

# Free the Class-War Prisoners!

*This year's Holiday Appeal marks the 34th year of the Partisan Defense Committee's program of sending monthly stipends as an expression of solidarity to those imprisoned for standing up to racist capitalist repression and imperialist depredation. This program revived a tradition initiated by the International Labor Defense under James P. Cannon, its founder and first secretary (1925-28). The PDC currently sends stipends to seven class-war prisoners.*

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**Mumia Abu-Jamal** is a former Black Panther Party spokesman, a well-known supporter of the MOVE organization and an award-winning journalist known as "the voice of the voiceless." Framed up for the 1981 killing of a Philadelphia police officer, Mumia was sentenced to death explicitly for his political views. Federal and state courts have repeatedly refused to consider evidence proving Mumia's innocence, including the sworn confession of Arnold Beverly that he, not Mumia, shot and killed the policeman. In 2011, the Philadelphia District Attorney's office dropped its longstanding effort to legally lynch Mumia, condemning him to life in prison with no chance of parole. In 2016, attorneys for Mumia filed a petition under Pennsylvania's Post Conviction Relief Act (PCRA) seeking to overturn the denial of his four prior PCRA claims by the Pennsylvania Supreme Court. On 27 December 2018 Judge Leon Tucker of the Philadelphia Court of Common Pleas granted Mumia's petition, allowing him to argue before an appellate court for reversal of his frame-up conviction.

**Leonard Peltier** is an internationally renowned class-war prisoner. Peltier's incarceration for his activism in the American Indian Movement has come to symbolize this country's racist repression of its Native peoples, the survivors of centuries of genocidal oppression. Peltier was framed up for the 1975 deaths of two FBI agents marauding in what had become a war zone on the South Dakota Pine Ridge Reservation. The lead government

attorney has admitted, "We can't prove who shot those agents," and the courts have repeatedly denied Peltier's appeals while acknowledging blatant prosecutorial misconduct. Before leaving office, Barack Obama rejected Peltier's request for clemency. The 75-year-old Peltier is not scheduled for a parole hearing for another five years. Peltier suffers from multiple serious medical conditions including a heart condition which led to triple bypass surgery in 2017. He is incarcerated far from his people and family.

Two **MOVE** members—**Chuck Africa** and **Delbert Africa**—are in their 42nd year of prison. After the 8 August 1978 siege of their Philadelphia home by over 600 heavily armed cops, they were sentenced to 30-100 years, having been falsely convicted of killing a police officer who died in the cops' own cross fire. In 1985, eleven of their MOVE family members, including five children, were massacred by Philly cops when a bomb was dropped on their living quarters. Collectively known as the MOVE 9, two of their number, Merle Africa and Phil Africa, died in prison under suspicious circumstances. After over four decades of unjust incarceration five of these innocent prisoners, Debbie, Mike, Janet, Janine and Eddie Africa, have been released on parole.

**Jaan Laaman** is the last of the remaining anti-imperialist activists known as the Ohio 7 still in prison, convicted for his roles in a radical group that took credit for bank "expropriations" and bombings of symbols of U.S. imperialism, such as military and corporate offices, in the late 1970s and '80s. Before their arrests in 1984 and 1985, the Ohio 7 were targets of massive manhunts. Laaman faces prison torture, having been isolated in solitary confinement for extended periods. The Ohio 7's politics were once shared by thousands of radicals but, like the Weathermen before them, the Ohio 7 were spurned by the "respectable" left. From a proletarian standpoint, the actions of these leftist activists against imperialism and racist injustice are not

crimes. They should not have served a day in prison. Laaman's comrade, **Tom Manning**, died in prison on July 30.

**Ed Poindexter** is a former Black Panther supporter and leader of the Omaha, Nebraska, National Committee to Combat Fascism. He and his former co-defendant, Wopashitwe Mondo Eye we Langa, who died in prison in 2016, were victims of the FBI's deadly COINTELPRO operation, under which 32 Black Panther Party members were killed and hundreds more imprisoned on frame-up charges. They were railroaded to prison and sentenced to life for a 1970 explosion that killed a cop, and Poindexter has now spent more than 49 years behind bars. Nebraska courts have repeatedly denied Poindexter a new trial despite the fact that crucial evidence, long suppressed by the FBI, proved that testimony of the state's key witness was perjured.

**Nina Droz Franco** was arrested while participating in a mass rally in San Juan during a Puerto Rican general strike on May Day 2017. She was indicted by federal prosecutors based on outrageous claims that she had tried to burn down a bank. The main piece of "evidence" was video footage of a small piece of paper burning on a marble walkway outside the building. Facing decades in prison, Nina took a plea deal on the lesser charge of conspiracy and was sentenced to over three years. She was released from prison on November 26, but is now being held in a federal halfway house. Nina Droz Franco is the victim of a transparent frame-up by the U.S. colonial overlords, who have bloodily repressed and starved the Puerto Rican people for more than a century.

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*Contribute now! All proceeds from the Holiday Appeal events will go to the Class-War Prisoners Stipend Fund. This is not charity but an elementary act of solidarity. Send your contributions to: PDC, P.O. Box 99, Canal Street Station, New York, NY 10013; (212) 406-4252.*

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