

NEWS from the Freedom Archives

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Wild Poppies: A Tribute to Marilyn Buck

by Barbara Lubinski

Wild Poppies is our newest CD. The seeds of this project are a chapbook of the poetry of political prisoner Marilyn Buck and her wonderful poem, *Wild Poppies*. The words of Marilyn's poetry demand to be spoken out loud - shouted, whispered, exclaimed, ranted, articulated and sung. So that's what we did. The Freedom Archives, Friends of Marilyn Buck, and over 30 poets and activists came together to record Marilyn's poetry, so all the world can hear the power of her poems and the passion of her revolutionary vision.

Marilyn is a federal prisoner, incarcerated over 20 years of an 80 year sentence, allegedly for helping Black revolutionary Assata Shakur escape from prison to sanctuary in Cuba, but more surely for her willingness to confront the US government with her revolutionary commitment. The state jailed her, but never broke her. And over the years the voice of her love and resistance has grown ever stronger, expressed most eloquently through her poems.

The magic of transforming these words into an audio experience has been a long one, taking place over two years, covering thousands of miles and hundreds of emails, letters, and phone calls with prison walls and censorship further complicating the matter. To begin the process, a call went out to dozens of poets and activists. Some, such as Chrystos, Mitsuye Yamada, and Kiilu, were Marilyn's friends and comrades over many years. Others, like Maria Poblet, Vini Bhansali, and Uchechi Kalu, had met her through Poetry for the People classes in jail. She and Carolyn Baxter did time together. David Meltzer is her college professor and friend. Mariann Wizard has known Marilyn since they were both "hippie chicks" and activists. Amiri Baraka and the late Kwame Ture recorded tributes. Both Samsara and Presente were so moved by her poems that the groups set them to music. And others did not know her at all, but responded to the beauty of both her work and her politics.



Recordings took place in many locations: New Jersey, Berkeley, New York, San Francisco, Austin Texas, Puerto Rico, Sacramento, Connecticut, and Boston. And under almost as many circumstances: in sound studios and radio stations, at schools and in offices, on home computer systems and state of the art equipment. When Sara Menefee, Jean Stewart, and Ginnie Lem were recorded, we had to do takes between the vibrations of the dry cleaning equipment next door. Marilyn was taped during a phone call with interference and background noise. Carlos Quiles recorded his poetic contributions during a rainstorm in a house with a tin roof. Some technical difficulties meant we had to rerecord, others, like Carlos reading in the rain, created beautiful ambiance.

So many amazing poems, so many exciting poets and activists reading Marilyn's work and their own that for a while the only solution seemed to be a 2 CD production. What could possibly be cut from the more than two hours of material? It was a struggle - hundreds of hours of editing made longer by my transformation from a splicing-tape-and-razor editor to a digital sound producer. Some poems were too long, some didn't quite fit the themes that were organically developing in the material, and others just didn't work. But gradually through editing, listening, discussion, and editing again, a shorter, more cohesive production

began to emerge. And to insure that none of the good work would be lost to the world, we will create a website with more info, more background, and all the poems recorded, whether they are on the CD or not.

And then the final polishing of the stone: embedding, framing, enhancing the poems in music sampled from the works of artists such as India Cooke, Fred Ho, Copper Wimmin, and Idris Ackamoor. And *Wild Poppies* was done...the coming together of poets, activists, and musicians with their sister poet, Marilyn Buck...a field of wild poppies standing tall in resistance and love.

This work made possible in part by a generous contribution from the Jericho Amnesty Movement.



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Charisse Shumate video
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Please Join Us!

Wild Poppies CD Release!

Sunday, October 10, 2004 5-7:30p
La Peña Cultural Center, Berkeley

Charisse Shumate: Fighting for Our Lives



We are just completing this video with the California Coalition for Women Prisoners which focuses on the life of Charisse Shumate and will serve as an informational and organizing tool about women in California State prisons. Available in November, it includes amazing prison interviews completed recently as well as materials from State Senate hearings on conditions for

women in the California State Prison System and historical video footage of Charisse and her family.

Charisse was a life term prisoner incarcerated for 16 years at the Central California Women's Facility. She died of complications from sickle cell anemia, cancer and hepatitis C.

Charisse championed the cause of battered women when no one else was rallying to their support. She was imprisoned for defending herself against an abusive partner. Charisse stepped forward to be the lead plaintiff and prisoner spokesperson in the class action lawsuit challenging the medical neglect and abuse of women prisoners (aptly named *Shumate v. Wilson*).

It was thanks to Charisse that many activists and advocates initially became involved in defending the right of women prisoners to medical care and adequate treatment. Now, through this video, she will inspire others to fight for social justice.

Many thanks to the Women's Foundation of California and the Vanguard Public Foundation for their support of this project.

La Lucha Continua: Mission Mural Project

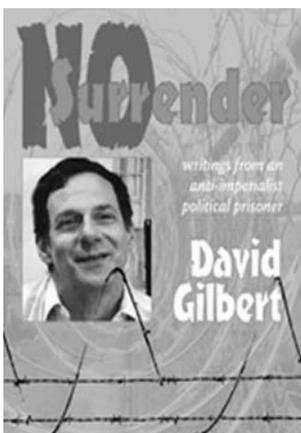
We have teamed up with Bay Area muralist Susan Greene to produce an audio accompaniment to her mural, titled "*La Lucha Continua/The Struggle Continues*." Thanks to the planning and creative efforts of Mission district community muralists and Freedom Archives intern Isaac Ontiveros and support from the Zellerbach Foundation, the CD contains the actual voices of almost all of the people displayed on the mural.

The mural is located on 23rd Street between Mission and Capp streets, in front of the offices of El Latino, a weekly Spanish-language newspaper. *La Lucha Continua/The Struggle Continues* is already a major magnet for school field trips, tourists, and a steady stream of community people walking by, stopping to take in and learn from the images.

Over the course of the last year, Susan and her team have been restoring the mural, originally painted in 1985, overcoming several serious physical defacing incidents. The portraits include Nelson Mandela (now aged from his original portrait in 1985), Mahatma Gandhi, Rachel Corrie, Mumia Abu-Jamal, Madame Nguyen Thi Binh, Bernadette Devlin McAliskey, Frida Kahlo, Archbishop Oscar Romero, Dolores Huerta, Cesar Chavez, Judi Bari and others.

The CD will be available at the upcoming mural dedication and will also be distributed by El Latino. If funds permit, an outside CD listening station will be constructed to allow mural visitors to use the CD on site while viewing the mural.

David Gilbert Book Release



Book cover design: Lisa Roth

David Gilbert will not be able to do a book tour to promote his insightful new book, ***No Surrender: Writings from an anti-imperialist political prisoner***. David was a founder of Columbia University SDS and fought and organized with the Weather Underground against US imperialism. He has been a political prisoner in New York State since 1981, which makes the publishing of this collection of his essays and commentaries a truly remarkable event.

July 30th marked the Bay Area book-release party for ***No Surrender*** at AK Press, co-hosted by the Freedom Archives. We were honored to have David's son Chesa Boudin open the evening which also included presentations by Ward Churchill, Linda Evans, poet Maria Poblet, Yuri Kochiyama & Clare Bayard. Recorded statements were sent by David, Marilyn Buck & Mumia Abu Jamal. The house was packed and \$1000 was raised for political prisoner support work.

No Surrender is an amazing collection of writings written under some of the most adverse conditions possible. Despite his physical isolation, Gilbert manages to stay connected to other political prisoners, many progressive struggles, and maintains a sharp analysis of a world that is physically beyond his reach. You can get ***No Surrender*** (\$15) as well as VHS copies of the video - ***David Gilbert: a Lifetime of Struggle*** (\$20) and the DVD - ***Underground***, which includes the David Gilbert video (\$25) from the Freedom Archives.

September 2004

Dear Friends,

This summer was a busy time for the Freedom Archives and youth! It's been challenging and rewarding to take part in planning and production meetings for all of the projects due out over the next few months, with *ten* youth interns logging hours of new materials, learning and developing their technical audio production skills, and designing their own projects to help make Freedom Archives materials more accessible to other young people. We were privileged to work with these young people and support them as they learned more about their communities and history.

As in all of our projects, this work would not be possible without the support of our friends. We rely on your contributions to continue to build our intern program and ensure the Freedom Archives continues to provide resources and inspiration to students, organizers, teachers, and artists for generations to come.

Please take a moment today to **send a donation to Freedom Archives**. For your convenience, we have enclosed an envelope with this newsletter or you may visit our website at www.freedomarchives.org/donate.htm. In these difficult times, we are so grateful for all of our supporters who contribute to our efforts.

Please join us today.



Summer Program intern Thomas W. Piggee III hard at work on his audio production project

In thanks,

Sele Nadel-Hayes
Youth Program Director
Intern/Volunteer Coordinator

Claude Marks
Project Director

In the Works: Robert F. Williams Documentary

We are making good progress on a program about the lives, struggles, contributions, exiles, and homecoming of Robert and Mabel Williams. "Rob" Williams was well known in the late 1950s and early 1960s as the NAACP leader from Monroe, North Carolina who put forth the constitutional right to armed self-defense and organized successful community resistance in the face of murderous Klan attacks on the Black community. His book, *Negroes with Guns*, flashed like lightning as the struggles intensified in Monroe and throughout the South. Framed by the FBI on a slanderous kidnapping charge, the Williams family was forced into exile, first in Cuba, then China, with time in Vietnam and Africa before return to the United States where they were eventually cleared of all charges.

In an exclusive interview, Mabel Williams tells their story, interwoven with highlights from Robert Williams' interviews and speeches and powerful portions of *Radio Free Dixie*, their radio program broadcast from Cuba and beamed toward the United States. This new CD is produced thanks to part to funding from the Paul Robeson Fund for Independent Media, the Puffin Foundation, and the LEF Foundation. Release is scheduled for Spring 2005.



Photo: Scott Braley

THANK YOU!

our intern and volunteer stars:

Deborah, Andy, Laurel

Isaac, Samson, Julia

Richard, Vanessa, Lana

Lena, Kelly, Isa

Thomas and LaMarcus

Self Respect, Self Defense & Self Determination

An event held at Oakland's First Congregational Church on March 14, 2004 with Mabel Williams and Kathleen Cleaver. Both women were welcomed and introduced by Angela Davis.

Now available on VHS, 72-minute Video of this amazing event. Produced by Collision Course Video & The Freedom Archives.

\$20 plus \$2.00 shipping & handling (\$3.50 international)



— check us out...

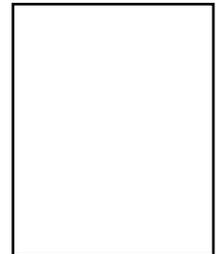
Listen for samples from our work featured on these new releases!

Amir Suliman - Dead Man Walking

F.I.L.T.H.E.E. Immigrants - self-titled

Los Mocosos - American Us

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