

Setting the Record Straight: The *Real* Role of the Revolutionary Communist Party in the Struggle vs. Police Repression

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Over the past few months, there has been a concerted attack on the Party and its role in the struggle against police brutality. Some political forces have not only spread rumors, but have actually accused the Party or people associated with the Party of criminal acts, or—either alternatively or at the very same time—of being police provocateurs. **THESE SLANDERS ARE LIES. THOSE WHO SPREAD THEM ARE LYING.** In addition, and even more serious, some people and forces have made physical threats, attempted to organize physical attacks and actually have carried out attacks. At times this has included fingering people for the police and actively working to help the police. **SUCH ATTACKS ARE OUTRAGEOUS AND MUST BE OPPOSED, AND ACTUALLY RENDER AID TO THE POLICE AND POWERS-THAT-BE. SUCH COOPERATION WITH THE POLICE MUST HAVE NO PLACE IN ANY MOVEMENT THAT REALLY OPPOSES POLICE MURDER, ABUSE AND BRUTALITY.**

Not only that: such slanders, threats and attacks are designed to enable, or in any case could objectively enable, the state to escalate the attacks on the Party and those who support and work with it to even more serious and grievous dimensions. These kinds of slanders and this kind of atmosphere played a major role in creating a situation during the 1960s and '70s in which poisonous conflicts were fomented by the FBI and other organs of the state, and important invaluable leaders were killed off, with the authorities able to hide their hand and blame it on “internal conflicts.” These slanders and attacks are also designed to create a situation where honest people who should know and do better—who would defend people against open attacks by the state—retreat into confusion.

A Brief History of the Revolutionary Communist Party’s Work Against Police Brutality and Mass Incarceration

What has the history of the Revolutionary Communist Party been in the struggle against police brutality and repression and mass incarceration? To detail all of this in a single article would be impossible; but let’s go into a few things to give a sense.

In a very real sense, the history of the Party in this struggle dates back to years before its founding. Many people in the Party, including its Chairman, Bob Avakian, participated in early struggles working with or defending the Black Panther Party; people can read Bob Avakian’s memoir for many examples of this, or they can watch the video of Bob Avakian speaking in 1969, 1979, and 2003 and listen to the testimony of former Panther member Joe Veale about his own early years, etc.

Throughout the 1970s the Party, and its principal forerunner, the Revolutionary Union, participated in many struggles, including, among others, the struggle for justice for José Campos Torres, in which Party members and supporters (most notably Travis Morales, who is today a target of haters whose arrogance is exceeded only by their ignorance) were railroaded and tried for their roles in the Moody Park Rebellion against that murder.

Throughout the 1980s, when the system of mass incarceration and massive police terror and repression was launched, the Party was locked in struggle on many fronts against this outrage. The Party, through Carl Dix, initiated the “Draw the Line” statement against the 1985 bombing of the MOVE house in Philadelphia, which killed eleven people, including children, in a heinous act of police terror, but which many in the movement would not denounce because it was carried out by a Black mayor. The Party was locked in battle in particular in Los Angeles, with Darryl Gates, the fascist police chief of LA, suffering numerous arrests for defying Gates and standing with masses of people who were under the gun of the notoriously racist and brutal LAPD. The Party participated in and helped initiate the first national conference calling out the War on Drugs, organized by the anti-repression group Refuse and Resist! And in nearly every local battle in major cities in which the Party did work—and in many cities in which outbreaks occurred where the Party was not located, but sent people—the Party organized people against this, and supported and defended them when they stood up.

In the 1990s the Party supported, participated in and defended the righteous rebellion in Los Angeles and elsewhere around the country over the acquittal of the police who had mercilessly and brutally beaten Rodney

King for speeding, in an attack caught on video and spread around the world. For this, the Party was singled out by top pig Darryl Gates and the major media. In the immediate aftermath of this rebellion—indeed, as it was still going on—Bob Avakian, at no small risk, released a statement welcoming this rebellion as one of the “most beautiful” events in years.

Also in the 1990s, Carl Dix of the RCP, working with Attica Brother Akil Al-Jundi, the New York-based December 12 Coalition, the MOVE family in Philadelphia, Food Not Bombs! and other groupings initiated the yearly October 22 demonstrations. From the very beginning, people who lost family members to police murder played a major role in these demonstrations. These demonstrations reached out very broadly and over the years involved tens of thousands actively going up against police terror. These yearly demonstrations played a major role in giving voice and expression to those families who had lost loved ones to police terror and murder. The Party also worked on the Stolen Lives Project, which compiled the first list of police murder victims in this country. At the same time, in numerous urban areas, party supporters organized against specific abuses by the police—again, especially in Los Angeles, where a number of legal cases had to be fought, and where the police would often physically attack legally permitted demonstrations.

Here it must be said that Joey Johnson, who has come under physical attack, slander and now a concerted plot to set him up for police prosecution, was playing a front-line struggle in these battles all through these decades, at a time when some of the politicians attacking him were still learning how to say “yes, sir!” to the power structure, and some of these so-called nationalists slandering, bad-mouthing and threatening him were doing nothing more radical than selling bean pies.

During this same period the Party took on major responsibility in the struggle to prevent the execution of Mumia Abu-Jamal and, again, BA released a statement calling on all to prevent this execution and to also defend and stand with Geronimo Pratt, the former Black Panther Party member who had been unjustly framed for murder and sentenced to life in prison (Pratt later proved his innocence and was released, playing an active role in the years before he died in 2011).

And through all this time the Party’s press—first the *Revolutionary Worker* and today *Revolution/revcom.us*—has week in and week out shined a light on these horrors, exposed their systemic character, and sharply put forward the fact that *it does not have to be this way—there is a whole other world that is possible*.

During the years since, the Party has continued to mobilize people all through society to stand against police repression and mass incarceration. In 2011, the Stop Mass Incarceration Network, in which the RCP works and helped initiate, initiated a series of sit-ins at police precincts around New York City against the practice of stop-and-frisk, getting arrested and going to jail. The Party stood with Occupy when the police came down on it. In 2012 and 2013, the Party united with others to support in many different ways the prisoners who heroically launched hunger strikes against the torture going on in the California prison system. During that period, Bob Avakian in a major speech opened up with a powerful and deep denunciation of police terror and went on in the speech to talk movingly about the efforts of those under the gun—including prisoners—to resist. Everybody who really wants to know our Party’s stand—on a level both visceral and theoretical—must watch this film, *BA Speaks: Revolution—Nothing Less!*

So, as we said in the main article, let’s face it: any honest review of the Party’s history over the past decades leading up to this year would have to conclude that, while the struggle against the genocidal system of mass incarceration and police terror that has been put in place as a new form of “Jim Crow” is not nearly strong enough, without the RCP it would be far weaker than it is.

The terrible damage done by this includes the assassination of Malcolm X, in which the outrageous slanders and threats against Malcolm coming from members of the Nation of Islam and their newspaper enabled the FBI and police to conceal their role in Malcolm’s murder. It also includes numerous incidents around the Black Panther Party, including the murder of Panther leaders Bunchy Carter and John Huggins by people associated with the cultural nationalist US group. And there are literally thousands of other such incidents, not so well-known, which were orchestrated in the same way. This is STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURE of the people who run this system—the “power structure”—the imperialist-capitalists.

Such slanders and threats were part of the whole “toolkit” of the FBI, a fact which only came to light in 1971 with the exposure of the FBI’s “COINTELPRO” program. These bitter and costly lessons, paid for with the blood of great leaders and the despair and suffering that came in the wake of all this, is today ignored by too

many who know it, and not known by too many who should. Those engaging in these slanders are doing something very criminal, counter-revolutionary and dangerous and need to STOP.

Right now such attacks are particularly focused on Joey Johnson, as well as some supporters who are in Ferguson. These, again, are outrageous. And again: **they must stop, and honest people, whether or not they agree with everything about the RCP, must oppose them.**

Of a somewhat different order, but also doing damage and great harm and often working in tandem with the first, is a second set of lies: the notion that the Party is a bunch of people with no connection to the masses who care only about self-promotion. **THESE TOO ARE LIES AND OUTRAGEOUS DISTORTIONS.** Anyone who had a serious attitude—who actually looked into our history and practice going back 40 years and more, who read our press or examined our positions—would see this in a minute. But particularly in today's culture of snarkiness and the attitude of "I-read-it-on-the-internet-and-I've-heard-it-around-so-it-must-be-true," this has confused some people. To that end, we have included here for people's reference a brief summary of the Party's history in this struggle. Left to stand, this lie undercuts and destroys the unity needed to actually stand against a common enemy and STOP the horror of mass incarceration and police murder. And it creates the attitude where people stand back and do nothing when the state goes after revolutionaries and radicals who stand against it.

What Actually Happened in Ferguson

Much of this current round of attack has focused up in and around Ferguson. On August 9, Michael Brown was wantonly murdered by the cop Darren Wilson and his corpse was left lying in the streets of Ferguson, like so much trash, for hours. Immediately on hearing this, Party supporters came down to the city to join with people who were standing up—as they should have, and as did many other people. Throughout that time, the Party stood with those who made sure through the fierceness and unquenchable determination of their struggle that this murder would not be covered up, not be tamped down by yet another round of the dead-ends of voter registration drives, lawsuits, investigations and everything BUT justice for yet another callous murder of an unarmed Black person by the police.

This stand in particular incurred the wrath of two kinds of people and has been the proximate cause of the threats, attacks, slanders and lies that made this article necessary. The first are those who outright work in or for the system (Ron Johnson, who is after all nothing but a PIG, Antonio French, the politician whose great claim to fame seems to be that when police in his district murder somebody they give an excuse for it; Anderson Cooper and Chris Cuomo, mouthpieces for the ruling class media; etc.); and the second are those who are not themselves part of the power structure but still wish to steer masses of people away from defiance and rebellion and into the tried and *untrue* meaningless dead ends of voting, "conversations," "working through the Justice Department," etc.

As for the cops, politicians and top news commentators, these people are enforcers of the system, pure and simple. There is no common ground with them. As for those who attempt to police the masses and attack the revolutionaries for standing with those masses—they fear the specter of the people rising up much more than they hate what the police do every day; this is why you see them doing the work of the police, telling the people to go home, fingering those who they claim are agitators, etc. They cannot conceive of anything beyond reforming this system, and more than anything they want "in" on it, and so they also fear and hate talk of revolution—especially as this gets a hearing among the people. Such people need to be sharply struggled with to see the consequences and implications of their actions and to get off them, and to be won over to at least friendly neutrality. Finally, all this has led to confusion of those who seem content to believe anything that they see on the Internet, who are not driven to find out the truth for themselves, and who just "go along" with the crowd—and this too does significant damage to the actual crucial fight that must now be urgently waged.

Those in the streets, the defiant ones, see no place for themselves in this system—they understand on a basic level that there is no future for them, and when the outrages just get to be too much and the chance comes to stand up against these outrages they fearlessly do so—these represent the hope for real change, if they are given leadership and support, if they are worked with to see the source of the problem and its solution, and if work is done to rally people very broadly to support their righteous stand. To the accusation that we have worked with and supported and provided leadership to these forces, we plead "innocent as charged."

The Party's Aims and Objectives

The RCP works with and stands with the masses to resist police terror and mass incarceration all over the country, in many different forms, AND we work to expose the real source of the problem—capitalism—and the real solution—revolution. These two aims flow out of a single place: our implacable opposition to the horrors that are brought down on masses of people based on our deep conviction that not only is this totally unjust and illegitimate, but *it doesn't have to be this way*. We could get to a whole new situation where the police terror that comes down on masses could be ended—through REVOLUTION. This understanding not only leads us to be at least as outraged as anyone else by these horrors, and at least as driven as anyone else to end them... it also leads us to grasp that UNLESS people are inspired and organized to stand up against these, they will be driven down and broken, unable to wage the larger struggle for emancipation. And we understand—through actually digging into WHY police terror and mass incarceration has grown like a cancer these past four decades, how this is linked to the capitalist system—that unless this is stopped, what is now a “slow” structural genocide could be escalated at some point into a fast, horrendous “final solution.”

Our aims and objectives in entering into these struggles are:

1. to build the strongest, most determined and broadest possible resistance to police terror and mass incarceration...
2. to build up the people's consciousness and fighting capacity against the enemy (the state—that is, the governmental structures of violent repression and decision-making), with particular emphasis to organizing and standing with those directly under the gun...
3. at the same time, to reach out broadly to many, many others in all walks of life in society to go against the demonization and isolation of those on the bottom who are the objects of this terror and imprisonment...
4. to instill in millions a sense of the systematic character of all this and the total illegitimacy of a system that requires this...and
5. through all this to both change the terms in society in such a way that the rulers are put on the defensive and forced to back off on this program AND to prepare people, in their millions, to actually make revolution and DO AWAY with this madness at the earliest possible time.

All this flows out of and is part of our strategy to actually make revolution in the U.S., at the earliest possible time. People can and should check out our explanation of this strategy: “**On the Strategy for Revolution.**” In another sense, this strategy is concentrated in the slogan “Fight the Power, and Transform the People, for Revolution.”

Does this constitute a hidden agenda? No, it constitutes a larger agenda. And, anyway, so what? “Having an agenda” is far from unique to the Party! As one minister working within a coalition put it, “look, everyone in here has an agenda—I'm a Methodist minister and I'm coming from that point of view.”

Methods and Principles

As part of building the fight to actually STOP this outrage right now we work with many different people and political forces. We come together and make plans on how to unite in common struggle against a common enemy. And within that, there *should be* a spirit of lively wrangling over differences. If done in the right way, with largeness of mind and generosity of spirit, this kind of wrangling actually deepens the unity of any group of people working together.

At the same time, there should be and must be a few simple principles of what does NOT go in this movement. One of those principles, which everyone should be able to agree with, is this:

Differences among groups should be struggled out in a principled way. **There must not be physical threats, let alone physical attacks, against anyone in the movement to end these outrages. Nor can there be accusations of working with the police—being a provocateur or informant—without actual evidence.** And as for “working with the police,” there are often instances where it is necessary to negotiate permits, etc.; *but in*

no instance is it ever permissible for people in struggle to finger, or turn over, others to the police or to speculate to the press—who often work closely with the authorities—about someone else in the coalition. Such activity should actually be cause for barring people and individuals from the people’s movements, until they renounce and change these practices.

Where We Are Now

Let’s face it: any honest review of the Party’s history over *literally decades* leading up to today would have to conclude that, as one minister put it, without the RCP this struggle would be far weaker than it is. However, because most people don’t know the history of the Party in this struggle, we have included an appendix going into this.

In April of this year, the RCP united with the initiative coming from Carl Dix and Cornel West for the Month of Resistance, now going on. 90 people, representing individuals and groups, met in April to hammer out a call for the Month. As of Sunday, October 5, 327 people have signed this call and hundreds are working actively on it in many different ways. Artists, including Alice Walker and Chuck D, have contributed important efforts.

Clergy have begun to give sermons, as part of a concerted effort to bring religious communities into, or further into, this struggle. Students have taken up different plans on different campuses, including building mock prison cells, holding symposia, group “hands-up” pictures, and other efforts. Plans have been made and are going forward for massive demonstrations on October 22. And, while called by a coalition of other groups, the forces organizing the Month of Resistance (the Stop Mass Incarceration Network), including the Party, have enthusiastically endorsed the weekend in Ferguson. There is a great deal at stake here in making this month a real blow against this whole genocidal program, a massive STOP sign right in the face of U.S. society.

Right now, as we said earlier, we are, with many other people and groups, working hard to make October a Month of Resistance to Mass Incarceration, Police Terror and the Criminalization of a Generation. To actively work to wreck this effort, as some are doing, is unconscionable and shows only that they hate revolution and resistance more than they do the system and its horrors; to stand aside based on rumors and hearsay, to fall for the distancing carried out by others, some of whom are in league with the authors and perpetrators of these horrors, without yourself digging into the facts, is, in its ultimate effect, just as bad.

The juncture is clear: we have an opportunity over these next 3½ weeks to change the terms of things in this society, to seize the political initiative to create a sea change in how people view this outrage—to take a huge step toward actually STOPPING this. Not mitigating it, not ameliorating it, not carving out alternative space within it for a few—but STOPPING it. There is much right now going on that is different and extremely positive—much of it that has been sparked by or influenced by the call issued for the Month of Resistance and much that is independent of that and welling up from many different quarters. There is tremendous potential. But to realize this potential—to really take this giant step toward changing the very terms in which millions of people view what is just, what is legitimate and what must be done—we must all go much further. That will take many, many people and political forces from a very broad diversity of viewpoints working together, in many different kinds of activities. Let’s DO this. Let’s honestly struggle over differences, learning from each other and developing our individual and collective understanding of the problem... but let’s most of all really go forward with the broadest, most united fight possible against a common enemy that is killing people and mutilating spirits even as you are reading this.

Two Things About the Revolutionary Communist Party, USA That Everybody Needs to Know

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In the midst of intense struggle over police brutality and murder, particularly of Black and Latino people and what it will take to get justice, millions are hearing about the Revolutionary Communist Party, USA (RCP). In some cases, they are meeting the Party first hand, engaging with and joining hand-in-hand with the RCP in the struggle for justice. In other cases, they're seeing the signs in the streets and on the news with the website revcom.us. And millions are reading and hearing about attacks on revolutionary communists in the media, and from representatives of the very forces who carry out wanton murder of Black youths, like the FBI and St. Louis police chief Sam Dotson.

And then you will find others, claiming to be on the side of the people, who repeat and try to give credibility to lies, slanders, and attacks on the RCP that come from or serve the powers-that-be. You hear them echo the tired old "outside agitator" bullshit that the FBI and the KKK ran out about the heroic Freedom Riders who went to the South in the struggle against the old Jim Crow.

So. To all those who truly do want to see an end to the outrages and abuses coming down on people... and to the slanderers, the haters, the opportunists, and worse:

THERE ARE 2 THINGS ABOUT THE REVOLUTIONARY COMMUNIST PARTY, USA THAT SOME PEOPLE APPARENTLY HATE... THAT OTHER PEOPLE CHERISH... AND THAT EVERYBODY NEEDS TO KNOW ABOUT AND UNDERSTAND:

1) We are about fighting this *whole* wretched system of exploitation and oppression, and bringing in a radically different, liberated world. We take the responsibility to look at *all* the outrages and abuses and agonizing problems confronting humanity... we analyze where they come from and how they are linked... we fight hard against them and figure out how to get rid of them. And we do all this as part of bringing forward a new system.

2) When there is a particularly outrageous abuse, an abuse which absolutely requires and demands that people stand up against it, we take the responsibility to reach out as widely as we can to unite with *every honest person*, of whatever viewpoint, who wants to fight it, and together we fight as hard as we possibly can to defeat the outrage. We don't view any particular kind of oppression as anyone's property. We don't think that it is negative when people from one section of society stand against abuses coming down on others, and stand with others to fight back. To the contrary: To do anything less, let alone to work against that, is to betray the hopes of the oppressed who really do yearn to see and know that others will stand up. And all our experience—right down to today, in taking on the outrageous police murder of Michael Brown in Missouri and in waging a battle against the life-and-death restrictions being put on abortion in Texas—shows that when such support is forthcoming, *those who are under attack welcome this!*

In other words, **we are about fighting the power, and transforming the people, for revolution.** This has been a hallmark of our Party for 40 years. Not only that—this has been led and fought for and insisted upon, no matter what the conditions or circumstances, by Bob Avakian, the leader of our Party, going all the way back before our founding, to the 1960s.

A simple but bedrock point of morality: Anyone who sees an injustice needs to fight against it. And then, yes, there will be lively debate and struggle over the source of the problem and the solution to the savage inequality and oppressive violence that keeps people down. That debate, dialogue, and struggle needs to keep a focus on the real enemy and the real attacks and abuses that urgently cry out to be opposed and ended. And honest, principled people must draw a line against attacks on the RCP—in any form.