

**Soledad Brother George Jackson—
Memories of Comrade George**
Kiilu Nyasha

On reading his first book, a 1970 bestseller, Soledad Brother: The Prison Letters of George Jackson, I felt a kindred spirit with George's rage and resistance, but thought he contradicted himself regarding women. So I began a correspondence with him from New Haven, Connecticut, where I was a member of the Black Panther Party, working for the Panthers' lawyers defending Chairman Bobby Seale, et al., and organizing community and national support for their freedom.

I remember sitting in the courtroom, where I had easy access through the same door the judge entered, and fantasizing that, since I was never searched, I could come through that door, climb up behind the judge, put a gun to his head and demand the release of Bobby and Ericka Huggins, who was being tried jointly with Bobby.

Then came the newspaper headlines that reverberated throughout the world of George's teenaged brother commandeering a Marin court, liberating three prisoners and attempting to free the Soledad Brothers! Wow! I thought. He did it! He actually did it!

It was August 7, 1970, when Jonathan Jackson's bravery taught us all that these "pigs" had no regard whatsoever for human life. They shot up the crowded van, instantly killing three brothers—Jonathan, William Christmas and James McClain—and a judge, and critically wounding Ruchell Magee and a prosecutor. One of three jurors suffered a minor wound. Magee remains in prison still fighting for release after 41 years in California gulags.

Shortly after Jonathan's death, George wrote: "I loved Jonathan, but his death only sharpens my fighting spirit". When I returned to San Francisco in June 1971, George asked me to obtain a press pass so I could visit him. Panther attorney Charles Garry connected me with Carlton Goodlett, publisher of the Sun Reporter newspaper, and I wound up with a job, as a reporter covering the pre-trial hearings for Angela Davis and Ruchell Cinque Magee that resulted from the events of August 7, 1970, and the Soledad Brothers—Fleeta Drumgo, John Clutchette and George Jackson—accused of killing a guard at Soledad State Prison in retaliation for the massacre of three Black militants—W.L. Nolen, Sweet Jugs Miller and Cleveland Edwards—by a tower guard in January 1970.

Seeing George for the first time in the San Francisco courtroom, I was stunned. I'd never seen an egghead martial artist before. I managed to visit

him in San Quentin's holding cell in July, an unforgettable experience, when I tried to convince him that there was no "People's Army" out here. A month later, I was devastated by the news of his assassination at San Quentin on August 21, 1971, in what we believe was a set-up escape attempt. Three guards and two inmate trustees were also killed. According to attorney Steve Bingham, "It seems the armory was just over the outside wall ... and the guards would lift handguns over the wall in little baskets. There were handguns all over the place". Hindsight being 20/20, George's mistake was in trusting the wrong folks.

As news editor for the Sun Reporter—I was known then as Pat Gallyot—I produced the spread on our beloved warrior and the grizzly aftermath of August 21, when 26 prisoners were tortured, brutalized, and even shot. These were life-changing experiences for me. George was/is my mentor, my inspiration, my heart. His love for people was boundless; his political knowledge and analyses brilliant, prophetic. For example, George makes clear the social science that the most oppressed targets of fascism will lead our struggle, (i.e., Black people, not the relatively comfortable, privileged "White Left").

In Soledad Brother (1970), George wrote:

International capitalism cannot be destroyed without the extremes of struggle. The entire colonial world is watching the blacks inside the U.S., wondering and waiting for us to come to our senses. Their problems and struggles with the Amerikan monster are much more difficult than they would be if we actively aided them. We are on the inside. We are the only ones (besides the very small white minority left) who can get at the monster's heart without subjecting the world to nuclear fire. We have a momentous historical role to act out if we will. The whole world for all time in the future will love us and remember us as the righteous people who made it possible for the world to live on. If we fail through fear and lack of aggressive imagination, then the slave of the future will curse us, as we sometimes curse those of yesterday.

The black bourgeoisie (pseudo-bourgeoisie), the right reverends, the militant opportunists, have left us in a quandary, rendered us impotent.... The blanket indictment of the white race ... is silly and indicative of a lazy mind (to be generous, since it could

be a fascist plot). It doesn't explain the black pig; there were six on the Hampton-Clark kill. It doesn't explain ... the pseudo-bourgeois who can be found almost everywhere in the halls of government working for white supremacy, fascism, and capitalism.

In letters to me, George had written:

My life is moving myself and other people into action.... And 'Action makes the front'. I am a Marxist-Fanonist, i.e., a realist. There is no such thing as a spontaneous revolution. History has been one long authoritarian process, the result has been the accretion of a very pronounced leader-follower syndrome.... The throwing off of the need for leadership and the creation of communist man (woman) is a goal, it isn't the situation of today, and must not be confused as such.... In the throws of combat, unitarian conduct will almost flow naturally; it will not have to be contrived or strained; the pressure from without, from the enemy of all will force us to tolerate each other's humanity.

In Blood in My Eye (1972), completed just before his death and published posthumously, George wrote:

The men who placed themselves above the rest of society through guile ... and sheer brutality have developed two principal institutions to deal with any and all serious disobedience—the prison and institutionalized racism. Most people realize that crime is simply the result of a grossly disproportionate distribution of wealth and privilege ... an aspect of class struggle from the outset.... Throughout its history, the United States has used its prisons to suppress any organized efforts to challenge its legitimacy.... The hypocrisy of Amerikan fascism forces it to conceal its attack on political offenders by the legal fiction of conspiracy laws and highly sophisticated frame-ups.

We must educate the people ... to realize that even crimes of passion are the psycho-social effects of an economic order that was decadent a hundred years ago.

San Quentin was built in 1852 to house 50 convicts. Today, it has over 6,000 prisoners jammed together in the same space, and on death row, over 600! Nationwide, there are well over two million captives and climbing. As the war on terror (read war on freedom fighters) escalates, and human rights are trampled—witness Guantanamo—George’s declaration becomes crystal clear:

The police state isn’t coming—it’s here, glaring and threatening. Settle your quarrels, come together, understand the reality of our situation, understand that fascism is already here, that people are already dying who could be saved, that generations more will live poor butchered half-lives if you fail to act. Do what must be done; discover your humanity and your love in revolution. Pass on the torch. Join us; give up your life for the people.

I wonder if we would be in the same mess today had we heeded George’s call 30 plus years ago. I ask you, how many tens of thousands must die in Darfur, in Haiti, in Palestine, before we call genocide GENOCIDE? How many millions more have to be hungry, homeless, locked up, tortured, executed and slaughtered? How many elections bought and/or stolen before we call fascism FASCISM?

Jonathan Jackson, only 17 when he was martyred, noted:

The picture of the U.S. as a Paper Tiger is quite accurate, but there is a great deal of work to be done on its destruction, and I’m of the opinion that if there is a big job of growing to do, the sooner begun the sooner done.

George and Jonathan Jackson’s revolutionary revolts painted the month of August Black forever—Black meaning Revolutionary. As Mumia Abu-Jamal noted, “a month of meaning ... of righteous rebellion; of individual and collective efforts to free the slaves and break the chains that bind us.”

For more information on George and Jonathan Jackson, Hugo L.A. Pinell and Ruchell Cinque Magee—still locked up more than 40 years later, do an internet search for “Kiilu Nyasha” and “Black August”, or e-mail Kiilu at: kiilul@mindspring.

Kiilu Nyasha (formerly known as Pat Gallyot) was a former member of the Black Panthers' Chapter in New Haven, Connecticut and of the legal defense team of Party Chairman Bobby Seale's trial for murder and conspiracy. She is an international egalitarian. The mother of two adults, she has been in the struggle to free political prisoners, abolish the death penalty and the prison system; and an actionist in global liberation movements. Kiilu is currently a producer/programmer for KPOO, a Black listener-sponsored public radio station in San Francisco. She is one of the strongest and loudest voices demanding and working for the release of Hugo Pinell, Ruchell Magee and Romaine Chip Fitzgerald, three of the longest held political prisoners from the Panther era.