

NC

TO MOVE FORWARD



Cultural Diversity and Commitment in the Anarchist Black Cross by Ojore N. Lutalo, Bonnie Kerness, and Lorenzo Kom'boa Ervin

"WE PERMIT PEOPLE OF OTHER IDEOLOGIES TO DEFINE ANARCHY RATHER THAN BRING OUR VIEWS TO THE MASSES AND PROVIDE MODELS TO SHOW THE CONTRARY. WE PERMIT CORPORATIONS TO NOT ONLY LAY OFF WORKERS AND TO THREATEN THEIR SALARIES, BUT POISON THE AIR AND WATER TO BOOT. WE PERMIT THE POLICE, KLAN, AND NAZIS TO TERRORIZE WHATEVER SECTION OF THE POPULATION THEY WISH WITHOUT REPAYING THEM BACK IN ANY KIND. IN SHORT BY NOT ENGAGING IN MASS ORGANIZING AND DELIVERING WAR TO THE OPPRESSORS, WE BECOME ANARCHISTS IN NAME ONLY..."

-THE LATE NEW AFRIKAN ANARCHIST, KUWASI BALAGOON

As a result of a number of discussions we've had with the Nightcrawlers about the upcoming ABC Conference, Ojore, Kom'boa and I would like to offer a number of ideas which we feel are vital to the forward movement of the Anarchist Black Cross in the United States. This is a crossroads time for ABC and these ideas can serve as stepping stones towards a budding prisoner-focused movement.

Our first suggestion is for individual ABC groups to take whatever steps are necessary in order to gain cultural diversity. The anarchist "scene" as it currently exists is perceived of as an all white, middle class group of aspiring anarchist who have yet to understand the depth and seriousness of the revolutionary struggle that is ongoing in communities of color all over this country - most particularly in that massive community of color that exists in the U.S. prison system. New Afrikan revolutionaries justifiably conclude that anarchists in the U.S. have no idea of what real struggle entails on either side of the prison walls. In order for a movement to exist, there need be programs designed to win the hearts and minds of people. A movement is organizing rooted in the colonies of the dispossessed. A movement has an offensive and defensive fighting force and programs which teach by example - i.e. anarchist food and clothing distribution centers. It is no wonder that anarchists are not seen as a movement, there are no programs which benefit people, nor is there any economic base from which to organize. There doesn't even seem to be a unified understanding of what it takes to be a movement, let alone a unified goal for action. By either encouraging Afrikan input, or becoming part of Afrikan groups and movements this can be rectified.

The Anarchist Black Cross has a rich and proud history in Europe. The "crossroads" we spoke of before is the difference between choosing one road leading to a continued lack of focus or the other leading towards credibility and a contribution to Anarchist Black Cross history.

Along with cultural diversity, the ABC needs to formally commit to structured local and/or regional work. The return of Lorenzo Kom'boa Ervin as a guiding force broadens ABC potential immeasurably. His book "Anarchism and the Black Revolution" provides a remarkable structure from which to work. Those opposed to

such structure are game playing with both anarchism and revolution. His "Draft Proposal for an ABC Network" has the support of prisoners all over the country. Adopting any or all of the fifteen points for local/regional work would provide the type of unification of effort that is currently needed to begin serious movement work.

There is one particular area in which we strongly suggest that the network of ABC groups focus. For those who have been either politically conscious prisoners or prisoner advocates, horror at the proliferation of isolation cages across the U.S. is inescapable. They are called control units and have been developed to modify the thoughts and behavior of political dissidents. Efforts are currently underway to form a national network of monitoring groups across the country. It is hoped that prisoners living in control units will have an outside advocate in as many states as possible. The potential for an ABC contribution in this effort is enormous - and badly needed.

In July of 1992 Ojore received a letter of note from Jim Campbell. Jim's Prison News Service plays an important role in current prisoner struggles. Jim says "There is much I do not understand. Why do anarchists have such short attention spans? Is it a question of youth? Six months is considered to be a long term strategy and within two years many are on to something else. For me, we need to be able to think in terms of 20 and 30 years. That is where it takes some discipline." Ojore responded by saying it's because "these play anarchist are merely/were playing a government approved word game with anarchy and revolution" like the charlatans of Love and Rage are doing today.

For Ojore, for Kom'boa and for myself, struggle is a lifetime commitment of utmost seriousness. This commitment is a promise that one makes to themselves that nothing ever alters. If ABC wants to be more than just a name, a protracted commitment is required. There is little point in integrating into prison work if you are going to get bored in a year and then move on to something else.

It is time for the Anarchist Black Cross to focus and unify. Gaining cultural diversity, using Kom'boa's 15 points of action, supporting control unit prisoners and dealing with the issue of protracted commitment are all directions imperative to consider at the upcoming ABC conference.

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