

Abolishing American Apartheid, Root and Branch Manning Marable

that African Americans not be left out of affirmative action programs. To demonstrate that an appropriate percentage of our workforce, students, residents, etc., are minorities is necessary but not sufficient. We must raise the question of the African American presence. We must be critical of programs that - under the aegis of diversity and multi-culturalism - importantly have representation from Asian Americans and Latinos, but no, or very few, African Americans.

The proposals for African American reparations is an area where the left can contribute. The NAACP, CBTU, grassroots organizations, scholars, many activists, including lawyers, have endorsed HR40, the reparations bill sponsored by Congressman John Conyers. We should also endorse it. The debate on the issue of reparations allows for many opportunities to discuss the systemic basis of African American oppression. The ensuing discussions can create the atmosphere for a broad, mass critique of capitalism - both historically and in the present.

Finally, the struggle for a living wage, which the CCDS has been engaged in for several years, is an area that allows for the joining of the issues of affirmative action and discriminatory hiring policies with the fight for living wages with benefits, health care, quality education and housing.

If we are to turn the politics of this country around, African Americans must be central in our organizing efforts. They are strategically placed in many public and private sector unions. The service industry is the largest area of growth within the trade union movement. And, just as importantly, they are strategically placed in the South, which has historically been the cutting edge of reaction in national politics.

The joining of class and race interests is paramount to defeating reaction in the south. Nearly fifty percent of African Americans live in the South. They are a consistent force for democracy in an area that is the most economic and politically backward in our country. Let's look at national electoral politics as an example. It's virtually impossible for a liberal/moderate Democratic candidate, not to mention a progressive candidate, to win a national election when one-fourth of the country is automatically ceded to the right. Yet the African American community is a sleeping force in that area. The left, working through mass organizations, grass roots developments and trade unions, can make an important contribution toward awakening that sleeping giant and fusing it with other progressive forces. Without that fusion there will be few meaningful national political victories in the electoral or legislative arenas.

The task before the left is clear. Either we resume our historic role in championing the issue of racial equality in general, and African American equality specifically, or we will continue to be ineffective in our efforts to popularize advanced democratic demands - up to and including socialism - among the people of our country.

---- *Charlene Mitchell, a founder and Co-Chair of CCDS, is a long-time leader in the struggle against racism.*

In 1900, the great African-American scholar W.E.B. Du Bois, wrote: "The problem of the twentieth century is the problem of the color line." Du Bois's powerful prediction of a century ago, that the entire world would increasingly be divided along boundaries of north vs. south, between the industrialized, affluent and powerful white populations of Europe and North America and the underdeveloped, poor, and oppressed nations of Africa, Asia, Latin America, and the Caribbean has largely come true.

The great challenge of the twenty-first century therefore, is the challenge of abolishing American apartheid, root and branch, and creating a genuinely non-racial, pluralistic democracy, a free and fair society with opportunity and justice for all.

For the surgeon to eliminate a cancer, she or he must first identify it, in order to remove it. Only with surgery can the body be healed, and made whole again. For this nation to eliminate cancer, we must clearly and carefully define its character, explaining how and why, a generation after the Civil Rights Movement, that race remains such a powerful and destructive force touching virtually every dimension of public life. We must "speak truth to power" about racism: that race has not magically declined in significance; that affirmative action is absolutely necessary and essential to redress both historical and contemporary liabilities and barriers to the development and progress of black and brown Americans; that "justice" of our police, courts, and prisons has never been and is not to this day "color blind"; that the African American still remains the last hired and the first fired; that the death penalty and life sentences without parole have become the "new lynchings" of the 20th and 21st centuries.

In the past three decades, the structure and character of American institutional racism has changed dramatically. We can measure the advances of African Americans in many ways. The number of black elected officials, barely 100 in 1964, has climbed above 12,000; the black consumer market has grown from \$70 billion in 1980 to over \$450 billion today. There is an affluent and substantial black middle class, and the economic expansion of the 1990s greatly improved the quality of life even for millions of working class and low-income households. However, this new prosperity for the black middle class obscures a very real crisis for millions of other African Americans. The unprecedented expansion of what a number of scholars increasingly describe as a "prison industrial complex" has created an oppressively new context for the articulation of racial politics. The dynamic and seemingly unchecked growth of the U.S. prison population has many profound consequences for all communities of color - politically, economically and socially.

How did we reach this situation? We must understand the connections between race, crime, and justice in an historical context. For a variety of reasons, rates of violent crime, including murder, rape and robbery, increased dramatically in the 1960s and 1970s. Much of this increase occurred in urban areas. By the late 1970s, nearly one half of all Americans were afraid to walk within a mile of their homes at night, and 90 percent responded in surveys that the U.S. criminal justice system was not dealing harshly enough with criminals. Politicians like Richard M.

Nixon, George Wallace and Ronald Reagan began to campaign successfully on the theme of "Law and Order." The death penalty, which was briefly outlawed by the Supreme Court, was reinstated. Local, state and federal expenditures for law enforcement rose sharply. Behind much of anti-crime rhetoric was a not-too-subtle racial dimension, the projection of crude stereotypes about the link between criminality and black people. Rarely did these politicians observe that minority and poor people, not the white middle class, were statistically much more likely to experience violent crimes of all kinds. The argument was made that law enforcement officers should be given much greater latitude in suppressing crime, that sentences should be lengthened and made mandatory, and that prisons should be designed not for the purpose of rehabilitation, but punishment.

Consequently, there was a rapid expansion in the personnel of the criminal justice system, as well as the construction of new prisons. What occurred in New York State, for example, was typical of what happened nationally. From 1817 to 1981, New York had opened 33 state prisons. From 1982 to 1999, another 38 state prisons were constructed. The state's prison population at the time of the Attica prison revolt in September 1971 was about 12,500. By 1999, there were over 71,000 prisoners in New York State correctional facilities.

In 1974, the number of Americans incarcerated in all state prisons stood at 187,500. By 1991, the number had reached 711,700. Nearly two-thirds of all state prisoners in 1991 had less than a high school education. One third of all prisoners were unemployed at the time of their arrests. Incarceration rates by the end of the 1980s had soared to unprecedented rates, especially for black Americans. As of December 1989, the total U.S. prison population, including federal institutions, exceeded one million for the first time in history, an incarceration rate of the general population of one out of every 250 citizens. For African Americans, the rate was over 700 per 100,000, or about seven times more than for whites. About one half of all prisoners were black. Twenty-three percent of all black males in their twenties were either in jail or prison, on parole, probation or awaiting trial. The rate of incarceration of black Americans in 1989 had even surpassed that experienced by blacks who still lived under the apartheid regime of South Africa.

By the early 1990s, rates for all types of violent crime began to plummet. But the laws, which sent offenders to prison, were made even more severe. Children were increasingly viewed in courts as adults, and subjected to harsher penalties. Laws like California's "three strikes and you're out" eliminated the possibility of parole for repeat offenders. The vast majority of these new prisoners were non-violent offenders, and many of these were convicted of drug offenses that carried long prison terms. In New York, a state in which African Americans and Latinos comprise 25 percent of the total population, by 1999 they represented 83 percent of all state prisoners, and 94 percent of all individuals convicted on drug offenses. The pattern of racial bias in these statistics is confirmed by the research of the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, which found that while African Americans today constitute only 14 percent of all drug users nationally, they are 35 percent of all drug arrests, 55 percent of all drug convictions, and 75 percent of all prison admissions for drug offenses. Currently, the racial proportions of those under some type of correctional supervision, including parole and probation,

are one-in-fifteen for young white males, one-in-ten for young Latino males, and one-in-three for young African-American males. Statistically today, more than eight out of every ten African-American males will be arrested at some point in their lifetime.

The latest innovation in American corrections is termed "special housing units" (SHU), but which prisoners also generally refer to as The Box. SHUs are uniquely designed solitary confinement cells, in which prisoners are locked down for 23 hours a day for months or even years at a time. SHU cellblocks are electronically monitored, prefabricated structures of concrete and steel, about 14 feet long and 8 1/2 feet wide, amounting to 120 square feet of space. The two inmates who are confined in each cell, however, actually have only about 60 square feet of usable space, or 30 square feet per person. All meals are served to prisoners through a thin slot cut into the steel door. The toilet unit, sink and shower are all located in the cell. Prisoners are permitted one hour "exercise time" each day in a small concrete balcony, surrounded by heavy security wire, directly connected with their SHU cells. Educational and rehabilitation programs for SHU prisoners are prohibited. As of 1998, New York State had confined 5,700 state prisoners in SHUs, about 8 percent of its total inmate population. Currently under construction in Upstate New York is a new 750-cell maximum security SHU facility, which will cost state taxpayers \$180 million. Although Amnesty International and human rights groups in the U.S. have widely condemned SHUs, claiming that such forms of imprisonment constitute the definition of torture under international law, other states have followed New York's example. As of 1998, California had constructed 2,942 SHU beds, followed by Mississippi (1,756), Arizona (1,728), Virginia (1,267), Texas (1,229), Louisiana (1,048) and Florida (1,000). Solitary confinement, which historically had been defined even by corrections officials as an extreme disciplinary measure, is becoming increasingly the norm.

The introduction of SHUs reflects a general mood in the country that the growing penal population is essentially beyond redemption. If convicted felons cease to be viewed as human beings, why should they be treated with any humanity? This punitive spirit was behind the Republican-controlled Congress and President Clinton's decision in 1995 to eliminate inmate eligibility for federal Pell Grant awards for higher education. As of 1994, 23,000 prisoners throughout the U.S. had received Pell Grants, averaging about \$1,500 per award. The total amount of educational support granted prisoners, \$35 million, represented only 0.6 percent of all Pell Grant funding nationally. Many studies have found that prisoners who participate in higher education programs and especially those who complete college degrees have significantly lower rates of recidivism. For all prison inmates, for example, recidivism averages between 50 to 70 percent. Federal parolees have a recidivism rate of 40 percent. Prisoners with a college education have recidivism rates of only 5 to 10 percent. Given the high success ratio of prisoners who complete advanced degree work and the relatively low cost of public investment, such educational programs should make sense. But following the federal government's lead, many states have also ended their tuition benefits programs for state prisoners.

What are the economic costs for American society of the vast expansion of our prison-industrial complex? According to

criminal justice researcher David Barlow at the University of Wisconsin at Milwaukee, between 1980 and 2000, the combined expenditures of federal, state and local governments on police have increased about 400 percent. Corrections expenditures for building new prisons, upgrading existing facilities, hiring more guards, and related costs, increased approximately one thousand percent. Although it currently costs about \$70,000 to construct a typical prison cell, and about \$25,000 annually to supervise and maintain each prisoner, the U.S. is currently building hundreds of new prison cells every week.

The greatest victims of these racialized processes of unequal justice, of course, are African-American and Latino young people. In April 2000, utilizing national and state data compiled by the FBI, the Justice Department and six leading foundations issued a comprehensive study that documented vast racial disparities at every level of the juvenile justice process. African Americans under age 18 comprise 15 percent of their national age group, yet they currently represent 26 percent of all those who are arrested. After entering the criminal justice system, white and black juveniles with the same records are treated in radically different ways. According to the Justice Department's study, among white youth offenders, 66 percent are referred to juvenile courts, while only 31 percent of the African-American youth are taken there. Blacks comprise 44 percent of those detained in juvenile jails, 46 percent of all those tried in adult criminal courts, as well as 58 percent of all juveniles who are warehoused in adult prison. In practical terms, this means that for young African Americans who are arrested and charged with a crime, that they are more than six times more likely to be assigned to prison than white youth offenders.

For those young people who have never been to prison before, African Americans are nine times more likely than whites to be sentenced to juvenile prisons. For youths charged with drug offenses, blacks are 48 times more likely than whites to be sentenced to juvenile prison. White youths charged with violent offenses are incarcerated on average for 193 days after trial; by contrast, African-American youths are held 254 days, and Latino youths are incarcerated 305 days.

Once black and brown women and men are ensnared into the criminal justice system, they routinely experience the same racial profiling in the courts. According to studies of the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, black Americans constitute only 15 percent of the nation's drug users, but comprise about one-third of all those arrested on drug charges and 57 percent of those convicted on drug charges. Once they are convicted on drug charges, African Americans receive on average one year more in prison than whites who have identical criminal profiles and who commit the same crimes.

In the United States today, about four to five million Americans receive criminal records every year. Roughly one in six U.S. citizens has a criminal record. In a society severely stratified by race and class, most of those who are pushed into the penal system are not unexpectedly black, brown and poor. One third of all prisoners were unemployed at the time of their arrest, with the others averaging less than \$15,000 annual incomes in the year prior to their arrest. About one half of the 2 million people in federal and state prisons and jails are African Americans. The proportion of black men in prison - about 6 percent - is approximately 20 times the corresponding rate for white men . . . In

Baltimore, 56 percent of black men are in prison or jail, out on bail, on probation or parole, or being sought on an arrest warrant. At least 90 percent of all black men living in that city can expect to be arrested and jailed for a non-traffic offense at some point of their lives. Although the majority of black prisoners are young men in their twenties and thirties, the fastest growing sector of the penal population consists of men fifty-five years old and above. Even outside of the prison walls, the black community's parameters are largely defined by the agents of state and private power. There are now about 600,000 police officers and 1.5 million private security guards in the U.S. Increasingly, however, black, Latino, and poor communities are being "policed" by special paramilitary units, often called SWAT ("Special Weapons and Tactics") teams. Researcher Christian Parenti cites studies indicating that "the nation has more than 30,000 such heavily armed, military trained police units." SWAT team mobilizations or "call outs" increased 400 percent between 1980 and 1995, with a 34 percent increase in the incidents of deadly force recorded by SWAT teams from 1995 to 1998.

What are the political consequences of regulating black and poor people through the criminal justice and penal systems? Perhaps the greatest impact is on the process of black voting. According to an October, 1998 study, "Losing the Vote," produced by the Sentencing Project and Human Rights Watch, two nonprofit research groups, about 4.3 million Americans, or one in fifty adults, have currently or permanently lost the ability to vote because of a felony conviction. In 32 states, convicted offenders are not permitted to vote while on parole. In ten states, former prisoners who have fully served their terms remain disenfranchised, and in ten of these states, ex-felons are prohibited from voting for life. For African Americans, these figures can be translated into 1.4 million men who are denied the right to vote, compared to only 4.6 million who actually voted in the 1996 elections. The racial impact of ex-felon disenfranchisement cited by the study is truly astonishing:

- In Alabama and Florida, 31 percent of all black men are permanently disenfranchised.
- In five other states - Iowa, Mississippi, New Mexico, Virginia, and Wyoming - one in four black men (24 to 28 percent) is permanently disenfranchised.
- In Washington state, one in four of black men (24 percent) is currently or permanently disenfranchised.
- In Delaware, one in five black men (20 percent) is permanently disenfranchised.
- In Texas, one in five black men (20.8 percent) is currently disenfranchised.
- In four states - Minnesota, New Jersey, Rhode Island, and Wisconsin - 16 to 18 percent of black men are currently disenfranchised.
- In nine states - Arizona, Connecticut, Georgia, Maryland, Missouri, Nebraska, Nevada, Oklahoma and Tennessee - 10 to 15 percent of black men are currently disenfranchised.

In effect, the Voting Rights Act of 1965, which guaranteed millions of African Americans the right to the electoral franchise, is being gradually repealed by state restrictions on ex-felons from voting. A people who are imprisoned in disproportionately higher numbers, and then systematically denied the right to vote, can in no way claim to live under a democracy.

These grim statistics reflect a draconian yet strategic

decision made by America's political and corporate establishment to redirect billions of dollars away from human needs spending - such as health care, public transportation, job training programs and public housing - toward the construction of a prison-industrial complex that today is destroying millions of lives. Perhaps the clearest example of this is the destructive trade-off between public education and incarceration. A 1998 study produced by the Correctional Association of New York and the Washington, D.C. based Justice Policy Institute, illustrated that in New York State hundreds of millions of dollars have been stolen from the budgets of public universities and reallocated to prison construction. The report stated: "that between fiscal year 1988 and 1998, New York's public universities saw their operating budgets plummet by 29 percent while funding for prisons increased by 76 percent. In actual dollars, there was nearly been an equal trade-off, with the Department of Correctional Services receiving a \$761 million increase during that time while state funding for New York's city and state university systems declined by \$615 million. By 1998, New York State was spending nearly twice what it had allocated to run its prison system a decade ago. To pay for that massive expansion, tuitions and fees for students at the State University of New York (SUNY) and the City University of New York (CUNY) had to be dramatically hiked. The New York study found that the total cost for a typical undergraduate student to attend a SUNY school, including tuition, books, room and board, rose from \$7,319 in 1991 to \$11,201 by 1997, an increase of 35 percent. The state government also cut its levels of support to CUNY, a system whose students are overwhelmingly black, Latino, working class and poor. Since 1988, the state share of the CUNY budget has fallen from about 77 percent to 49 percent. Tuition and fees for full-time CUNY undergraduates in that decade roughly doubled. The basic impact on black and Latino young adults had been to make it simultaneously much more difficult to attend college, but much easier to go to prison. The New York study found: "There are more blacks (34,809) and Hispanics (22,421) locked up in prison than there are attending SUNY, where there are 27,925 black and Hispanic students. Since 1989, there have been more blacks entering the prison system for drug offenses each year than there were graduating from SUNY with undergraduate, masters and doctoral degrees combined."

The pattern of schools vs. prisons present in New York exists throughout the country. Thousands of black and Latino young adults in California are denied access to state universities because of the passage of Proposition 209, which destroyed affirmative action. Thousands more have been driven out due to steadily growing costs for tuition and cutbacks in student loans. Meanwhile, hundreds of millions of dollars have been siphoned from the state's education budget and spent on building prisons. In 1977, California had 19,600 inmates in its state prison system. By 1997, it was almost 160,000. In the past twenty years, California has constructed twenty-one new prisons. California currently has the largest single prison system in the industrialized world, "holding more inmates in its jails and prisons than do France, Great Britain, Germany, Japan, Singapore, and the Netherlands combined." The California Department of Corrections estimated in 2000 that despite the leveling off of the state's prison population, it will need to spend \$6.1 billion in the next ten years just to maintain the present prison population. Instead of

funding teachers, we are hiring more prison guards. Instead of building new classrooms, we are constructing new jails.

The unprecedented growth of what many critics of the U.S. criminal justice system termed the "prison industrial complex," was not solely the result of the triumph of political conservatism, or from overtly racist attitudes about the treatment of blacks in the courts. In the 1980s and 1990s, the American welfare state was being rapidly dismantled. The social "safety net" which was the legacy of legislative reforms from the New Deal to the Great Society was pulled to the breaking point. President Bill Clinton promised to "end welfare as we know it," and in 1996 secured the passage of the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunities Reconciliation Act. While most whites were able to successfully leave welfare - by 1998 they represented less than one-third of all participants - the vast majority of women of color remained regulated by the Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF), the program that in effect supplanted the old AFDC system. By 2000, welfare "reform" had succeeded in cutting overall welfare rolls in half. But fewer than one in four TANF participants left the welfare rolls because they found employment. Most welfare recipients simply disappeared from the rolls, frequently because they were "sanctioned" for missing appointments or due to their inability to secure childcare. The majority of TANF recipients who do make the transition to employment usually earn from \$5.50 to \$7.00 per hour, well below the federal government's poverty level for a family of four. A 1999 study of former welfare recipients found that black women earn less than whites, are less likely to be employed full-time, and are over represented in lower paying jobs. African-American job seekers were asked twice as often as whites to complete a pre-application, and 36 percent were subjected to drug tests and criminal record checks.

As corporations closed their branch offices in the central cities, and businesses relocated to the suburbs, large neighborhoods in cities like Detroit and Newark became economic wastelands. Neighborhoods where labor force participation rates were below sixty percent became commonplace. The federal government, once recognized as the "employer of last resort," even by mainstream Republicans, retreated from previous entitlements to the poor. It was in this uncertain political environment of governmental retrenchment and economic meltdown that the welfare state gave way to the prison-industrial state as the chief means of regulating and warehousing redundant and minority labor. From the vantage point of the working poor and families below the poverty level in black and brown communities, mass incarceration under the facade of legality and fairness was the essential defining factor of the twenty-first century's version of American structural racism.

With support from the Criminal Justice Initiative of the Open Society Institute, the Institute for Research in African-American Studies at Columbia University has just initiated a project "Toward a New Civic Leadership: The Africana Criminal Justice Project." The project ventures a new praxis of criminological endeavor, grounded both in a more detailed understanding of the African-American experience, and a forthright commitment to innovative and progressive social change. A major priority of the Africana Criminal Justice Project is to address the problem of civic incapacitation in the U.S. justice system, and its particularly destructive effects in African-American community

contexts. Thousands of women, men, and children mostly of color are presently experiencing criminal sanctions, which essentially revoke fundamental rights of citizenship, curtailing their ability to function as productive community members and participants in civil society. These sanctions, including felon disenfranchisement and juvenile waiver, inflict a new form of capital punishment on disproportionately black and Hispanic citizens - indeed, a "civil death" - which leads to a broader political alienation and social disorganization of already marginalized Latino and African-American communities. It is critical that the specific dimensions and potential remedies of this problem receive immediate and proactive attention, not only in the interests of the black community's well-being, but for the sake of the promise of American democracy, and it's inconsistent and at times non-existent promise of freedom and equality.

In this effort, the Africana Criminal Justice Project will support three working groups of scholars, activists, and young people; produce original research and publications; develop curricular innovations; and sponsor two national conferences in 2003 and 2004 to discuss and organize political mobilization around the impact of criminal justice policies on African-American communities and American civil society.

What all of the issues I have just outlined have in common is the utilization of power to reinforce racial inequality. Racism is deliberately manufactured through thousands of acts of random violence, and from the elimination of affirmative action programs, and from the policies of racial profiling by police, and from the mass imprisonment of young black women and men. The power of our government is increasingly used to buttress white privilege; the role of prisons is no longer primarily a means of correction or rehabilitation, but the site for warehousing the unemployed and the poor, for creating populations providing cheap labor to hundreds of corporations, and for eliminating millions of people, once released from prison, from exercising their democratic right to vote.

These issues collectively represent a great moral challenge to a democratic society. Martin Luther King, Jr., once observed that, "the moral arc of the universe is long, but it bends toward justice." But let us apply Martin's insight about morality and power to our present racial crisis.

Politics is often defined as the "art of the possible." We are taught to accept "the lesser evil," rather than committing ourselves to causes in which we deeply believe. We expect politicians to be crooks, and are therefore not surprised when they cheat and lie to us. In the U.S. today, there is a direct connection between culture, representation and power. Our society generally worships the symbols of authority, and celebrates hierarchies. We applaud those who are wealthy, and despise the poor. Individuals are all too often judged by their market value, rather than by their character as human beings. Our economy glorifies the production of commodities above the development of our young people. Our government deals with poverty by imprisoning the black, brown and the poor. The structures of power and privilege deny real opportunity to millions of people.

The great strength and power of the Black Freedom Movement in the U.S. has been its capacity to link politics with morality. In the letter from the Birmingham jail, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., sharply confronted the hypocrisy and the contradictions of white liberals who professed their dedication to the

principles of universal brother and sisterhood, yet who were unwilling to commit themselves publicly to the struggles against Jim Crow segregation. King argued that, "Shallow understanding from people of good will is more frustrating than absolute misunderstanding from the people of ill will. Lukewarm acceptance is much more bewildering than outright rejection." Martin was saying that morality is not separate from politics, that how we run the society should in some way conform with our notions of ethics for how we should treat others and be treated in return. Sometimes it is essential for people of conscience who truly believe in a just and humane society to take a public stand, challenging the institutional evils which we see all around us every day. As Martin declared, "I submit that an individual who breaks the law that conscience tells him is unjust and willingly accepts the penalty by staying in jail to arouse the conscience of the community over its injustice, is in reality expressing the very highest respect for law."

How do we achieve progressive change? By celebrating our passionate discontent with the way things are. Contented, satisfied people rarely want things to change too much. If you want to find out what new directions history is taking our society, don't wallow in the mainstream - stand at the edge, at the boundaries. Listen to our poets. Learn from those who have little or nothing to lose. Understand the anxiety of the forty-five million Americans today who lack any medical insurance. Spend time working at a homeless shelter, or walking a picket line with trade unionists. To be passionately discontent is to want our democratic ideals and our egalitarian hopes to be realized in the world around us. It is to challenge conformity, to push the boundaries of "the way things are" to "the way things should be."

What is absolutely clear is that a new leviathan of racial inequality has been constructed across our country. It lacks the brutal simplicity of the old Jim Crow system, with its omnipresent "white" and "colored" signs. Yet it is in many respects potentially far more brutalizing, because it presents itself to the world as a correctional system that is theoretically fair and essentially color blind. The black freedom movement of the 1960s was successful largely because it convinced a majority of white middle class Americans that racial segregation was economically inefficient, and that politically it could neither be sustained nor justified. The freedom movement utilized the power of creative disruption, making it impossible for the old system of white prejudice, power, and privilege to function in the same old ways it had for nearly a century. How can Americans who still believe in racial equality and social justice, stand silently while millions of our fellow citizens are being destroyed all around us? Unquestionably, the racialized prison industrial complex represents the great moral and political challenge to the preservation of democracy.

For several years, I have lectured in New York's famous Sing Sing prison, as part of a master's degree program sponsored by the New York Theological Seminary. During my last visit several months ago, I noticed that correctional officials had erected a large yellow sign over the door at the public entrance to the prison. The sign reads: "Through these doors pass some of the finest corrections professionals in the world." I asked Reverend Bill Webber, the director of the prison's educational program, and several prisoners what they thought about the sign. Bill answered bluntly, "demonic." One of the M.A. students, a 35-year-old

Latino named Tony, agreed with Bill's assessment, but added, "let us face the demon head on." There are now over two million Americans who are incarcerated. It is time to face the demon head on.

---- **Manning Marable** is Professor of History and Political Science and Director of the Institute for Research in African-American Studies at Columbia University, and Member of the CCDS Advisory Board.

Racism and Its Impact on Nationalities in the USA

Elizabeth (Betita) Martinez

Good morning, buenos dias.

As Charlene mentioned in her talk, there is no way to separate racism from capitalism. I would add that there is also no way to separate racism from colonialism and imperialism. For the United States, that began when the land of the Native American peoples—a whole hemisphere—was taken from them in the most brutal form of colonialism ever seen. Part of the stolen land formed the basis for what is now the U.S., and it was extended with the takeover of half of Mexico in 1848 through a war provoked by President Polk. Later came the takeover of Cuba, Puerto Rico, the Philippines and other Pacific islands.

This colonization was carried out in the name of Manifest Destiny, which said the U.S. as a superior white nation should dominate the hemisphere. We can see a direct link between that spirit and what's going on today in U.S. foreign policy. Manifest destiny is raging all over the world.

It is important to see the linkage between colonization and slavery as foundation stones of this country and its capitalism. That linkage appears in connections between the historical experiences of different peoples, including the ways we have often struggled together against common oppressors. Seeing that linkage is key to building the movement that Manning Marable was talking about.

We don't know our histories well enough to realize that there is a tradition of alliances, as between Blacks and Seminole Indians in Florida, or white frontiersmen and servants with slaves in Bacon's Rebellion of 1676. That uprising so frightened the plantation owners that, after it was defeated, the whites were given the right to carry arms, own land, be in militias, and other privileges. The white elite had perceived correctly that a black/white alliance was a very serious threat; it had to be eliminated by privileging whiteness.

An important black/brown alliance also developed when Mexicans helped some 4,000 slaves escape across what became the Texas border in the early 1800's. By that time Mexico had abolished slavery. When the slave owners came to get back their "property" (worth \$3.2 million at the time) the Mexicans resisted those armed efforts and defended the ex-slave settlements.

Today relations between peoples of color have become more complex for various reasons. A major reason is, of course, demographic changes. In 1990-1998, two thirds of the growth of the US population was from African-American, Native Ameri-

cans, and Latinos. California's population is already a majority people of color. New York City is now 27% Latino. Asians are the fastest growing population of color and San Francisco is already 31% Asian. Latinos are 27% of New York City and 47% of the population of Los Angeles. Half the people in California were born in Mexico. We can expect the whole country to become a majority people of color during this century.

That growth, particularly of Latinos, is striking also because it can be found everywhere, including the southeast: North Carolina, Georgia, Florida—areas where workers have been predominantly African American for many years. The population changes are sometimes accompanied by tension between the native-born and migrant workers. It is therefore good to see southern organizers making efforts to create understanding and solidarity between Blacks and Latinos against common enemies, particularly as workers. They have been ahead of California and other areas in that respect.

Common enemies include not only exploitation on the job but also the forces of state repression, from police abuse to anti-immigrant agencies. (Remember that the Border Patrol is in fact the nation's largest police force.) Efforts to build solidarity should include shared information about California propositions like 187 and 227 as well as other new state and federal laws. Often deadly attempts to reduce immigration have multiplied, with the U.S. military playing a major role, such as helping to build a new triple fence on the border near San Diego. INS policy has forced migrant workers to try to cross in areas where there's less vigilance by the Border Patrol, so they freeze to death in remote mountains or die of heat in desert areas. A recent Houston report cites over 1000 deaths in the last few years.

That's one way to cut down on immigration. Just make 'em go die somewhere out of sight. So much for trying to get work and feed your family back home.

Here in San Francisco, Latino day laborers have been under attack in their long struggle to get a site where a proper hiring hall can be located so they do not have to stand on the street hoping to be picked up for work. As a result of harassment by the police chief and city authorities refusing to approve the site the workers have identified as suitable, we still see the line-up of men who come from Mexico to a place that used to be Mexico on a street named for one of this country's great labor leaders—Cesar Chavez, a Mexican. Their struggle is now 10 years old.

All this makes it clear why some Blacks have said "immigrants are the new n*****s," and we must fight together, not against each other.

This is not to deny the historical differences or to minimize the material conditions that have made African Americans resentful about job competition, for example. First is the general economic crisis, which makes any kind of cutbacks particularly painful. There's also just plain perception. You go to a hotel in the South, where the service staff all used to be African American and now they're Latino. Or a Latino goes to a gas station in the Mission and sees Vietnamese or Cambodian attendants where there used to be Latinos. These are visual realities and should not be ignored simply because, according to a 1997 report by the National Research Council, job loss from immigration was less than 1% for Black men (no statistics for women). These are realities we have to be looking at. We can't