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The Law, Prisons, and Revolutionaries

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As I continued to read and study and experience and analyze life around me as a Black male in history and modernity, Brother 'Lil and his declaration of being a revolutionary made total and complete sense.

The word no longer frightened me. It enlivened me. My conclusion and our only solution is revolution. Real peace. Real freedom. Real equality. Real love, is to be found not in the strict adherence and blind obedience to Western laws but in the destruction of imperialism, the overthrow of capitalism, the political independence and unification of the continent of Africa, and the inevitable and complete liberation of Black/African people throughout the diaspora.

oppressed masses. It has been stated that “when law and morality contradict each other, the citizen either loses his moral sense or loses his respect for the law.”

Capitalism and imperialism are philosophies which are, in and of themselves, contradictory and amoral. True revolutionaries cannot afford to lose their moral compass; they are, in fact, guided by it. What they lose instead is simply and fundamentally their respect for “the law.”

Prisons and Revolutionaries

I remember the first time someone told me they were a Revolutionary. It was my man Khalil. At the time, I was a Christian. He was a Muslim. And we were both in prison.

We were coming from chow when he uttered it. Often we’d fall into political and/or historical conversations because we read a lot. He was much farther along than I was, so I listened more than I talked.

“I’m a revolutionary...” he said.

It disturbed me. I never heard anyone describe themselves under those terms before, yet my mind automatically associated it with individuals who were “militant” or violent. So I remained silent.

“I gotta book called *Blueprint to Black Power* by Amos Wilson in my cell if you wanted to check it out,” he said.

Again, I even associated the term “*Black Power*” to mean something racist, vengeful, or hateful. I told him cool, but I knew I wasn’t going to read it. I wasn’t ready yet.

When I got out of prison the love I acquired for reading when I was inside only increased because I had more access to a wider variety of texts.

I was also simultaneously experiencing the social and political conditions and contradictions of my new environment.

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The Law

According to Frederick Bastiat, “the law” as contrived by the West is designed fundamentally and crudely as an instrument of plunder. The West has never been self-sufficient nor independent. The resources and so-called prestige that they do have comes through the ruthless and savage exploitation of the Third-World; pillaged either militarily or through chicanery. So in order for these capitalist imperialists to protect what they have taken — foreign lands, raw materials, human bodies, etc. — “the law” is established and enforced.

This western bourgeois conception of the law has nothing to do with justice, fairness or morality. To the contrary, it has everything to do with protecting and sustaining the criminality and illegality of U.S. and Western imperialism. Thus, it should be easy to understand how “the law,” instead of checking injustice, becomes the implacable weapon of *injustice*. All revolutionaries are considered “out-laws” for waging revolution is fundamentally against “the law.” This is why comrade George Jackson said, “the ultimate expression of law is not order — it’s prison.” Prisons become necessary in capitalistic society so as to neutralize any potential revolutionary movements or organizations seriously willing to challenge the legitimacy of the state apparatus. Prisons also provide the workforce that capitalism requires for the exploitation of cheap labor.

Do we need a reminder that it was “the law” that made African enslavement and their subsequent cultural and psychological diasporic subjugation and oppression perfectly legal? It was the law that declared African people three-fifths of a human being. It was the law that formulated the conditions of the Jim Crow South and the apartheid of South Africa. It is this same bourgeois law in operation today that serves and protects the ravages of police brutality, produces the mass incarceration of Black bodies, sustains, justifies, and rationalizes the social and political enslavement of the