

THE UPRISING

THE LOS ANGELES uprising isn't about a free lunch or integrated lunch counters. It's about those whose lives have been diss'd: disinherited, displaced, discriminated against, and disenfranchised. It's about 500 years of European-exported genocide. The entire state of California sits on stolen Indian and Mexican land. There is nothing legitimate about this kind of theft, nor the institutional racism and violent repression which accompanies it.

THE MOST INTENSE flames of this uprising have burned in predominantly Black South Central L.A. This community is one of many emanating from the African Diaspora and its historically developed land base in the Black Belt South. Today's resistance draws its lifeblood from the earliest slave rebellions and is embodied in the descendants of Malcolm X. There is no "middle of the road" after the Middle Passage.

THERE ARE COMMON threads between the L.A. uprising and the

Palestinian Intifada. Both defy overwhelming superior police and military forces. Both constitute dispossessed nations fighting for basic human rights. And at the heart of their struggles is the right to national identity and land. The L.A. uprising has broken through one of oppression's fundamental realities: its disarming effectiveness at turning its victims against each other instead of their oppressors. The rising has redirected the rage of its participants against the moral bankruptcy of capitalism and white supremacy.

AS OF THIS writing, the battleground has claimed 50 lives in four days, most by police gunfire. In the usual course of events, L.A.'s killing grounds would take two weeks to claim as many lives. The significant difference is that instead of passively waiting for death to stalk them, the people went on the offensive. Or what might be considered a vigorous self-defense, since they were going to die anyway through police violence, internecine warfare, alcohol and drug poisoning, and social neglect.

THE UPRISING RESULTED in extensive property damage. While there was some needless destruction, the people's firebombs were strikingly accurate at rooting out capitalism's ghetto infrastructure. For the most part, people avoided damaging schools, mosques, churches, and housing. Most damaged property was corporate and absentee-owned. More than one Bank of Amerikka branch was torched into oblivion. These are the businesses that bleed the community with overpriced staples of life, then take the money and run. These are the purveyors of unlimited supplies of alcohol. It was like pouring salt on leeches as the profiteers squirmed in their suburban enclaves.



WHEN FACED WITH uprising and mass resistance, the government has historically responded with military intervention. From one decade and century to another--Watts, East St. Louis, Chicago, New York--the police and military have combined to exact a fearful death toll. It was during the 1965 Watts rebellion that Daryl Gates, the Bull Conner of L.A., drew his first blood as a police commander. From Watts, Black rage swept through Cleveland in '66, and Newark, Detroit, and other cities in 1967. After returning from Viet Nam, I travelled to Detroit and saw the immense destruction. In Viet Nam I'd seen extensive bomb damage from the door of a helicopter; in Detroit, I saw it from the asphalt. Both areas burned in wars for self-determination. The deployment of federal troops is predictable, but uprisings that trigger deployment demand attention and demonstrate the potential power of the people.

THIS IS NOT a time for apology and accommodation. If I began writing

all the names of those murdered and beaten senseless by the police, I'd be writing until forever. I could never catch up with the reality. With each death is a killer cop who walks free. I know I've written this before, but it's something I can't forget. It shouldn't be forgotten. I will write but two: Philip Pannel, a Black teenager from Teaneck, New Jersey, who died from a police officer's bullet as his hands were raised over his head. And Ralph Canady, a personal friend, who was murdered in cold blood by police in Baltimore, Maryland. No civil rights inquiries were initiated into these murders. There rarely are. It took 50 deaths in L.A. and the U.S. government's embarrassment in the court of world opinion to legitimize a federal inquiry into the Rodney King case.

THOUSANDS HAVE BEEN arrested in L.A., and the federal and state governments have formed a special task force to prosecute them. Steal a pair of shoes and go to jail; rip off the livelihood of a people and you're rewarded with profits and high office. These prosecutions will be punitive and vindictive. Years after the Watts rebellion, some of its participants are still in California prisons. Black Nationalist Ahmed Evans was sentenced to death following the Cleveland uprising. I first met Ralph Canady after he'd been railroaded to prison in the wake of the 1968 rebellion in Nashville's Black community. Colonial rebellions strike fear in the bowels of American capitalism, and it'll spare no effort to imprison the most rebellious. Still in prison, some for decades, are those women and men that represent their people's aspirations to be free: Leonard Peltier, Geronimo Pratt, Mumia Abu-Jamal, Gary Tyler, Alejandrina Torres, Abdul Haqq, and many others. As Mandela put it--there's no easy way to walk to freedom.

... more prisons in a country
already choking with them ...

THE FEDERAL DEPLOYMENT in L.A. includes elements of the U.S. Marshall's Service, who made their notorious mark in history tracking fugitive slaves, the racist dogs of the Border Patrol, and the Bureau of Prisons. The presence of the latter is a further indication of what lies in store for the rebellious poor: more prisons in a country that's already choking with them. The U.S. has more steel cages than any country on earth, and imprisons more Blacks per capita than South Africa. I live in this compressed nightmare of a gulag. Each year of my imprisonment I've endured the exile with those from amerikkka's barrios and ghettos, including South Central and East L.A. There's no denying this apartheid reality or the necessity to break its chains.

NAT TURNER SAID that the struggle for freedom was not a war for robbery or to satisfy passions. Opportunists exist everywhere, but most of that unleashed power of mass resistance did not act with criminal intent. They are pursuing their very survival. Their intent is to demand respect and gain some measure of control over their

lives and community. What criminal intent exists is primarily represented by police violence and a system which fosters and protects the real criminals: that rotten element that lives in bourgeois splendor derived from exploiting and defrauding societies' most vulnerable. Their rapacity is exceeded only by their ruthlessness and disregard for the value of human life. The rule of class and white supremacy ensures that they operate with impunity.

NO DOUBT THE system will attempt some band-aid application to problems reflected in the uprising. This has been attempted before, but hasn't worked. That's one of the messages from the streets-- government money, with all its bureaucratic strings, may alleviate some conditions in the short term, but it cannot deal with the basic causes that underlie a people's subjugation. There's only one serious context in which to discuss money, and that is reparations. Billions of dollars in reparations. Millions of acres of land in reparations. However, a government and a general population that applauds the agonizing death of Iraqi children caused by U.S. bombing raids will not seriously consider reparations simply to quell the impact of 50 deaths and property destruction in L.A.

THE SITUATION IS desperate but not hopeless. To rise from ashes and bondage requires a well-organized and militant resistance that's willing and prepared to take it to the limit. For amerikka's most oppressed, there is no viable alternative to revolutionary nationalism and socialism.

THERE WAS WIDESPREAD participation by Mexicans in the L.A. uprising, though the media has manipulated coverage to keep them voiceless. Their involvement is understandable given the conditions of survival and the fact the amerikka occupies their land. Los Angeles was forcibly taken from the Mexicans in 1846.

THERE WAS MARGINAL participation by young whites in L.A., as well as in actions in other cities. This is encouraging, but it is not enough. Historically, white people have laid claim to privilege based on race. There are exceptions, but they're not the rule.

White power rules in amerikka, as is clearly evident in the presidency, congress, supreme court, and corporate boardrooms. You can see it in the faces of the swine wearing the badge of the LAPD. You see it in celebrations of Columbus. There are those that embrace the racist ideology that permeates this country, others are simply complacent when confronted with its effects. Both are part of the problem.



FOR THE PREDOMINANTLY white Left and broader grouping of "progressives", there exists a heightened call to action. Where are the millions who created a vibrant anti-apartheid movement? Where are all those that provided political support and material aid to Nicaragua and El Salvador? Where are the near million strong that attended the recent pro-choice demonstration in Washington? And where in hell is organized labor? It's time for this conspiracy of silence to end.

FOR POOR AND working-class whites, the choice is clear: collaboration with a system based on white supremacy, or combatting it. When John Brown was asked why he fought to end slavery, he replied "I act from principle. My objective is to restore human rights." When Malcolm X was asked what whites who care about Black peoples' struggles could do to support them, he replied "Do as John Brown did." It's time to get down to dismantling the apartheid legacy of slavery. It's time to organize a 20th century abolition movement, and to provide aid and assistance to freedom fighters. It's way beyond the time of no return.

Marion Prison, May, 1992



DISS'D

FROM 1976 through 1984, the Sam Melville-Johnson Jackson Unit and the United Freedom Front called for the release of political prisoners and POW's from U.S. prisons. This call, accentuated through the use of explosives, was integrated with other issues such as independence for Puerto Rico, an end to apartheid, and support for liberation movements in Central America.

In 1985, the first of many trials began for seven long time activists and