

The Immovable Black Lumpenproletariat

The Futility of White Supremacist State-Sanctioned Indictments of Black Factions and Gangs

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Though I cannot condone it, much of the violence inflicted on my gang rivals and other blacks was an unconscious display of my frustration with poverty, racism, police brutality and other systemic injustices routinely visited upon residents of urban black colonies such as south central Los Angeles. I was frustrated because I felt trapped. I internalized the defeatist rhetoric propagated as street wisdom in my hood that there were only 3 ways out of south central, migration death or incarceration. I located a fourth option: incarcerated death.

— Stanley Tookie Williams, *Blue Rage, Black Redemption: A Memoir*

It should be made clear, if in any case there was no critical observation of the phenomena, that in our, to use bell hooks' phrase, 'imperialist, colonial settler, white supremacist, capitalist, cisheteropatriarchal society,' Black people (of all ages and gender identities) are under ceaseless exploitation and violence via surveillance, harassment, instigations and so on. With attention to Black-led organizations, factions, collectives, and in this case particularly, Black gangs, there is unquestionably a white supremacist outcry from racists (media or otherwise), who deem these communities a threat to the status quo.

Fuck respectability politics and fuck civility; and this is to say that regardless of the objective of a Black collective, be it as politically far-left as the Black Guerilla Family (BGF), a Black Power group that originated in San Quentin State Prison and was founded by George Jackson in 1966 or politically center-right as the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) founded by Ida B. Wells, W.E.B. Du Bois and several other members in 1909, we're niggas at the end of the day.

While we can present arguments for what this statement means is not the point, but rather, the sociohistorical result of change that is assuredly established when Black people have long struggled for: Black Liberation. Black history is every day. Black history in itself chronicles resistance, togetherness, unfettered joy, solidarity, commonality, righteous insurgence, mutuality, love — notably the urgency for Black self-defense against the white supremacist police state.

Let us also highlight that in spite of these elements, we recognize the settler-fascistic entities that have been responsible for the many deaths, infightings, conspiracies, and consistent destabilizations of Black-led movements, organizations, and to this day, Black gangs. Prior to the Black Panthers — and what many of us know in modern day as Crips, and Bloods, were some of their historical predecessors, The Slausons, The Businessmen, and The Gladiators, Black-led gangs that originated in Los Angeles during the 1940s. In the documentary, *Bastards Of The Party*, former Blood and historian Cle Sloan outlines the history of the formation of Black factions in California throughout the 1950s to the 1990s. The sociopolitical function of these gangs were a direct response against white supremacist gangs like the Spook Hunters who regularly terrorized Black people because of the growing Black population at the time—white flight. Indeed, a significant number of Black factions were created out of a response to white settler violence in the late 1940s — although the formation of Black gangs in the United States can be traced back to the 1920s. In the article, “Black Street Gangs in Los Angeles: A History (excerpts from *Territoriality Among African American Street Gangs in Los Angeles*),” writer Alex A. Alonso states:

The first major period of black gangs in Los Angeles began in the late 1940s and ended in 1965. There were black gangs in Los Angeles prior to this period, but they were small in numbers; little is known about the activity of these groups. Some of the black groups that existed in Los Angeles in the late 1920s and 1930s were the Boozies, Goodlows, Blogettes, Kelleys, and the Driver Brothers. Most of these groups were family oriented, and they referred to themselves as clubs.

In the 1960s and 70s, an example of this is Kwanzaa’s founder, Ron Karenga, who was not only a violent, self-hating, misogynist responsible for kidnapping and torturing Black women, but also, an agent of fascist J. Edgar Hoover’s COINTELPRO, who exacerbated the infighting between the Black Panthers and the US Organization. Subsequently, this led to the murders of four members of the Black Panthers, whose names went by John Huggins, Sylvester Bell, Alprentice “Bunchy” Carter and John Savage:

According to Louis Tackwood, a former informant with the Los Angeles Police Department’s Criminal Conspiracies Section and author of *The Glass House Tapes*, Ronald Karenga was knowingly provided financial and material support by LAPD Tackwood as a liaison for U.S. operations against the Black Panthers. On January 17, 1969, a gun battle between the groups on the UCLA campus ended in the murder of two Black Panthers: John Huggins and Alprentice “Bunchy” Carter.

This incident led to a series of retaliatory shootings that lasted for months. Later, in 1969, two other Black Panther members were killed, and one other was wounded by ‘US’ members. The Panthers referred to the ‘US.’ organization as the ‘United Slaves.’”

Around the same time the Black Power movement was building momentum, the Gangster Disciples, founded by Larry Hoover, were a Black-led faction based in Chicago in the late 1960s and 70s. In the same way, the Black Disciples, founded by David Barksdale, were another Black faction based in Chicago that was created at the grassroots, organizing projects such as the free breakfast program for the community and marching together with Martin Luther King, Jr. in 1966. At a time before the Black Disciples (BDs) and Gangster Disciples (GDs) were separate factions, they were an alliance that went by the Black Gangster Disciple Nation (BGDN)..

Though the BGDN has been disbanded since the late 1980s, we can contextualize this into broader discourse on how the Black lumpenproletariat has demonstrated instances of solidarity

amongst one another — although, there are clear political and ideological inconsistencies that have been shown in the Black lumpenproletariat that cannot go unaccounted for such as: transphobia/misia, colorism, infighting, ableism, sanism, queerphobia/misia — lack of thorough constructive criticism amongst themselves, and the betrayal of the Black masses due to capitalistic interests.

As an example, Brooklyn Drill pioneers, Sheff G and Sleepy Hallow, who whose music and lyrics reflected warring against neighboring factions across the borough, exhibiting hyperbolic bravado — misogynoir — broadly expressing the racial, economic plight of coming up as a Black youth in the now-ever-increasing gentrified streets of Brooklyn — have aligned themselves with Zionist billionaire, white supremacist and genocidaire, Donald Trump — to whom they have exalted — and to whom Sleepy Hallow replied subsequently after Sheff G's cosigning of Trump using his fascistic slogan, "Make America Great Again."

Due to intraracial conflicts between Hoover, Barksdale, and other neighboring factions who fought and killed one another over territory and notoriety, the two leaders met with each other to have a conference that soon led up to the unity of the BDs and the GDs:

In June of 1969, Larry Hoover had enough of the Stones and conferenced with David Barksdale instead. Larry Hoover's alliance with Jeff Fort as allies for a few months had gone sour and now Hoover met with David Barksdale. The two groups established an alliance that had a title known as the Black Gangster Disciple nation. The Black Gangster Disciple nation consisted of the Gangster nation, which was the Supreme Gangsters and their Gangster allies, these Gangsters were to be led by Larry Hoover. The Disciples were now known as "Black Disciples" and this was the alliance of all the Disciple gangs led by David Barksdale.

Stanley Tookie Williams, who co-founded the Crips alongside Raymond Washington in 1971, established a groundwork in which Black folk would defend themselves and their communities from neighboring adversaries in Los Angeles. Similarly, the Bloods, created by Sylvester Scott, were later created as a direct response in opposition to the Crips. Contrary to this occurrence, the remarkable moments in Black history where Bloods and Crips, despite their incendiary rivalries against each other, have come together in solidarity to protest state-sanctioned police violence against Black people. To echo the sentiment of George Jackson in his book, *Soledad Brother: The Prison Letters of George Jackson*:

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.

We highlight instances of collective protest in Atlanta, the unity of rival Bloods and Crips gangs taking place after the beating of Rodney King in Los Angeles in 1992, unity between Bloods, Crips, and the Nation of Islam in Baltimore, who banded together in honor and righteous vengeance against the state-sanctioned murder of Freddie Gray, Newark, New Jersey and a March For Peace in The Bronx that was led by rival gangs inspired by the wrongful murder of Nipsey Hussle.

Bringing further attention to the history of white supremacist, State-sanctioned violence toward Black people in the US and across the world, we understand that surveillance and more specifically, indictment, an arbitrary charge or accusation of a crime, is no new concept to us. To

be Black itself is a crime in the world. In the article, *Black is Crime: Notes on Blaqillegism*, writer Dubian Ade states,

What a crime it is to be Black. To have the police be called on you for sitting in a restaurant, for grilling at a cookout, selling water, going to the pool, taking a nap, standing on the corner; to be Black and to have the presence of one's very own body break the law and to know at any given moment a police officer can slam you to the ground and cuff you for resisting arrest, which is to say, arrest you for absolutely no reason at all. Blackness carries this implication that a law is or has been broken and is about to be broken in the future. It is the color and sign of criminal activity under white supremacist capitalism used to justify the mass incarceration and extra-judicial murder of Black people by and large.

*But what are the origins of this strenuous relationship between Blackness and the law? In what ways is Black criminalization constituted under the state? And if Blackness is already criminalized in the eyes of the law, what are the features of already existing Black illegal forms and what might the theoretical contours of Black illegalism (Blaqillegism) that is principled and above all revolutionary look like?

With attention to this concept of Blaqillegism and Black criminality, Huey P. Newton articulates that the question of freedom in the context of Blackness, in its totality, is an ontological one:

...existence is violent; I exist, therefore I am violent in that way.

- Huey P. Newton, *On Revolution*

The State does not spare racialized captives. To name a few, learn about Mutulu Shakur, stepfather of Tupac Amaru Shakur and a member of the Black Liberation Army, who was just released from prison in December of last year after serving 60 years in prison; he was informed he only has a few months to live due to terminal cancer in April. Another is Marshall “Eddie” Conway, an elder of the Black Panther Party, who was sentenced to serving 43 years to life in prison for self-defense.

Look to the instance of Tay-K, who was 19 at the time he was indicted and sentenced to 55 years in prison. 23-year old YNW Melly, who was indicted and is facing the death penalty. Look at the wrongful indictments of YSL and Young Thug and Gunna—Sheff G, Sleepy Hallow — Woos and the Choos, the YGz and Drilly indictment and now 19-year old Kay Flock, who was just indicted with the death penalty being listed as a possible charge.

I repeat, the death penalty.

Where else have we heard the inhumane sentencing of young Black and Brown children and teenagers across AmeriKKKa?

Recall the wrongful conviction of 14-year old George Stinney in 1944, who the State put to death by electric chair for allegedly murdering two white girls. The State — white civil society — junior partners liken themselves to heroism subsequently initiating rituals via jingoistic propaganda by which they have indicted us — whether we be part of a faction, gang or what have you — by regurgitating white supremacist, fascist talking points spread by Western media. Consequently, this pattern people develop and take on cannot be reductively described as a form of

so-called “racist hatred,” but as Frank B. Wilderson III articulates in his memoir, *Afropessimism*, these indictments on us — are gratuitous and thus whites and their junior partners — nonBlacks — find nourishment in the consumption and annihilation of our Black flesh. Wilderson states:

Why is anti- Black violence not a form of racist hatred but the genome of Human renewal; a therapeutic balm that the Human race needs to know and heal itself? Why must the world reproduce this violence, this social death, so that social life can regenerate Humans and prevent them from suffering the catastrophe of psychic incoherence — absence? Why must the world find its nourishment in Black flesh?

As long as antiBlack suffering exists, which is what sutures the unethical formation of The World, there will never be any transformative recourse for Black people until we put an end to said apparatus.

By the same token, it is far too reductive (and victim-blaming) to present cases that serve as counterarguments to the material reality in which Black children and adults are continuously subjected to. With Malcolm X’s truism, by any means necessary in mind, often many Black folk are left with no choice to navigate this colonial settler, white supremacist world in the best ways we can as a means of not only defending ourselves and our communities against the white supremacist power structure, but also surviving under it. Black feminist and scholar, bell hooks, highlights the two-sidedness of this racial, socio-existential dilemma in her text, *We Real Cool: Black Men and Masculinity*:

In today’s world, most upwardly mobile educated black males from privileged class backgrounds share with their poor and underclass counterparts an obsession with money as the marker of successful manhood. They are as easily corrupted as their disenfranchised brothers, if not more so because the monetary stakes, as well as the rewards in their mainstream work world, are higher...assimilated black males who are “white identified” find it easier to submit to fickle arrogant white males (and white female bosses) in the workplace. However, most black males suffer psychologically in the world of work whether they make loads of money or low wages from overt and covert racially based psychological terrorism.

hooks continues:

Young beautiful brilliant black power male militants were the first black leftists to loudly call out the evils of capitalism. And during that call they unmasked wage slavery, naming it for what it was. Yet at the end of the day a black man needed money to live. If he was not going to get it working for the man, it could come from hustling his own people. Black power militants, having learned from Dr. King and Malcolm X how to call out the truth of capitalist-based materialism, identified it as gangsta culture. Patriarchal manhood was the theory and gangsta culture was its ultimate practice. No wonder then that black males of all ages living the protestant work ethic, submitting in the racist white world, envy the lowdown hustlers in the black communities who are not slaves to white power.

The inherent uselessness of incarceration—of imprisoning Black children—Black people, is divesting money from state to state and putting the funds toward building transformative rehabilitation centers across the country similarly to the Success Stories Program. As stated in their mission and values statement, the primary focus of the Success Stories program is this:

Our mission is to provide an alternative to prisons that builds safer communities by delivering feminist programming to people who have caused harm. We envision a world free of prisons and patriarchy as the dominant culture. We build a world where harmful behavior is seen as a symptom of patriarchy to be transformed, in the community, by our program and others like it.

What happens when the State persistently (and wrongfully) indicts Black women, men, queer folk, and children for so-called “crimes” will never resolve anything — it will never curtail anything. We are looking at a generational passing down of Black factions (of the newer generation) that will continue to repeat itself. These factions, which are defined as a group or clique within a larger group, party, government, organization, or the like, typically having different opinions and interests than the larger group, are often born out of an aversion to episodic, economic violence, impoverishment, governmental negligence, fascist police violence, —the white establishment and a yearning—a desperation to belong (commonly by homosocial bonding) to establish camaraderie between one another. In other words, regardless of how many indictments the State puts on Black people, the lumpenproletariat collectives that the State has destabilized will naturally be reborn out of generational factions in our continued struggle against the deathly whims of the US Empire.

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