

Bismillah Ir Rahman Ir Raheem

Bashir Hameed

All praise is due to Allah, Whose aid we seek, and Whose forgiveness, guidance and protection we seek against our own evil and the sinful acts of others. He who Allah guides aright, none can lead astray, and whom He leads astray, none can guide aright. I testify that there is no true god except Allah alone Who has no partner, and I openly testify that Muhammad is the slave servant of Allah, and His Messenger.

The above is my basic political outlook and way of life today. Islam is a total way of life that governs one's secular and spiritual outlook and way of life. There is no separation between one's political views and religious views. They are both governed by a person's adherence to the Islamic way of life.

I've been asked to submit a piece on my current political philosophy which is the reason for the above statements. In addition, I've been asked questions regarding the present crisis and fight that we, as oppressed people, find ourselves in today. I will start by stating that writing is not something that I enjoy doing or do well, but I will attempt to answer some of the questions put to me as best and honestly as I can.

Islam has been my sustainer. It has given me a sound and proven way of life, that has sustained me during those low periods. Now that I've come to understand and internalize its basic tenets and concepts better, I see it as an extension of my former revolutionary political views.

Today, if one looks at the geopolitical situation and motion in the world, it is Islam and Muslims at the epicenter of the struggles currently taking place. The countries whose world outlook was Marxist-Leninist or revolutionary nationalism have abandoned it. Today, China, the Soviet Union and most of their followers have fundamentally changed their world outlook. The way of life viewed as the scourge of mankind by the West today is Islam, not Marxism.

Although I am sustained by my religious belief, I still cherish, seek and welcome the relationships of my family, friends and supporters. They have made numerous sacrifices on our behalf and have supported us for years. They are cherished and appreciated very much.

The human spirit has a basic herd instinct and one looks forward to the relationships of families and friends and the interplay (as limited as it is under

the circumstances) that a person has with others. I'm a basic people person. I enjoy and love people especially those with whom I have a commonality or am united in some fundamental way. Most of the folks in the movement are very committed and self-sacrificing. A person can not help but cherish this type of person, especially since they are not the kind that this particular society produces a great many of. The basic tenet of this society is premised on individualism and being primarily about yourself. So, when we meet and know those committed to the betterment of humanity, one can not help but to cherish them.

My family is extremely important to me. My elderly mother has been the foundation of our family like so many of our women are. The same appears to be the case with my brother and co-defendant Abdul Majid's family, his mother being the bedrock there. My family's support and sacrifices over the years have been extremely important, especially my sisters. I also have developed a strong and loving relationship with my son and his family. I look forward to the phone talks with my eight year old granddaughter and fifteen year old grandson. Over the years, I have developed extremely strong relationships with nieces and nephews. I treasure the relationships that I have developed with our supporters and our conversations and visits. We have a wide array of supporters of various ethnicities and ages, and I enjoy them all.

One of the main premises that I try to impart to the young folks here is that I talk about the struggle and the importance of struggle being love-inspired, and that struggle cannot be sustained, maintained or based upon hating someone because of their ethnicity.

Maintaining one's dignity is a constant struggle. Like George Jackson said, they are about "breaking our spirits". Unfortunately, today's main cultural genre hip-hop, for the most part, has degenerated into a self-hating, materialistic and hedonistic minstrel show. A genuine relevant culture should reflect the on-going struggle of the aspirations of the oppressed. There are a few progressive groups and individuals righteously speaking to our condition and plight, but they, for the most part, don't get the air-play or aren't promoted by the mainstream entertainment venues and folks. Opportunists like Russell Simmons are viewed as icons and progressives because of accumulated wealth and his (Simmons') 11th hour involvement in the recent drug law (Rockefeller Drug Law) issue, and his relationship to Louis Farrakhan of the Nation of Islam.

I no longer get angry when I hear remarks allegedly made by folks who were former revolutionaries. Over the years, I have heard remarks allegedly made by Bobby Seale (co-founder of the Black Panther Party) that would make one wonder what was he thinking or if he was thinking at all when he made these comments. Congressmen Bobby Rush (former member of the BPP) and John Lewis (former member of Student Non-violent Coordinating Committee, SNCC) were two of (President) Clinton's most co-operative and docile sycophants. The criticism of these brothers isn't based on my personal dislike, but I'm just curious as to what could have transpired, that I haven't noticed, to make them take such radical (right) turns from their former positions. It isn't like folks are free or any genuinely fundamental changes have come upon us. This society has become more of a police state than ever.

The struggles and persistence of our ancestors and their indomitable wills are also important factors in our willingness to continue to struggle. I love it when we hear of former BPP members still struggling around the country in various ways, e.g., Brother Malik Rahim in New Orleans and the O'Neals in Africa. Character is built during our youth in many different ways. It is also one of the many things that maintains one's faith and hope. In Islam, maintaining hope and faith are fundamental tenets of the religion.

The question was asked, do I think that I will walk out of here? Would I like to? Yes. Would I mortgage my soul to? I would pray not. I think that how we conduct ourselves in here is of the utmost importance. They would love to see us groveling at their feet. They know the psychological effect that it would have on the others here. They make countless assaults on all of our dignity daily and especially those of us who are political.

Bashir Hameed (formerly known as James York) was born and raised in New Jersey. In 1968, he joined the Black Panther Party while residing in Oakland, California. Once he returned to New Jersey, he became Deputy Chairman of the New Jersey Chapter of the BPP. FBI documents obtained during the 1970s reveal that, during this time, Bashir became a COINTELPRO target. He was charged and convicted of the murder and the attempted murder of two police officers in April 1981. This conviction came as a direct result of his political activity. Bashir Hameed and his co-

defendant, Abdul Majid, were tried three times. Their first trial ended in a hung jury divided along racial lines. The second trial was declared a mistrial by the judge immediately after the jury rendered a decision that acquitted Bashir on the murder charge. At a third trial, they were eventually convicted for murder. Bashir is currently service a sentence of 25 years to life and is presently being held in the Great Meadow Prison (Box 51, Comstock, NY 12821).