

Salute to the Brave Resisters on the 6th Annual National Day of Protest to Stop Police Brutality, October 22, 2001



New York City, October 22, 1999.

The RCP salutes the brave protesters preparing to mark October 22—the sixth national day of protest to stop police brutality, repression and the criminalization of a generation.

For the past five years, we have come together in cities all over the country on October 22. We have seen the parents of those murdered by police join with the youth from the ghettos and barrios and join forces with justice-loving people of all nationalities on that day.

Together, we have brought out the reality of the STOLEN LIVES—the thousands of people killed in cold blood by the police over the past decade. October 22 has exposed the daily brutality that comes down against the people on “the bottom” of society, with its racist edge directed against people of color and immigrants. October 22 has called out the way in which the system treats a whole generation of young people as if they were born criminals. On October 22 the people have condemned the practice and policies of racial profiling.

Our resistance has given heart to millions—and begun to open the eyes of millions more. And we had begun to put the powers-that-be on the defensive about the actions of their brutal enforcers. October 22 has become an important exclamation point to the ongoing struggle against police brutality, a struggle which has steadily gained in numbers and determination over the past several years.

All that has been very important to the people.

But this October 22—in the wake of the attacks of September 11, and everything that has followed them—may be the most important yet.

The October 22 demos and rallies of 2001 will be even more controversial. The authorities and the news media will say that “everything has changed since September 11” and that the people must not protest.

Some things have changed. But some things haven't.

In Cincinnati just this month the courts set free the cop who shot Timothy Thomas and stole his life. Timothy Thomas joins the long list of people—including Amadou Diallo, Tyisha Miller, Pedro Oregon, Johnny Gammage,

Anthony Rosario and too many others—who have been murdered by the police and received no justice. This has not changed. What has changed is that now we are told that we must shut up and endure this, in the name of “standing together for national unity.”

The brave political prisoner Mumia Abu-Jamal still sits on death row, awaiting execution on the basis of an unjust conviction. This has not changed. What has changed is that Tom Ridge, the heartless man who signed Mumia's death warrant, has now been made head of the new office of “Homeland Security.”

Our immigrant brothers and sisters are still forced by the police and INS (“La Migra”) to live in the shadows. This has not changed. What has changed is the scale of this oppression: the vast roundups and street-corner interrogations by the FBI, the speeded-up deportations, the even more intense militarization of the U.S./Mexico border, and the nasty edge of all this directed against Arab, Muslim, and south Asian people.

People of color are still being “profiled” on the streets, highways, and airports of America. This has not changed. What has changed is that the authorities are openly stepping up the practice of profiling to a whole new level—with a special edge directed against Middle Eastern and South Asian people.

Two million people—mostly minority and many young—are still locked down in prison, most for crimes that involved no violence. This has not changed. What has changed is the frantic push to give even more powers to the police, the courts, and the prisons.

The repression against people struggling for a more just world still goes on. The violence against protesters, the use of curfews, the widespread spying and surveillance all continue—from Washington, DC where police beat anti-war protesters on September 29 to the streets of Cincinnati earlier this month. These things have not changed. What has changed are all the new laws being rushed through to make it easier to spy on and put in jail all people who resist the program.

This year October 22 takes place as the U.S. military

rains down bombs on the people of Afghanistan. The authorities are callously using people's grief and tears to advance an agenda of repression and to turn the reality of "this American way of life" upside down.

For years, the epidemic of police terror and the unjust imprisonment of so many youth have torn apart literally tens of millions of lives. But now the power structure is trying to use the events of September 11 to erase history and "rehabilitate" the reputation of the police, whose brutal behavior has shocked and outraged millions of people. In the name of protecting the people, even more repressive power is being put in the hands of the very enforcers who have already been allowed to get away with murder.

Those who understand this cannot fail to bring their own hard experiences to bear to oppose this. And we must step out to expose how all this talk of "everything has changed" will bring down even greater pain and sadness on millions more.

What was the mission of the police who put 41 shots into Amadou Diallo, who brutalized Amadou Diallo, who choked Anthony Baez to death in front of his family, who shot down Nicholas Heyward Jr. for carrying a toy gun? Are they "working class heroes" whose job is to protect the masses? No. They are oppressors of the people, part of the state apparatus of repression which systematically terrorizes the basic masses in this country. This is the real role of the NYPD and the police in general.

And what was the Cincinnati judge telling us when he not only let off the cop who murdered 19-year-old Timothy Thomas in cold blood, but said that this cop was just "carrying out his duty." He was telling us that it is the job of the police to enforce this unjust system of haves and have nots—and all of the oppressive social relations the masses of people experience every single day.

And what is the mentality of the police who ran down Maria Herrera and her young son and sister in Brooklyn after an all night drunken orgy where the entire precinct was out womanizing? Are they heroes or arrogant thugs who think a woman's life counts for nothing? It is the same mentality we see in the bombs falling on women and children in Afghanistan painted with the letters NYPD.

In so many ways we are being told—by politicians and the media—that criticisms of the system and its power structure are no longer appropriate. Since September 11 and the supposed heroics of the police in New York, all criticism and opposition to the status quo and its enforcers in America must now be silenced, they insist—everything is different now. Oh really? Tell that to the judge who exonerated the cop who murdered Timothy Thomas with a court ruling on September 26.

Does "everything is different" mean that the police will no longer murder people—and harass and brutalize the youth in the ghettos and barrios and throughout society? Does it mean that discrimination will now be ended completely and in every sphere of society—that genuine equality will now really be implemented for Black people, Latinos, and other oppressed peoples in the U.S.? Does it mean that women will no longer be brutalized and treated like sex objects? That Christian fascists and other

reactionaries will no longer terrorize and murder women who seek reproductive freedom and doctors and other health care providers who make it possible for women to have abortions as well as birth control—and that Bush will denounce these reactionaries for their attacks on women?

Does it mean that immigrants will no longer be hounded and exploited at minimum wage or less? That political prisoners and people unjustly convicted and condemned to death like Mumia Abu-Jamal will now be freed and such political persecution ended? That hundreds of millions of people, from Mexico to Haiti to Bangladesh to China, including millions and millions of children, will no longer be enslaved producing everything from computer chips to designer clothing to soccer balls, at starvation wages, for American and other imperialist corporations? That the U.S. and other "great powers" (or wannabe "great powers") will no longer bully, bludgeon, and bomb their way to global domination and will actually apply their resources to ending starvation, disease—including the rampant and growing epidemic of AIDS—and to overcoming the great and growing gulf between haves and have-nots in the world?

If not, then...

DON'T TELL US THAT "EVERYTHING IS DIFFERENT" AND OUR STRUGGLE AGAINST THESE OUTRAGES, AND OUR DETERMINATION TO END THEM, IS NO LONGER APPROPRIATE OR VALID. IN FACT IT IS MORE APPROPRIATE, MORE VALID, AND MORE IMPORTANT THAN EVER.

There is much talk of heroes these days. On October 22 let us mark these heroes:

— the parents of those murdered, who have stood up in their terrible sorrow and found the courage to insist on justice, in the face of abuse and still further attacks by the police;

— the youth who have dared to defy the authorities and demand a better, humane world, as they brave the clouds of tear gas, the hails of rubber bullets, and the floods of lies;

— and all others who have stood firm, from the immigrants hounded on the mean city streets to the unjustly convicted resisting from death row to anyone who has raised their voice against the deafening chorus, led from on high, calling for yet more repression.

**STOP POLICE BRUTALITY, REPRESSION AND
THE CRIMINALIZATION OF A GENERATION!
REVOLUTION IS THE HOPE OF THE HOPELESS!**

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