison-house of nations. Jackson reminds us, even from his grave and from the pages of history, that the revolutionary, once having made peace with their condemnation, is immortal. In the same interview mentioned above, the interviewer prods at Jackson's stern defense of armed revolution and combining the prison movement with the mass movement under the Vanguard Party for revolution, callously using the example of the slain life of his younger brother Jonathan Jackson as potentially having been "wasted:"

*Jonathan took a calculated risk. Some people say that makes him a fool. I say his was the sort of courage that cause men of his age to be awarded the Congressional Medal of Honor in somewhat different settings. The difference is that Jonathan understood very clearly who his real enemy was; the guy who gets the congressional medal usually doesn't. Now, who's the fool?*

*Personally, I bear his loss very badly. It's a great burden upon my soul. But I think it's imperative – we owe it to him – never to forget why he did what he did. And that was to stand as a symbol in front of the people – in front of me – and say in effect that we have both the capacity and the obligation to stand up, regardless of the consequences. He was saying that if we all stand up, our collective power will destroy the forces that oppose us. Jonathan lived by these principles, he was true to them, he died by them. This is the most honorable thing imaginable. He achieved a certain deserved immortality insofar as he truly had the courage to die on his feet rather than live one moment on his knees. He stood as an example, a*

*beacon to all of us, and I am in awe of him, even though he was my younger brother.*

It can be said, then, that Black August began before the commemoration of George Jackson and the San Quentin Six. It began with Jonathan Jackson, and George Jackson picked up his brother-comrade's weapon from his dying hand. This is what it means to honor and commemorate from a Communist standpoint.

And prior still, Black August must be seen more totally as a living legacy honoring the fallen, even prior to the 70s, as is said by MXGM[4]:

*\*The arrival of the first enslaved Africans to Jamestown, Virginia in August 1619;*

*\*The start of the great Haitian revolution in August 1791;*

*\*The call for a general strike by enslaved New Afrikans by Henry Highland Garnett on August 22nd 1843;*

*\*The initiation of the major network that conducted the Underground Railroad on August 2, 1850;*

*\*Gabriel Prosser's rebellion of August 30th, 1800.*

*\*The rebellion of Nat "the Prophet" Turner on August 21st, 1831;*

*\*On August 3, 1908, the Allensworth Township for former slaves was established in California;*

*\*The March on Washington occurred in August of 1963;*

*\*The Watts rebellion of August 1965;*

*\*The defense of the Provisional Government of the Republic of New Afrika (PG – RNA) from a FBI assault in Mississippi on August 18, 1971;*

*\*The attack of the MOVE family by Philadelphia police on August 8, 1978.*

Remember the Black August Martyrs. Remember the Black revolutionary Communists by reinvigorating yourself in the revolutionary movement – which can only mean war, war above all things, war against national oppression, war against the capitalist state and imperialism, Peoples War until Communism!

**Article by– *Cajemé Iniciador***

[1] <http://www.historyisaweapon.com/defcon1/jacksoninterview.html>

[2] <https://mxgm.org/2017/08/02/blackaugust-the-true-history-culture-practice/>

[3] <https://www.blackagendareport.com/content/revision-and-origin-black-august>

[4] See footnote No. 1.

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