NEXT GENERAL MEETING OF THE COALITION:
THURSDAY, JUNE 28, 1990 AT 7:00 P.M.
Albany Public Library, Main Branch
Washington Avenue, Albany, New York

Summer Planning Meeting
OTB Tennis Boycott
Black Arts Festival - Coalition Table*
Assessment of Committee Work:
Sanctions Police Abuse

Note that no regular meetings are planned for July and August - however, Coalition work will continue and this meeting will set up the plans for that work.

*The Black Arts Festival is scheduled for Sunday, July 22, 1990 at the Empire State Plaza. If you can work the Coalition table, please call 436-0562 to arrange hours.
Dear Friends,

I have the distinct honor to inform you that, since the independence of Namibia on March 21, 1990, and particularly following the admission of my country to the membership of the United Nations on April 23, 1990, this office has changed status. Its official designation is: The Permanent Mission of the Republic of Namibia to the United Nations.

It is our wish to continue having cordial relations with all of you who have assisted us in the struggle for the liberation of our country, and to strengthen ties during this face of national reconstruction and development.

Yours sincerely,

Hinyangerwa P. Asheke
Ambassador
Charge d'Affaires.
BIRMINGHAM FRAME-UP

In 1970 the Harris family moved onto a previously all-white block in Atmore, Alabama. There was a neighborhood petition campaign demanding the family move, and threats were made on their car, a cross burned on their lawn. Threats from the Ku Klux Klan were followed by visits by men claiming to be local police.

Five months after moving into his new home, on August 11, 1970, this atmosphere of racist violence and terror killed 12-year-old Johnny Imani Harris. He was arrested without a warrant while on his way to work. He was placed in a line-up where his photographs was handed around to insure that he would be the man identified. The next day Harris was charged with four robberies in the amounts of $11, $67, $90 and $205, and with the alleged rape of a white woman. Each of these charges in 1970 carried a maximum penalty of death.

There followed a flurry of activity to count and due process. One of Harris' court-appointed lawyers never visited him before the trial. No pre-trial motions challenging Harris warrants were served or the warrantless search and seizure of his home were answered. Harris was found guilty. None of Harris' attorneys examined the medical report on the alleged rape victim, which stated there was no evidence of rape. None of the five people testifying against Harris had an unbreakable alibi for the time of the alleged rape. Harris was convicted and sentenced to die.

A few minutes before the trial began, Harris' attorney, ruled counseled him to plead guilty. One had not subordinated any defense witnesses and was totally unprepared to defend his client. The other felt the court would not take his white man's word over Harris regarding the rape and that Harris should get the death sentence if he didn't plead guilty. And this might "deter people from coming forward."

The horrors which awaited him were indescribable. Little had changed since the days when the Scott-Senators defendants were imprisoned there. Federal Judge Frank M. Johnson of IIFA ordered the guards to attack the prisoners and break up the protest. A guard, Officer Mark Mistier, 518-462-6?53, began. Harris' attorney, both counselors, and a prison leader, George Dobbins, were killed. According to eyewitnesses, the Wardens repeatedly stabbed Dobbins in the face after having him shot by a guard.

CRUEL AND UNUSUAL PUNISHMENT

In January, 1974, 64 prisoners who had protested— including Harris—were confined in a hole "built for 32. 'There were unusual punishment..."

Harris, along with other prisoners, joined Impacts for Action (IFA) to try to improve conditions. Prison officials answered their protests with beatings and brutality.

In January, 1974, 64 prisoners who had protested—all cited Harris—were confined in a "hole" built for 32. There were no toilets or beds. Guards lied to the prisoners, saying they had just beaten an IIFA member to death. Believing there would be next, the prisoners seized two guards as hostages and made one demand— that members of the press, legislature, and clergy he brought to Atmore the next day be given unimpeachable alibi for the time of on warrantless arrest or the warrantless search of his home were the alleged rape of a white woman. Each of these charges in 1970 carried a maximum penalty of death.

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NEW TRIAL WON

In 1978 Jesse David Jett, a former police officer at Atmore, came forward with eyewitness testimony that Harris had not killed the guard. He had not said anything before due to threats by the prison guards. Harris' attorney won a new trial in 1983, but Jett suddenly refused to testify. Once again an all-white jury convicted Harris and sentenced him to death.

THE CASE TODAY

The ruling overturning Harris' conviction resulted from effective legal work and the 15 years of struggle led by the NAACP. The court said, "the appropriate relief is the dismissal of the indictment since rather than merely granting a new trial."

In 1987, a U.S. Supreme Court decision in another case led to the overturning of Harris' death sentence. On March 10, 1989, after the vindictive opposition of the state's prosecutor, the Alabama Supreme Court ruled Harris could not be sentenced to death.

The case had been on appeal to the Alabama Court of Criminal Appeals. But an effective appeal had been made impossibly obscure by the fact that key sections of the transcript "shoving down" with the discriminatory jury selection process were not included in Harris' current attorneys' notes. A number of trials, including the highly prejudicial statements made by the state's prosecutor, the racially discriminatory composition of the indictment, the jury, and the lack of evidence linking Harris to the crime.

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SENTENCED TO DEATH

Harris was brought to trial by a politically ambitious Alabamian Attorney General, Bill Bailey, using an 1859 slaveholder law carrying a mandatory death sentence. No evidence was presented that Harris had killed the guard. Bailey maintained Harris was guilty of murder if he had been part of the protest. During the trial Bailey stated that the guards "lay at the word of the guards. The jurors were instructed to refuse eyewitness testimony that "the guard..." the word "to be..." then cut them all down."

During the trial Bailey stated that the warden "should have set a..." the word "to be..." then cut them all down."

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WE CAN FIGHT BACK AND WIN

We are a coalition of the Concerned Citizens of Alabama, the Southern Christian Leadership Conference, the National Alliance Against Racist & Political Repression (NAARPRP), through which we have spearheaded the building of a national and international movement to save Johnny Imani Harris' life and free him from prison. We have marched, rallied, negied, petitioned, passed out leaflets, and written letters. Support has come from elected officials such as Detroit Mayor Coleman Young, Congressmen John Conyers, William Clay, and Walter Fauntroy, Chicago Alderman Jesus Garcia, Detroit Council-members Maysan Mahaley and Mel Ravitz, and Alabama State Senator Hank Sanders and Earl Hilliard. They have been joined by the Coalition of Black Trade Unionists the Board of Church & Society of the United Methodist Church; singer Carmen McRae; writer Alice Walker; Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC) President Dr. Joseph Lowrey; Daniel Berrigan; Aldean Jahalba, President, American-Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee; Chicago activist Lupe Lozano; Dr. Jonathan House, President, Committee of Interns and Residents, New York, and many, many others.

WHAT YOU CAN DO:

Johnny Imani Harris should begin the new decade outside any prison walls. With struggle and organization we can free him and begin to heal the terrible wounds inflicted 20 years ago. Let Alabama's governor and parole board feel the renewed pressure of a national and international campaign to free Brother Harris. It's time!

• Move your church, organization, union, etc., to demand that there be no more delays. Demand Harris' sentence be commuted to time served, or at least immediate parole granted.

• Write Gov. Guy Hunt at the State Capitol, Montgomery, AL 36104, and separate letters to each member of the parole board.

• Write Attorneys General, and Senate Judiciary Committee, 777 South Lawrence St., Montgomery, AL 36130.

Capital District Coalition Against Apartheid and Racism
A project of the Social Justice Center

WE CAN FREE JOHNNY IMANI HARRIS

Demand Clemency or Immediate Parole

In January 1990 the state of Alabama chose to continue its racist vendetta against Harris, denying him parole. Last September, Alabama courts overturned Harris' conviction in the 1974 death of a prison guard. After nearly 19 years in prison, 14 years on death row, it is time to end this travesty of justice.
DEATHS AND COVER-UPS AT NEW YORK STATE PRISONS
Prisoner Support Network

For the second time in ten months, a young African American prisoner in the New York State prison system has died after being "subdued" by guards. James Charles, 30, of Queens, died at Attica on May 24th, 1990. Ronald Smith, 33, from the Bronx, died at Clinton on July 20, 1989.

In both cases, the official Department of Corrections version is that the prisoner, following an "altercation" with guards, was restrained within undue force, developed unrelated respiratory problems shortly afterward, collapsed and died. In both cases, inmates say they saw savage beatings. Hundreds of inmates at both prisons risked (and incurred) severe reprisals to try to get out the message that they believe Smith and Charles were beaten to death by guards.

On July 23, 1989, six hundred prisoners at Clinton boycotted the mess hall in order to make known that they believed Ronald Smith had been beaten to death.

Smith's autopsy was performed by the State Police Medical Examiner, Michael Baden. Dr. Baden's autopsy report notes, without comment, "abrasions, contusions, and lacerations" -- scrapes, bruises, and cuts -- all over Smith's body, including the head and testes. Dr. Baden concludes that the cause of Smith's death was cardiac arrhythmia caused by coronary arteriosclerosis and toxic levels of the antidepressant medication amitriptyline. In other words, he had a heart attack caused by hardening of the arteries and medical drug overdose.

Prisoner Support Network obtained the informal opinions of five medical specialists who were asked to read Dr. Baden's report. They expressed the following views: (1) that cardiac arrhythmia cannot be diagnosed in an autopsy, but only by electrocardiogram while it is happening; (2) that the amount of coronary artery narrowing -- to 60% in one artery -- reported by Dr. Baden is almost never enough to cause death; (3) that high amitriptyline levels are consistent with therapeutic use, and that the levels reported were probably not fatal. That is, Ronald Smith probably did not die the way the autopsy report says he died.

The Corrections Officers' own account of the death says that Smith, gasping and collapsing, was taken to the Mental Observation Unit instead of the infirmary and allowed to lie, handcuffed, face down in his vomit for six minutes. Medical attention arrived after he was dead.

The report on Ronald Smith's death by the Commission of Corrections, the state agency which is supposed to monitor state prisons, is an insult to the people of New York. Its two short pages simply repeat the conclusions of Dr. Baden's autopsy report and emphasize Smith's history of mental disorder and aggressiveness. Why did the Commission not investigate, or not report on, witnesses' claims to have observed Smith being beaten, the evidence of traumatic injury in the autopsy report, and the delay in obtaining medical attention? Instead, the report says, "Post mortem exam did not reveal traumatic injury that caused or contributed to the death of the deceased," creating the false impression that no traumatic injury was found. Injuries were found, but were not considered important by the State Police Medical Examiner.

The death of Ronald Smith takes on fresh significance with the death of James Charles. James Charles became involved in an altercation with corrections officers in A-yard at Attica in the late evening of May 24th. Over two hundred inmates were in the yard at the time, and many of them saw 20-30 guards restrain Charles, cuff his hands behind his back, and beat him to the ground. The guards then dragged Charles into the corridor of A-block, where they continued to beat him while prisoners watched through the window. Less than two hours later, James Charles was dead. Department of Corrections spokesperson Amy Colodny announced that preliminary autopsy results "failed to disclose" a cause of death, but there is "no indication of any trauma or injury that would have contributed to his death." (Buffalo News 5/26/90)

On the night of May 26th, 700 prisoners gathered in all four of Attica's yards to protest the death of James Charles. 459 of them either stayed out or were locked out in the yards overnight. Most have now received punitive transfers and disciplinary proceedings for their attempt to be heard. Although the prisoners in the yard on the night of May 26th were chanting, "No more murders, no more beatings: James Charles!" the Department of Corrections announced, and the media repeated, that they had no idea what caused the protest.

Individuals and groups concerned with these and other incidents of human rights violations in New York State's prisons are urged to write or telephone the following people requesting independent investigations and assurances of safety for inmate witnesses:

Governor Mario Cuomo
Attn John Poklemba
State Capitol
Albany, NY 12223
(518) 474-3334

Commissioner Thomas Coughlin
NYS Dept of Correctional Svcs
State Campus, Building #2
Albany, NY 12226
(518) 457-8182

Correction Committee
Daniel Feldman, Chair
N.Y.S. Assembly
Albany, NY 12248
(518) 455-5314

For further information, please contact Naomi Jaffe, Prisoner Support Network, 137 Oakwood Ave. Troy NY 12180, (518) 272-0601.

Capital District Coalition
Against Apartheid and Racism
A project of the Social Justice Center
Announcements

The Martin Luther King Jr. Institute for Nonviolence

Rebuilding New York – "Nonviolence at Work"

2nd Annual Summer Workshop on Nonviolence

August 12-16, 1990, Hofstra University, Hempstead, N.Y.

For more information, call the Institute M-F 9AM-5PM at (518) 426-2300.

THE BERKSHIRE FORUM

Rd 1 Box 124
Stephentown, NY 12168-9723
(518) 733-6013

June
22-24

Communist Parties at the Crossroads

The widespread reports of the death of the Communist Parties, North and South, East and West, are greatly exaggerated. And yet, recent events have certainly challenged their historic mandate as vanguards of emancipation. What is to be done? A provocative exchange of views with Gil Green, member of the Central Committee of the U.S. Communist Party; Deirdre Griswold, editor of "Workers' World"; Joseph Kaye, writer and long-time progressive activist; Sandra Levinson, executive director of the Center for Cuban Studies; Bruce Richard, labor activist; Merton Simpson, co-chair, Capital District Coalition Against Apartheid and Racism

July
27-29

South Africa: The Continuing Struggle

When Nelson Mandela was released from prison, the struggle for the liberation of South Africa entered a decisive phase. Nomazizi Sokudela, chairperson of the African National Congress' Regional Political Committee in the U.S. and a member of the ANC Women's Section, is a dedicated, resilient fighter who will explain the current situation in South Africa and the significance of negotiations. Vera Michelson, co-chair of the Capital District Coalition Against Apartheid and Racism, will discuss tactics and strategies in organizing movement work.
Two important dates:

Wednesday, June 27, 1990 - Reception
Thursday, June 28, 1990 - Regular Monthly Meeting
Details inside

BLACK LEADERS CALL FOR CONTINUED SANCTIONS WHILE SOUTH AFRICAN APARTHEID STILL RULES

Many feel that the fight against apartheid has been won because there have been some positive moves by the apartheid regime in South Africa. Black African leaders are urging that the United States and other Western countries maintain sanctions at this critical juncture in history. Until all the pillars of apartheid are dismantled and apartheid is replaced by democratic majority rule in a unitary, nonracial state, sanctions are necessary. The demand is for one person, one vote on a common voters roll in a unified nonracial state.
For several months the CDCAAR has been planning a reception in honor of the release of Nelson Mandela. In keeping with his demand for continued sanctions against the white minority regime until apartheid is ended and there is one man, one vote in South Africa, this reception will also be a renewed and urgent call for sanctions.

Several celebrities and politicians have pledged their support and will be in attendance. Resolutions are being prepared for introduction in local government bodies.

We need to make this the strongest call for sanctions ever. The South African regime is calling for sanctions to be ended. The Bush administration is talking about lifting sanctions to encourage "reforms."

Nelson Mandela, and the people of South Africa are calling for sanctions to continue and be intensified.

Take a stand for real democracy in South Africa. Your attendance at this reception and your support of sanctions will be a real "welcome" for Nelson Mandela.
On the occasion of Nelson Mandela’s visit to the United States, the Capital District Coalition Against Apartheid and Racism requests the honor of your presence at a reception for a representative of the African National Congress and the launching of a renewed sanctions campaign for full freedom in South Africa.

Wednesday, June 27, 1990
5:00 p.m.
Legislative Office Building, Reception Room 711A
State Street, Albany, New York

also co-sponsored by New York State Assemblyman Roger L. Green

For further information, call the Mandela Reception Committee telephone (518) 432-4623

Project of the Social Justice Center