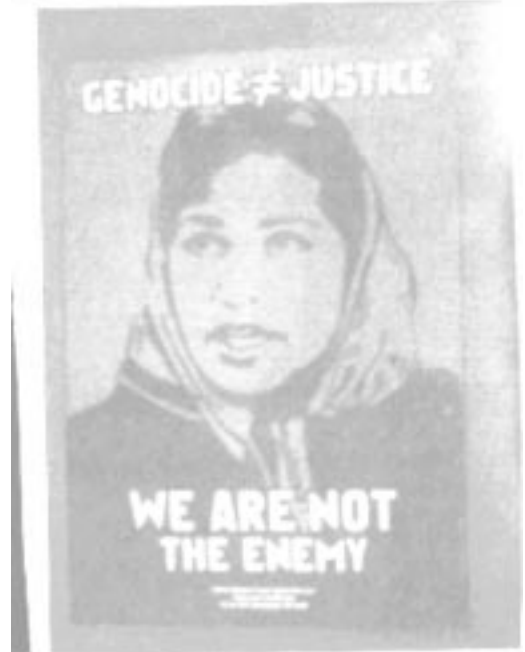


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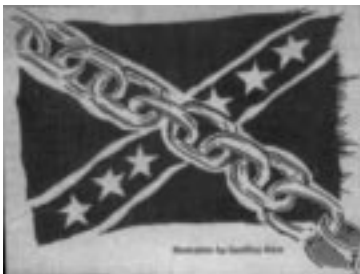
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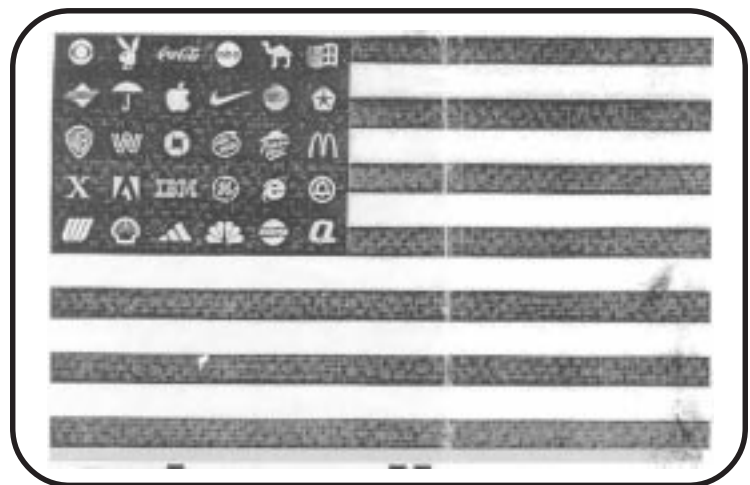
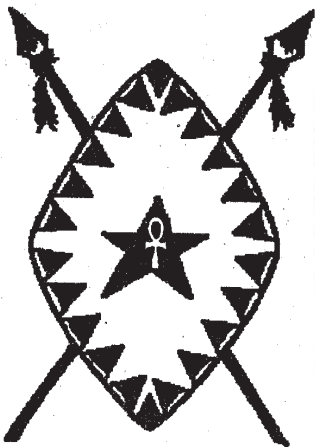
Bush job plan would omit minimum wage



Indian team dubs itself 'Whities'



1st U.S. 'cold hit'
DNA execution set



Women, Power, and Revolution

Kathleen Neal Cleaver



When Black Classic Press director Paul Coates invited me to speak at the Howard University symposium featuring the book he'd published, The Black Panther Party Reconsidered, he asked me to be on the panel discussing the party's legacy. I dislike the term "legacy", to me it signifies what has been left after death. Since I am not dead, and a lot of other former Panthers aren't dead, I told him I'd rather speak on a different panel. The afternoon panel, he said, would focus on gender. I suggested that it be called "Women, Power, and Revolution," because I think what we have to say about gender transcends the experience of being involved with the Black Panther Party. The organizers, however, followed the conventional thinking, and entitled my panel "Gender Dynamics Within the Black Panther Party."

Regardless of what name was chosen, I think the relevant question to discuss is this: How could a young black woman raised during the 1950s find someplace to take collective action against the repressive social conditions she faced, and bring about revolutionary

change? While I was growing up, I saw black women who inspired me to ask that question, and showed me where I could find that place. I saw **Gloria Richardson** standing face to face with National Guard soldiers, bayonets sticking from the guns they pointed at demonstrators she led in Cambridge, Maryland. I saw **Diane Nash** speaking at Fisk University, leading black and white Freedom Riders onto Greyhound buses that got set on fire when they reached Alabama. I saw **Ruby Doris Robinson** holding a walkie-talkie, dispatching the fleet of cars that transported civil rights workers across the state of Mississippi during the 1964 Freedom Summer. These women were unfurling a social revolution in the Deep South. Gloria Richardson, Diane Nash, and Ruby Doris Robinson all worked with the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC). That's where I was determined to go.

About two weeks before I joined SNCC, "Black Power" replaced "Freedom Now" as the battle cry. We, young women and young men who flocked to the front lines of the war against segregation, were contesting the remaining legacy of racial slavery. What we sought to eliminate were the legal, social, psychological, economic, and political limitations still being imposed on our human rights, and on our rights as citizens. That was the context in which we fought to remove limitations imposed by gender, clearly aware that it could not be fought as a stand-alone issue.

During that era, we hadn't developed much language to talk about the elimination of gender discrimination. Racism and poverty, imposed by bloody terrorists backed by state power, seemed so overwhelming then, and the ghastly backdrop of the war in Vietnam kept us alert as to what was at stake. It was not that gender discrimination wasn't apparent. It was evident in the most intimate matters—separate bathrooms marked "colored women" or "white ladies"; it was obvious in the facts that so many schools did not allow women to attend, and that so many jobs were not available if you were a woman. But from the early to mid-1960s, the first order of business was not how to advance our cause as women but how to empower the community of which we were a part, and how to protect our lives in the process.

Being in the Movement gave me and everyone who joined it a tremendous education. That experi-

ence taught us how to understand the world around us, how to think through the issues of what we could do on our own to advance our people's cause, how to organize our own people to change the world around us, and how to stand up to terrorism. Everything I learned in SNCC I took with me into the fledgling Black Panther Party. I started working there in November 1967, three or four weeks after Huey Newton was jailed on charges of killing an Oakland policeman in a predawn shoot-out. I organized demonstrations. I wrote leaflets. I held press conferences. I attended court hearings. I designed posters. I appeared on television programs, I spoke at rallies. I even ran for political office in order to organize the community around the program of the Black Panther Party and mobilize support to free Huey Newton.

At times, during the question-and-answer session following a speech I'd given, someone would ask, "What is the woman's role in the Black Panther Party?" I never liked that question. I'd give a short answer: "It's the same as men." We are revolutionaries, I'd explain. Back then, I didn't understand why they wanted to think of what men were doing and what women were doing as separate. It's taken me years, literally about twenty-five years, to understand that what I really didn't like was the underlying assumption motivating the question. The assumption held that being part of a revolutionary movement was in conflict with what the questioner had been socialized to believe was appropriate conduct for a woman. That convoluted concept never entered my head, although I am certain it was far more widely accepted than I ever realized.

Nowadays, the questions are more sophisticated: "What were the gender issues in the Black Panther Party?" "Wasn't the Black Panther Party a bastion of sexism? Etc., etc., etc. But nobody seems to pose the question that I had: Where can I go to get involved in the revolutionary struggle? It seems to me that part of the genesis of the gender question, and this is only an opinion, lies in the way it deflects attention from confronting the revolutionary critique our organization made of the larger society, and turns it inward to look at what type of dynamics and social conflicts characterized the organization. To me, this discussion holds far less appeal than that which engages the means we devised to struggle against the oppressive dynamics and social conflicts the larger society imposed on us. Not many answers to the "gender questions" take into consideration what I've experienced. What I've read or heard as answers generally seem to respond to a particular model of academic inquiry that leaves out what, I believe is central: How do you empower an oppressed and impoverished people who are struggling against racism, militarism, terrorism, and sexism too? I mean, how do you do that? That's the real question.

My generation became conscious during a period of profound world turmoil, when the Vietnam War and countless insurgencies in Africa, Asia, and in Latin America challenged the control of the resources of the world by the capitalist powers. They were facing a major assault. Those of us who were drawn to the early Black Panther Party were just one more insurgent band of young men and women who refused to tolerate the systematic violence and abuse being meted out to poor blacks, to middle-class blacks, and to any old ordinary blacks. When we looked at our situation, when we saw violence, bad housing, unemployment,



Gloria Richardson

rotten education, unfair treatment in the courts, as well as direct attacks from the police, our response was to defend ourselves. We became part of that assault against the capitalist powers.

In a world of racist polarization, we sought solidarity. We called for Black power for Black people, Red power for Red people, Brown power for Brown people, Yellow power for Yellow people, and, as Eldridge Cleaver used to say, White power for White people, because all they'd known was "Pig power." We organized the Rainbow Coalition, pulled together our allies, including not only the Puerto Rican Young Lards, the youth gang called Black P. Stone Rangers, the Chicano Brown Berets, and the Asian I Wor Keun (Red Guards), but also the predominantly white Peace and Freedom Party and the Appalachian Young Patriots Party. We posed not only a theoretical but a practical challenge to the way our world was organized. And we were men and women working together.

The women who filled the ranks of our organization did not have specifically designated sex roles. Some women worked with the newspaper, like **Shelley Bursey**, who became a grand jury resister when she was jailed because she refused to respond to one of the investigations into the Black Panther Party newspaper. Some of us, like **Ericka Huggins**, saw their husbands murdered, then were arrested themselves. In Ericka's case, she was jailed along with Bobby Seale and most of the New Haven chapter on charges of conspiracy to commit murder. She was later acquitted, but imagine what happens to an organization when fourteen people at once get arrested on capital charges. That doesn't leave much time to organize, or to have a family life. Maybe that was the kind of pressure that they hoped would force us to give up.

I created the position of Communications Secretary, based on what I had seen Julian Bond do in SNCC. I sent out press releases, I got photographers and journalists to publish about us, I wrote articles for our newspaper. I ran for political office on the Peace and Freedom Party ticket, against the incumbent Democratic state representative—who, by the way, was Willie Brown (now mayor of San Francisco). We ran a campaign poster in the *Black Panther* newspaper, which was a drawing of Willie Brown with his mouth sewed up, his body tied up in rope. The caption read: Willie Brown's position on the War, political prisoners, and racism, you get the idea. We were imaginative in our approach to political organizing. **Matilaba**, one of the earliest women members of the Black Panther Party, published drawings in the newspaper along with Emory Douglas. **Connie Matthews**, a young Jamaican who was working for the United Nations in Copenhagen, met Bobby Seale when he came over there on a tour, joined the Black Panther Party, and became our International Coordinator. **Assata Shakur**, who joined the New York chapter of the Black Panther Party, later became convicted of murdering a state trooper after a shoot-out on the New Jersey Turnpike in which she was wounded and another Panther, Zayd Shakur, was killed. Fearing that she would be killed, she escaped from prison, lived underground for a while, and eventually received asylum in Cuba.

In fact, according to a survey Bobby Seale did in 1969, two-thirds of the members of the Black Panther Party were women. I am sure you are wondering, why isn't this the image that you have of the Black Panther Party? Well, ask yourself, where did the image of the Black Panthers that you have in your head come from? Did you read those articles planted by the FBI in the newspaper? Did you listen to the newscasters who announced what they decided was significant, usually, how many Panthers got arrested or killed? How many photographs of women Panthers have you seen? Think about this: how many newspaper photographers were women? How many newspaper editors were women? How many newscasters were women? How many television producers were women? How many magazine, book, newspaper publishers? Who was making the decisions about what information gets circulated, and when that decision gets made, who do you think they decide to present? Is it possible, and this is just a question, is it possible that the reality of what was actually going on day to day in the Black Panther Party was far less newsworthy, and provided no justification for the campaign of destruction that the intelligence agencies and the police were waging against us? Could it be that the images and stories of the Black Panthers that you've seen and heard were geared to something other than conveying what was actually going on?

What I think is distinctive about gender relations within the Black Panther Party is not how those gender

relations duplicated what was going on in the world around us. In fact, that world was extremely misogynist and authoritarian. That's part of what inspired us to fight against it. When women suffered hostility, abuse, neglect, and assault—this was not something arising from the policies or structure of the Black Panther Party, something absent from the world—that's what was going on in the world. The difference that being in the Black Panther Party made was that it put a woman in a position when such treatment occurred to contest it. I'll always remember a particular mini-trial that took place at one of our meetings. A member of the Party was accused of raping a young sister, who was visiting from the Los Angeles chapter of the Black Panther Party, and he got voted out of the Party on the spot. Right there in the meeting. In 1970 the Black Panther Party took a formal position on the liberation of women. Did the U.S. Congress make any statement on the liberation of women? Did the Congress enable the Equal Rights Amendment to become part of the Constitution? Did the Oakland police issue a position against gender discrimination? It is in this context that gender relations—a term that we didn't have back then—in the Black Panther Party should be examined.

I think it is important to place the women who fought oppression as Black Panthers within the longer tradition of freedom fighters like **Sojourner Truth, Harriet Tubman, Ida Wells Barnett**, who took on an entirely oppressive world and insisted that their race, their gender, and their humanity be respected all at the same time. Not singled out, each one separate, but all at the same time. You cannot segregate out one aspect of our reality and expect to get a clear picture of what this struggle is about. In some cases, those who raise issues about gender are responding to what they think is the one-sided portrayal of the Black Panther Party as some all-male, macho revolutionary group. But look at where the picture is coming from before concluding that the appropriate response is to investigate gender dynamics within the Black Panther Party. I am not criticizing the project, but I am criticizing the angle.

The way Black women have sustained our community is phenomenal. Historically, we did not live within the isolation of a patriarchal world, we were thrust into that brutal equality slavery imposed. Our foremothers knew we would have to face the world on our own, and they tried to prepare us for that. What I think need to be examined and explained more fully are the powerful contributions women have made to our resistance against slavery, to our resistance against segregation, to our resistance against racism. Placing the participation of women in the Black Panther Party within that context illuminates a long tradition of fighting women. But that tends not to be what scholars asking these gender questions seem to have in mind.

To conclude, I refer to W. E. B. Du Bois, who pointed out that until emancipation, blacks faced two alternatives: we could either revolt and resist, or assimilate and submit. Emancipation provided a third alternative that Du Bois called "separate development." It could be seen as the ground of nationalism, or some might prefer to call it pan-Africanism. What I think is unique about the Black Panther Party is that as an organization, it combined all these possibilities in one. It provided the chance to revolt, to assimilate, and to have separate development at different aspects and at different times. I think that needs to be understood. I think the Black Panther Party's leadership structure, organizational structure, and military structure all need to be better understood. I think the way the organization furthered the main currents of African-American resistance from slavery to the present needs to be better understood, and that is the context within which gender dynamics should be placed.

Look at the demands raised by the Colored Peoples' Conventions at the end of the Civil War: they asked for the right to education, the right to be treated in law the same as white people, for equal treatment under the law. When you look at the Appeal to Human Rights issued by the student movement in Atlanta when they launched the campaign of sit-ins, what did they demand? Jobs, housing, education, and an end to police brutality. When you look at the Charter of the Kenya Land and Freedom Army, the African liberation movement that we called the Mau Mau, what did they ask for? They wanted self-government. They wanted to get rid of foreigners. They wanted an end to the trial of criminal and murder cases by the Europeans. Things like that. All these demands were similar to what we asked for in the Black Panther Party's Ten Point Platform and Program. We insisted on power to determine our destiny, full employment, decent education, and an end to police brutality. These have been our peoples' demands for over a century.

The Black Panther Party continued to fight for what our people demanded in those Colored Peoples' Conventions, in those civil rights protests, and in those African liberation struggles, and this is what the black women who joined the organization were fighting to bring about.

I am a part of a group of women, former Black Panthers, who have been meeting for the past few years. We hold retreats to come together and discuss what has happened to us, to restore our health, and to recover from the injuries and traumatic experiences that we have endured. A few days ago, I was at the Newark airport to catch a 5:00 A.M. flight to Atlanta, on my way to one of these retreats, and I ran into the actor Danny Glover, who was also taking that 5:00 A.M. flight to Atlanta, where he was going to visit his family.

We talked, and of course, I asked him about his work in the film *Beloved*, and told him that I was going to a Black Panther women's retreat. Danny Glover lived down the street from me in San Francisco. He told me, "I came to San Francisco in 1967 to go to San Francisco State." I said, "I came to San Francisco in 1967, but I went to Eldridge Cleaver's apartment." We all lived on Oak Street, only a few houses apart. He was involved with the BSU (Black Student Union). Many students who belonged to the BSU were active in the Black Panther Party; our organizations were very close. In fact, one of the demands made when the students at San Francisco State initiated their strike concerned George Murray, a professor who was fired and was then on the Central Committee of the Black Panther Party. So I told him about our Black Panther women's retreat.

Danny was sitting beside me at the gate. He tilted his head back and looked up as if he were remembering something that happened a long time ago. Then he said, "Oh, those women.... Those women in the Black Panther Party, you all held it together. The men—there was a lot of chaos going on. Things were wild. But it was the women who held it all together."

Kathleen Cleaver's memoir Memories of Love & War, will be published in Fall 2002. Her Liberation, Imagination & the Black Panther Party, which she edited with George Katsiaficas, is in bookstores now.



UNIVERSITY OF
DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
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April 18-20, 2002
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Black Panther Party
35th ANNIVERSARY & REUNION CONFERENCE
Theme: Cointelpro & Political Prisoners



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April 18-20, 2002

The IT'S ABOUT TIME COMMITTEE is committed to hosting an inclusive, non-sectarian, memorable event that celebrates the founding principles, platform, and programs of the Black Panther Party (BPP). We will commemorate the historic legacies of the BPP as well as the many sacrifices and constructive contributions that all of us made while serving the people body and soul.

As we approach the 35th anniversary of the Black Panther Party's founding, not only do we have the opportunity to celebrate, we have the responsibility to place our own experiences into historical context and to continue to struggle for social justice, especially for our political prisoners and other victims of Cointelpro.

PARTIAL LIST OF SPEAKERS:

Pam Africa - MOVE FAMILI, ORGANIZER FOR MUSA
S.E. Anderson - MEXICO EYES COLLEGE, NEW YORK
Safiya Bukhari - JERICHO AMNESTY MOVEMENT
Kathleen Cleaver - FORMER COMMUNICATIONS SECRETARY OF THE BPP, ATTORNEY
Nzinga Conway - FORMER BPP MEMBER, WIFE OF POLITICAL PRISONER, EDDIE CONWAY

Dave Johnson - TIMERS, PRISON MOVEMENT (SAN QUENTIN E)
Kwaku Duren NPYM - INTERNATIONAL
Akua Njeri - FORMER PANTHER, ACTIVIST, MOTHER OF FRED HAMPTON JR.
Bobby Seale - CO-FOUNDER OF THE BLACK PANTHER PARTY
Robert King Wilkerson - FORMER POLITICAL PRISONER, ANGOLA 3 DEFENSE COMMITTEE

SUPPORTING ORGANIZATIONS:

- It's About Time
- New Panther Vanguard Movement (International)
- Jericho Amnesty Movement
- Malcolm X Grassroots Movement
- Black Panther Party Alumni Committee
- CAPA (L.A.)
- Angola 3 National Committee: NY • New Orleans • California
- Eddie Conway Support Committee

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“You Have To Take Action From Below”

Interview With James Petras On The Uprisings In Argentina

A month ago, Argentina was a symbol of the disaster of the free market. Years of recession had driven unemployment to nearly 20 percent and pushed one-third of the population into poverty. And all President Fernando de la Ra and his hated economics chief Domingo Cavallo could offer was more austerity - slashed wages, layoffs, spending cuts, privatization. But Argentina today is the symbol of something else - the hope of a better future. In mid- December, ordinary Argentineans said “no” to the misery of a system run by bankers and bosses. By December 20, every city and town in Argentina, including Buenos Aires, was paralyzed by mass demonstrations. Cavallo was the first to go. Then de la Ra. And one week after that, a new wave of demonstrations brought down another government. James Petras has worked for the past two years with the unemployed movement in Argentina. Petras is the author of numerous books on Latin America - the most recent, co-authored with Henry Veltmeyer, is Globalization Unmasked: Imperialism in the 21st Century.

Q: Where did the spark for the December uprising come from?

James Petras: The driving force for these massive mobilizations has its roots in the large-scale, sustained activities of the unemployment movement.

The unemployed workers movement has been gaining strength for the last five years. But in the last year, it’s spread throughout the country and has played a major role in securing subsistence programs from the government and public works for at least a sector of the unemployed.

Its tactics are to paralyze the circulation of commodities and transportation. So the piqueteros, as they’re called, meaning “the picketers” block off major highways in order to make their demands.

The ranks of the unemployed movement include a preponderance of women, especially woman heads of households, which has grown with the unemployment.

In some areas, unemployment is probably 50 to 60 percent. So many of the piqueteros are factory workers with trade union experience. Many are young people who’ve never had a job.

They organize and block the highways. Traffic piles up, trucks can’t move, factories can’t get supplies. These are the functional equivalents of factory workers downing their tools. In this case, instead of directly stopping production, they stop the inputs and outputs from production.

Then the government can send the police down, in which case there’s a whole confrontation. People have been killed, five or six recently in the north of Argentina.

But the fear for the government is that if the confrontations continue, the crowds come in from the huge slums, and it could turn into a mini-civil war. So the government usually - after threats and mobilizations of police - negotiates an agreement.

These agreements are discussed by the participants themselves. They don’t delegate any leaders to go downtown. They make the government come to the highways, and the people there discuss what they should demand and what they should accept.

Their experience with delegated leadership is that they go downtown, they sit in a big room with the government or with the trade union bureaucracy, and they usually get bought out. The leaders get some payoffs, even the militant leaders. Or they get drawn into some tripartite agreement, and the rank and file is sold out. So their activity is about direct representation, direct negotiation, direct action.

These demonstrations have been enormously successful within the limited areas in which they operate. But recently, as early as September of last year, there were two national meetings trying to coordinate the committees from all the different cities and the regions and suburbs of Buenos Aires, and they created a kind of coordinating committee.

But what they taught the population as a whole was that you can't rely on the politicians. You have to take action for yourself and from below.

How did the piqueteros struggles set the stage for the December demonstrations?

I think that spirit began to manifest itself, even in downtown Buenos Aires, shortly before this latest uprising. There were several cases where grievances emerged, and shopkeepers and others decided to close off downtown streets.

There was a huge debate within the movement, because the so-called progressive trade union leadership thought it could win over the middle class by blocking main streets but allowing alternative streets to function. This was opposed by the more militant unemployed movements, which said you either close the streets, or you don't.

So this spirit captured the imagination of not only employed workers and, of course, the young people, but also the impoverished lower middle class, and even sectors of more affluent petty bourgeois, including shopkeepers, small businessmen and others who had accounts in the banks.

When the government finally confiscated the savings - billions of dollars in savings - of the middle class, these layers also became involved in street demonstrations. This is an impoverished, radicalized middle class.

It's a mistake to think of it as simply the middle class. These are people who've lost all their savings. They don't have money to pay their grocery bills, or their rents, or go on vacations, or what have you. So under the example of the unemployed workers, you had a coming together of various strands of the population.

You had the great mass of unemployed who were involved in some kind of informal economy. You had employed workers who hadn't been paid because the accounts of their employers are frozen. And you have a great mass of public employees and shopkeepers and others forming a very broad front against the bankers.

The bankers have been able to get their money out. By using the purchase of Argentine stocks on the New York Stock Exchange, they have no problem getting their money out of the country.

So this is very much a class phenomenon, in which the unemployed workers formed one pole, drawing the workers, the petty bourgeois and sectors of the middle class to the politics of extra-parliamentary struggle - to the politics of rejecting the major bourgeois parties.

This, I think, is the dynamic. Now whether this middle class will be a strategic ally - whether they'll get a deal which allows them to take their money out of the banks - is an open question.

But I think the most important factor in this is that mass action, more than all the ritual strikes of the trade union bureaucracy, led to the ouster of the main leaders of neo-liberalism and the main spokesmen for U.S. banks and U.S. imperialism in the government at that time.

Each time, they've been replaced by new faces, all coming within the framework of neo-liberalism. There's no way that the debt can be paid without precipitating a mass uprising - in which case, I think, the bourgeois parliamentary system will go down, and perhaps you'll have a civil war, with the military coming into the picture.

Nothing in the bourgeois press captures the degree of tension and polarization that exists in Argentina today. On the spot, activists and revolutionaries describe it as a pre-revolutionary situation. And certainly the degree of hostility to all the bourgeois parties and the degree of militancy of great masses of people would describe a pre-revolutionary situation.

There isn't at this time an organized revolutionary party with roots and support. There are thousands of local activists and militants who engage in these activities, and there is a broad radicalization of consciousness among hundreds of thousands, if not millions, of Argentines today - unprecedented in recent times in Latin America.

But the little left parties - all the Trotskyist and Marxist parties - spent most of their resources recently in electing officials to an impotent parliament. And nowhere have these parties - or the center-left, of course - exercised any kind of leadership. They've been out of sight. They issue manifestos; they sell their newspapers. In none of these growing mass confrontations - that are reaching proportions of hundreds of thousands in different cities - has there been any organized vanguard.

There are militants from the unemployed movement, who have some kind of street-fighting experience and preparation. Programmatically, they're clear as far as their immediate demands - which is massive employment projects, living wages, unemployment benefits, and of course, no payment of the debt. And some sectors are calling for the renationalization of the strategic sectors of the economy.

What will Duhalde's new government be like?

The current government of President Duhalde is clearly a provocation. He's a man of the right, and he's organized, in the past, a political apparatus of thugs.

Despite what the press says, he is capable of putting right-wing street fighters out - fascist-like groups that can draw on lumpens and some disoriented unemployed to challenge for hegemony in the streets and take pressure off the police. There already has been one major confrontation with, of course, police taking the side of Duhalde's Peronist thugs.

But this is, I think, a dress rehearsal. There is no honeymoon period for Duhalde. Right as we're speaking today, there are massive demonstrations in Argentina, and there are preparations for a big show of force when he announces his economic program late this afternoon.

More than any recent events, we're dealing with a country that has a long tradition of trade union, collective action. General strikes are more common in Argentina than in any country in the world.

This is the country that has the biggest concentration of unemployed industrial workers in the world today. And thirdly, this is the country with the largest number of unemployed workers organized and engaged in direct action.

What is, I think, necessary or missing in this context is a recognized political leadership that can carry this dynamic process forward to the creation of a workers government. I think the ensuing struggle is going to raise that question very acutely.

We should keep in mind that the leadership in Washington will not rest until it buries that movement. And I think what you might see is the maintenance of the civilian political facade and the return of the military as a determining factor in politics.

And that's like throwing wood on the fire. As we saw in the earlier dictatorship of 1976, it took 30,000 dead and disappeared to bury that movement. This time, there are many, many more activists and militants than there were at the height of the mobilizations in the 1960s and 1970s.

You talked about the conservatism of labor leaders and the unions "ritual" general strikes. But haven't the unions played a role in the resistance?

You can't just speak of a general strike in Argentina. There are general strikes, and there are general strikes. And everybody knows that in Argentina. You can talk to a cab driver, who, when you ask, "What do you think of this general strike?" will tell you that the bureaucrats are using it to blow off steam.

They're one-day affairs with no active mobilizations or factory occupations. The employers know it, and the government knows it - that if they sit on their hands for one day, everything goes back to normal.

So they have little consequences. There's little mobilization and little in the way of activating the class and creating class consciousness. They're decided from above, and they're shut off from above.

There are three trade union confederations in Argentina. The official trade union is the CGT, which has allied itself with every government since the dictatorship - and even had arrangements with the dictatorship.

There's the CGT-Moyano - the dissident CGT led by Hugo Moyano, which has been critical of the official CGT for being so closely tied to the government. But in turn, this federation is run by another set of bureaucrats who utilize their opposition to the status quo to pressure the government to make concessions to their followers while maintaining a distance from any structural challenges.

The third major union is the progressive CTA, which emerged as a rejection of the CGT and has many of the public-sector workers - workers who haven't had any relief with the shutting down and cutting off of services and the firings of hundreds of thousands.

The Moyano trade union bureaucracy has been more eager to engage in general strikes and to mobilize around specific issues. They use a great deal of populist rhetoric, but later negotiate on more narrow sectoral issues, constantly negotiating behind the backs of the workers.

That's why they're distrusted by many sectors of the working class as being essentially an opportunistic opposition that is capable of putting people in the streets, but is also quite capable of bringing them out of the streets.

The CTA has been the most active and radical of the trade unions, led by the ATE, the public employees union. They have been involved with the piqueteros and the unemployed.

They have raised very important structural issues. However, they have not at any point called into question the capitalist system. Moreover, they have a tendency to engage in militant actions and then step back and negotiate. They have been conscious of their position as state employees - and therefore very much engaged in negotiating with the state and paying lip service to the rest of the working class.

They say that we ought to unify the unemployed and the public employees. But the experience of the unemployed workers with the national leadership of the CTA - and, particularly, the ATE - has been that they become auxiliaries. And when the real negotiations take place, it's over cutbacks in employment in the public sector. That's why the unemployed decided to go and organize for themselves.

Now, there are powerful sectors of the public employees unions, plus sectors of the teachers union, that have engaged in mass struggle and confrontations - and have suffered some injuries and deaths even in these great mobilizations.

I think one has to distinguish between the national leadership - particularly of the CTA and to

a lesser degree the Moyano group - and the rank and file. This is especially true in the provinces, where you will find very radical, very militant trade unionists, local leaders even, as well as the rank and file.

For example, in Cordoba, in Salta, and in Neuquen, where the petroleum industry is located, you have a great number of trade union activists, some of whom have been influenced by the piqueteros, who have joined in struggles.



What do these links between the unemployed movements and rank-and-file union members look like?

I can give you an example. Hospital workers in Neuquen were protesting for weeks, trying to get rid of an abusive director. Finally, the director called the police in to stop the strikers from blocking the entrance to the hospital.

Word got back to the unemployed. They jumped into their cars and buses - whatever transport was available - and went up there 300 strong. In less than an hour, the director was out, and the hospital workers elected a new director.

That was an example of the kind of solidarity between the health workers and the piqueteros that occurs frequently in the interior of the country. I think this is a very promising development. But it has to be seen in context.

The pronouncements coming from the general leaderships are not representative of what they do - and certainly don't correspond to the kinds of alliances which are building up at the grassroots level. That's the significant thing.

I'm not saying that there aren't individual leaders in some particular sector of industry who've displayed militancy. But the militancy today has to be understood in a very concrete sense. Where were the leaders of the ATE and the CTA during the December 20 protests?

The militants tell me that they were under the bed. They were notable by their absence in those great days that brought down the de la Ra government. They don't show face, as they say in Argentina. And that is very important, because action tells you a lot more than the speeches and programs.

Where do industrial workers fit into this picture of the labor movement?

The bulk of industrial workers are unemployed today. They used to be 40 percent of the labor force. They're under 20 percent today.

So we have to think of the unemployed not as some kind of poor, urban street vendors. We're talking about Argentina. We're talking about guys that worked in auto plants, who were steelworkers, who were metallurgy and mechanical workers. When I spoke last May at a meeting in Argentina, I met a great many workers who had backgrounds in the trade unions.

And what's even more interesting are the wives of former industrial workers. One of the things I've noted is the militancy and high levels of participation of wives of industrial workers - wives who've taken on even more family responsibilities because their husbands have become disoriented, in part because of long-term unemployment.

The women are the ones to call them out on the picket line - to go down and be active in order to get a job. Because if you're not on the road blockage, you're not there to get a job when the assembly meets.

To understand the union movement, think that the U.S. [AFL-CIO President John] Sweeney and the mainstream of the AFL-CIO would be in the CGT. The left-of-center of the AFL-CIO would probably be with Moyano, the dissident. Very few trade unionists would be with the CTA. And of course, the militant section of the CTA would be totally foreign to American trade unionism - or even most of European trade unionism today.

We have to put this in perspective. The mass action and mass confrontations beginning on the 20th did more to change the political agenda and the physiognomy of the government than all the general strikes and symbolic protests of the trade unions in the last five or 10 years. The general strikes are important when they have a social content - when the workers occupy the factories and come out and face the government.

That's what I think these movements of the unemployed have. These are desperate people today. These are not employed workers fighting against a particular cutback. They've lost all their savings. They've been out of work for a long time. Many of them haven't seen meat for months. This is a whole desperate mass of people that cuts across class lines - but in which class demands are articulated.

What are the prospects for the development of an organization or party that can take up the big political questions ahead?

The organizing principle of the struggle has been hunger. That's what started the sacking of supermarkets in December, and the organization of these road blockages before that. You had what we might call survival demands for jobs - even low-paying public works jobs at \$200 a month - and for food.

Out of that struggle and organization, some of the more advanced workers in the movement - with trade union experience and some political experience - began to raise other issues, structural issues like repudiating the debt, large-scale public investments and the renationalization of strategic industries.

There are Marxists and socialists who are involved in some of these organizations. But they are there as militants within these movements. They are not, certainly, the dominant force. And they certainly don't have the following in these movements to give leadership and direction - at least at this time.

I think what you have is three levels. One is the grassroots, which is suffering horrendous deprivation. Here's a country that is one of the leading meat and grain producers in the world, and the workers are hungry. They don't have beef, they don't have pasta, they can't feed their kids - and they watch the trains taking tens of thousands of tons of meat to Buenos Aires to ship to Europe.

So this is a provocation. Here's one of the most fertile areas in the world with large-scale unemployment and with hunger - unprecedented in the history of Argentina.

That's one level. The second level is the emerging leadership, which has a conception of structural changes that we might call anti-capitalist and populist. And then we have a third level, in which the issues of socialism and of a revolution come into play.

While the government continues to avoid the measures to ameliorate the problems, increasingly the power within these mobilizations is moving toward the left. A month ago, the issue of foreign debt repudiation was a left-wing issue. Today, it's the mainstream. The issue of massive public works was a left-wing issue. Today, it's moved over into the mainstream.

The renationalization of basic strategic industries had a very small group of supporters. Today, it's gaining tens of thousands of adherents. Intervention in the banks was an issue for the minority. Today, it's become a major issue.

So the whole political debate has moved to the left, as the left begins to gain ideological hegemony. But it's the ideas, not an organized left.

(Source: Socialist Worker - January 11, 2002)

Arm The Spirit is an autonomist/anti-imperialist information collective based in Toronto, Canada. Our focus includes a wide variety of material, including political prisoners, national liberation struggles, armed communist resistance, anti-fascism, the fight against patriarchy, and more. We regularly publish our writings, research, and translation materials on our listserv called ATS-L. We also publish pamphlets and books as part of a joint project with Solidarity, a Montreal-based group. For more information, contact: Arm The Spirit, P.O. Box 6326, Stn. A, Toronto, Ontario M5W 1P7 Canada; E-mail: ats@etext.org ATS: <http://burn.ucsd.edu/~ats>; Solidarity: <http://www.tao.ca/~solidarity>; ATS-L Archives: <http://burn.ucsd.edu/archives/ats-l>

NEW U.S. NATIONAL CENSORSHIP SYSTEM FOR TERRORISTS?

In President Bush's new u.s. National Censorship System even the information that the system has been put into place was censored out of the news. CBS's Dan Rather and ABC's Peter Jennings got identical phone calls from the Office of Homeland Security reminding them not to say a word about it (NBC's anchor was lunching with Bush and got reminded in person). True or false? Is that a paranoid fantasy? The suspicion of a secret government agency that tells the media what they can say or not, is a long standing conspiracy fantasy. But really, how can we know? Since news about the "War on Terrorism" is so managed and manipulated it's just like there was a secret government gag order on tv news and our daily newspapers.

Check out what wasn't news in the Bush administration's supposed "World War on Terrorism" everywhere:

With heavy u.s. government support, several hundred white fascists staged a terrorist offensive against the New Afrikan community in strife torn York, Pennsylvania on January 12, 2002. This is where Charlie Robertson is on trial for the murder of a Black woman in the 1969 "race riots". Robertson, who was a career policeman, was leading crowds of white youths to go kill New Afrikans—even passing out ammunition to them. The young New Afrikan woman was shot to death by a white mob when she and her family were driving to the grocery store.

To demonstrate white support for terrorism against New Afrikans, the fascist coalition held a January 12th meeting at the public library inside the New Afrikan community. The main speaker was Matthew Hale of the white supremacist World Church of the Creator, aided by the National Alliance, Aryan Nations, White Aryan Resistance, National Socialist Movement, and many young members of the Eastern Hammerskins (the main international neo-nazi skinhead gang network). These are all upfront white fascist groups. The white fascists who couldn't fit into the library spent hours in a formation outside confronting the community, waving red and black Nazi flags and chanting "Sieg Heil! Sieg Heil!"

They could only do this because they had the support of government on all levels, which not only provided them with the meeting room but called out a large phalanx of riot cops in full gear to protect them from anti-racists. The f.b.i. were also involved, as were a unit of white men in camouflage fatigues, flak jackets and helmets with automatic weapons who refused to identify themselves (but who appeared to be some special u.s. army unit). Well guarded by government police and soldiers, the fascists held their ground around the community's library for several hours, angrily opposed by a crowd of young activists from the militant organization Anti-Racist Action (ARA) and some four hundred angry local residents. Later, the politicians and police and business leaders held a press conference saying that the worst problem had been the "outsiders" from Anti-Racist Action.

Just for comparison, suppose several hundred members of Al Qaeda decided to hold a demonstration at the World Trade Center ground zero, waving banners, shouting slogans calling for more killings, even pulling out guns and shooting to hold back an indignant crowd. Would the f.b.i., police and army rush out in riot gear to join and protect Al Qaeda? Not damn likely! But they did exactly that at York on January 12th. White fascists who want to terrorize now and eventually start doing genocide to New Afrikans not only aren't a target of Bush's "World War on Terrorism", they appear to be important clients having government protection.

But that isn't "news" that you'll see in your newspaper or on tv.

Sorry, we forgot to mention that the white fascists at York did pull guns and one did start shooting. As strong as the fascists' police protection was, there was a gap. The local kids who knew the hood (the angry crowd being held back by the government forces was mostly New Afrikan, with Latinos and working class white youth there as well) led everyone through back streets, around to the back. The fascists leaving the scene got ambushed. Meanwhile, bands of ARA activists and local youth had roamed the area, intercepting white fascists driving into the area for their hate rally. About a dozen vehicles belonging to the fascists got thoroughly trashed, with a number of fascists getting physically discouraged from returning (some fascists became unconscious in the process of the anti-racists discouraging them). At least three of the fascists in cars and pickups pulled pistols out- and one got off several shots. The police grabbed them, took the guns, and then released the fascists without charges. Pointing pistols, shooting pistols, not a crime to police and f.b.i.—as long as it's white fascists who are doing it (can you imagine what would happen if you or i and some friends held a demonstration outside the Whitest House, displaying guns and even getting off some shots?).

For the first time, white fascists waving racist flags and shouting racist slogans were holding a major hate rally inside the Black community, heavily protected by white riot cops and white troops with automatic weapons. Even more startling, these fascists were permitted to point pistols at anti-racists and even shoot—with the f.b.i. and

police being careful not to injure or arrest any of them. Under Bush's supposed war on terrorism far right white supremacist terrorism is not only legalized but being carefully protected by the government. Isn't this the real news?

While short news stories about the rally and the fighting appeared in some newspapers, the real story about government support of armed white racist terrorism was whited out everywhere. "20/20" didn't investigate it and "60 Minutes" didn't expose it and Oprah ignored it and Dan Blather didn't report it and CNN didn't show it. Was it secretly suppressed on orders of the u.s. national censorship system? Or is this just how America's corporate media always worked in unison?

There is not just one incident of government-white fascist coverup but a much larger pattern. Take the shocking Anthrax attacks, which targeted Democratic Congressional leaders and presumably liberal television news anchors (white rightwingers always fantasize that the media, which is heavily racist and conservative, are "liberal Jews"). The attacks caused deaths, hospitalizations, the closing of post offices, schools and the u.s. Capitol building itself. For months the government encouraged the public to believe that the attacks were the work of Al Qaeda or Muslim fanatics. Only now in the late Winter of 2002 is the u.s. Justice Department saying in a low-keyed way that they suspect a lone deranged white man (just like the "lone gunman" Lee Harvey Oswald who was framed in the Kennedy Assassination), who probably worked in the u.s. biological warfare program. The anthrax used in the mail attacks has been proven by researchers to come from the u.s. military CBW testing program at Dugway, Utah.

But all along the government has known that the Anthrax attack was a white far rightwing conspiracy. Only they've been covering it up, with no national alerts, no "profiling", no publicity campaign, nothing like the national hate campaign, sweep and pickup of thousands of suspects like the authorities have done with Muslims.

On October 28, 2001 the London daily newspaper "The Observer" broke the news from Washington that the Anthrax attacks were the work not of Muslims but of white fascists:

"Neo-Nazi extremists within the US are behind the deadly wave of anthrax attacks against America, according to latest briefings from the security services and Justice Department. Experts on 'survivalist' groups and extreme-right 'Aryan' militants have been drafted into the investigation as the focus shifts away from possible links with the 11 September terrorists or even possible state backers such as Iraq.

"'We've been zeroing in on a number of hate groups, especially one on the West Coast,' a source at the Justice Department told The Observer yesterday...the Justice Department official said: 'We have to see the right wing as much better coordinated than its apparent disorganisation suggests. And we have to presume that their opposition to government is just as virulent as that of the Islamic terrorists, if not as accomplished.

"But that is, in its way, one of the most compelling possible leads in the anthrax trail - that it is not really al-Qaeda's style, but rather that of others who sympathise with its war against the American government and media...The American neo-Nazi Right is motivated above all by its loathing of the federal government, which it believes is selling out the homeland to a 'New World Order' run by masons and Jews...

"One message, entitled 'No Sympathy for the Devil', was posted in several chat rooms by right-winger Grant Bruer, whose racist writings are circulated among supremacist groups. It reads: 'Is there not a single person who has received these anthrax letters that isn't an avowed enemy of the white race? Tom Brokaw, Tom Daschle and the gossip rag offices have all been 100 per cent legitimate targets. Who among us has the slightest bit of sympathy for these pukes?'

"Right-wing groups have had an interest in anthrax and other biological agents. A member of the Aryan Nation group once bragged he had a stash of anthrax from digging up a field where cows had died of the disease in the 1950s. Larry Wayne Harris was arrested after trying to obtain three vials of bubonic plague from a mail-order science company.

"The shift in the investigation echoes that which followed America's other infamous terrorist attack: the destruction of the federal government building in Oklahoma City in 1995. The bombing was initially thought to be the work of Arab extremists, but turned out to be the work of the Aryan supremacists."

That was big news not only in Europe but around the world. It was very big news in the Middle East and the Muslim world. So I turned on my television that night, expecting it to be the lead story in the national news. But flipping from ABC to NBC to CBS and back, I soon discovered that the week's biggest news on the terrorist attacks on America...wasn't "news" at all. It had been totally whited out. Nor was it there the next day, or in my daily newspaper. Most people in America had no idea about the biggest "World War Against Terrorism" story to the rest of the world. It was just like a high-powered u.s. National Censorship Office had secretly ordered the nation's media to suppress this news.

In fact, one white rightwinger has published a book that is a "do it yourself" guide to finding, culturing and using Anthrax spores as a biological weapon. He shows, step by step, how with only hundreds of dollars and no prior training you can produce lethal Anthrax weapons. There have even been some television and newspaper coverage of his work (which has been confirmed by government scientists as crude but workable), as well as complaints to the f.b.i. But the government has said that they must protect his "free speech rights" to teach other white fascists how to make home made biological weapons.

Just as they said that they needed to protect the "rights" of the several hundred white fascists to promote racist murders and terrorism of the New Afrikan community in York, Pennsylvania. To use the hypothetical comparison again, if Al Qaeda ever wanted to publish and sell a book in America on "How To Hijack Airliners & Use Them For Mass Murders"—do you think the Bush Administration would insist that they had to protect Al Qaeda's "rights" to do this?

Again, this isn't just an isolated case. For years the white fascists here in the u.s. have been preparing for such mass terror attacks. This is admitted by the f.b.i. In his testimony to a congressional committee in 1999, f.b.i. director Louis Freeh admitted that "a growing number, while still small, of 'lone offender' and extremist splinter elements of right-wing groups have been identified as possessing or attempting to develop or use" mass terrorist devices. Last year, f.b.i. director Freeh said that they had to intervene to stop two "potentially large-scale, high-casualty attacks being planned by organized right-wing extremists." One of these was the blowing up of a large propane storage facility in Elk Grove, California, as well as the armed seizure of National Guard armories and attacks on electric power lines in several other states. Again, no national alerts, no public warning of terrorist dangers, no "profiling", no pickups of thousands of suspects, nothing like has been done against Muslims.

Clearly, the government has evolved a special doctrine that white fascists and violent extreme rightwingers—even those who want to do Oklahoma City II and racist terrorism—are to be protected as much as possible. And that the media must twist and suppress the news to cover this up. We could speculate that it is in part because u.s. attorney general Ashcroft comes from the far right (in the past he publicly supported the Southern white supremacist campaign for a revived Confederacy, for example). Any national campaign of extreme racist "profiling", detention or political screening of the white far right would scoop up hundreds of thousands of white folks who support the Republican Party. That would be a political disaster area for Bush & Company. Or because it is much, much more convenient for u.s. imperialism to focus mass fear and hatred on people of color. In particular, to picture government "anti-terrorism" as a war between "good" modern Western capitalism and "evil" backward Arabs or South Asians. Like the cowboys and Indians in the old movies.



nazis & cops rally in York, PA

Should this be news to us? To me it's more important than their latest flimsy lies from Afghanistan. But I'm sure we won't be seeing Peter Jennings or Barbara Walters detailing all this. Nor are we going to read about it in the "Chicago Tribune" or "TIME magazine". So keep reading **CROSSROAD** and publications like it, because this is the only place you're going to get the truth about what's changing our lives. And what we can do about it.

by fast eddie

The Murchison Center is a community computer center. We use computers to help our community. We help people get good jobs. We help children. We can help you....

Use the Internet:

Build Social Cyberpower

Social Cyberpower = the use of information technology for the social struggle to fight for freedom, building social participation in cyberspace for community empowerment.

Cyberchurch: We are building web pages for churches in the African American community. This project is spreading around the country under the rubric of "cyberorganizing," a 21st century transformation of civil rights activism. Everyone is invited to contact us to get your church online!

www.murchisoncenter.org/cyberchurch

Cyberschool: We are building web pages for schools in the inner city of Toledo. Our efforts are to involve students and their parents, along with their teachers and administrators, in building web pages that give important information and celebration to the fight for a decent education and educational achievement.

www.murchisoncenter.org/cyberschools

Cyberculture: We are building web pages that cover the political culture of everyday life. Our first project is about hair culture, and involves creating web sites for all of the nearly 35 Afro-American beauty salons in the Toledo area. We are concerned with information, celebration, and economic development.

www.murchisoncenter.org/hair

Cybercommunity: We are digitizing a major street in the Black community. Dorr is a major street that includes the Black poor, the middle class, a leading global corporate headquarters, libraries, schools, churches, and farm country. Dorr Street is a mirror of the country. It takes 25 minutes to drive the length of the street, but few Black youth have ever taken the drive. In cooperation with Mott Branch Library.

www.murchisoncenter.org/dorr

Virtual Black Family: We are building web pages for family history projects. We hope to provide a research opportunity based on Black family history. In cooperation with the Art Tatum Resource Center, Kent Branch Library.

www.murchisoncenter.org/family

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Debi Zuver

Debi Zuver defends her life; gets 21 years

On January 7, Sonoma County Superior Court Judge Elliot Daum handed down a 21-year sentence to Debi Zuver, a domestic violence victim who pled guilty to manslaughter in the shooting death of Kim Garloff, Zuver's ex-boyfriend. Garloff repeatedly beat, terrorized and threatened to kill Debi over a two-year period.

In handing down his stunning decision to give Debi Zuver the maximum penalty (11 years for manslaughter plus 10 years for using a gun), Judge Daum ignored the determination by an expert witness that Debi Zuver suffered from "battered women's syndrome" and acted to defend her own life.

The judge also disregarded the fact that only moments before the shooting Kim Garloff had threatened to kill Debi because she refused to give false testimony in his upcoming trial on 3 felony counts of methamphetamine production and sale. (If convicted, Garloff was facing 19 years in prison. Debi was his alibi witness.)

As Debi Zuver was packing her car to flee to a friend's house, Kim Garloff came into her house, locked the door, threw her down on the bed and beat her, threw her against the wall and made repeated threats to kill her.

Garloff then sat down on the couch and said, "Get me my goddamned gun." (Debi had been sleeping with the gun under her pillow ever since she had told Kim's lawyer she wouldn't testify on his behalf.) According to Debi, she got the gun and walked across the room. "I was actually going to give him the gun," she said. "Instead I shot him. I know that if I hadn't shot Kim that night, I wouldn't be here today."

Despite all this, Judge Daum determined the evidence of battered women's syndrome was not convincing; refused to accept that the victim (Garloff) had precipitated and been the aggressor in the incident; and determined she was not acting under duress or in defense of her own life.

This sentence is particularly chilling in light of the recent dismissal of all charges against Petaluma doctor Louis Pelfini, charged with homicide and domestic violence in the smothering death of Janet Pelfini. Louis was Janet Pelfini's husband of some 30 years. Because of double jeopardy, Louis Pelfini cannot be charged again for criminal behavior in Janet's death.

As women's rights activists we are extremely concerned about the messages these two cases send to the community — messages like, "If you kill your wife you'll get away with it" and: "If you're a battered woman you better shut up and take it because the cops won't protect you and if you dare protect yourself we're gonna rip your life away."

Letters of support can be sent to: Debi Zuver Purple Berets, PO Box 3064, Santa Rosa, CA 95402

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