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Brink's Trial Closing Statement

Kuwasi Balagoon

September 13, 1983

For the record, i'll say right now, that this place is an armed camp. It has the trappings and props of a court. A state-issued clone in a black robe, an ambitious state-issued clone of the state table, a fenced off area, and a section for spectators with a smaller section for members of the press, who can listen to an opening statement and between them, not one mentions anything i said about America being an Imperialist empire that among other things holds New Afrikan people in subjection or that the U.S. government while hypocritically speaking of human rights in places like Poland never mentions the political prisoners it holds and calls grand jury resisters. The state-issued prosecutor objects, the state-issued court sustains and the media that pats itself on the back and hypocritically calls itself free, erase whatever notes they might have taken automatically and take their places beside the state-issued court and prosecutor. Although i think the press is capable of following instructions the ruling that politics have nothing to do with this case is enough. A reporter Van Sickle describes the opening as a list of grievances. That New Afrikan people are subjected to living in reservations administered by an occupation force, calling itself police and being systematically beaten

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out of wages, liberties and our very lives is not news and that the media is just so many state-issued clones is not news either. Their job all along has been to present the state in a false light and instil fear in the population so that people will find fascism acceptable. And call it democracy. Under no stretch of the imagination, twist or turn summations or evaluations can a racist, imperialist country call itself a democracy, without its victims, its enemies calling it anything more than a hypocrisy.

Taking up a couple of other rows in the court are the pistol-packing armor plated plain clothes cops paid to keep an eye on things. On the roofs and in the surrounding areas there's more and a herd of hastily deputized armed clones in gas station attendant uniforms, as well as German shepherds and of course the usual guards. There's a lot of iron in here, state-issued iron. And in the hallway leading to this theatre there's more state-issued clones with state-issued iron and metal detectors to make sure that all the iron that enters these state domains, this imperialist theatre, is state-issued. They wish to have us believe or act as if we believe that war is peace – as the press apparently believes that ignorance is strength.

Other than that are the people who braved searches, having their pictures taken and filed away by the fascist to come here to actually be as they are designated supporters and spectators. And one group of people that stinks of the trappings of this court is designated a jury, among them wear sunglasses while in our midst – another has children who has Black friends whose homes they visit, but who never visits them at home and who has Black friends himself who never drop by. Another who thinks we are so ugly she turns and looks at the wall while we ride by in police cars. None of these people are racist or have any prejudice, and we know this because the court asked them, and they said they didn't, all of them. None of the potential jurors were racist or infected by racial prejudice, and showed this to the satisfaction of a racist court.

concerned about its image. That's why people familiar with Newburgh, Harlem and Overtown can ignore the issue of colonialism even while Reagan speaks of free enterprise zones, ban-tustans! That is why the U.S. with jaw-shaking righteousness can say that it doesn't have colonies, while planning to turn the beautiful island of Puerto Rico into an industrial park.

These people who judge us should take a city bus or a cab through the South Bronx, the Central Ward of Newark, North Philadelphia, the Northwest section of the District of Columbia or any Third World reservation, and see if they can note a robbery in progress. See if they recognize the murder of innocent people. This is the issue, the myth that the Imperialists should not be confronted and cannot be beaten is eroding fast and we stand here ready to do whatever to make the myth erode even faster, and to say for the record that not only will the Imperialist U.S. lose, but that it should lose.

i am not going to tell you that the Black Liberation Army's ranks are made up of saints; it is clear that there have been impostors among us who have sold out and are worse than the enemies history has pitted us against. And i am not going to tell you that there's no virtue among money couriers or policemen. However, i will tell you now and forever that New Afrikan People have a right to self-determination and that that is more important than the lives of Paige, Brown and O'Grady or Balagoon, Gilbert and Clark. And it's gonna cost more lives and be worth every life it costs, because the destiny of over thirty million people and the coming generation's rights to land and independence is priceless.

in the interests of the oppressed. It's legal to oppress and illegal to resist.

At the helm of this myth are the police, who are the government after six o'clock p.m., are of a species above that of mortals. Whose racism is less than the general society's, whose competence and heroism is beyond us all and is the apex of all culture. When, in fact, police are at best only human and are tools of the state who are employed to maintain an unjust, exploitative, oppressive system that holds New Afrikan and other Third World peoples under subjection and in a colonial relationship.

When i was growing up, the bulk of programs on TV were westerns, where the heroes shot down endless rows of Native Americans, while calling them Indians, Redskins and what not. There were other westerns too, like "Gunsmoke." Marshal Dillon shot fifty-two people a year and was the central character in Dodge City. i never remember seeing the mayor, preacher or schoolteacher, only Dillon and his friends – Doc, Chester and Miss Kitty – and i thought they were my friends too.

Now, Matt Dillon is Chief McCain, on the cop show "McCain's Law," and even Captain Kirk is a cop! Westerns have been replaced by cop shows. There are 29 hours of cop shows on TV each week. There are more cop shows on during prime time and all the other times on TV on any week than any other type of program. There is not a single program on TV other than comedies where a Black is the central character. We are portrayed as sidekicks of cops, snitches and sources of humor without exception.

This is all the interest of images. Pictures say a thousand words, they say what seems to be a fact over and over in ways that can't be countered by reasonable argument, without investigating reality. White racism does not for the most part care what really goes on inside New Afrikan colonies, or even recognize that we do indeed live in colonies. But because white racism is politically and morally bankrupt, it is

Had i not taken the position that no court in the imperialist U.S. empire had the right to try me as a criminal, i would have demanded that this case be tried in Rockland County. One cannot hold both positions. However, i believe that the people of Rockland County and elsewhere deserve an explanation of the event, the expropriation and related actions that took place on October 20, 1981. Not a mere criminal defense in relation to it, that type of legal mumbo jumbo could have matters more confused than ever. An explanation on the other hand, by someone who might have given them directions on the subway in New York City, or sweated through a basketball game with them or shared a dance floor should make things clear factually as well as let people in Rockland who are not already our friends, and everyday people throughout the confines of the U.S. know for sure that it is not the people but the United States Government and its oppressive apparatus that we are at war against.

The media said that on two separate occasions, members of the Black Liberation Army jumped out of vehicles shooting randomly in incidents where one guard and two policemen were killed. On the face of it, it doesn't appear random at all according to that line. Either the guerrillas and the people around not participating were lucky; the armed money courier and the two policemen were very unlucky; or the guerrillas were armed with guided bullets. Obviously none of this was so, but it was broadcast far and wide for a long time to taint not only people who might be jurors, but everybody in a land where a war is going on between oppressed peoples and the oppressors. It's clear the guerrillas intended to shoot police and that's who they shot. They shot the enemy.

Expropriation raids are a method used in every revolution by those who have got to get resources from the haves to carry on armed struggle. When George Washington and company crossed the Delaware it was to raid the British, to take money, supplies and arms, even though he was financed by the French and owned slaves. Joseph Stalin robbed banks when he was fif-

teen to support revolutionary struggle. The Sabate Brothers in Spain were obliged to empty the tills of banks to resist Franco during the Spanish Civil War. When Carlos Marighella in Brazil or the Tupamaros in Uruguay expropriated from banks to finance their struggles, it was clear to the press that they were revolutionaries; this government sent counterinsurgency specialists to help the juntas and dictators they resisted and expropriated from, just as they've done in regards to Argentina. But here in the U.S., the government doesn't acknowledge the collection of revolutionary compulsory tax as the work of revolutionaries, just as the British do not acknowledge the I.R.A., just as Israel doesn't acknowledge the P.L.O. and just as the Southern Africans do not acknowledge the A.N.C. It's too close. The British called Washington a criminal and issued a reward for him dead or alive just as the Americans put a price on the head of Twyman Myers. The state must deny revolution and call revolutionary acts and revolutionaries something else, anything else — bandits, terrorists. The state must suppress revolution and say they are doing something else. Rather than argue that there's no need for revolution and be confronted with Harlem, the South Bronx, Bedford Stuyvesant, Newark's Central Ward, North Philadelphia etc. They say there is simply not a revolution, as if there is no reason for sweeping the oppressors from power. Revolution is always illegal and revolutionaries are always slandered.

There are clearly more than a few points that the state has pushed for reasons beyond that of legal, that clearly go past the objective of getting convictions. The first lie is that Peter Paige, the Brink's guard and money courier, was gunned down without a chance to defend himself or surrender. In order to portray the Black Liberation Army as cowardly and cold-blooded, bloodthirsty.

The B.L.A. is an organization that takes credit for pre-planned assassinations. In our history there are numerous instances of ambushed police where credit was clearly taken,

[District Attorney] Gribetz, the perfect representative of the United States, a pimple of a man, has tons of evidence that has been labelled, marked and stored for two years. He has two Browning 9mms, the doberman pinscher of pistols, no prints on them, no bullets from them in bodies, but it's important. He has a shotgun or a picture of one also, and shell casings that can't be placed on anyone, but it's important too, because niggers are only supposed to have spears. He's got expert witnesses giving expert testimony and opinions on prints and glass. Ms. Clark had five kinds of glass on her, two, in the "expert's" opinion "consistent" with Brink's brand glass and Honda glass, and three other kinds of glass. They mention two pistols and a shotgun of mine, that had a part missing, by the way, as if it's evidence. When the fact is that i should have had a bomb or at least a grenade. He's got a witness who remembers — when he asks "did you happen to see a white male with brown hair, a brown beard and a big nose." He's got lots of witnesses. He's got clothes, pieces of bullets, pictures of bullets, pictures of cars, trucks and everything but our masks.

He has ski masks and he has his own public official mask, his civil servant mask. But he doesn't have our's, we've thrown them away. We are not going to act like wayward citizens in a democratic society before a just court with the duty of administering justice. We act like ourselves. New Afrikans and anti-imperialist freedom fighters, in an Imperialist empire that colonizes and commits genocide against New Afrikan, Native American, Puerto Rican and Mexicano people, before an impostor, in an armed camp.

In an effort to deny the issue of New Afrikan Independence that is part and parcel of the October 20, 1981 action, the state has presented its politics that we are to be confronted with. The politics of imperialism, based in their myth of justice in their colonial courts, whose function somehow should be participated in by its victims as if this whole scheme of things are

even, that Koch has been spinning his yarn to his co-workers for two years, took a circular approach to the roadblock, because the shortest distance between two points is a straight line. Do you believe that he [lost] an opportunity to shoot someone who had been shooting at other cops because some ladies' scream broke his concentration? Or that another cop, John McCord, missed his opportunity to shoot Marilyn Buck because just as she drove up he dropped a shell, and by the time he reached down to pick it up she zoomed right past him? What was so important about that particular shell, outside of it being a catalyst for a fish story? Why would an experienced cop and bodyguard like O'Grady try to load every shell into his revolver when someone is running up to him to kill him? Why does the state insist that we swallow all of this?

How did those cars that had been spotted and noted get out of the area? Well, i'll tell you why, it was because the cops who got paid so much a week wanted back-up in a big way. This was discernable war. One group of soldiers in opposition to another group of soldiers. One group of soldiers who ate and slept at the front and another who may not have witnessed colonialism contested so aggressively before. i don't know. The state says there were six people coming out of the back of the truck, with pistols and an automatic rifle, and counting Koch there were five cops with revolvers and two shotguns. The insurgents left one pistol at the scene of the expropriation, one pistol and one shotgun at the scene of the roadblock. i don't think there were any supermen or saints around that day battling it out on Route 59, or Mad Dog Killers or Cowboys, i think there were only men, mortals, one group called niggers and the other group called pigs. Lennon during his hypnotic session when he described a Black man running up to O'Grady shooting didn't describe that Black man as a "terrorist" or "robber;" he called that man a nigger, "a big nigger." He'd taken his mask off while in the car weathering the storm, and he had to push a dead nigger away from the door to get out of the car.

where communiqués were issued to the media who do not broadcast them completely if at all, because the government has directed them not to. These ambushes have always been retaliations for terrorist acts against Black people — these acts have always been responses to murders, brutalizations and threatening against Black people, Third World people or their forces of resistance. Never has a guard or a bank teller been shot down as part of a plan, no unit of the B.L.A. has ever done this, including the unit involved in the expropriation of October 20, 1981. Our war is not a license and the B.L.A. reserves assassinations for those who are combatants in opposition to the revolution and those who direct them. Money couriers are safe so long as they do not put their bodies and weapons in between someone else's money or try to shoot their way out of a source of embarrassment or into a promotion or an early grave.

This is because the goal of an expropriation is to collect revolutionary compulsory tax and not casualties. A unit is no better off with a guard killed. Shots are signals that alert more police more quickly and directly than an onlooker's phone call. Guerrillas prefer to take the weapons from the holsters of guards or pick them up after they've been dropped, and completing the action without anyone except guards and guerrillas being any the wiser. Had Peter Paige not acted the fool, he would've lived and his co-worker would not have been injured.

War is expensive, you know that, you don't pay taxes once. And no matter how much money a unit may get from an expropriation, that unit as well as others will have to engage in other expropriations in the course of a protracted war. The B.L.A. doesn't want a situation where guards believe they will be shot whether they comply or not, because then there would always be shoot-outs. Dead guards don't bring us a step closer to land and independence and don't add a cent to a war chest. At the same time, the B.L.A. doesn't want guards to believe for

an instant that they have any reasonable alternatives outside of compliance.

The only parties that benefit from a bloody shoot-out during an expropriation are the bankers, the bosses of the armored car corporations and career counter-insurgency experts. The first two put their money or what they label their money before the lives of guerrillas, as well as their employees; the third without New Afrikan, Puerto Rican or Mexican fugitives to justify raids in those colonies could find themselves in fatigues, in the wilds of the Dakotas, laying siege to Native American colonies. Paige died for his bosses, not for himself, his family or his fellow workers.

State clone Michael Koch issued another slanderous attack for the state. At one point in his testimony he says that one of the combatants says in regards to Kathy Boudin, “fuck her, leave her.” On one episode of “Today’s F.B.I.,” a band of “terrorists” takes a truck of 1.6 million dollars and purposely leave one of their comrades. On one episode of “Hill Street Blues,” a radical band gets 1.6 million dollars from another truck. In the F.B.I. fiction the radicals mow down the guards as a matter of course; in the “Hill Street Blues” fiction, the beautiful white girl when faced with life in prison serves up her comrades for a deal that sounded not unlike a slave auction, with time being the medium rather than money. Koch meanwhile hasn’t gotten a contract as a writer or an actor – i tell you, there is no justice in this world.

There’s no record of the B.L.A. leaving comrades in hostile areas on purpose. When comrades are wounded attempts are made to carry them. The state contends that Marilyn Buck was wounded and taken to Mt. Vernon with the unit in question. The state wants to have it both ways.

The B.L.A. doesn’t work that way. We have a saying, “the lowest circles in hell are reserved for those who desert their comrades.” The B.L.A. has a history of aiding the escapes of comrades from prisons and other detention centers. The state-

issued lie that any of us said anything to the effect to leave anyone who had participated in any action with us is designed to portray us as users and racist. For the state to project that piece of propaganda at the same time that it lines the roofs with rifle-toting clowns, posts guards at each block and intersection and transports us in armed convoys without red lights is not only an insult to us, but an insult to anybody outside the state who hears it. Every day we come to court there are scores of fat middle-aged cops crouching behind trees, phone poles and cars, guns at the ready. This is not because they think we can break out of handcuffs, waist chains and leg chains and then dive out of closed car windows and sprint to the next county before anyone notices what is going on. They do this because the B.L.A. does not forfeit comrades in the hands of the enemy and does not forfeit those who struggle beside us into the hands of the enemy. There are enough instances of aided escapes, attempts at escapes and fierce battles to avoid capture to make it clear how we feel and how we deal.

They say that veteran police officers responding to an incident where one guard was mortally wounded were convinced to put a shotgun away by Boudin, but Waverly Brown didn’t have a shotgun. They say he was the first to go in any event, that O’Grady was loading his weapon when someone ran up to him shooting, but didn’t he have six shells in his weapon when he responded? And if he was reloading, doesn’t that mean he fired six times and for all practical purposes, missed. Lennon says he watched O’Grady get shot, but didn’t Lennon have a pistol that was loaded, as well as a shotgun? Why didn’t he shoot the man who ran up and shot O’Grady? Why was Keenan so far away from the action? And didn’t hit no one? Why is it that so many police officers converged on the scene so soon after the battle?

Once they got a couple of suspects who had surrendered, who were outnumbered, handcuffed, they got tough at the action, but i suggest that they lost heart! That the odds were too