

# BOOK REVIEW

***No Surrender: Writings from an anti-imperialist  
Political Prisoner* by David Gilbert  
Reviewed by Claude Marks**

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David Gilbert will not be able to do a book tour to promote his insightful new book, *No Surrender: Writings from an anti-imperialist political prisoner*. David has been a political prisoner in New York State since 1981, which makes the publishing of this collection of his essays and commentaries a truly remarkable event. David was a founder of Columbia University SDS, a veteran of the Civil Rights and anti-Vietnam War movements and fought and organized for many years as part of clandestine resistance against U.S. imperialism. He was captured in 1981 in the course of an armed action and since then has organized and written inside the New York's State prisons.

*No Surrender* is an amazing collection written under some of the most adverse conditions possible. Despite his physical isolation, Gilbert manages to stay connected to other political prisoners, many progressive struggles, and maintains a sharp analysis of a world that is physically beyond his reach. There are in-depth essays and book reviews on a stunning variety of historical and current issues — AIDS education, African liberation, Palestine, Chiapas, male supremacy and feminism, environmental racism — and much more. He writes three haikus to Mumia Abu Jamal and another entitled:

Our Politics in 17 Syllables  
Love for the people  
Means nonstop struggle against  
Imperialism

Unlike most other writings about the movements of the 60s, 70s and 80s, Gilbert is honestly self critical in looking back at his own political development and involvement and at the political errors and advances of those movements. Whether it is his look at SDS (Students for a Democratic Society) and the Weather Underground Organization or more general reflection, he encourages today's activists to "study the past to draw lessons to help us liberate the future". He writes about what it means to challenge white and male supremacy, organize and fight to build a future based on

a more humane and just vision of the world. He calls for others to reflect honestly upon contributions and errors:

Why hasn't there been more written on our errors? The obstacle of not giving up security details to the state can be readily overcome by focusing on the political themes and lessons. So I believe our main problem has been our reluctance to face up to and analyze our errors, along with the lack of consensus about them. There is no way to sugarcoat it: this dearth of self-criticism and analysis is a serious failure to carry out our responsibilities to the movement. (p. 269)

Gilbert's book is serious analysis and reflection; it also conveys his resilient spirit, sense of humor, creativity, and gives us a glimpse into his very close relationship to his son Chesa, now in his 20s.

This is a challenging, powerful, and deeply moving book. Intelligence, courage, positive energy, and revolutionary dedication shine through every page, echoing the closing lines of a poem by Turkish poet and political prisoner, Nazim Hikmet, that opens the book:

It's this way:  
Being captured is beside the point,  
The point is not to surrender.

*No Surrender* can be ordered from Abraham Guillen Press in Canada & AK Press in California.