

Preface

Viviane Saleh-Hanna and Ashanti Omowali Alston

On May 26, 2006, this issue of the Journal of Prisoners on Prisons was initiated through the circulation of this letter:

Journal of Prisoners on Prisons: A Special Black Panther Political Prisoners Issue

Greeting Good People! This is a special invitation, from Ashanti Alston and Viviane Saleh-Hanna asking you to help us produce this Special Issue of the Journal of Prisoners on Prisons. It is dedicated to the Political Prisoners of the Black Panther Party and the Black Liberation Army. In the same spirit of this journal, this issue will be the words of the political prisoners themselves, along with those in exile and former political prisoners. For many, it has been over three decades of imprisonment in the face of mountainous files of Counter-Intelligence Program operations (federal/state/local) and present "Criminal-Justice" intransigence in setting these black revolutionary servants of the people free. Several of these servants have already "died" in prison—needlessly. How many more? Let this Special Issue contribute to highlighting Criminal-Justice in the United States of America and renewing our passion in fighting for the freedom of the political prisoners and for the completion of the revolutionary project of creating new world humanities.

The Journal of Prisoners on Prisons (JPP) has worked for 15 years to bring forth the voices of prisoners, and has done a political prisoners issue in the past with revolutionaries in Ireland. Their 15th anniversary issue (published by the University of Ottawa Press) will be dedicated to the Black Panther Party and the Black Liberation Army. Because the JPP is published in Canada it will provide us with an international audience. It is distributed to universities, activist communities and prisoners around the globe.

We want you to tell your story. We are hoping you will focus on the prison experience but also contextualize it so folks as readers will know who you are and why you have been able to "overcome" the day by day hell of prison. Where are you now? Whether you are still in a maximum security prison or out here back in the minimum we know as "society" let your reader get insight into your experiences, struggles and triumphs. Write about the things that are most important to you. Imagine your readers coming to the realization of why you manifest, in Huey's words, "Prison, where is thy victory?" and why, even today after 30, 40 years in prison,

the powerful, intoxicating dream of freedom is what keeps your hope alive. Share your wisdom, your insights, your thoughts and your experiences. It can be personal, or it can be commentary—choose the style you are most comfortable with.

We know that you have written your stories before, and some of you are tired of writing them over and over again when they seem to fall on deaf ears. We hope this publication with its unique distribution list—prisoners, (ex)prisoners, activists, university professors and students—can reach out to a larger audience and spread the word about our struggles. We also hope that the young people who read this publication can learn about the struggle and get some hope through your experiences. If YOU still believe, after all that you have been through and still go through, then you are the hope for tomorrow. You are the carriers of our freedom dreams, our dream-catchers of the Elder Clans. It ain't ovah!

We would like this issue to show the on-going work for the freedom of the political prisoners and upcoming proposed campaigns. And lastly, we would like to propose a special dedication to Yuri Kochiyama for her continuing years of work for the freedom of political prisoners, especially Black Panthers and Black Liberation Army members, who enjoy her unwavering support no matter how hostile and conservative the political U.S. government and criminal justice system agenda. Power to the people!

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<i>Party, Black Liberation Army,</i>	<i>Assistant Professor</i>
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<i>Co-Chair, National Jericho Movement</i>	<i>Dartmouth</i>

The people who received this letter are former members of the Black Panther Party and/or the Black Liberation Army and their supporters. More specifically, the majority of the people who received this letter are those who continue to sacrifice and involuntarily pay a price for the black revolutionary struggles of the 1960s and 1970s: they are political prisoners that the United States government continues to hold in captivity, and they are political activists and freedom fighters that the United States government continues to force into political exile. African blood, sweat, and tears built this nation through slavery and racial apartheid. Descendant African blood,

sweat and tears continue to be sacrificed on the same soil in the continuing struggle for total and absolute freedom from white supremacy in the United States and in the Diaspora.

Unfortunately, the invitation to record and write about these struggles did not reach all intended recipients:

CBP-S327.058 RETURNED CORRESPONDENCE CDFRM2 MAY 94	
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE FEDERAL BUREAU OF PRISONS	
TO: ASHANTA ALSTON 2022 BEVERLEY RD. #4 BROOKLYN, NY 11226	FROM: UNITED STATES PENITENTIARY P. O. BOX 2000 MARION, IL 62959
RE: SEKOU ODINGA #5228-054	DATE: JUNE 13, 2006
SUBJECT: Correspondence With Inmate Returned	
Your correspondence to the above-named inmate is being returned. This correspondence was not delivered to the inmate because:	
Your correspondence poses a threat to the security, good order, or discipline of the institution.	
The rejection of this correspondence is in accordance with the Federal Bureau of Prisons policy on "Correspondence" as published in Title 28 Code of Federal Regulations, Part 540 and in the Federal Bureau of Prisons Program Statement on correspondence. You have the right to appeal this rejection by writing the Warden in care of the above address. The inmate to whom you addressed your correspondence has been notified this correspondence has been returned to you and of his or her right to appeal the rejection.	
<p style="text-align: center;">B. A. Bledsoe, Warden</p> <p style="text-align: center;">(Printed or Typed Name and Written Signature of the Warden)</p>	
Record Copy - Addressee (with Correspondence); Copy - Inmate; Copy - File (with copy of Correspondence)	
(This form may be replicated via WP)	Replaces BP-327(58) of FEB 84

Despite the *criminal* justice system's attempts to thwart the content of this publication, submissions were collected, experiences were recorded, and events, experiences and thoughts occurring over the 40 years that have passed since the forming of the Black Panther Party have been addressed in this issue of the JPP. We continue to threaten and destabilize white supremacy and we continue to struggle against European and descendant European institutions and people that control and exploit non-European people, land and resources. ***All power through the people!***