

Post-Feminism • The Mexican Left • Crack and Black Youth

# BREAKTHROUGH

POLITICAL JOURNAL OF PRAIRIE FIRE ORGANIZING COMMITTEE

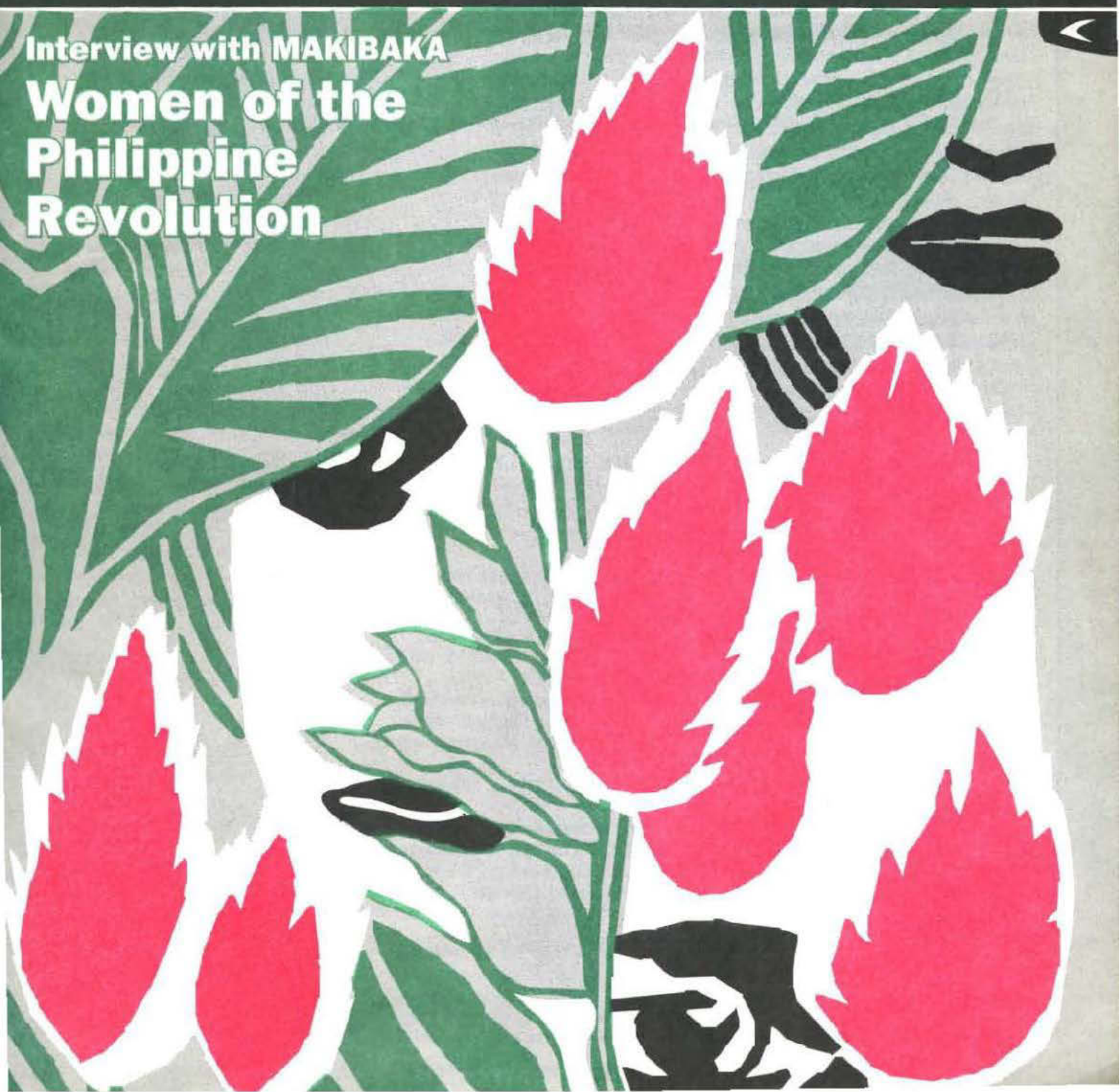
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Interview with MAKIBAKA

Women of the  
Philippine  
Revolution



# Table of Contents

- 
- 1 Editorial—EL SALVADOR**
- 
- 3 Editorial—Political Prisoners in the U.S.: BREAKING THE SILENCE**
- 
- 5 THE POST-FEMINIST MYSTIQUE**  
an essay by Judith Mirkinson
- 
- 10 WE'RE PISD, WE'RE GONNA SEIZE CONTROL**  
speech by Ferd Eggan, PISD Caucus of ACT NOW
- 
- 15 BATTLEZONE L.A.**  
by Makungu Akinyele, New Afrikan People's Organization
- 
- 19 Namibia and Angola: FREE AT LAST?**  
by Felix Shafer
- 
- 22 WOMEN OF THE PHILIPPINE REVOLUTION**  
interview with Makibaka
- 
- 33 Mexico: CARDENAS, THE LEFT AND THE PRI**  
interview with Gabino Gomez, Comité de Defensa Popular
- 
- 37 Occupied Mexico: LAND STRUGGLE IN TIERRA AMARILLA**
- 
- 43 WRITE THROUGH THE WALLS**
- 

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# El Salvador

**A**fter nearly ten years of full-scale warfare, the people of El Salvador are approaching a revolutionary triumph. A movement that five years ago was presumed dead has re-emerged stronger than ever. After \$3 billion of U.S. aid, El Salvador is ready to become the first full-fledged foreign policy crisis of the Bush Administration.

There will be no quick fix for the U.S. El Salvador is not Grenada. In fact, El Salvador presents a classic revolutionary picture: a ruling elite unable to unite or govern effectively, conditions of poverty and misery for the large majority of the people, and a sophisticated revolutionary movement which commands broad-based support. The FMLN has now moved to the offensive, striking at will throughout the country and in San Salvador itself. The mass movement, decimated in the early 1980s by the army death squads, is now back in the streets. And the Salvadoran army—despite a motivated officer corps, billions in U.S. aid and sophisticated weaponry—is divided over strategy, thoroughly infiltrated, forced to conscript the poorest youth, and overly reliant on a few elite battalions.

While the Bush Administration stalls for time, the FMLN has seized the political initiative with an eminently reasonable peace proposal. Add to this the disintegration of the Christian Democrats and the rise to power of the fascist ARENA party, and you have all the elements for a social explosion which the U.S. cannot contain.

What will the U.S. do? There are powerful international pressures—particularly from Latin America—against further U.S. intervention. With the contras a dead letter, Latin America is demanding a change in U.S. Central America policy. The Bush Administration, for its own reasons, would like to sweep the El Salvador mess under the rug so it can get on with its economic war against Nicaragua and continue renegotiating debt payments from Venezuela, Mexico and Brazil. A costly strike into El Salvador doesn't fit well into this picture. In addition, the U.S. and Soviet Union are engaged in a complex process of disentangling from regional conflicts—in Indochina, Southern Africa, Afghanistan. It will be very difficult for Bush—already off to a rocky start—to take the political risk of direct military intervention. Especially when there will be a price to pay in U.S. lives.

Still, El Salvador happens to be where the Reagan Administration "drew the line" in 1981. It has been, until recently, the jewel of U.S. counterinsurgency projects. So it's foolish to discount the possibility of U.S. escalation.

Nearly 70,000 Salvadorans have died in the fight to reach this pivotal moment. More will fall if the U.S. intervenes to "save" its counterinsurgency project. How can the movement here forestall a further U.S. escalation? How can we contribute to a popular victory that can end this cruel war?

First, we need to recognize the urgency of the period. Whether or not an insurrection occurs in the next month or two, it's clear that El Salvador is at a critical juncture. We can quibble over the exact phrasing—"decisive moment," "turning point," etc. But the fact is that the Salvadoran movement is contending for power. At a time like this, some priorities shift. It's not enough to simply broaden our own movement. We have to impact on U.S. policy, as dramati-

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***“The  
present  
elections  
aggravate  
the war.  
Our  
proposal  
contributes  
to peace.”***

***—FMLN  
El Salvador  
January 23, 1989***

cally and sharply as we can, mobilizing as widely as we can. This will take different forms in different places. But the goal is to bring as many people as possible into confrontation with the war—into a resistance which breaks the media blackout, which challenges the status quo, which forces El Salvador into public consciousness, and which makes the Bush Administration think again about the cost of intervention.

The media for the most part continues to ignore the crisis. This makes some people underestimate what is really happening. But we shouldn't fall into the trap of letting the media define everything. Nor should we assume that consciousness will remain static. A strong base has already been built around El Salvador. Church groups, Salvadoran refugee organizations and solidarity groups like CISPES have educated hundreds of thousands about the U.S. war and the death squad government. Direct action groups like the Pledge of Resistance have focused more and more work on El Salvador. Students around the country have taken up the issue. Add to this the generalized anti-intervention sentiment that has built up over years of work around Nicaragua—so forcefully expressed in March 1988 when U.S. troops were sent to Honduras—and there's a basis for resistance.

Direct action plays a vital role right now. It creates possibilities—to break the silence, to show how serious our opposition is, to demonstrate political power. By disrupting the status quo, it challenges people to think, to address the issue, to come to the next demonstration. And it sends the right message to the Administration. We could see this power when hundreds of protesters tore up the tracks at Concord Naval Weapons Station in the Bay Area. And we could see it when thousands around the country defied police and took the streets during the Honduras crisis, or when AIDS protesters blocked traffic on the Golden Gate Bridge.

What matters is that actions are politically clear, that organizers are prepared to defend them against the inevitable backlash, that recriminations are kept to a minimum, and that there is a plan to build off of them. For all the furor over some of the tactics at the October Pentagon action, what's most significant is how successful it was. The action served as a powerful centerpiece for the nationwide El Salvador: Steps to Freedom actions organized by CISPES and the Pledge of Resistance. It mobilized a few thousand people from all over the East Coast, including many students and other young people. It effectively disrupted the functioning of the Pentagon, and focused attention on El Salvador. Not a small feat. We could use more such controversy in the near future.

It's also time for broader support of the FMLN. We'd better be prepared for the media campaign against FMLN “terrorism,” particularly in the event of an insurrection. These attacks on the FMLN are aimed at the entire popular movement. As anyone who travels to El Salvador learns, there is a broad unity of purpose and mutual respect among all sectors of the movement. As the U.S. attempts to isolate the FMLN, more of us need to counter the lies. The FMLN peace proposal, in which they stated their willingness to abide by the results of a genuine free election, provides a vehicle for reaching out to many new constituencies here. The proposal deserves the support of everyone in the anti-intervention and progressive movement.

During the latter stages of the Vietnam War, a slogan emerged within the anti-war movement—“All For Vietnam.” This didn't mean that other issues weren't critical, or that all work then focused on Vietnam. But it identified the historic nature of the moment. Such a moment is now at hand in El Salvador. □

## Political Prisoners in the U.S.

# Breaking the Silence

In 1983, Susan Rosenberg and Tim Blunk, two long-time anti-racist and anti-imperialist activists, were convicted of possession—not use—of handguns, explosives and false ID. They were sentenced to 58 years. This is roughly three times the sentence given to the Tupamaros, the urban guerrilla organization that shook the Uruguayan military dictatorship to its foundations in the late 60s. Two months after Susan and Tim were busted, Don Black, Grand Wizard of the Alabama KKK, was arrested with an entire boatload of weapons and explosives, en route to a coup attempt in the Dominica. The Klan leader was sentenced to two and a half years, and is long since back on the street.

Why does the U.S. government think that Susan and Tim are 23 times more dangerous than the Klan leader? It's not about the "crime"—Susan and Tim got 58 years without ever being accused of harming anyone. It's about scaring people who would consider taking direct action against imperialism.

Not content with this virtual life sentence, the U.S. government is putting Susan and Tim on trial again, along with Dr. Alan Berkman, Marilyn Buck, Linda Evans and Laura Whitehorn. The Resistance Conspiracy defendants are accused of conspiring to bomb three military installations and the U.S. Capitol (in the aftermath of the Grenada invasion). The defendants already stand convicted of many of the acts alleged in the conspiracy. True, for most citizens the legal system prohibits double jeopardy. But for revolutionaries the law is a frill on a no-frills journey to life in prison.

So two days before a statute of limitations ran out, the government dished up a warmed-over conspiracy charge made of allegations that had been lying around in the files since 1983. Susan, Tim, Marilyn and Linda are each already serving sentences ranging from 30 to 70 years on related charges. But the government needed to construct a case to put Alan Berkman and Laura Whitehorn away for life. In a previous trial, Alan "only" got 12 years after the U.S. government prosecutor had explicitly asked the judge to "warehouse this man for the rest of his life." And Laura Whitehorn, who has so far been sentenced to only two years for giving false statements on a passport, would be out on the streets if not for these charges. Laura has been in prison for over three years, making her the longest-held pretrial detainee in the country, one of the early victims of the Bail "Reform" Act of 1984.

One final irony: the Resistance Conspiracy trial will be held just down the hall from Ollie North's trial. If you're looking for violence (60,000 dead and wounded in Nicaragua) and crime (drug-running, illegal arms sales), Ollie North is it. But lucky for Ollie, that most violent of governments takes care of its own.

While Ollie hops in his car and drives back and forth to court each day, the Resistance Conspiracy defendants are being jailed under terrible conditions. When the prisoners were first transferred to the DC Detention Center, guards passed rumors to the 98 percent Black prison population that the comrades were Klan members being indicted for the attempted assassination of Jesse Jackson! Most of the defendants arrived already exhausted and with an array of serious health problems. Dr. Alan Berkman is recovering from a battle with cancer; Marilyn Buck had recent leg surgery and was deprived of rehabilitation therapy. A warehouse for thousands of Black women and men, the DC jail typifies the racist and inhuman character of U.S. prisons. For the Resistance Conspiracy defendants, their ability to prepare for trial is seriously jeopardized. They were deprived of sleep; loud rock music blared 'til midnight; they were reawakened at 2 a.m., again around 3, and then up for a new day at 4 a.m.

The defendants are sent to court with SWAT teams escorted by helicop-

ters. Once in court, a video camera is pointed at the defense table and supporters, turning the courtroom into an arena of surveillance. The defendants are kept draped in shackles behind a bulletproof glass shield, suggesting that they might jump up at any moment and spray the jury with bullets. In March, representatives of the National Conference of Black Lawyers, the National Lawyers Guild and others stated that, "The defendants are being denied a fair and impartial trial based on speculation born of their supposed political ideologies."

Simultaneously, in Springfield, Massachusetts, three of the Ohio Seven—white working class revolutionaries—are on trial. Ray Levasseur, Richard Williams and Patricia Gros Levasseur are accused of seditious conspiracy (conspiracy to overthrow the government) and racketeering in connection with 19 actions carried out in 1976-84, including bombings of South African consulates, corporations and military targets. When the Ohio 7 were arrested, their children, ages 2 to 11, were illegally held and interrogated from two to eight weeks.

In Hartford, CT, Puerto Rican independence activists arrested almost four years ago are standing trial. They have been accused of participation in an armed expropriation carried out by the *Macheteros*, a clandestine organization in Puerto Rico. In the case, the U.S. is relying on thousands of hours of illegally obtained wiretap evidence.

The treatment of political prisoners in these and many other cases exposes the lengths to which this government will go to silence dissent. While many of us understand the repressive U.S. role in the Third World, the fact that the exporters of torture are also carrying out human rights violations right here passes unnoticed. International law against torture is not limited to condemnations of systematic beatings or electric shock alone. Psychological torture, isolation, sensory deprivation, denial of medical care, sleep deprivation, grossly excessive sentences and sexual abuse are techniques which are universally recognized as forms of torture. And when the U.S. government uses them against political prisoners here it is up to us to hold the state accountable.

Internationally there is a new groundswell of concern for political prisoners and human rights. In 1991, a human rights summit will be held in Moscow. To create momentum on the question, the Soviet Union has released 400 political prisoners and Cuba 200. On the right, Chile has announced an amnesty. Yet the U.S. stands aloof, posing as the human rights cop of the world. According to the official dogma, political prisoners don't even exist here.

But the U.S. stands on increasingly shaky ground. The Reagan administration stood by fuming while Mexico released Puerto Rican freedom fighter William Morales to asylum in Cuba. Hundreds of members of the Italian parliament have joined a campaign to demand the U.S. free or repatriate Italian anti-imperialist prisoner Silvia Barald-

ini. Here, the movement exposed the infamous Lexington Control Unit. A chain of events was set in motion; the Soviet Union raised the issue at a summit; Amnesty International denounced the unit; a federal judge admitted there are political prisoners in the U.S., and the Bureau of Prisons was ordered to close Lexington.

Today more than 150 political prisoners remain incarcerated in the U.S. as a result of their activities in the Puerto Rican independence movement, the Black liberation/New Afrikan independence movement, the Native American struggle for sovereignty, and the white anti-imperialist and anti-nuclear movements. (See list, pp. 42-43.) Leaders like Dhoruba Al-Mujahid bin-Wahad, Leonard Peltier, and Geronimo jiJaga Pratt will soon be starting their third decade of imprisonment.

In December 1988, on the 40th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the Freedom Now Campaign was launched at the United Nations, organized to press for human rights and amnesty for political prisoners. In February, it addressed the U.N. Human Rights Commission in Geneva. This ambitious effort, embracing families and supporters of most political prisoners in the U.S., has begun to break the silence on this issue. (To contact the Campaign, see page 43.)

For too long, some people on the left have been reluctant to support political prisoners imprisoned for actions with which they disagree—in particular, for the use of armed tactics. The Resistance Conspiracy defendants and the Ohio 7, along with many other political prisoners, are revolutionaries, who believe that "power concedes nothing without a demand." They understood that this would mean directly confronting the war makers and were prepared to accept the consequences of their actions. We believe these comrades and the armed movement they represent have always been an integral part of building a movement of resistance to U.S. imperialism.

Political debates in the movement about strategy and tactics will—and should—be carried out. The questions and the consequences are serious. But regardless of what your conclusions may be, the old slogan, "an injury to one is an injury to all," is as true today as ever. Above any differences, our obligation to support comrades who are being attacked by the state remains. Campaigns to protect human rights and win freedom for political prisoners are integral to every progressive political movement in the world. With the international community already moving to challenge the U.S. about political prisoners, it is time for all of us to speak loudly and clearly on this issue.

The trials of the Ohio 7, the Resistance Conspiracy defendants and the Hartford independentistas are happening right now. We can't let the government bury these comrades alive. Contact their defense committees at the addresses on page 44. We need to publicize their cases, write to them and organize support wherever we can. □



# The Post-Feminist Mystique

An Essay by Judith Mirkinson

In January, 1972 I had an abortion. I was 21 years old, had hated the pill and gotten pregnant. But I was lucky. Just months before, NY state had made abortion legal. The choices to me were clear. For one crazy moment my boyfriend suggested that we get married and have the baby. This was an option that had never crossed my mind. The right to abortion was something I had fought for over the last couple of years. It was more to me than just the question of having or not having a baby, more than just an extension of birth control. It was about control over myself, my body and my future. It wasn't tragic, although it was hard and emotional, but it wasn't a tearing emotion; it was something to struggle through, to grow on.

So I called the abortion clinic, made an appointment, got a valium from one of my friends and took a taxi to the upper East Side in New York City. I went through all the counseling, finally met the doctor (male, of course), and had the abortion.

It was an amazing experience. In the recovery room I lay next to a 17-year-old girl, very straight and all-American, whose mother was sobbing—but whose mother was there, had come all the way from Ohio with her daughter. On the other side was a young woman from Pennsylvania. Down a stretch was someone from Texas. Women were coming from all over the country to have a safe, legal abortion.

It was still twelve months before *Roe v. Wade* would make abortion legal on the federal level. So the question of abortion was being debated from one end of the country to the other. Thousands of people marched in the streets demanding the basic right for women to control their own bodies.

We wanted abortion to be free and on demand. We didn't want to have to ask our fathers, husbands or male doctors. We were not property, objects or children. We were ourselves and our futures were to be far different than those of our mothers' and grandmothers'.

Talking about abortion meant that sex had to come out of the closet. Together with the pill which had mass-produced birth control, it meant women demanding knowledge of their own bodies and sexuality. No longer could sex be tied to procreation in the same old way. We felt we could challenge the idea that pregnancy was a woman's fault and something to be deeply ashamed of. Remember, this was a time when the concept of illegitimacy was commonplace. Abortion meant talking about things that in the past just weren't talked about, especially in public.

*Roe v. Wade* happened because the pressure for abortion was so immense. The movement had the advantage, psychologically, ideologically and emotionally. We had the moral authority. The issues involved were ones whose time had come. Abortion was a logical extension of the sexual revolution. The movement was broad and reached

women of all ages, classes and races.

There were contradictions, rooted in the fact that the movement was overwhelmingly white. As such, it failed to understand the historical relationship between population control, birth control, sterilization and abortion, and the relationship of these policies to genocide for Third World peoples and nations.

But despite these weaknesses, the right to abortion won because it had at its core the demands, feelings and aspirations of women to change our lives. It was part of the women's movement, part of women's liberation.

It's almost twenty years later, and it's clear that we've lost the moral authority on this question. Even the most progressive "pro-choice" women talk about the tragedy of abortion. Pictures of uptight, right-wing men with tears streaming down their faces, as they try to talk women out of abortion, are seen day after day on the TV. Operation "Rescue" is "operating" everywhere. There's a very good chance that *Roe v. Wade* will be overturned. Do most Americans favor abortion? Yes, but they/we so far haven't had the voice, or the oomph to get it across.

How did it happen? Were we hoodwinked into thinking that our rights were really protected? Did we underestimate the power of the right wing? Were so many of our hopes, dreams, struggles and aspirations coopted and assimilated into the mainstream? It might seem flip, but in some ways the answer is yes. The right to abortion came during a time when feminism was strong. And if we lose the right to abortion, it will be in a time which has come to be called post-feminist.

\* \* \* \* \*

One of the great things about the women's movement, about feminism, was that women together began to explore our own feelings and thoughts. We were able to explain the world in a whole new light and it made sense. Out of the consciousness-raising groups, the demonstrations, the confrontations that took place in countless bedrooms, kitchens and living rooms came a deep sense of sisterhood and freedom.

In the world we now live in, women's lives are assumed; the explanations are made for us all the time. There's a facade of feminism, a concern for women, but it's all within the status quo. There's no question, even hint, of radically changing anything. It's a way for society to keep the lid on, to make sure women don't go too far out of our assigned places. Perhaps, our constraints are a little looser than they were. But we're still constrained—by our society, by our laws, by the very ideology and culture that shapes our development.

Post-feminism is part of a larger strategy to contain the contradictions within our society. This is done through an incredible combination of cooptation, assimilation, co-

modification and repression. So the Black Liberation Movement has been smashed and Blacks are told to be "Post-Nationalist." We're expected to believe that everything's changed and that Black people can be like Bill Cosby. So too, we are expected to believe that the reasons why the feminist movement came into being have been liquidated.

It's a lot about the creation of an image. Post-feminism sees the world as one where many women's demands have been achieved. Women are in the work force, we're professionals. (At least some of us are—the image is that most of us are.) There are women in "non-traditional" jobs. There's a woman on the Supreme Court; it's true she's a right winger—but she's still a woman. In fact, a woman even ran for vice-president.

It's more than abundantly clear that living in the post-feminist era means women can be sexual. It's a time when a woman can and should demand sexual pleasure and, in fact, be able to explain to her lover how to give it. And I think that most women would agree that having our sexuality more open and free is far better than how it has been. But it is a little weird to see "How to Get Monotony Out of Monogamy" next to the "Ten Greatest Recipes for Leftovers." Or "How to Satisfy and Keep Your Man" next to "How to Have an Affair."

Post-feminism projects a world where women have been able to go *beyond*, where women's equality is taken for granted. So we don't have to worry about objectification. We can even like being objectified. It's part of being sexy, of being sexual. And objectified we are. As much as ever. We're told that if we don't like seeing our legs spread in fashion spreads, we're just uptight. We don't have to worry about all the overt and covert violence in advertising and everywhere else. It's just *fantasy*; it's just fun.

Our bodies are everywhere. And we hate them. Poll after poll, whether in the *New York Times*, *Off Our Backs*, or *The Ladies Home Journal*, talk about how most women hate their bodies and think that they're ugly. Our feelings about inadequacy and insecurity start there and go on to our minds and emotions."

There's even this new phrase people are coining—"retro-feminism." I've heard it on those call-in talk shows you hear on the radio. You know, the ones where a psychologist will diagnose your problems and solve them in 30 seconds. And with it goes the retro body. In

December *Self* magazine proclaimed that "Breasts are Back." That's nice, most women think there's something wrong with theirs anyway. But then they always talked about American men being "breast men." Think of *Playboy*, of Marilyn Monroe. It's nice that we've come full circle. It's lucky for us now we have liposuction and cosmetic surgery. Did you read that issue of *People* (at the dentist's office, of course) in which a woman was "remade" by her husband. "Well if she can be better—why not?"

I suppose we have several reasons to consider ourselves lucky these days. At least now it's fashionable for women to have breasts. And sometimes when we're objectified—we actually have brains. Think of those Hanes stocking ads. She loves Kierkegaard and

*"She does the crossword puzzle... in ink.  
Doesn't like New Wave,  
New Age, or New York.  
And don't even get me  
started on her legs...."*  
Silk Reel



speaks 25 languages, but those legs...OOOOOOH. And now we can also objectify him—or ourselves. She/he is soooooo cute.

They're even getting lesbians into the act. This month's *Cosmopolitan*, which was practically post-feminist before there was feminism, has a big article on lesbianism, and periodically it's been featuring lesbian-owned businesses as examples of how women are "making it" in the man's business world. If you look in all the fashion magazines, there are a lot of pictures of women together who are obviously with each other. Ads for liquor, cigarettes—you name it—are using lesbian images, or at least fantasy lesbian images.

There's this tough independent veneer that's coming across in all these different ways. There's an acknowledgement that women have our own lives to lead. Part of this has to be positive, a product of the women's and lesbian movements. But it's all contained within the same old package. Straight or gay, the women all meet the male attractiveness quotient. They're all successful and beautiful. How many women, how many lesbians, are really like that? Not many, but post-feminism dictates our images of reality.

We're bombarded with hundreds of different messages and expectations of what we should be. No sooner do you

think one thing, than another message comes flying across your screen, your newspaper, your conversation at work. There's a lot of acknowledgment that things aren't exactly what they should be, but the tendency to look to the family and relationships for the solutions is overwhelming.

\* \* \* \* \*

What *about* the home front? It's commonplace to hear that women have two jobs—one outside, one inside the home. The myth of the supermom is being debunked. Yet mom's responsibilities are still exactly what they were when that stereotype was being touted. The pressures on women both at work and at home are far greater than most individual women can handle.

And since women are still trained to be the caregivers, the message of the family strikes home very deeply. We feel a lot of guilt and responsibility. Women are still held accountable for their homes, children and families.

We hear constantly about the sanctity of the family, which of course goes along with the "sanctity of life." Yet this family, the infamous white nuclear family, no longer really exists. But the mythology is so powerful people can still long for it. It's a mythology that has a basic message inside of it. The message of women back in their place, back giving birth to babies, back as procreators.

This message comes in a lot of forms. And it's not just from overt right wingers. Just last month there was a big story in *Newsweek* about the new family and parenting, featuring T. Berry Brazelton (another Dr. Spock). Half of the article was about the need for more child care, maternity leave, even paternity leave. But the other half was how it was important for women to feel comfortable with their "guilt" about working and not being with their children, how children really do suffer in the first couple of years if they're not with their mothers.

This isn't to deny that there are real contradictions for women who work and contradictory feelings about not having enough time to spend with your children. But the solutions which are being offered just aren't real.

It's all a very 50s kind of message—with a nice 90s twist. It fits in perfectly with George Bush, who, you'd have to admit, is a very 50s kind of guy.

The way they're packaging Barbara Bush, for instance, is very interesting. We're going from the anorexic, aristocratic Nancy Reagan, the ultra-devoted wife who loved her husband, but seemed to hate her children, to the nice, comfortable, lovable, devoted Barbara. Of course, this nice wife has a husband who's had a mistress for years—but, oh well. And women are longing for BB—someone who isn't so fancy, who doesn't appear to be so rich and so chic. But if you notice every picture shows her surrounded by her children and grandchildren, puttering in her garden, cooking in her kitchen or teaching reading to

the poor children.

The truth is, even if we wanted to, we can't go back. We're not going to leave the work force; we can't and they can't afford it. Those fantasy families and relationships probably never existed but they certainly don't exist now; there are too many contradictions. But all the contending forces that have developed from these sets of realities have to be held in check. There's a great wealth of women's anger hiding there, right under the surface.

This is a society of deep unhappiness and alienation. A society which is being held together by strong but desperate forces. People are searching for solutions and they/we are looking in different directions.

The right looks backward over their shoulders and dreams that there once was a time of greater happiness. The men think, "Yeah, that's when men were men and women knew their place." (And you could read the same for the relationship between Blacks and whites.) For the women, it's not quite so clear, but they know they don't like the world as they now find it; they too want more controls.

For the right, the fight over abortion is particularly strategic. It involves people's emotions at the deepest level. It goes along with a religious fervor, not unlike the fundamentalism which is gaining strength all over the world. And, to paraphrase Richard Viguerie, once you're against abortion, you can be led logically into right-wing politics at every level.

It's within this atmosphere, when the women's movement is weak, where militant action by women is frowned upon and/or deemed unnecessary, that the abortion forces have been able to grow, flourish and influence us all.

Women are embarrassed to say that they've had abortions. It's the 80s equivalent of having illegitimate children. Both imply sex where the woman just wasn't "careful," didn't carry out her responsibility for birth control well enough. People speak of abortions in hushed tones and whispers. When I was in the hospital giving birth to my third child, the nurse refused to list the number of abortions on my chart, saying that the other nurses just wouldn't understand and might get a bad attitude.

All this really affects us. Many women I know have talked about how bad they still feel about their abortions. Women feel compelled to talk about the tragic but necessary operation.

Why is it so tragic? In a society which has refused to develop adequate birth control for women and which refuses to educate its children about sex and sexuality, there's often no other choice. If we lived in a society (and there are some) which viewed abortion as another form of birth control, it wouldn't be so tragic and awful. Soon, if you miss your period and think you're pregnant, you'll be able to take a pill. Very clean and neat. This is going to further blur everything and that's why the right wing's so afraid

of it. Abortion pill, birth control pill, there's very little difference really.

Let's be clear, abortion is not the preferred method of birth control. It is more dangerous, and more difficult, both physically and mentally. Having an abortion means that you're already pregnant. The potential for having a child is there *for real* —and it's something to seriously think about. Then too, all the hormones are beginning their work and your body and emotions are already a bit wacko. Each abortion is a bit of physical trauma. Too many of them can produce complications. All these are strong reasons for not relying on abortion.

But that's not why we see middle-aged men with tears streaming down their faces blocking the entrances to abortion clinics. These Neanderthals could care less about better birth control, about sex education, about health care, about infant mortality, about the quality of children's lives. To get these you have to go forward, not backward. They're concerned with the fact that now women can control their own bodies, that children are no longer the property of the *father*, that sex is there just for pleasure. They're concerned with the fact that abortion carries with it the message that women can decide their own lives without men.

Anti-abortionists aren't troubled by the fact that making abortion illegal will bring back the days of the "back-alley" abortion, which was responsible for the maiming and killing of thousands upon thousands of women. This to them, is the consequence of "unclean" behavior. Abstinence is the only solution. One wonders what goes on in

their houses.

It's very standard in these *Breakthrough* articles to have a rousing finish, or rather to say at the end that we have to build a movement and that's the way we're really going to change everything. Regular *BT* readers know the rap.

It might sound boring, but it's usually true. And in this case it's really true. And it's beginning to happen.

The pro-choice, pro-abortion movement has to realize that it can't be just about abortion alone. Our choices, which should be ever-expanding, will stop and start and perhaps begin to contract if we can't rebuild our women's movement with a strong feminist ideological core. It's the ideology of feminism which allows women and men to understand much of society's workings, which allows us to peel away the layers of culture that have made women's lives so oppressive.

"Our bodies, our lives, our right to decide." To control our bodies is to control ourselves. Sex and childbearing have always been controlled, determined by men. What is sexually desirable is determined by men. Women are changing that. Today women are getting pregnant without intercourse. Women are being sexual on our own terms. Some of us are committing our lives and futures to other women. These are fundamental advances and they're not going to be taken away.

In the 17 years since that first abortion, a lot has changed. I say "first" because since then I've had many others, along with several children. All these decisions were mine to make. And I don't know about you, but I'm not going back. □



Photo Credit: Fireworks

**We're PISD**

**We're  
Gonna Seize  
Control**

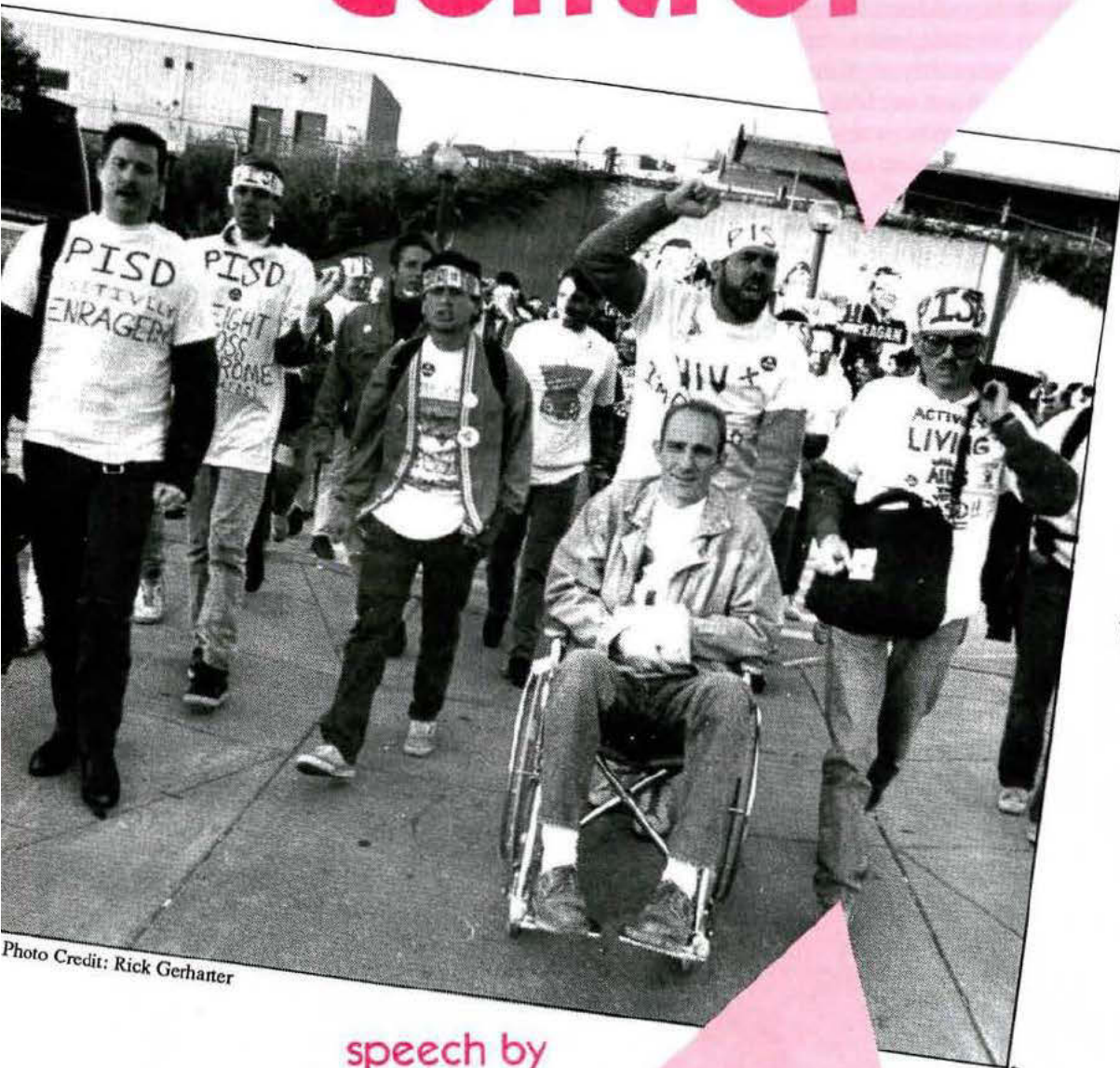


Photo Credit: Rick Gerharter

speech by  
**Ferd Eggan**  
**PISD Caucus**  
**of ACT NOW**

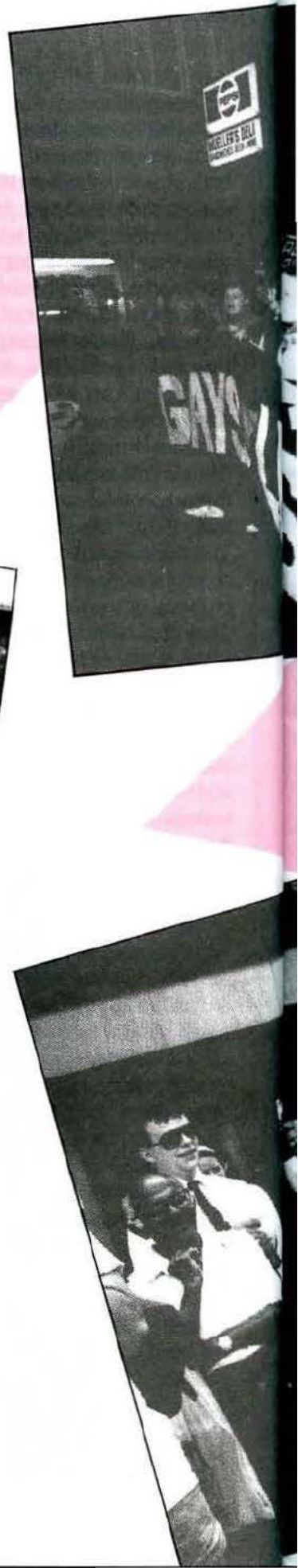




Photo Credit: Rick Gerharter

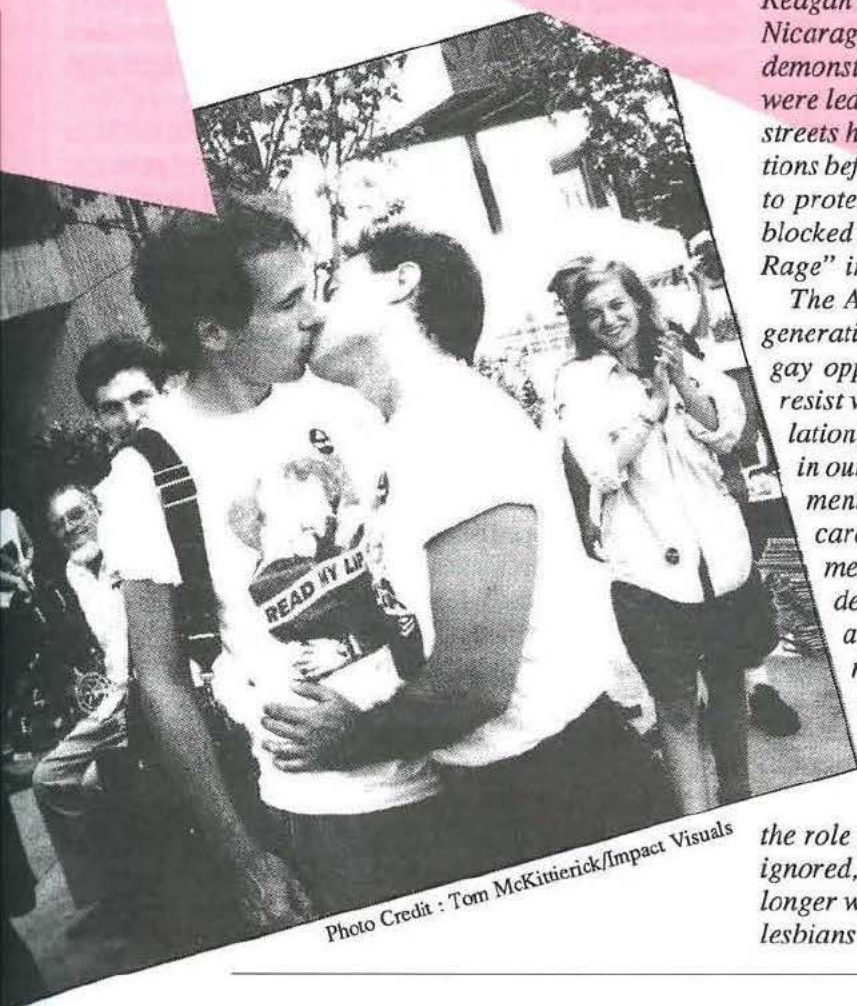


Photo Credit: Tom McKitterick/Impact Visuals

In the last year and a half, lesbians and gay men have been taking to the streets in numbers and with a militance not seen since over a decade ago. While many actions have focused on AIDS, it would be a mistake to see this new activism as limited to AIDS alone. For many of us, the AIDS movement is a vital part of our movement for lesbian and gay liberation.

While hundreds of thousands of lesbians and gay men have staffed educational and service groups to deal with the AIDS crisis, an angry response has also surfaced. The emergence of ACT UP (AIDS Coalition To Unleash Power) in New York in early 1987 sparked dozens of similar groups to form around the country—over 50 by the time of the national Teach-In and Action called by ACT NOW (AIDS Coalition to Network, Organize, and WIN) in Washington, DC, in October 1988. These groups have been staging increasingly defiant demonstrations that have confronted government institutions, drug companies, and even commuters on the Golden Gate Bridge, to draw attention to the AIDS crisis.

Within this same period, over 800,000 gay men and lesbians converged on Washington, DC, in October 1987 for the March for Lesbian and Gay Rights, the largest civil rights march that city has ever seen. In March 1988, when Reagan sent masses of troops to the Honduran border of Nicaragua and was met with five days of non-stop street demonstrations in San Francisco, two days of actions were led by the lesbian/gay community, bringing into the streets hundreds who had never participated in such actions before. In other demonstrations, we have turned out to protest the antigay violence, including the 500 who blocked Manhattan traffic in the August 1988 "Gays of Rage" in New York.

The AIDS crisis has helped to mobilize a whole new generation of lesbians and gay men to press for an end to gay oppression. Growing numbers are determined to resist violent attacks, the proliferation of antigay legislation, and attempts to reverse the gains we have made in our struggle for freedom. This reinvigorated movement is fraught with contradictions. Issues of health care, of sexuality, and of our relationship to government institutions and the electoral process are being debated. Other issues—the relationship of lesbians and lesbian issues to a movement led predominantly by gay men; the connection between gay and women's issues, such as the fight for abortion rights; how best to build support for the struggles of people of color—need to be addressed much more than they already are. But the role gay liberation plays in the left can no longer be ignored, and the question for the left to address is no longer whether, but how, to take up the issues raised by lesbians and gay men.

has been the emergence of people with AIDS and other immune disorders as an organized force within the movement. The PISD (People with Immune System Disorders) Caucus of ACT NOW has broken down the artificial distinctions of the medical establishment by uniting those of us with AIDS, with ARC, with chronic fatigue syndrome, with HIV positive status, with Epstein-Barr virus, and with other immune disorders. Informing PISD caucuses within ACT UP-type groups, we have talked about what it means to be activists with disabling illnesses, how to have our diseases taken seriously, how to investigate and obtain whatever treatments we choose and how to support and validate each other in the process.

PISD challenges the myth of the "AIDS victim." This was seen at the October 1988 shut-down of the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) Headquarters when the PISD caucus led demonstrators through police barricades to claim the front of the building. Once arrested, PISD organized those in jail to stand in solidarity with each other, refusing to leave or cooperate until the needs were met of those who were hearing-impaired, needed extra blankets to stay warm, had other illness-related problems, or faced more serious charges than the rest of those arrested.

We are reprinting the keynote speech that was delivered by the PISD caucus to the ACT NOW teach-in just prior to the FDA action (first published in the Nov. 20-26, 1988 issue of Gay Community News). The PISD speech sets a tone of anger and defiance from those of us who do battle with the health care system on a daily basis. Furthermore, it challenges the AIDS activist movement to confront issues that it has tended to avoid: to see AIDS as a worldwide epidemic, not just its impact in the United States; to acknowledge and oppose racism and sexism in our movement and in society; to see our work as part of a gay liberation struggle; and to push the limits of militance as far as necessary to achieve our goals.

As progressive people, there is much we can learn from PISD. Many on the left these days look at the state of this country and feel depressed, helpless, and cynical. The example of PISD men and women, some in wheelchairs, some on canes, some nearly blind, outmaneuvering police lines to take over the government bureaucracy that literally decides if we live or die—three members of PISD who participated have died since the October action—should serve as an inspiration to us all. The FDA action, and the role of PISD, was no symbolic victory. It was a moral victory from which we felt and built our own power and strength in the face of great odds. It was a courageous example of the type of movement we can build and the kind of society we can create.

All women and men who are living with AIDS and other immune system disorders can contact PISD c/o ACT NOW, 2300 Market St., Suite 87, S.F., CA 94114.

**T**his message is brought to you by all the ACT NOW people who are PISD, and especially by Margie, Arawn, Terry, Mark, Mic and Pam. We speak—if it's not too presumptuous—for all the men and women with AIDS and other immune system diseases around the world, and with 50,000 others in mind who are no longer here. We live with the epidemic in our own flesh, and we wanted to begin this gathering with an awareness of the special urgency we feel. In a larger sense, all of us here are feeling the epidemic's impact on our lives.

Well, dear friends, ACT NOW is gathered here to assess our movement. We're only a year old. But the AIDS movement is as old as the epidemic. This month marks the third anniversary of the S.F. AIDS/ARC Vigil, the first and longest continuous civil disobedience action around AIDS in the U.S. Three years ago, PWAs chained themselves to the doors of the S.F. Federal Building and demanded humane treatment; the fact that they are still there indicates how much work lies ahead of us. We've been working together as ACT NOW since the fateful and difficult "Educate, Agitate, Organize" meeting here in DC last October. ACT NOW has a whole week of joint activities in April and May under our belts, and far too many phone calls to coordinate actions at the Conventions and this shindig here. We are back in DC because this country needs us, and because we want to learn from our successes and our failures and develop our unity to work together in the future.

We are one part of a huge movement around AIDS, a whole uprising brought about by abuse on top of pain. For those of us who are lesbians or gay men, this has all-too-often been the story of our lives—despised by a racist, anti-woman, anti-gay society, now we have to take on the burden of epidemic death and suffering. But we are strong. All of us, gay or not, are moving through our love and pain to take power over our lives—the power to act, to demand, to resist injustice.

Look at how far we have come. In eight years' time, people with AIDS, staring at the face of death, have created a network of caring services around this country. We have developed underground guerrilla clinics to provide information and treatments that the government has refused to even test—let alone make available for people in need. And we are seizing medicine and health care away from the doctors and the experts. The actions of this AIDS movement are a challenge to the whole system of health care in this country. We demand a profound

Photos (pp. 10-11): Left—PISD Caucus members march on the FDA building, Rockville, MD, October 1988. Top—Lesbian/gay community leads S.F. protest against U.S. war maneuvers in Honduras, March 1988. The banner reads, "Gays • Lesbians Say No War." Bottom—ACT UP kiss-in at Democratic Convention in Atlanta, July 1988.

change—we say that health care is for human needs, not for corporate profit. We are here in Washington, DC, to carry that challenge to the centers of power in the Department of Health and Human Services and the FDA.

Our protest in the streets has already forced changes in government policy. We are the ones who forced the President to create an AIDS Commission, and we dogged them, made them take a human and progressive stand in the face of the callous and moralistic pronouncements of the President himself. PWAs and health workers forced the CDC to recognize ARC and extend disability coverage to PWARCs. We are the ones who made the FDA develop fast-track testing for AIDS drugs; now we are here to make them *use* the fast track.

There's something else we have done—we have helped to recreate the movement for lesbian and gay liberation. We have heard the puritanical criticisms that said the 70s were a death trip of rutting sexuality and alienation. But gay men's sexual networks in particular were the foundation to build the communities that care for each other now. Did you cry for joy at the glorious sight of all those dykes and fags at the march on Washington last year, all three-quarters of a million of us? It is an unfortunate fact that the march would never have been so large if it hadn't been for AIDS. After sorrow comes joy.

And we have learned in our movement as we struggled with each other over racism and sexism and different physical abilities. We are like other North Americans, and we have grown up in a system that has relegated Blacks, Latinos and immigrants to poverty and suffering, pushed women into submission. Our confrontation with illness and death has taught us a little humility about our own suffering, and helped us to expand our loving consciousness to reach out to other communities, to overcome prejudices and realize what we have in common. And I am proud of those struggles where we changed ourselves.

I am proudest that a caucus of People with Immune System Disorders came into existence. What happened was this: a lesbian who had been a leading part of the work on AIDS and the work of ACT NOW asked what we as people with AIDS intended to do about the fact that she and many other women also suffer from immune system diseases. She urged us to see that her illness—chronic fatigue syndrome—was in need of investigation and that women were in need of the support from us that women, and lesbians in particular, have given to gay men with AIDS. So, the PISD caucus of ACT NOW came into being—a group of mostly gay men who recognize that chronic fatigue syndrome/Epstein-Barr Virus is also an immune system disease. We were able to understand the position of a person who feels sick and is told, "It's all in your head," and we are able to support our sisters/our friends.

I believe we offer a new vision of society, a new model

for a movement for social change, for justice and equality. And the movement is based on our own lives. We are stretching ourselves to love others different from ourselves, but with a realization of a common humanity. We offer action—collective, difficult but authentic action—in a society that has stolen power and meaning from all but the most privileged. When we act, we offer a new vision of what community is all about, and it's based in the nature of our loving impulses and our eroticism. Look at the NAMES Project quilt, or better, look at ads in the *San Francisco Sentinel*, where PWAs advertise in order to continue their sexual lives. These ads are a pioneering force for sexual liberation in the face of danger. We offer the erotic as a tool for the liberation of all people.

I want to talk about some of the challenges that face our movement. The principal one is the changing face of the AIDS epidemic. We hear from Stockholm the news that among gay white men, the epidemic has been contained. We still see more and more of our friends get sick, and we have to fight for them. But in terms of the rapid spread of infection, AIDS is switching to the Third World. Dr. Gallo knows: he told AIDS workers in Africa that he would test his Nobel-Prize-bid vaccine in Africa because safe-sex education had reduced the incidence of AIDS too much in the U.S., but in Africa he could count on unchecked epidemic disease. In Africa, there are 14,000 official cases of AIDS, but the World Health Organization estimates that the true number is more like 140,000.

Here in this country the fastest-growing AIDS statistics are in communities of people of color—among Blacks, Puerto Ricans, Native Americans, Mexicanos, Asians. And among the despised IV drug users, the homeless, where health care and social services are non-existent. Black, Latino and Native American forces have labeled the AIDS epidemic genocide, just like the sterilization programs that eliminated whole generations. How is our movement going to adjust to these new facts?

And AIDS is now the number one killer of women aged 18–35 in New York City. Nearly 5000 women have been diagnosed in the U.S. and half of the people with AIDS in Africa and Asia are women. Women die faster when diagnosed, and are less able to tolerate AZT, the one drug the FDA has released. Can we permit AIDS among women to remain a silent epidemic, like breast cancer?

We have an opportunity for genuine human solidarity. But, that solidarity must be a struggle to create new values, not the expedient constituency politics of this society. We are not all the same and it is counterproductive to assume that differences don't matter in the face of AIDS. The whole course of AIDS-related illness is different among Africans, for example. Each community will develop its own ways of dealing with the epidemic. Up to now, our movement has been—for good reason—largely gay and white and male. We can retain our gay consciousness and

expand to a global compassion: we can support the directions that people of color or women will develop for themselves. We can join together with others not on the basis of paternalistic sympathy, but of common suffering and common enemies. And we had better build solidarity, because AIDS has become a political weapon in the hands of real enemies who want to eliminate queers and people of color.

How do we move forward? We confront powerful forces that stand in our way—chief among them government agencies like the National Institutes of Health (NIH) and the FDA. We are in a fight with drug companies that are squeezing our blood money, like LyphoMed and Burroughs-Wellcome. [Even if Dukakis had become president instead of the CIA-wimp, we would be facing neglect and inaction.] In fact, this government, which pays for death squads and torturers in other countries so as to ensure profits for U.S. business, needs a much more thorough-going change than any president can effect. Are we willing to go that far? Are we willing to go beyond the formalities of civil disobedience to achieve those changes?

We want to stop AIDS. There are whole populations we have to pay attention to and to work with—people with different abilities, the homeless, IV drug users, prisoners. This means we will have to step outside middle-class values and ideas of how to do things. And we have to keep up the fight against erotophobia and homophobia. The AIDS epidemic provides fuel for the right wing and those who listen to them. In Illinois, where I live, State Rep. Penny Pullen—one of Reagan's AIDS Commissioners—is a mainstay of the Phyllis Schlafly Eagle Forum. Pullen and others have just successfully passed a bill that destroys the confidentiality protections of the law for people "suspected" of having HIV infections. Now they can be tested against their will, even without their knowledge. AIDS has given strength to the right-wingers and they are killing lesbians and gay men.

The gay and lesbian freedom riders in Atlanta and New Orleans showed us that we have to protest not just AIDS discrimination, but also the anti-sodomy laws. Those die-ins and kiss-ins were important acts, just like the Gay and Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation and ACTUP demonstrations against gay bashing in New York City. We all know that AIDS is not a gay disease, but let's face it, in the minds of most people, that's how it is perceived and mostly gay men have died in this country. In the minds of most people all gay men and lesbians are

considered sinister AIDS carriers and are targets for attack. So, it's more important than ever to reaffirm the rightness of our sexual desire. One of our lesbian AIDS activists introduced herself in one of those "let's go around the room and say something about ourselves" by saying she liked sex. Let's take up those courageous words and keep remembering what speaks even louder.

We have to be clear about what we want. In October of last year we came up with a tentative program in the AIDS Action Pledge. In the Pledge, we called for a broad movement "in solidarity with all people threatened by the AIDS crisis so that no one is abandoned." We recognized that the AIDS crisis disproportionately affects men and women of color, and called for massive funding; comprehensive, sex-positive education; and a free, nationalized health care system. We know the AIDS Action Pledge is not perfect, but is a living document that we have deepened and made more effective. Our demands of Health and Human Services and the FDA show how we can work together and make our work sharp and effective.

But I need to point out one more enemy—and perhaps this is the most powerful of all—it is ourselves. For the sake of millions of people in this country and around the world, we have to learn from each other and build unity. Let's ACT NOW with humility and respect, let's get to know and trust one another. Look around. We are the AIDS activists, for better or worse, in sickness and in health. We, dear sisters and brothers, are the ones we have to rely on to take care of business.

One thing is clear—the government is not going to take care of us. Just as the PWAs themselves had to take control of the government's activities in education, prevention, services to people who are sick.

The fact, dear friends, is that AIDS has taught us how to live and how to be well—by fighting for what's right. It is our society that is truly sick—sick with oppression and exploitation. The government is not interested in helping us—they would prefer that we curl up and die. In the face of cruelty and injustice, it's right to rebel.

We all have to act, and act now. There is hope for this sick society—the healing power of our anger and

love. Love does not mean being nice, it means seeing what's wrong and trying to change it. We've already accepted the part that can't be changed—the death of friends that we love. Now we want to change what we can. In the words of our brilliant and loving fanatics, "Act Up! Fight Back! Fight AIDS!" □

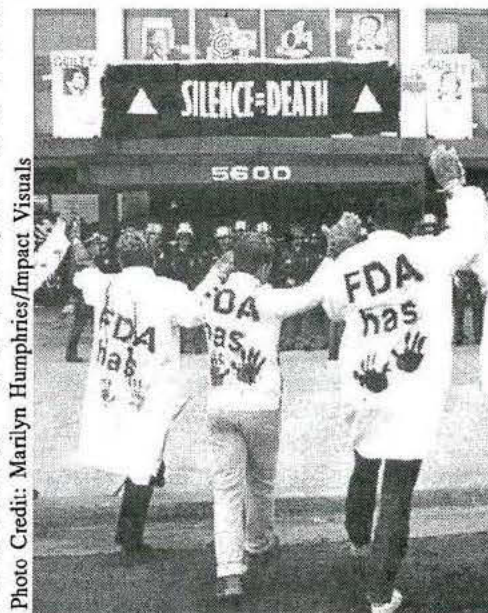
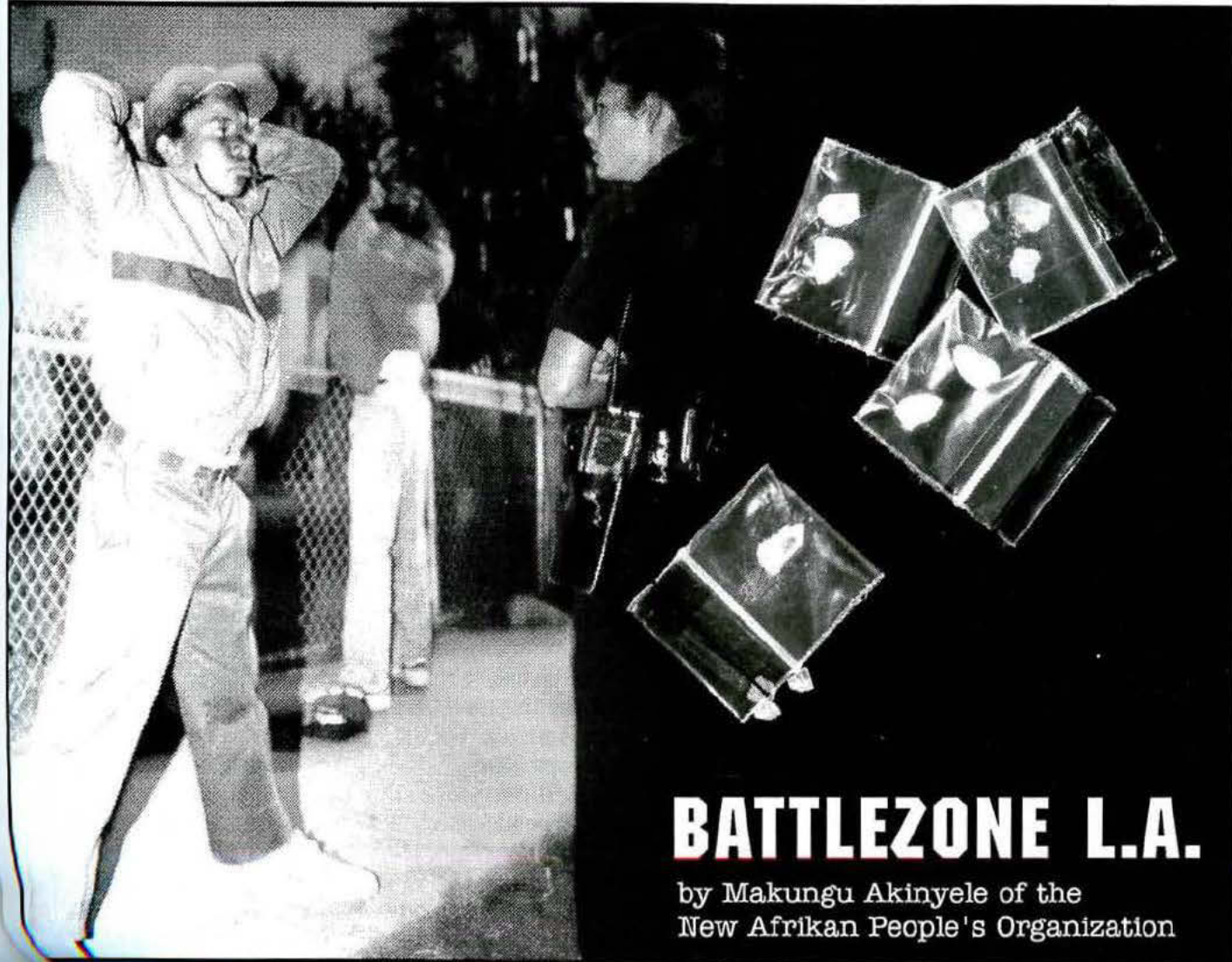


Photo Credit: Marilyn Humphries/Impact Visuals



## BATTLEZONE L.A.

by Makungu Akinyele of the  
New Afrikan People's Organization

**A**ll across the U.S. empire, the New Afrikan community of Los Angeles has become a symbol of the endless cycle of life and death without growth which most of our people are experiencing in this last part of the decade of the 1980s. Everyone wants to know, "What is happening in L.A.? Is it as bad as we hear on T.V.?" Los Angeles has become a synonym for death and drugs. Depending on the source of your news, L.A. is the gang capitol or the drug capitol or the murder capitol of the U.S. empire. And always the images and faces we see in connection with that news are Black and young.

The truth is that it is as bad as "they" say. The Black community of Los Angeles is in a crisis—possibly the worse crisis we have ever faced. But what "they" don't say is that our community is not the perpetrator of the crisis; we are the victims.

What is happening in Los Angeles is no new thing. This is a part of the historical colonial oppression which has been placed on our people and native Indian people and Mexicano people ever since the first colonial settlers and slave traders and land grabbers decided that God had destined them to take the "burden" of the colored peoples of

the world on their shoulders and become the masters of the world.

In Los Angeles, the New Afrikan community is being devastated, torn apart by a monster. That monster is the triple evil of drugs, gangs and police terrorism. These three must be seen and spoken of in the same context. They are all part of the historic systematic oppression and exploitation of our community.

On a main street in South Central L.A., on any given night, young brothers can be seen just hanging out, gesturing to any driver who happens to pass by and glance their way. Shoulders hunched and the question is, "What'cha need!" L.A. streets are becoming drug supermarkets—crack cocaine retail centers. The dealers line the streets, some as young as ten and twelve. Close behind them are the women and girls, after those same drive-by customers. These are the cluck heads. The army of prostitutes out to turn a trick for \$10? \$5? \$2? Just a little money to help them buy some drugs and make it through the night. And somewhere in the apartments and projects and cheap motels or abandoned cars are children, often left unattended. Many of them, babies born with their mothers' drug hab-

its. Hungry, dirty and frightened. They are living with anger and abuse and neglect. Thousands of babies who have never eaten a nutritious meal, or played with a new toy or slept in a warm bed. These men, women and children are the victims of colonialism. Living out a reality which they did not create. They are dying slowly. Thousands of them.

Then there is the quick death. The death by drive-by shootings, as automatic weapons' fire breaks the relative silence of the L.A. nights and steals the lives of mother and father and aunt and uncle and brother and sister and many of those same babies, who have come into a world that already seems so meaningless and callous. These are the victims of Uzis and AK-47s and CAR-15s and all kinds of exotic guns with numbers and letters for names. Their cracking and sputtering weave through the sound of car horns and sirens and loud music. And with each sputter and crack, more pain and death is spread in our community. This is the gang war. It is the destructive outcome of a ritual of searching and seeking identity, power and meaning by young men and women who know that they live in a hostile world controlled by people who will never allow them to live and grow into who they were meant to be. So they find their identity in names like Cuzz and Blood, Crip and Piru. And in red and blue rags. Meaningless to the outside world, but holding the power of life and death to the young people of the New Afrikan community.

Fifteen or twenty years ago this search for identity, this energy and desire to belong, would have led Cuzz and Blood to become freedom fighters. Members of the Black Panther Party or the New Afrikan Legion or the Black Guards. But now hundreds are dying each year in a meaningless holocaust. Just as much victims of a growing state fascism as any victim at Auschwitz or Dachau. South Central Los Angeles has become our concentration camp!

On that same South Central street, on any given weekend, terror can break out from the city's oldest and best financed and equipped gang. This is the Los Angeles Police Department on one of their infamous and impotent so-called gang sweeps. Hundreds of young Black men and women are rounded up on the streets of the city and lined up on their knees with fingers laced behind their heads for "routine" investigations and traffic tickets or because of the clothes they wear or the way they stand or because they are dressed too well or not well enough. The message is clear: All Black people, especially men are considered dangerous criminals and will be treated as such. The scenes of lines of young brothers on their knees on the sidewalk as LAPD "soldier-cops" pace back and forth or posture in front of them is common. It can remind you of a picture from South Africa. The ideology is the same, only the names are changed. Colonialism and white supremacy is alive and well in Los Angeles.



The people of our community are confused, bewildered and frightened by what is happening. No answers have come out of the community and no leadership. All answers and leadership has come from the state and Black neo-colonial politicians employed by the state. The "party line" is that we are to blame for the conditions which exist in our community. T.V. documentaries and newscasts emphasize that it is the laziness and irresponsibility of the Black man in taking care of his children which has resulted in the delinquency of Black teenagers and the rise of Black teen pregnancy and, therefore, in the rise of more and more Black teenage women on the welfare rolls, continuing a Black tradition of dependence on the (white) taxpayer. Newspaper and magazine articles, written

by "objective" reporters after much "in-depth" research, report that there is a drug crisis in America caused primarily by Black street gangs which have cornered the market on the drug trade from Central and South America. We are cited as the cause, not only of our own problems, but of the general decline of American society. The stage for a fascist holocaust is being set.

Black politicians and business people and even many frightened community people are calling for more police protection and even the national guard. They have forgotten the hundreds of deaths of innocent people at the hands of the LAPD and the Sheriff's Department. The state for its part is overjoyed at this anger/fear reaction from within the community. It has gladly supplied the answers to the problem. Police sweeps, more police, more jails, prisons and youth detention centers and more sophisticated weapons. And of course more authority for the police and the courts to persecute and prosecute the criminalized Black community.

In Los Angeles, the white supremacist policies highlighted by the Reagan regime have been put to the test—and they are working. The velvet glove of the past twenty years or so has been completely taken off and thrown down as a gauntlet to challenge the New Afrikan nation. The iron fist has been exposed and shows no sign of being withdrawn.

The drugs, the gangbanging, the deaths and the police sweeps are no isolated example of bad policies or mismanagement or a few corrupt politicians' opportunism, or even just good old American racism. What is happening in Los Angeles is part of a historical and current program of international imperialism and colonialism. The New Afrikans in Los Angeles are just a segment of one of many nations which are suffering because of the colonial policies of the U.S. government.

There have been gangs in Los Angeles for decades. Black, Latino, Asian. Bands of youth coming together to



find a meaning to their lives. To find identity, love and power within a society which denies them all of this, as well as denying the very validity of the cultures in which they live.

But what was once a natural outgrowth of traditional rites of passage from adolescence to adulthood, what was once a means of maintaining self and group identity and affirming self-worth, has been distorted into an ugly glorification of blood revenge and death with the profit motive as the bottom line. Young gangbangers are taking the lie of the American capitalist dream to its ugliest conclusion, chasing after a dream that American colonialism will never let them have.

Many of us in the New Afrikan Independence Movement can see a close relationship between the rise of violent gangbanging inside the Black community of L.A. and the destruction of the Black Panther Party and other revolutionary nationalist organizations in this city by the FBI/U.S. government Counter-Intelligence Program, which purposely set about to create distrust, anger and hatred between members of different organizations. Many of these young revolutionaries had been gang members before they were organized into the liberation struggle.

The destruction of Black revolutionary organizations left a void in the Black community which was quickly filled with bourgeois colonial cultural influences glorifying gross individualism, violence for the sake of personal revenge, vulgar materialism and drug culture. Malcolm X, Huey Newton, and Geronimo Pratt were replaced in the minds of New Afrikan youth with Shaft, the Mack and SuperFly by colonial culture.

Behind this cultural onslaught has also come a rise in unemployment in the Los Angeles New Afrikan community, a severe shortage of housing which has forced thousands of homeless into the streets, and a serious rise in the dropout rate from the city's Black high schools. The Black community of Los Angeles has also been at the mercy of a ruthless police department for the past decade which has killed hundreds of us with little hope of justice.

These conditions have created a situation of anger, fear and self-hatred in our community which is being expressed by our misdirected youth in the gang wars. In 1980, there were 351 deaths attributed to

the gang wars. In 1987, the rate was 387. But whereas in years past brothers fought over territory and the "set" you belonged to, now it's all about crack cocaine and the money, prestige, power and "things" that come along with it.

Much of the U.S. news media would leave us with the impression that the so-called drug gangs, especially those in Los Angeles, are responsible for the influx of cocaine into the United States.

Witnesses before a Senate subcommittee in Washington D.C. have testified that CIA operatives in Central America have allowed gun runners taking guns to the contras camped in Honduras to unload their military weapons and then reload their planes with cocaine to be taken back to the U.S. to be sold—with a portion of the proceeds from cocaine sales to be donated to the contra effort.

Outside of the U.S., drug deals help to finance an illegal war to help U.S. imperialism regain territory lost when the Nicaraguan people overthrew the U.S.-supported dictator Somoza. Inside the U.S., drug deals help to fuel a war and maintain a state of confusion among New Afrikans which keeps us immobilized and unable to become organized and to fight back against our real enemy.

By creating the illusion that the drug traffic is run by Black street gangs in cooperation with South American drug cartels against the wishes of the American government which is powerless to stop these evil murderers, U.S. imperialism and colonialism is able to criminalize the New Afrikan nation as a whole and justify more and more

Photo Credit: Judy Janda/Impact Visuals



July 19, 1988, Bedford-Stuyvesant, NY,  
Black community rally against crack

vicious repression in our communities.

Here in Los Angeles, as the mythology of the criminal Black youth and the lost cause of saving the Black community is perpetuated, in South Central plans are being made to buy up all of the property in our community which has been blighted by the criminal element.

As more and more horror stories are told of so-called Black-on-Black crime and as Black businesses are forced to shut down and the community becomes a prison shut off from the outside world, the image is created that this is a hopeless area and the cost of property is driven down. In recent months speculators and land grabbers such as the University of Southern California have stepped in to buy up property in order to "revitalize" the area. Of course, this means displacing thousands of Black families which will only serve to add to the crisis in housing which already exists in this city.

The New Afrikan People's Organization has posed a means to resist this situation in the city. We have been working to organize the community on a grassroots level by building a *Saving Our Youth Freedom Campaign*. The campaign is organizing around six principles of unity:

1. To build Black hope, self-respect and unity in the Black community;
2. We want allocated funds (state and federal) to be directed to jobs for our youth, not for more police;
3. Stop U.S. importation of drugs into the Black community and maintain support for community drug programs;
4. Stop terrorist so-called "gang sweeps" and the criminalization of the Black community;
5. Black elected officials must be accountable to the Black community first;
6. Prevent police murders and attacks on innocent people, and the military occupation in the Black community.

These are the things that the campaign is working for. The campaign has also targeted five goals which it wants to achieve:

1. To unite all of the organizations, community groups, churches, and individuals possible to work for an end to the crisis;
2. To work in the South Central and South west areas of the Black community;
3. To take groups of community people to City Hall and local politicians' offices to press our demands;
4. To help community people develop grass roots solutions to the crisis, such as "stop and watch" anti-police abuse programs, and anti-crack community patrols;
5. We will organize marches and rallies throughout the Black community to highlight the community's determination to end the crisis in a just and uplifting way.

The most seriously effected segment of the community in the crisis at this time is the youth. And it is from the youth that our most concrete hope is deriving. Members of NAPO's youth movement, the New Afrikan Panthers, are working within high school Black Student Unions (BSUs) and along with other youth organizations in a rising tide of Black consciousness unlike any seen for many years.

Beginning with the demands of university students for divestment in the late 70s and early 80s, a student and youth movement has begun to snowball and has moved even to the high school and junior high school level, not only in Los Angeles, but across the country.

This rising consciousness among the youth has been spurred on culturally by hip hop and rap, by groups like Public Enemy and Stetsasonic, and the increased alienation felt by New Afrikan youth from America. The result has been an increasing number of youth organizations with strong Black consciousness which are beginning to be viable alternatives to the gangbanging and drugs, and which clearly define the colonial relationship our people have to the police.

NAPO is confident that, though our people are in a serious crisis which appears to have no end, we will find our answer in the youth of the community. We will find relief through organizing of the New Afrikan Panther youth, along with other groups, such as the National African Youth Student Association, the City-wide African Student Association and the local BSUs in the high schools. These are the organizations which can pose an alternative to the brothers and sisters in the community and lend ideological direction to our young people through Black Consciousness which is opposed to the drugs, gangbanging and the police terrorism, and is willing to move the youth to resistance. □

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*Makungu Akinyele is a writer and family counselor in the Black community of L.A. He is a founding member of the New Afrikan People's Organization (NAPO). NAPO grows out of the historic struggle of Black people for human rights and self-determination and has become a leading part of the New Afrikan Independence Movement, committed to establishing a sovereign socialist Republic of New Afrika in the states of Louisiana, Mississippi, Alabama, Georgia and South Carolina. They uphold the right of New Afrikans to self-defense against racist terror. NAPO supports New Afrikan Freedom Fighters and campaigns to win the freedom of political prisoners and Prisoners of War. They have deep roots in struggles for Black community control of education and for the full participation of New Afrikan women in the liberation struggle. For more information, write to NAPO at P.O. Box 2348, New York, NY 10027; P.O. Box 5698, Los Angeles, CA 90056; P.O. Box 04252, Detroit, MI 48204; or P.O. Box 11464, Atlanta, GA 30310.*



# Namibia and Angola Free at Last?

by Felix Shafer

**O**n December 22, 1988, at a stormy United Nations ceremony presided over by George Shultz, two landmark agreements concerning the future of Southern Africa were signed by the governments of Angola, South Africa and Cuba. The first mandates implementation of UN Resolution 435 (calling for the total withdrawal of South African troops from Namibia), independence and the election of a sovereign government by November 1, 1989. Both South Africa and Angola agreed to cease aiding guerrilla movements fighting the other. A second agreement, between Cuba and Angola, sets forth a timetable for the phased withdrawal of all Cuban forces from Angola. With the clock on the seven month timetable for implementation of Namibian independence due to begin ticking on April 1st, the U.S. and South African governments are mounting a renewed effort to undermine genuine independence and peace.

A new chapter in the battle for the liberation of Southern Africa has begun. On the complex map of this region, involving the interconnections of so many countries and liberation movements, the accords may bring only a temporary lull in the long war against foreign domination.

For the U.S. and South Africa, diplomatic initiatives are often used as camouflage to continue covert aggression. The success or failure of the UN monitored peace process will have a serious impact on similar negotiations to settle regional conflicts throughout the developing world.

If the letter and spirit of the accords are actually followed, it will be an historic step in Africa's quest for freedom. If they aren't—and based on the racist regime's sordid record and the current U.S./South African machinations, it is entirely possible that they won't be—activists will be called upon to mobilize the dormant mass base of the anti-apartheid movement for action. The coming months are an urgent time for Southern Africa, yet it appears that the rapidly evolving

situation is in danger of catching the U.S. progressive movement offguard.

## BATTLEFIELD ANGOLA

Angola is a large mineral-rich nation with a population of 9 million. Led by the socialist-oriented MPLA, the People's Republic of Angola has been a target of international aggression ever since independence was won from Portugal thirteen years ago. From the first, Cuban support helped this young revolutionary nation withstand South African aggression. As an African-Caribbean people, Cuba fought alongside its sisters and brothers not out of narrow self-interest, but under the internationalist banner of Che. Contrary to western press labels that Cuba entered Africa as "mercenary adventurers," Cuban resistance to white supremacy stands out as one of the century's clearest demonstrations of internationalism.

During a six-week period between mid-March and late April 1988, large scale conventional battles between the forces of national liberation and imperialism climaxed on the African continent. In the siege of Cuito Cuanavale, a key town in southeastern Angola, South African invasion forces attempted to prevent Angolan troops from crushing apartheid's "contra" force, UNITA. Angolan and Cuban forces poured troops and highly sophisticated weaponry into the battle. The siege was finally broken and along with it the backbone of the invasion. White casualties were high and thousands of retreating apartheid soldiers found themselves surrounded. Slightly later in June, South Africa lost control of the air to Cuban and Angolan pilots at the battle of Calueque Dam project ten miles from the Namibian border.

An army of African fighters dealt South Africa a defeat it was neither militarily nor politically prepared for. Angolan forces advanced into territory hitherto controlled by UNITA and South Africa. South Africa calculated that it could no longer afford to sustain the status quo, and the process of serious negotiations began. The agreement signed at the UN stipulates a twenty-seven-month timetable for the withdrawal of Cuban forces and South Africa has agreed to cease supporting and sheltering UNITA. The Cuban government has made it clear that if South Africa violates the accord it is prepared to remain side-by-side with the Angolan people.

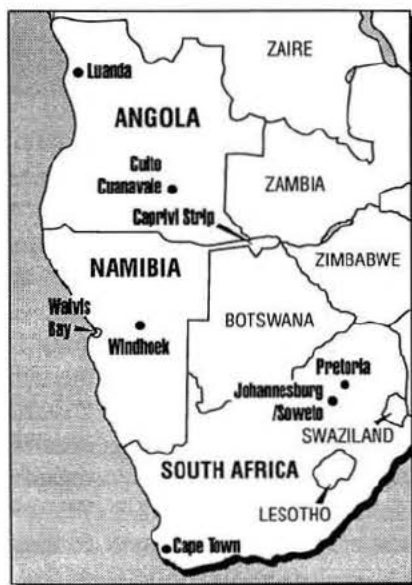
The agreement leaves unsettled the continuing conflict between UNITA and the MPLA. In the days before his inauguration, President Bush sent

UNITA leader Savimbi a letter promising to continue providing millions of dollars in covert support. Whether or not South African aid for UNITA does cease, as mandated by the accord, U.S. influence is already increasing. UNITA troops are being moved from southern Angola to the northwest where they are being supplied by the CIA out of its Kamina base in Zaire. Fierce battles are being reported in Quimbele in northern Angola, where the Angolan army is hammering UNITA in order to prevent them from establishing a base area. The U.S. Agency for International Development (AID) is spending millions to build roads in southern Zaire whose sole purpose is to facilitate movement of troops and war materiel to be used against Angola. These developments indicate the depth of U.S. government commitment to intervention in the region. By February 1989, UNITA announced plans for a new offensive against the government. Two weeks later, South Africa violated the UN agreement by invading 25 miles into southern Angola.

The MPLA government is struggling to force South Africa and the U.S. to end their joint sponsorship of UNITA. The recent accords are one part of this strategy, as are preliminary talks with UNITA and the offer of amnesty to UNITA members who turn themselves in. Angola also seeks full diplomatic recognition from the U.S. (denied since independence in 1976), and has applied to join the International Monetary Fund and World Bank. If the U.S. agrees to establish full relations, it will be more difficult for the Bush administration to continue covert support for UNITA.

Shortly after the agreement on Namibia was signed and the timetable for Cuban withdrawal established, the African National Congress (ANC) announced it would close its military training bases in Angola. The estimated 2,000-6,000 guerrilla fighters are to move to Tanzania, Ethiopia and other countries. This development was not specified in the accords. It was widely rumored to be one of the principal concessions demanded by the U.S. and South Africa in their effort to force the ANC to abandon armed struggle as a precondition for negotiations. While not entirely unanticipated, this is a setback for the struggle against apartheid. It will make the building of a liberation army in secure and relatively nearby base areas much more difficult.

The precedent for this move was the 1983 Nkomati Accord signed between South Africa and Mozambique when South Africa agreed to cease aggression against Mozambique (including aid for the murderous Mozambique National Resistance, MNR) in return



for closing ANC military bases. Documents found by Mozambiquan and Zimbabwean forces, when they captured an MNR headquarters, revealed that South African support and control continued in blatant violation of Nkomati. The negative political/military impact of Nkomati on the battle against apartheid was largely cancelled out by a new uprising inside South Africa, which began in 1984. Nevertheless, ANC fighters were deprived of bases along South Africa's eastern border. Angola, to the north of Namibia, and not directly bordering the racist state, became an important external base area.

Now, in order to support Namibian independence, the ANC is quietly leaving Angola for bases at even greater distance from the frontlines. On January 8, 1989, the ANC stated that the tripartite pact is an "advance of strategic significance for our region and for our own struggle," and that it would do "everything in its power to facilitate" Namibian independence. The ANC further pledged that armed struggle inside South Africa would be intensified.

### NAMIBIA: THE PERILOUS TRANSITION

The ANC's commitment to Namibian freedom underscores the importance of this struggle to all of Africa. Nothing less than the independence of a colonized nation is at stake, and whether or not this new sovereign nation will be led by a popular government headed by SWAPO. SWAPO (the South West Africa Peoples Organization) is recognized the world over as the legitimate representative of the Namibian people. Since 1966 it has waged guerrilla war and mass struggle for independence.

For more than seventy years the South African army, allied with 100,000 white settlers, has occupied Namibia in blatant violation of UN resolutions and international law. A vast country larger than Texas with a population of about 1.5 million, Namibia is one of the world's great treasuries of natural resources. Because of its tremendous wealth and strategic location, neither finance capital nor the South African military-dominated State Council (South Africa's key decision-making body) have been willing before now to consider giving up control, despite the \$600 million annual cost of occupation.

South Africa's agreement to withdraw from Namibia should not be taken as an invitation for euphoria. While the possibility of political independence is a victory we all hope for, early returns do not bode well for the sincerity of

U.S. or South African intentions. SWAPO remains a banned organization, and its leaders are still in exile.

With the ink barely dry on the accords, the South African army began reinforcing its position in northern Namibia and training new combinations of counter-revolutionaries to subvert the decolonization process:

- UNITA forces are being moved into the Caprivi Strip in Namibia where they could be used to destabilize the transition process and attack a future SWAPO-led government. UNITA members are being given Namibian identity documents by the racists, indicating they are planning to stay.




Cuban Women's Anti-aircraft Unit on their departure from Angola, January 1989.

- Moses Katjuongua, Welfare Minister in the South African puppet government in Namibia is reported to have set up a "private" army which is being trained at South African bases.
- Koevoet (Afrikaans for "crowbar"), a para-military police squad run by South Africa, which terrorizes the Namibian population, is to be disbanded, but not disarmed. This raises the specter of these forces allying with UNITA and others.

South Africa's own polling shows that in a free and fair election SWAPO is likely to win 85% of the vote. This is a democratic outcome Pretoria and Washington are loathe to accept.

continued on p. 40

# Women



**I**n the three years since the overthrow of Marcos, the promises of the Corizon Aquino government have proved shallow. To pay its \$27 billion debt, Aquino is borrowing abroad and seeking more foreign investment. Land reform is a sham. Forty-three percent of the budget goes towards debt service, while a third goes to the military. Meanwhile, 80 percent of the population lives below the poverty line and the country—the 14th largest food producer in the world—has the second lowest caloric intake in Asia.

Aquino's highest priority has been "total war" against the revolutionary movement. The countryside is totally militarized with free-fire zones, bombing and strafing, the hamleting of villagers suspected of being National Democratic Front (NDF) sympathizers, the displacement of close to 200,000 civilians and an estimated 700 political detainees—conditions worse than martial law under Marcos.

Government-sponsored vigilante groups have terrorized the population with assassinations, rape, disappearances and torture. In the past year, six human rights lawyers have been killed in Manila; leaders of mass movements like BAYAN (a coalition of 2,000 cause-oriented groups) and KADENA (the Philippine Youth Organization) have disappeared. In December, the Defense Minister announced that BAYAN, KADENA, GABRIELA (a national coalition of over 100 women's groups), the KMU (a national federation of labor unions and workers' organizations) and the organization of the urban poor were banned.

Despite this repression, the public movement is growing in size and strength and reaching into every sector of society. Their demands—an end to repression, democracy, land reform, and national sovereignty—are fundamental challenges to the current regime. The NDF and the New People's Army (NPA) operate in nearly all 73 provinces. They count on a mass base of close to ten million people and have recently begun to organize provisional revolutionary governments on the barrio, municipal and district levels.

The U.S. stakes in the Philippines are clear. Subic Bay Naval Base and Clark Air Base are home to 14,000 military personnel, with another 5,000 coming in and out of Subic regularly. These bases are the forward thrust of U.S. military power in Asia and will never willingly be given up. So Sikorsky helicopters and U.S. bombs rain death on the Philippine people, while the CIA directs counterinsurgency operations. Along with El Salvador, low-intensity conflict in the Philippines is high on the U.S. agenda. Building solidarity with the Philippine struggle is an urgent necessity.

In the summer of 1988, Breakthrough had the privilege of interviewing a leading member of Makibaka, the clandestine revolutionary women's organization in the NDF. Makibaka developed as part of the Philippine national democratic movement as well as part of the worldwide women's liberation movement of the 70s. It arose in a country where the feudal image of the passive, subservient Filipina coexists with a traffic in women's bodies that is one of the largest in the world. Between 16 and 20,000 prostitutes, including children, live in Olongapo where Subic Bay Naval Base is located. Filipina mail-order brides and "entertainment girls" are bought, sold and

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Interview with Makibaka



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**Breakthrough:** *Could you start by telling us about Makibaka and how it developed?*

**Makibaka:** Makibaka is a revolutionary women's organization within the National Democratic Front (NDF). It was founded in 1971 by young female students who were members of two radical youth organizations, the Kabataan Makabayan, which means Nationalist Youth, and the Samahang Demokratiko Ng Kabataan, the Organization of Democratic Youth. Both had a national democratic orientation. In 1970 or '71, the women members of these organizations decided to hold a picket at the Miss Philippines beauty contest. This picket generated a lot of public interest; newspaper accounts carried headlines and photos. The group of women who were picketing the beauty contest decided to call themselves Makibaka, which means the Nationalist Movement of New Women. Following the beauty contest, the founding members of Makibaka decided to form a permanent organization. Its founding Congress was held in 1971. The first chairperson of the organization was Ma. Lorena Barros, who was then a student leader at the University of the Philippines studying anthropology.

Makibaka engaged in various activities other than joining demonstrations. It organized women students and youth from secular schools, from exclusive girls' schools, Catholic schools, and even from universities. The most common term then among student activists was the word "integration," living and learning from the people. During

the summer we held integration meetings and studies with workers on the picket lines and in the communities. Some of us went to the countryside to integrate with the peasants. That was how Makibaka women were trained in the struggle.

The work of Makibaka generated interest among the nationalist organizations of that period. The words "women's liberation" became a household phrase among women activists from all sectors of society. The bourgeois media asserted that these women activists were espousing some type of sexual liberation; they would identify it with a kind of bra-burning women's liberation in the U.S. We would correct that impression in our speeches, in our discussion groups and even in the press. Student leaders would give interviews correcting that impression—that ours is not the bra-burning type of women's liberation, but a revolutionary type of women's liberation that would require the liberation of the country in order to fully liberate Filipina women. In that early stage we already identified our type of women's liberation with the national democratic movement.

Until the declaration of martial law in 1972, all our activities were very open. Then all nationalist and democratic organizations, including Makibaka, were declared illegal. All our members were blacklisted in schools and were forced to drop out of their classes. Some went underground; some opted to do organizing work in the open mass movement through various people's organizations. Others, of course, chose not to be active because of





the terrorizing effect of martial law. But many of us went to the countryside to join the armed struggle. Even before martial law was declared, Laurie Barros decided to go underground and work in the countryside to organize peasants and join the armed struggle. Later we found out that the military caught up with her sometime in 1976 in Quezon province and killed her. Most Makibaka members who went to the countryside joined the New People's Army (NPA), while the other Makibaka members in the cities decided to go underground or to work with various people's organizations. The organization existed up until the mid 70s, but we had to operate clandestinely.

However, in the mid 70s, the organization decided to suspend operations, because as many activists and cadres as possible were needed to help in the organizing efforts in the countryside. Virtually all organizations that had gone underground decided to suspend separate operations and to join the efforts to advance the armed struggle and organizing work in the countryside.

Makibaka members who joined revolutionary peasant organizations in the countryside were active in the organization of the peasant women's organization, SKM, the Samahan Ng Kababaihan Magbubuked, which means Association of Women Peasants. This is a distinctly revolutionary type of organization that openly advances and espouses armed struggle.

*BT: How did the Makibaka members in that period combine some of the struggles around feminism or women's liberation in its organizing?*

**Makibaka:** For example, in 1974, the Marcos government sponsored the Miss Universe contest in Manila. At the risk of their own security, Makibaka clandestinely circulated a manifesto denouncing the contest. The manifesto denounced the commercialization of women and the use of the Miss Universe contest by the regime to deodorize martial law at the expense of women.

In the trade union struggle, we would raise issues about childcare and maternity leave and sexual harassment. Makibaka members who were working through the trade unions would struggle with trade union leaders to adopt these demands alongside other trade union demands.

In the countryside, former Makibaka members joined various revolutionary organizations. They would try to integrate what they learned from Makibaka into the revolu-

tionary work. We were very active in propagating the concept of revolutionary women's liberation among peasant women. We tried to educate the peasant women that they should have equal rights with men; they had as much right to advance the liberation of their own class, of the entire nation and of their own sex.

*BT: How successful do you feel you were in those struggles? How receptive were the women and the men in terms of changing feudal roles?*

**Makibaka:** The feudal culture is so strong and so ingrained in the countryside that peasant women see themselves as having no part in the general peasant organizations, which are mostly male. So they welcomed the idea of having peasant women's organizations where they could talk about their problems more freely. And they can talk about issues that are very close to home. For example, what to do with their children in relation to the revolution; what to do with the relations between the sexes in a guerrilla zone.

In the past, women were merely kept on the sidelines and didn't do anything, just cooking or doing laundry for the men. They couldn't even go from one barrio to another to ask people to attend an event. But once the area was organized, their husbands didn't stand in the way of their activities; they could go to meetings and mobilizations; they were even allowed to help the NPA in waging the armed struggle. The mere fact that they allowed their wives to join peasant women organizations was an indication of how open they could be.

*BT: What has happened to Makibaka since it suspended operations in 1976?*

**Makibaka:** Although operations have been suspended, the Makibaka members, especially those who took part in the leadership, have gotten together from time to time to discuss the possibility of reviving Makibaka's work and to talk about revolutionary work among women in general.

When the mass movement burst into the open after the assassination of Ninoy Aquino and work in the countryside had advanced and developed to a great degree, former Makibaka members began to push for the reorganization of Makibaka. Especially now that the structures of the NDF are being put into place, we feel that a revolutionary peasant women's organization does not adequately answer the needs of the women's liberation movement. We feel that a multi-sectoral women's movement should arise and advance the demands of women under the revolutionary umbrella of the NDF.

At this point in time, we are reviving Makibaka, setting up its national structure and hoping to hold a Congress within this year. We have Makibaka cells and chapters

operating in various regions of the country. This is very important, especially now, when Provisional Revolutionary Governments are being set up from the barrio to the district or provincial level. The NDF's target is to set up Provisional Revolutionary Governments at the district or provincial level by 1991. When these government structures are in place, it will be easier to organize women's programs under their supervision. Unlike a women's program which is limited to the members of a particular organization, within a government structure a women's committee or a women's program could reach women at all levels in the community. And Makibaka, we think, has a very major role to play in areas where Provisional Revolutionary Governments are in place. As a non-governmental organization, Makibaka can serve to influence the government to pay attention to the problems of women in that entire community.

**BT:** *How would you define your main program as an organization?*

**Makibaka:** Generally we would say that our aim is to advance the liberation of women in the Philippines. But we can only do this by advancing the national liberation struggle at the same time. Our concept of liberation does not end with the national liberation struggle. Our concept of liberation ends where humanity—the whole human race—is liberated from oppression and exploitation.

Women should be able to engage fully in the revolutionary struggle—whether in the armed struggle, in education, in organizing, even in production. We feel that even under the conditions in the Philippines, women can realize their liberation step by step by engaging in revolutionary work. Because this is how you develop revolutionary consciousness.

By revolutionary work, we mean involving women in destroying the oppressive and exploitative structures in society. It means you have to mobilize women; you have to make women see that their oppression as women is basically tied to the oppression of the nation. As long as the nation, the entire people, is oppressed and exploited, women will also be oppressed and exploited. So the liberation of women is basically integrated with the liberation of the nation.

**BT:** *And yet, we also know that the liberation of a nation doesn't necessarily mean that women will be liberated.*

**Makibaka:** Yes. We realize that. But we feel that by engaging in revolutionary struggle in a national liberation

movement, we have already taken giant steps towards women's liberation. Without a revolutionary movement, women are merely engaged in housework or in production work. The revolutionary struggle opens up various possibilities for women's involvement which you cannot have when you do not join the revolutionary movement.

**BT:** *So why have a separate women's organization? Why not work within the larger revolutionary structures?*

**Makibaka:** Women have special problems. Even if the entire movement recognizes that women in principle are on a par with men, there is a big difference when it comes to practice. Women have suffered from oppression for generations—for centuries. You need special mechanisms in order to draw out women from their present state to a new state. We don't say that women cannot advance in a mixed organization—they can. But very few women can do that in a mixed organization. In a mixed organization—like it or not—you have to contend with male supremacy and male chauvinism. A women's organization gives them all the opportunities that they may need in order to advance. So, in recognition of these special problems, we need special organizations for women.

**BT:** *How do you assess the state of women within the revolutionary movement at this point? Could you talk about the women's program of the NDF and Makibaka's role in making it happen?*

**Makibaka:** In principle the revolutionary movement recognizes the equality of men and women and we are very happy about that. In fact, in recognition of the need to integrate women's liberation with the national liberation struggle, Makibaka members encouraged the NDF to put a separate provision for women in its program, to advance the emancipation of women in all spheres. We realized that for the revolution to advance and for

women's liberation to advance, the NDF had to categorically state that it stood for the emancipation of women and that it really had a program for women.

But there are still many things that need to be done in practice. There should be

mechanisms and structures set in place in order to realize that principle. We need women's committees within organizations that will give special attention to women's problems. For example, when women activists and revolutionaries have to contend with problems about children and the home—whether in the countryside or in the city—these are usually considered as secondary problems and





are not discussed in their organization. There needs to be an organized movement aiming to advance the demands of women within the organization. Women themselves have to raise these issues.

**BT:** *You say that, in theory, women are recognized as equals, but how real is that within the organization. How well are women represented in revolutionary organizations, in the leadership?*

**Makibaka:** For one thing, when we say that women are recognized as equals, in terms of leadership positions for example, they are chosen on the basis of merit, not on the basis of sex. We have women in the leadership. But at this point, we are not so concerned about the precise proportion of women to male leaders. What we want is the increasing participation of women in the revolution and in the leadership—in all facets of revolutionary work.

We think that we've advanced a lot. For example, it's not just men fighting in the battlefield. Even the government, the military, recognizes that there are women fighters actively engaged in combat operations in the countryside. Even when the NPA was just starting, you would see women fighters in the armed propaganda units; or you would see women doing various types of work in other organizations. So I think that we've really advanced a lot in so far as the participation of women is concerned.

**BT:** *So where do you think you need to go? What are some of the weaknesses that you think need to be improved?*

**Makibaka:** Support structures. We've advanced a lot compared to the early days of the struggle. But we still have to do a lot of things to realize the full participation of women. The war has created so many problems for us that to be able to increase the participation of women, we also need support structures.

For example, we need pre-schools and nurseries in the countryside, health clinics especially for women, adult education classes for women. We need child care and health care for women, whether we are working in the countryside or in the city. If these are met, coupled with education work, both among the men and the women in the revolution, we think that the participation of women would increase tremendously.

**BT:** *What do you mean about education for the men? Is it around the ideas of gender equality?*

**Makibaka:** Yes. Various organizations are trying to educate their members with regard to women's liberation. In both the city and the countryside, the comrades are asking Makibaka members to give a women's orientation for their entire unit. All that they know are general theories—men and women should be equal. But they don't know exactly how to do this under a revolutionary situation. They even ask us to settle marital problems.

**BT:** *How do you help resolve a situation like that? Suppose somebody's having marital problems, because the man is behaving in a particularly sexist manner.*

**Makibaka:** For example, you have cases of two revolutionaries working in two separate areas, who only meet, say, once every three to six months, and then they start to develop relations with other comrades. And so the relationship cools off between husband and wife. Then say one of the partners develops special relations with another comrade. And of course this creates problems which

wife against the wishes of the wife, then it becomes marital rape."

**BT:** Are there other issues that come up frequently?

**Makibaka:** The question of sexual education is very important. In the countryside, you will find women who

don't even know how babies are made. We heard of one incident where a young peasant woman was already in the family way and she thought all the while that she had a tumor.

We have to educate our forces and our people on how to use contra-



affect both of their political work. So they usually ask us, how are we going to handle this situation?

First we ask them what the situation really is. We ask what is the situation of the woman; what is the situation of the man; what is the nature of their work. We do not prescribe solutions. We only ask them what's happening. We give our personal opinion about the matter, but we also encourage them to raise the problem to their collective and discuss this matter with them. Because we are not there to tell people what to do. We can only say what the rights of women are and what the rights of men are regarding marital problems.

**BT:** What happens in the revolutionary movement if one of the men, who's married or in a relationship, starts having a relationship or sleeping with other women? What do you do in cases of rape or wife-beating?

**Makibaka:** We discipline the man. There are five levels of discipline in the organization. You have warnings, strong warnings, demotion, suspension, and then expulsion. We apply these principles in cases which we normally call "S.O." or sexual opportunism—a married man having an affair with another woman, or taking advantage of a woman, or a married woman having an affair with another man.

Rape in most cases merits the death penalty, except in certain mitigating circumstances. But we're very strict on rape. Wife-beating also merits strict disciplinary measures. It can lead to the expulsion of a member from the organization if he starts to beat his wife.

But we haven't yet handled cases of marital rape. We still need to educate our members on what marital rape is all about. The feudal tradition is so strong that if a husband forces himself on his wife, it's not considered rape. The man is just exercising his sexual right over the woman. In consultations some comrades are surprised when we call this marital rape. They say, "Is there such a thing as marital rape?" And we say, "Yes. If a man forces himself on the

ceptives. In one region, for example, the organization advises couples to space their children because of the requirements of the work; and some comrades would complain that it's not possible to space out children, because if you meet rarely, the woman might just conceive. They also thought that maybe coconut milk could make a woman fertile all year round. And so they say, "How can we control birth here, if the situation is like this." You really have to understand the entire situation before you can impose policies or advise couples regarding these matters.

And then, of course, there's the problem of what to do with children of pre-school age, especially in a guerrilla zone. You have to educate parents on the proper way of raising children. In the countryside children are seen merely as forces of production. They think having children is the best investment they could have as far as production and old age are concerned. And the family structure is extremely authoritarian. We feel our role in the women's movement is to educate parents that children should be treated as individuals and not merely as forces of production. If you have women who are oppressed, you also have children that don't seem to matter, especially in an authoritarian structure. They are merely extensions of the peasant male.

What we observe is that if you have a women's movement in a certain area, then you can start talking about the family, about children. Then the revolution becomes comprehensive. You are dealing not only with political structures, but also with family structures, social structures. Without the women's movement, you only got to talk about politics, economics. Now you have to talk more about the family, the women's situation, even the situation of the old people. It really helps in consolidating and advancing the revolution. But more than that, it really advances the status of women.

**BT:** How receptive have you found the men to be in helping with the children and in the home?

**Makibaka:** Generally they are very receptive, but sometimes a difficulty arises when it comes to concrete realities. For example, take a couple whose husband is in the NPA and whose wife is organizing in the local area. The NPA, of course, travels from one area to the other and then the woman asks us how can we demand an equal share in housework in such a situation? Especially when we talked about sharing of housework, what priorities do we choose? Must we demand equal housework from those who have to fight in the field? Must we demand that they stay in the home and help us in our housework and lessen the time they would spend in fighting in the field?

Sometimes they're really caught in a fix. That's what we found out. Maybe it's really different in capitalist countries. The concept of equal sharing of housework has its own time and milieu. When you transpose it here, it doesn't work that way because the conditions are radically different.

What we're actually saying is we all have these goals, but we also have to be practical sometimes when it comes to concrete conditions. To meet the goal you also have to change the conditions. You cannot just insist on the goal without looking at the actual conditions operating in a certain area. If you keep on insisting on equality without understanding the concrete conditions, it will only end up with men and women fighting each other.

How can you resolve that type of situation, when you have a husband who has to fight in the front and then you would insist on equal sharing of housework? The only way would be for the organization to have enough support structures to take care of the children, so the women can be released for other types of work.

**BT:** Can you give some more concrete examples about how you experience male supremacy and struggle against it?

**Makibaka:** I don't think any revolutionary in his right mind would deny that he was for the equality of women. But then when it comes to practical things, whether they are conscious of it or not, male supremacist tendencies appear. In meetings you hear anti-women jokes—conscious or not—trying to put you down, especially when you come from a women's group. They try to bait you into reacting and they seem to be so amused when you start to struggle about women's rights, when you start to talk about paying attention to women's problems, as if that doesn't exist. You see that in the snickers, the facial reactions, sometimes in the words themselves. Many women revolutionaries experience that in the movement.

**BT:** So how have things changed?

**Makibaka:** The most significant change for us is the NDF provision adopting the revolutionary emancipation of women in all spheres. Collectives are paying attention to problems of relationships and children. They are increasingly asking for women's orientation, especially when women comrades have problems with their families or husbands.

When both the husband and the wife are activists that sometimes creates problems. Even if two comrades have very strong political unity, if there is no support for their children, that will create friction between them. So one has to give in. One has to restrain his or her political activities in order to give more attention to the kids. The husband might be demanding that the wife give more attention to the kids. Then the wife answers back, "Why don't you give more attention to the kids."

These problems will be aggravated if support structures aren't set in place and if no education is done among men



and women themselves. There are cases where women feel that the best contribution they can make is to raise their children to become revolutionaries. So they end up staying in the home and ensuring that their kids grow up to be progressive.

In many cases we also come across women who have once been very active, but when they start to have children, they reduce their political work, saying, "We just have to pay attention first to the kids." That is a very sad thing for us, because we know that these women comrades have very great potential. We keep saying to other comrades that without the support structures that women need, we will lose these women who could advance our work so much.

So we've been making a struggle for them to pay attention to support structures—for collectives to have programs for children, plans for children, plans for women. Alongside of the women's liberation movement, we are pushing for recognition of the rights of children and of the organization's responsibility for the rearing and welfare of children.

**BT:** *What are some other difficulties that women in Makibaka have in their relationships?*

**Makibaka:** We have had cases where the men comrades would *want* their wives to become members of the Makibaka because they feel safer that way. They think that in a women's organization, the wives would not have the chance to have extra-marital relations—the organization would serve as some kind of security blanket.

We've also had cases where our members' husbands have been involved sexually with other women. Of course they suffer very much, because they think it's a betrayal of trust. But it doesn't necessarily happen that when the man or the woman is unfaithful that the relationship automatically breaks up. Either the man or the woman is given some discipline; they accept it; the organization helps to patch up the relationship once again.

It's more difficult for the woman when the collective also thinks that she is at fault, when the man himself is the one who committed adultery or has become unfaithful to her. We have had one case of that kind. It was very painful for the woman; they blamed her for his infidelity.

If this happens to one of our members or if we know the



Women fighters of the New People's Army

woman who was affected, we prevail on her to criticize the collective, or to take up the issue once again and struggle with the collective. But sometimes the pain is so much that the woman just keeps it to herself and does nothing about it.

**BT:** *Do the men ever find it a threat when their partners are in a women's organization?*

**Makibaka:** Yes, that happens. Some men feel so threatened that they refuse to allow their wives to talk with Makibaka women, for fear that they might just create friction between husband and wife.

Sometimes when women start to demand their rights, some male comrades are quick to say, "Is that what they're teaching you in the women's liberation movement, to create problems between husband and wife?" That is often the reaction when women start to fight for their own rights. They immediately brand us as having an incorrect political line.

But it really depends on the level of political consciousness that men have. And it doesn't always follow that because they have a high theoretical level that they immediately understand the problems of women. From my own experience, you really have to educate them about women's liberation. Even if they are theoretically brilliant, you still have to educate them about women's liberation in order for them to really understand what it's all about.

**BT:** *In a more personal vein, you've told me that you often don't see your husband for many months. How do you handle it?*

**Makibaka:** Because of the nature of the work that we are doing or because of security arrangements, physical separation is definitely part of the sacrifice we have to make in order to advance our revolutionary cause. Of course, if you love someone, you want to be near him or to see him as often as possible and to share things with him, to share your life. But the reality of the revolutionary war does not make that possible. Of course, you feel loneliness; you feel the pain; you think about your partner often.

But then—because you also have a lot of work to do, this doesn't become a problem. In fact, meeting after a long separation strengthens the love couples feel for each other. That is, of course, if the love that you feel for one another is strong enough to withstand all the pressures. But in most cases the bond is so strong—on both political and personal basis—that the distance is not able to rock the relationship.

**BT:** *Many members of Makibaka have been captured and for many of them the standard method of interrogation and torture was rape. How do you find that you handle this and help your membership deal with this? How are they treated in the community?*

**Makibaka:** Maybe I can talk about the case of one of our members which occurred quite a while ago. She was kept in a safe house for some months and was repeatedly raped. Actually, instead of being raped by several men, she was forced to agree to have a one-on-one relationship with the commanding officer of that unit. To save her own skin and as a ruse to be able to escape later, she had to submit to this.

Finally she had the chance to escape; she went back to the countryside and she was able to see her husband. But the husband refused to talk about it and still does. When she reported back to her unit, there were aspersions made on her character. They were wondering why the other two comrades who were with her were killed and she was not. We would have discussions about this and you could really see the pain when she talked about these things. Instead of feeling jubilant that she had successfully escaped from her captors, she was really very, very disappointed and unhappy that questions were raised about her character.

She had to struggle very, very hard for the organization

to understand that they should be more thankful that she had escaped; that aspersions should not have been cast on her character.

**BT:** *Since rape is so prevalent, is there any education being done on therapeutic methods to help the women?*

**Makibaka:** Organized therapy is being done in the city, but not in the countryside. So the coping mechanism in the countryside is to try to help the female comrade to unburden herself. That's about all that's being done. In the city, we've come to learn that you also have physical exercises and massage in order to help the victim cope with the situation or unlearn the experience. They call it stress therapy for rape victims.

But in the countryside all you have is the chance to talk about the problem with your collective. There are comrades, not necessarily from Makibaka, who could not even admit to their collectives that they were raped. All they could say was they were molested, but never raped. There are very few comrades who can openly and publicly state that they were raped.

Because of the feudal culture, especially in the countryside—but even in the cities—the men would somehow think that you wouldn't be raped if you didn't allow yourself to be raped. Especially now that violence against women is rising with the counterinsurgency program of the government, there should be a lot of support structures for rape victims. And men should be educated that rape is a form of torture. It's not a question of choice.

**BT:** *One final question—how can we in the U.S. better support your work?*

**Makibaka:** Well, first of all, for Americans themselves to raise the issue of anti-imperialism is already a big help for us in the revolutionary movement, not only in Makibaka. Actively opposing the foreign policies of your government helps us in a very big way. We don't have to wait for these policies to be implemented, if the American people themselves are protesting the foreign policies of their government that affect Third World countries. Secondly, specifically for the women's movement or specifically for Makibaka, we want our struggle to be propagated, for more people to know that there is a revolutionary women's movement in the Philippines that is aiming not only for the liberation of women, but for the liberation of the entire nation. □



Batang Iskwater (Slum Children), 1984



Nester Bugayong  
Philippine Political Artist  
1953 - 1988



**MEXICO:**

# Cardenas, the Left and the PRI

An Interview with  
**GABINO GOMEZ,**  
COMITE DE DEFENSA  
POPULAR,  
CHIHUAHUA, MEXICO

*In July of last year, the ruling party of Mexico, the PRI, was shaken by an upsurge of popular discontent. For the first time in the party's history, a majority of voters rejected its candidate, Salinas de Gotari, and threw their support to Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas and the National Democratic Front, a coalition of PRI dissidents and leftist parties. Only through massive fraud was the PRI able to maintain its control of the presidency. Shortly after the election, Breakthrough interviewed Gabino Gomez, a leader of the Comité de Defensa Popular (CDP), a revolutionary mass organization in the northern border state of Chihuahua.*

*The organizing work of the CDP encompasses approximately 300,000 people at all levels—from the urban poor, workers and students to the peasants and indigenous people. On vacant land expro-*

*prized from landowners and the state in the major cities of Chihuahua, the CDP has established squatter communities—colonias—and built schools and medical facilities for its members. It has fought for and won the provision of municipal services—electricity, gas, water and drainage—to these urban communities, the redistribution of land in the countryside, and a halt to the despoiling of forest resources belonging to the indigenous tribes of the region. Established in the late 70s, the CDP has spread through the state of Chihuahua with the perspective of building socialism.*

**Breakthrough:** *What is the situation confronting the PRI since the election?*

**Gabino Gomez:** The PRI is a party that is coming to an end after more than 60 years of governing Mexico in which PRI officials have been unable to understand the needs of the population. Today the people don't want to have anything to do with this party. Nevertheless they continue in power and consequently can influence and manipulate many things. They control the media, the press, television and radio and can still deceive certain sectors of the population.

But in the last election on the 6th of July, the majority of the people rejected the PRI. Not only did they not vote for the PRI, the majority of the people—70 percent—didn't vote at all. And the majority of those who did vote didn't vote for the PRI.

**BT:** *How do you analyze the movement which developed around the candidacy of Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas?*

**GG:** Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas, together with the people that form the Democratic Current, developed within the PRI. In addition, he was the governor of the State of Michoacan for the PRI and a high official in the federal government. During the entire time of his governing, he was exactly like any other PRI member. There were no differences.

However he represented a more progressive sector within the PRI. The party has come under the control of a group of technocrats, people who are very well trained academically—many of them have studied at Harvard, including Salinas himself. This group has implemented a disastrous economic policy to pull the country out of the crisis that we are currently in. In contrast, the sector of the PRI represented by Cárdenas tried to change the PRI from within, to make it more democratic. They didn't want to fight against the party, only to modify it.

But the group in power threw Cárdenas and the other reformers out of the party and launched the candidacy of Salinas de Gotari, which was exactly what the liberals in

the PRI opposed. So they organized themselves as the Democratic Current and launched an electoral campaign with other parties.

This grouping, the National Democratic Front, decided to promote Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas for the presidency. In part this was to take advantage of the prestige of his last name. In the context of a situation where every president is a bad one, his father, Lazaro Cárdenas, was a relatively good one. He redistributed land, expropriated the foreign-owned oil industry, and promoted education. These were the things that they believed they could take advantage of.

So they launched his candidacy and he actually got a lot of support from the people. Not because people believed that he was a great person capable of bringing about important changes, but because of the generalized discontent felt by the people.

The Democratic Front capitalized on this discontent to build support for Cárdenas' candidacy. And—it's a reality that we can't deny—he was transformed into a leader through the mass support of the political groups, people from the rural areas, and the workers. All of these groups hoped that even if Cárdenas wouldn't resolve all of their problems, at least the PRI would be defeated. And they won. But the government and the PRI were able to use their apparatus of control to perpetrate a fraud and declare a victory for Salinas de Gotari.

**BT:** *How do you think the Democratic Front will move in this period?*

**GG:** What will happen next we can't predict. No one can. Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas has stated that he intends to struggle through legal means, that he won't call for violence or any action against the law. However, one thing that's certain is that the actions taken by Congress declaring Salinas de Gotari president-elect is a *legal* decision, to which there is no *legal* challenge. Legally it's the highest possible decision and cannot be reversed by any court, tribunal or even presidential decree. So it's over, as far as a legal battle is concerned. Salinas de Gotari is the president, and it's no longer possible to keep fighting legally.

So today, the great masses of the population are waiting to see what to do, including very important sectors such as the students of the Autonomous University of Mexico. They are saying that they're ready to do whatever is asked of them. But the Democratic Front is not asking them to do anything at this point. Many of us are distrustful about placing all our faith in people like Cárdenas who are not prepared to advance any further. We understand that they are members of the bourgeoisie who fear that at some point a movement of another type will come along and leave them behind. But we don't know if perhaps they are prepared to do anything or not. It's something which is difficult to calculate.

**BT:** *The CDP participated in this last election. How does this fit into your overall revolutionary perspective?*

**GG:** We participated in the election because it is a means of functioning politically, a means of growing and of allowing us to reach different sectors of the population. But *not* because we believe that this is how we will seize power. The workers will seize power only when they decide to fight within a vanguard party that calls for an insurrection. The exact form this might take will be agreed upon when things reach that stage. How long will this take? Who knows? We believe that as the situation develops, we will have to decide what to do. We believe that to launch an insurrection now would be adventurist. We are not prepared to sustain ourselves. We would be taken to slaughterhouses until we were stopped. Because in Mexico today, no single organization exists which is capable and sufficiently well organized to become the vanguard of a revolutionary movement of this type.

**BT:** *Given these conditions, how do you see the development of the revolutionary mass movement, within or outside of the electoral process?*

**GG:** The elections caused the whole panorama to change. As a result of the elections, the parties which had previously supported the PRI are now the most radical parties. But at this moment, we have to wait to see what the balance will be. A realignment is taking place between all the forces—in terms of the electoral process and also in terms of their work. This is not something that we can call a “mass movement,” but it means that we have to wait a little, to see what will happen.

There have been declarations on the part of all parties and organizations emphasizing that we should not become fragmented. In the past, there has been a mosaic of parties and organizations in this country; the left was totally divided. Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas has brought these groups together around his candidacy. At this time there is nothing else that unites us. Now the movement has developed a little further around the issue of the defense of the election.

One possibility that is being discussed is that a unitary party of the Mexican left will be formed. Another is that Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas and his Democratic Current and the other parties that supported him will form a unified party. This type of party would be huge, very strong, and open to the participation of many mass organizations. As the Comité de Defensa Popular, we possibly would also enter, but we have not yet made this decision, because it's not clear if this party will form.

But in response to your specific question, I would say we have to wait. Now the scene in Mexico is in a lot of upheaval; nothing is clear yet. We have to wait and see

how things will turn out. We, the CDP, are developing a politic of the masses, but we are only in one region of the country. The elections are over and we are continuing with our daily activities, reaching out to sectors of the population, meeting their needs, and organizing ourselves. There are other local organizations like us that continue to develop. If a party doesn't succeed in developing, we as a local organization have begun to talk to various mass organizations from other parts of the country about forming a national organization of the masses that would be called the National Party of the People.

Concretely, we are talking with the Popular Front of Land and Liberty of Monterrey, the Popular Front of Zacatecas, the Committee of Popular Defense of Durango, the Worker-Farmworker-Student Coalition of the Isthmus in Oaxaca, some other organizations from Huastecas and Potosi and from the Valley of Mexico—all mass organizations—with the goal of forming one unitary national organization. If what we referred to earlier occurs—the formation of a national party—we will change our projection. Because we and all the other mass organizations would join the national party.

**BT:** *Given the political crisis which resulted from the last election, what steps do you see the PRI taking to restore its control?*

**GG:** We calculate that the PRI cannot rise from this situation. It is finished. Some analysts on the left say the presidential term of Salinas de Gortari won't even be completed; that something will happen to end it. We predict that, given everything that has happened, the PRI will have to modify itself from within. If it doesn't, it will lose everything completely. But we believe that even if it changes, it will not be able to continue governing anymore in the same way. It will only be able to continue governing through force.

And we know that they are not willing to loosen their grip on power. For example, a well-known member of the PRI, Fidel Velazquez, a very old man who has been head of the CTM (Confederation of Mexican Workers) forever, recently stated that the PRI has no intention of giving up their power. If it's necessary to use force to maintain it, they will. We understand this position perfectly. They have the power and they won't let go of it. It's been demonstrated historically that power has never been given up through electoral means. It will only be given up when it is taken from them through violent means.

So, although the PRI will modify internally, the people will have nothing to do with them, absolutely nothing. Still, they have all the repressive apparatus—the police and the army—to maintain control. And when the media no longer works for them, they will use the repressive apparatus. This is clear. But when this happens the re-

sponse of the people will have to be different. As organizations that struggle for a transformation, we have to be prepared.

**BT:** *In the economic sphere, for example regarding the debt, what impact do you think this crisis will have on the policies of the PRI?*

**GG:** When the candidacy of Salinas de Gotari began, some of the strongest opposition to him was because as Minister of Budget and Planning he was an important part of the economic programs of the previous government. The government of President de la Madrid implemented an economic policy which handed the economy over to capitalism and imperialism. The presidency of de la Madrid refused to suspend payment of the debt—a debt so high that Mexico cannot ever pay it and which moreover has already been paid for several times in interest. They sold almost all the state-owned enterprises to private interests. They implemented austerity plans; they cut public expenditures back to alarming levels; they have caused unemployment for thousands and thousands of workers and have reduced workers' salaries. Most importantly inflation has soared. The price of goods has risen and risen until no one can control it. This economic policy has left the population impoverished.

In choosing Salinas de Gotari, they were choosing to maintain these policies. They received the blessing of the Reagan administration that said this was fine; that this was the policy that all Third World countries should follow; that Mexico was an example of a strong country, continuing to pay its debt. So all of this reinforced the idea that this

would be the political direction of Salinas de Gotari.

But there are also those who understand that the harsh defeat suffered by the PRI was due to these policies. If they continue these policies, they will be adding fuel to the fire and digging their own graves. If they are really smart, they must modify these policies. One of the main slogans of the campaign was "Don't Repay the Debt." All the candidates said "We can't repay it; it's misery; it creates poverty because we pay millions and millions, only to pay the interest on it." Even the Salinas candidacy had to say that if the debt was an obstacle to the internal growth of the Mexican economy, they would not pay it. So they have calculated that, based on the results of the elections, they will have to change some aspects of their economic policy.

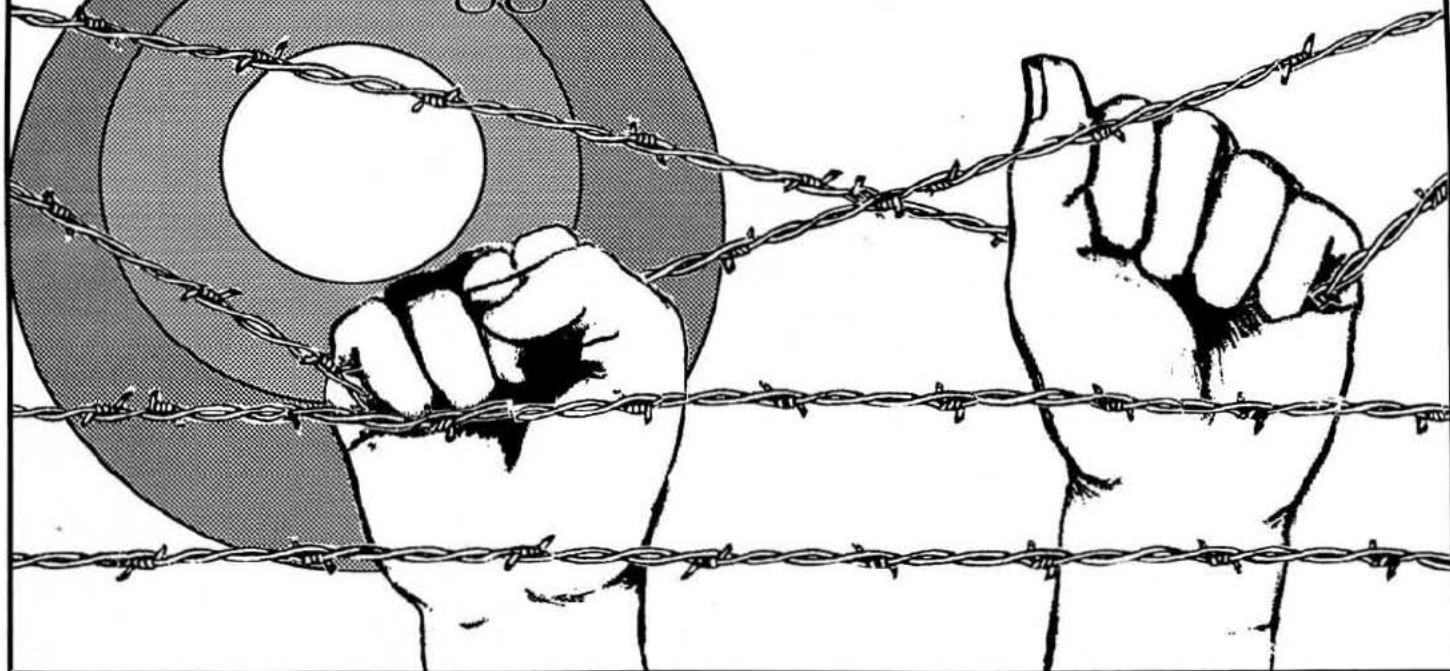
Already private businessmen, such as COPARMES (Confederation of Petroleum Producers of Mexico)—the bosses and owners—are protesting that they hope the Salinas government won't become a "populist" government as a result of the elections. A populist government implies popular control of the press, land redistribution, raising salaries, etc. This is what the businessmen fear. After the results in favor of Cárdenas, the fall of the PRI and the defeat of the PAN, which is the party of the businessmen, they are fearful of what will happen. They are pressuring the government with these statements so they won't implement these measures.

If the PRI is smart, they will probably make some changes so the population will think they are not as bad as the previous PRI governments. It's probable that circumstances will force them to modify a bit, but it won't be a complete change. That's not possible; they represent capitalist interests and they have to manage them. □



## Occupied Mexico:

# Land Struggle in Tierra Amarilla



*"We have nothing to celebrate about. We've lost our land. We're losing our identity; we're losing our language. They are attacking us from every side. And we are struggling to maintain some type of sanity in a real insane situation."*

— Ricardo Romero

*Movimiento de Liberación Nacional Mexicano*

On 500 acres of rolling and forested land in northern New Mexico, under the watchful eye of the sleeping giant whose arms, local legend has it, form the massive Los Brazos cliffs, a new chapter in the 140 year struggle for the land rights of Mexicano people is being written. Since April 1988, this land, part of the original 600,000 acre Tierra Amarilla land grant, has been liberated territory in the midst of Occupied Mexico held in defiance of developers and Anglo judges by the family and friends of Amador Flores.

Since 1968, Flores had claimed the land, paying taxes on it and using it for hunting, camping, and gathering wood. As part of the Tierra Amarilla land grant of 1832, the land was to be collectively owned by the Mexican community, and its resources were part of the communal trust. Pedro Archuleta, a fourth generation resident of Tierra Amarilla and one of the founders of the Movimiento de Liberación Nacional Mexicano, explained Flores' action:

The land here is not just a piece of land that the Flores family came onto 20 years ago and decided to take for

themselves. Amador Flores, as well as his father, understood that this land belonged to the Mexican people not just to the people of Tierra Amarilla, but to the Mexican people everywhere and that it was part of a struggle. They knew that a day would come when somebody would move against them, and not just against them but against our community.

In 1985, an out-of-state development company, Vista del Brazos, claimed that they had been given title to the land and wanted to turn the area into a tourist resort and ski run. In April of 1988, they went to court and got Judge Bruce Kaufman, who had the dubious claim to fame of hosting a reception for Nicaraguan dictator Anastasio Somoza in 1978, to issue them a clear title to the land without ever having to present a deed. Without asking him to present his case or giving him notice of a hearing, Kaufman issued an injunction ordering Flores off the land. Flores burned the injunction and moved a trailer onto the site. Since April, local activists have fortified the camp and vowed to remain there until the struggle is won. In June, Amador Flores was jailed for contempt when he went to Santa Fe to present his case. Released on bail in August, Mr. Flores agreed not to physically occupy the land himself, but his supporters remain.

The land struggle in Tierra Amarilla has its roots in the theft of northern Mexico in the war waged by the U.S. in 1848. Although the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, negotiated to end that war, promised that the U.S. would respect the Mexican land grants, almost immediately Anglo set-

tlers began to manipulate the courts and legislatures to get control of the land. One of the most notorious groupings to arise was the Santa Fe Ring, headed by the Attorney General for New Mexico, Thomas B. Catron. Catron used his influence to have the 600,000 acre Tierra Amarilla land grant (originally, a communal resource) invalidated and rewritten to place the property in the hands of one Mexican collaborator. Catron then proceeded to acquire nearly the entire land grant. By the end of the 19th century, Catron was the largest landowner in the entire U.S.

Because these negotiations took place in Santa Fe and Washington and were negotiated in English, the Mexicans who lived on the land continued to believe that they were the legitimate owners. The ensuing decades were a history of conflict between Anglos possessing "deeds" to various parcels of land and Mexicans with their *hijuelas*—informal deeds from the Mexican government—which were soon declared invalid.

The memory of this chicanery and massive land theft runs deep in the residents of Tierra Amarilla. Soon after Flores' confrontation with Vista del Brazos and Judge Kaufman broke out, local activists convened a *consejo*, a council of elders and activists, to give political guidance to the struggle. Along with the generation of the 60s political activists like Pedro Archuleta and Moises Morales, who was a driver and bodyguard for Reies Tijerina in the land struggles of 1965-69, members of the *consejo* include a generation of men and women, now in their 80s, who provide a historical link to the land.

In an international gathering commemorating Mexican Independence Day, September 16, at the encampment, renamed La Colonia Jose Maria Martinez, Nicolas Lopez, one of the *consejo* members, recalled this history. "On a patent which I have of the land grant made in 1832, it says the land is for the Mexican people. It doesn't say it's for Thomas Catron, or Thomas Burns, or any of the Santa Fe Ring. All of them were thieves and they stole this land through fraudulent means."

Rafael Flores, Amador Flores' father and another member of the *consejo*, added, "Our ancestors believed that they couldn't do anything and left us with that problem, thinking that nothing could be done. Now God has helped us and given us an understanding that we, the Mexicans, can unify and fight against those people who have stolen our land."

The struggle at Tierra Amarilla has crystalized this link between past and present, dream and reality. In the words of Pedro Archuleta:

Our elders have struggled for many years hoping that the land would be free or at least free for their children. Now for the first time we have a piece of land that has been freed. But it has been freed because we have taken a position—an armed position—on this land, against developers, against those people who want to come in and destroy our way of life, come in and destroy what our elders built years ago. But our people kept struggling because there was hope and we see it here today.



Left to right, Pedro Archuleta, Sra. and Sr. Lopez, Rafael Flores and Ricardo Romero

What is at stake in Tierra Amarilla is the future of a struggle that has been waged for over 140 years against the process of colonization of Mexican people. At its heart is the question of land—the land which was violently stolen in a war of conquest. Reclaiming this land, winning its liberation and control for the benefit of the Mexican people who have lived there for generations remains at the heart of the Mexican national liberation struggle. Ultimately, in the vision of the Movimiento de Liberación Nacional Mexicano, the colonization of Mexican people within the U.S. will end with the reunification of the Southwest in a socialist Mexico. Today Tierra Amarilla is in the forefront of that struggle. □

*The compañeros at Tierra Amarilla need your support. Please send contributions to Pedro Archuleta, La Puente, Route Box 1, Tierra Amarilla, New Mexico 87574. For more information, contact the Movimiento de Liberación Nacional Mexicano at 807 E. 22nd Ave., Denver, Colorado 80205, (303) 839-5366.*

## Key Dates in the New Mexico Land Struggle

- 1820s** Mexican government issues land grants to settle northern territories. Settlement of New Mexico begins.
- 1832** Tierra Amarilla land grant (600,000 acres of communal land) issued.
- 1836** Anglo invaders of Texas claim their territory extends into New Mexico.
- 1841** Santa Fe Filibuster. Armed band of invaders from Texas march into New Mexico, are captured and sent as prisoners of war to Mexico. Guerrilla attacks by Anglos increase.
- 1846** Kearny leads "Army of the West" into New Mexico with intention of capturing territory for the U.S. Spontaneous armed revolt is suppressed with massacre of 150 Mexicans and Pueblo Indians and the execution of 25-30 others by firing squads.
- 1848** Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo establishes Rio Grande as border with Mexico, ending war against Mexico and supposedly guaranteeing civil and property rights of Mexicans remaining in occupied territories.
- 1850s** Santa Fe Ring, headed by Thomas B. Catron, Attorney General of New Mexico, is established. Catron ends up largest landowner in the entire U.S., holding almost the entire Tierra Amarilla land grant.
- 1890s** *Las Gorras Blancas* (White Caps), a clandestine group claiming 1500 members, organize armed resistance to land grabbing, cutting fences and destroying property.
- 1920s** *La Mano Negra*, another clandestine Mexicano resistance group, continues to fight land grabbers.
- 1960s** *La Alianza Federal de Mercedes* (the Federal Alliance of Land Grants) is organized by Reies Lopez Tijerina to organize for the return of stolen land grant areas. Occupation of national forest land in Carson National Forest in 1966. Courthouse raid in Tierra Amarilla in 1967. New Mexico National Guard deployed. Tijerina later abandons the struggle. ➡
- 1988** Establishment of *La Colonia Jose Maria Martinez* on 500 acres claimed by Flores family since 1968, following court order awarding title to Vista del Brazos development company. Amador Flores burns judge's injunction and with supporters occupies land.



## Free at Last, continued from p. 21

Even if South Africa does not physically prevent an election it will attempt to control the terms of independence by demanding control of the Namibian deepwater port at Walvis Bay. Walvis Bay is an integral part of Namibia. But to South Africa and the Pentagon, it is a strategic asset, similar to Guantanamo in Cuba. The results of the contention over Walvis Bay will determine a lot about whether Namibia achieves genuine political and economic independence.

At the international level, using the rationale of budgetary constraints, the U.S. with the consent of the Soviet Union has moved to alter implementation of UN Resolution 435. They have won Security Council agreement to drastically reduce the number of UN troops charged with ensuring a fair election and a peaceful transition to independence. The reduction of UN troops is particularly dangerous because although elections will be supervised by the UN, they will be organized by South African authorities. The move to cut UN troops met near universal condemnation from African heads of state. While the U.S. motives are consistent with its strategy of low-intensity war, phony elections and destabilization, Soviet agreement to the U.S. terms took many by surprise. For the first time in decades, the Soviet Union placed itself in contradiction to Southern African liberation movements, progressive Southern African states and the Non-Aligned Movement. For its part, SWAPO president Sam Nujoma, speaking in Cuba, declared the Security Council maneuvers to be "unacceptable, unjust and undemocratic."

In the face of this perilous transition, SWAPO maintains a position of "guarded optimism."

On the basis of what it knows to be the objective realities of the situation on the ground, SWAPO holds a firm conviction that the present negotiation process is significantly different from any other in the past. The present negotiations started against the background of the largest military battles ever fought in the southern Africa region... SWAPO does not base its guarded optimism on the assumption that South Africa is negotiating in good faith or that the U.S. has all of a sudden found a magic wand to broker a successful peace settlement... All the units of the People's Liberation Army of Namibia (PLAN) have remained in a state of combat readiness in the event that the talks collapse. And in the event it becomes clear that Resolution 435 cannot be implemented in the immediate future, the armed struggle will certainly be resumed.

—SWAPO newsbriefing, Nov. 1988

SWAPO's warning cannot be taken lightly. Although the new situation reflects a weakened South Africa, it's still the region's strongest power and there is no guarantee that fundamental change is at hand.

## AFRICA: GENERATIONS OF RESISTANCE

The current peace initiatives should be seen in the context of the dynamic interplay of struggle both inside South Africa itself and around the region. Over the past quarter of a century there have been three successive popular uprisings aimed at overturning the apartheid-colonial system. The Sharpeville massacre in 1960, which led to the banning of the two liberation organizations, the African National Congress and Pan Africanist Congress, signalled the end of non-violence as the strategy for revolution. The beginning of armed struggle inside South Africa occurred as European powers were granting formal independence to many African colonies. This was an era of mass nationalist movements and leaders rising across the length of the continent—from Nasser in Egypt, to Nkrumah in Ghana, Nyerere in Tanzania and Lumumba in the Congo. By the late 1960s armed struggle against white minority rule had commenced in the countries bordering South Africa, and in Namibia, South Africa's direct colony.

The mid 1970s brought Soweto and the triumph of the next wave of national liberation movements in Angola, Mozambique, Cape Verde and Guinea-Bissau. Under the leadership of African scientific socialists like Amilcar Cabral, Agostino Neto and Samora Machel, the South African/Azanian people were inspired to heighten their own struggle against apartheid and capitalism. In 1980, South Africa's closest ally, the white settler colony of Rhodesia, became Zimbabwe after a prolonged guerrilla war led to an international settlement and the election of ZANU under the leadership of Robert Mugabe.

In the wake of the Soweto rebellion and the advance of African liberation at its borders, South Africa struck back. The racist government dubbed its regional and domestic strategy "Total War." Its main components involved bludgeoning the Frontline states into political submission, dominating the region economically through a scheme called the Constellation of States with industrial South Africa at its hub, and unleashing a wave of domestic repression (the murder of Steve Biko and the banning of Black Consciousness groups) aimed at destroying the internal revolutionary movement. For both Washington and Pretoria, crippling the resistance is seen as the precondition for implementing reform schemes designed to save capitalism in South Africa.

Repeated invasions of Angola, bombing attacks on Zambia, the creation of the terrorist MNR in Mozambique and renewed support for UNITA counter-revolutionaries in Angola were crucial elements of this multi-pronged offensive. To get an idea of the human devastation

***For the  
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covert  
aggression.***

wrought by Total War, consider these statistics: in Mozambique more than 100,000 killed by MNR and 1,000,000 peasants made refugees. In Angola, 200,000 have died since independence, with an additional 2,700,000 displaced or severely affected.

Yet, for all its raw military and economic clout Total War failed to achieve its ultimate objectives. Despite the devastation of Mozambique and the assassination of Samora Machel, the Frelimo government remains in power and most western nations, including the U.S., have refused to support the MNR. SWAPO has continued waging a guerrilla war and leading a resurgent mass resistance to the occupation of Namibia. And in Angola, apartheid's war machine suffered the stunning battlefield reverses already described.

Inside South Africa, the African majority launched its most recent country-wide revolt in 1984. Qualitatively broader and more sophisticated than the earlier uprisings in 1960 and 1976, it has propelled the apartheid-colonial system into its deepest crisis. The State of Emergency decreed in 1986 continues and today South Africa is a society living under a permanent State of Siege. The detention of tens of thousands, imposition of near total press censorship and banning of more organizations in the past two years than in the last two decades combined has succeeded in temporarily lowering the level of mass resistance. Nevertheless the rhythm of mass and armed resistance continues. These generations of struggle have produced a politically astute African majority which not only sees through phony schemes to reform apartheid, but has now brought a new historical weapon—the force of an organized labor movement—into the battle.

Internationally, a world-wide anti-apartheid front exists which is isolating the racist regime politically just as the sanctions campaign weakens it economically. All these factors are pushing relations between South Africa and the U.S. into a seemingly inescapable bind: on the one hand there is a deepening loss of confidence in the ability of the Nationalist Party regime to salvage and lead South African capitalism into the 21st century. On the other hand, no alternative vehicles exist which are capable of ensuring that the process of change will be contained within the capitalist framework.

Over the past eight years South Africa's Total War to turn back the tide of African history has been predicated on its strategic alliance with the U.S. and the Reagan administration's policy of Constructive Engagement. For imperialism South Africa remains the real prize. Its position as a principal source of strategic metals—gold, platinum, diamonds, manganese—to the global market underpins this strategic relationship. For all its anti-apartheid rhetoric, Constructive Engagement differed from Total War in only two respects: first it voiced support for the independence of Namibia, and second it sought to enhance U.S. economic and political influence in the region by working with "liberal" reformist elements of the South African ruling class. Now, the recent setbacks for South Africa coincide with other crises for its allies in counter-revolution, the United States and Israel. Reagan's departure leaves a chain of mounting problems for Washington which threaten to upset the status quo in key areas: Israel's failure to contain the Palestinian *intifada*, the defeat of the contra war against Nicaragua, the general offensive of the FMLN in El Salvador, and the inability of the Aquino government to stem the growth of revolution in the Philippines. In this context, the peace initiatives of the Soviet Union, aimed at negotiating the settlement of regional conflicts, may pressure the Bush administration to scrap failed elements of the Reagan Doctrine.

### MANAGING THE CRISIS

Pressed between a liberation struggle supported by the majority of African people and a resurgent far right which demands a return to old-style apartheid, the South African government is being reluctantly prodded by the U.S. and its western allies into a posture of retrenchment and reform. Unable to impose its military will on the Frontline states, Pretoria appears prepared to step back from some of its regional

ambitions in order to strengthen its hand both internationally and internally. But on the stage of domestic white South African politics, the growing far-right exerts considerable influence and can be expected to do everything in its power to resist even the minimal process of change. The recent selection of Willem de Klerk, a pragmatic hardliner who beat out more "liberal" contenders, to head the Nationalist Party and most likely succeed Botha as state president, underscores this reality. In February, news began reaching the U.S. that hundreds of Black activists, held for long periods in detention, have launched a hunger strike—to the death—if they are not formally charged or freed. With this dramatic action, the oppressed locked inside apartheid's concentration camps move us to refocus world attention on the continuing crisis inside South Africa.

It is likely that the Bush and Thatcher administrations will use the signing of the latest peace accords as a means to refurbish the international image of the racist state as one committed to progress. Bush has already stated a commitment to oppose and reverse momentum towards comprehensive sanctions.

In other efforts aimed at buying time for apartheid, we may see renewed pressure to have the regime overturn some of its more odious racist laws and speed-up release of imprisoned leaders like Nelson Mandela. (Zephania Mothopeng, President of PAC, was released in December on humanitarian grounds. He is suffering from cancer.) The powerful South African military and its Afrikaner colleagues continue to fear the impact of Mandela's release on the potentially explosive domestic situation. Further, even if Mandela and others are released, it is not likely that this will mean the beginning of serious negotiations between the liberation movements and the regime over the dismantling of the basic structures of apartheid and colonialism.

The following statement by one of the "enlightened" leaders of South African finance capital (who was in the forefront of moves for dialogue with ANC) indicates how far the ruling class is from considering the basic democratic demand of the majority: one person one vote in a unitary South Africa.

The real problem which faces the ANC is to face up to the realities of life and realize that none of its ambitions are likely to have anything more than ephemeral fulfillment unless it can find a way to insure that business in the general sense can operate in a free enterprise system. You can't have your cake and eat it... You have to make a choice... I don't think our generation is going to see majority rule.

—Gavin Relly, Chairman, Anglo American Corporation

Obviously, this choice is unacceptable to the African people of South Africa, yet it is the most that imperialism is willing to offer.

## SEEKING NEW GROUND: THE ANTI-APARTHEID MOVEMENT

During the last wave of broad anti-apartheid action occurring in this country between 1984-1986, students and the Black community launched a two-year campaign of mass actions targetting South Africa and the U.S. Then, it appeared to many of us that the uprising in South Africa was heading on a lightning path towards the final destruction of the apartheid regime. Television sets across the western world tuned to the fiery horizons of Soweto; people were genuinely inspired by the scenes of mass confrontations in townships where the rule of white supremacy seemed to be crumbling. History was being made not behind closed doors, but in the streets by the direct action of the oppressed.

Many activists have identified the impact that the South African media white-out of television news had on demobilizing the upsurge of solidarity. Similarly, the adoption of limited sanctions by the U.S. Congress and pledges of divestment by universities and U.S. corporations undercut a great deal of the momentum of the anti-apartheid movement here.

Our attention wasn't on the dynamic role developments in the region play in the struggle to defeat apartheid and imperialism. If our view proved too superficial and short range to sustain a broad and militant solidarity inside the U.S., the physical struggle to liberate the southern part of the African continent continued to be fought on ever more complex terrain.

Developing a more sophisticated understanding is particularly pressing now because the anti-apartheid movement within the U.S. has the capacity of playing an important role in determining whether or not genuine independence will come to Namibia. This is a critical juncture when what we do or do not do in the next year will affect the Bush and Botha administrations' ability to recover from their setbacks and entrench imperialism and white supremacy for years to come.

New battles over the U.S. role in Namibia, Angola and South Africa have begun. The call for sanctions will undoubtedly be one of the first struggles between the Bush administration and the Democrat-controlled Congress. Today, two years after the passage of many sanctions and divestment laws, much of their promise has been circumvented. Now is a time for vigilance and for following closely what the liberation movements are saying about what is truly happening in Africa. Before the Bush presidency is able to fully implement its strategy, this is a moment for activists to demand genuine independence for Namibia and peace in Angola. In turn, this necessary step will clear the way for a renewed focus against humanity's enemy, that garrison of modern slavery and racism, South Africa. □

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