



Edited by Angela Y. Davis **If**  
**They Come in the Morning...**  
*Voices of Resistance*

***Angela Y. Davis***

***and***

***George Jackson Bobby Seale  
Ruchell Magee James Baldwin  
Fleeta Drumgo John Clutchette  
Julian Bond Huey P. Newton  
Erika Huggins Bettina Aptheker***

***and others***

***raise impassioned voices in defense of  
the American political prisoner. Many  
speak from brutal, firsthand  
experience at the hands of a judicial  
and penal system that does not hear—  
or will not listen. Others, as leaders in  
the struggle to alter—or overturn—  
that system. Together, they have  
produced an explosive document that is  
truly of and for our time.***

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## Prison, Where Is Thy Victory?

*by Huey P. Newton*

*For Black youth throughout the United States, Huey P. Newton, the Minister of Defense of the Black Panther Party, is a radiant leader, a bold fighter, a hero and a genuine brother. They identify with the battle he has fought against the forces of racism and reaction. They identify with this principled revolutionary struggle against a system which ineluctably spells misery and destitution for the mass of Black people.*

*Very early, the Black Panther Party played a decisive part in unleashing the new tide of Black militancy. In the Fall of 1966, Brother Huey, together with Brother Bobby Seale and Brother Bobby Hutton (later assassinated by Oakland policemen) established the groundwork for the Party. After formulating a basic 10-point program for the Black Liberation struggle (calling for full employment, housing, education, the cessation of police hostilities, and an end to the railroading of Black men and women into jails and prisons), they began to take action. Their first step was an attempt to deal with one of the most immediate and most injurious symptoms of oppression—police brutality.*

*Armed with lawbooks, rifles, shotguns and pistols, they patrolled Oakland's Black community, monitoring the police, observing arrests and informing brothers and sisters of their rights. Their vigilance produced a*

*marked decrease in police harassment and brutality. Black people in Oakland, California, were impressed.*

*The increasing influence of the Black Panther Party in the Black community, their vehement defense of the rights of their people inevitably engendered violent, hysterical reactions in the police force and in government.*

*On October 28, 1967, a policeman radioed to his headquarters that he was following a "Panther car." Shortly afterwards Brother Huey had been shot four times in the stomach. One cop was dead, another wounded. Huey P. Newton was charged with murder.*

*The Black Panther Party spearheaded a nationwide Free Huey campaign, as they continued to increase in size and influence. The impact of this movement, coupled with Brother Huey's manifest innocence, resulted in his acquittal on the murder charges, but, in what was clearly a political compromise, he was convicted of manslaughter and sentenced from 2 to 15 years in prison. Governor Reagan had made no secret of his attitude toward the Panthers.*

*As the Free Huey movement continued to gain support, the courts could no longer blatantly disregard the interests of justice and the demands of the people. In the summer of 1970, Brother Huey's conviction was reversed on an appeal, and he was released on bail pending the outcome of a new trial.*

*Temporarily free after almost three years' imprisonment, Brother Huey's first remarks expressed a renewed commitment on his behalf and on behalf of his party to energetically struggle for the liberation of all political prisoners.*

*The following article was written in captivity.*

When a person studies mathematics, he learns that there are many mathematical laws which determine the approach he must take to solving the problems presented to him. In the study of geometry, one of the first laws a person learns is that "the whole is not greater than the sum of its parts." This means simply that one cannot have a geometrical figure such as a circle or a square which in its totality, contains more than it does when broken down into smaller parts. Therefore, if all the smaller parts add up to a certain amount, the entire figure cannot add up to a larger amount. The prison cannot have a victory over the prisoner, because those in charge take the same kind of approach and assume if they have the whole body in a cell

that they have there all that makes up the person. But a prisoner is not a geometrical figure, and an approach which is successful in mathematics, is wholly unsuccessful when dealing with human beings.

In the case of the human, we are not dealing only with the single individual, we are also dealing with the ideas and beliefs which have motivated him and which sustain him, even when his body is confined. In the case of humanity the whole is much greater than its parts, because the whole includes the body which is measurable and confinable, and also the ideas which cannot be measured and which cannot be confined. The ideas are not only within the mind of the prisoner where they cannot be seen nor controlled, the ideas are also within the mind of the people. The ideas which can and will sustain our movement for total freedom and dignity of the people cannot be imprisoned, for they are to be found in the people, all the people, wherever they are. As long as the people live by the ideas of freedom and dignity there will be no prison which can hold our movement down. Ideas move from one person to another in the association of brothers and sisters who recognize that a most evil system of capitalism has set us against each other, when our real enemy is the exploiter who profits from our poverty. When we realize such an idea then we come to love and appreciate our brothers and sisters who we may have seen as enemies, and those exploiters who we may have seen as friends are revealed for what they truly are to all oppressed people. The people are the idea, the respect and dignity of the people, as they move toward their freedom, is the sustaining force which reaches into and out of the prison. The walls, the bars, the guns and the guards can never encircle or hold down the idea of the people. And the people must always carry forward the idea which is their dignity and their beauty.

The prison operates with the idea that when it has a person's body it has his entire being—since the whole cannot be greater than the sum of its parts. They put the body in a cell, and seem to get some sense of relief and security from that fact. The idea of prison victory then, is that when the person in jail begins to act, think, and believe the way they want him to, then they have won the battle and the person is then “rehabilitated.” But this cannot be the case, because those who operate the prisons have failed to examine their own beliefs thoroughly, and they fail to understand the types of people they attempt to control. Therefore, even when the prison thinks it has won the victory, there is no victory.

There are two types of prisoners. The largest number are those who accept the legitimacy of the assumptions upon which the society is based. They wish to acquire the same goals as everybody else, money, power, greed, and conspicuous consumption. In order to do so, however, they adopt techniques and methods which the society has defined as illegitimate. When this is discovered such people are put in jail. They may be called “illegitimate capitalists” since their aim is to acquire everything this capitalistic society defines as legitimate. The second type of prisoner, is the one who rejects the legitimacy of the assumptions upon which the society is based. He argues that the people at the bottom of the society are exploited for the profit and advantage of those at the top. Thus, the oppressed exist, and will always be used to maintain the privileged status of the exploiters. There is no sacredness, there is no dignity in either exploiting or being exploited. Although this system may make the society function at a high level of technological efficiency, it is an illegitimate system, since it rests upon the suffering of humans who are as worthy and as dignified as those who do not suffer. Thus, the second type of prisoner says that the society is corrupt and illegitimate and must be overthrown. This second type of prisoner is the political prisoner. They do not accept the legitimacy of the society and cannot participate in its corrupting exploitation, whether they are in the prison or on the block.

The prison cannot gain a victory over either type of prisoner no matter how hard it tries. The “illegitimate capitalist” recognizes that if he plays the game the prison wants him to play, he will have his time reduced and be released to continue his activities. Therefore, he is willing to go through the prison programs and do the things the prison authorities want to hear. The prison assumes he is “rehabilitated” and ready for the society. The prisoner has really played the prison’s game so that he can be released to resume pursuit of his capitalistic goals. There is no victory, for the prisoner from the get-go accepted the idea of the society. He pretends to accept the idea of the prison as a part of the game he has always played.

The prison cannot gain a victory over the political prisoner because he has nothing to be rehabilitated from or to. He refuses to accept the legitimacy of the system and refuses to participate. To participate is to admit that the society is legitimate because of its exploitation of the oppressed. This is the idea which the political prisoner does not accept, this is the idea for which he has been imprisoned, and this is the reason why he

cannot cooperate with the system. The political prisoner will, in fact, serve his time just as will the “illegitimate capitalist.” Yet the idea which motivated and sustained the political prisoner rests in the people; all the prison has, is a body.

The dignity and beauty of man rests in the human spirit which makes him more than simply a physical being. This spirit must never be suppressed for exploitation by others. As long as the people recognize the beauty of their human spirits and move against suppression and exploitation, they will be carrying out one of the most beautiful ideas of all time. Because the human whole is much greater than the sum of its parts. The ideas will always be among the people. The prison cannot be victorious because walls, bars and guards cannot conquer or hold down an idea.