

“On to New Orleans!”

REMEMBERING the 1811 SLAVE REVOLT with the AFRIKAN-AMERICAN HISTORY ALLIANCE of LA.

ON JANUARY 8, 1811, the largest Slave Revolt in the history of the United States began just outside of New Orleans, Louisiana. Never heard of it? This is not surprising. Neither had we until one month after our first visit to The Big Easy in July of 1997 (See KUUMBARReport, Issue #1). Upon making contact with the Afrikan-American History Alliance of Louisiana (AAHAL), we arranged for a return visit to New Orleans to learn more about AAHAL and about the 1811 Slave Revolt, and to obtain a copy of what must be the only truly scholarly work on this important event in the history of Afrikan liberation and revolution. This is our report on that visit.



ous insurrections in which the Afrikans either killed the crew or committed suicide to avoid enslavement) and in the Caribbean. In Haiti, at times a colony of the French and the Spanish, a nearly continuous revolution was organized under the leadership of three particularly influential Afrikans: **Baukman Dutty** (?-1791), **Toussaint LOverture** (1746-1802) and **Jean Jacques Dessalines** (1758-1806). Each man took the revolt to the next step from his predecessor. Inspired by their Afrikan heritage (the spirituality of **Vodoun**, presently known as Voodoo, served as part of the ceremonial beginning of the revolt) and carried on through the military brilliance of their leaders, the Afrikans overthrew their French

A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE 1811 SLAVE REVOLT

In order to discuss the 1811 Slave Revolt, or any slave revolt in the United States for that matter, one must consider the effect of earlier slave revolts in Afrika, on the slave ships at sea (there were numer-

ous insurrections in which the Afrikans either killed the crew or committed suicide to avoid enslavement) and established one of the few independent countries in the western hemisphere to win its freedom through force of arms.

Many of the colonial slaveholders fled Haiti for the United States. Even after the Louisiana Purchase

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Thankkksgiving?

AT THE AMERICAN INDIAN DAY OF MOURNING, PLYMOUTH, MASSACHUSETTS, THURSDAY, NOV. 26, 1998

*“We are not Vanishing.
We are not Conquered.
We are as Strong as Ever!”*

This was the primary slogan of the **United American Indians of New England (UAIN)** as they commenced the **1998 Day of Mourning Rally and March** at Cole’s Hill in historic Plymouth, Massachusetts, overlooking Plymouth Rock. The event had been held at this place every year since 1970, when **Wamsutta Frank B. James**, a member of the **Wampanoag Indian Nation**, had been invited by the Commonwealth of Massachusetts to address a gathering of dignitaries marking the 350th anniversary of the arrival of the Pilgrims. After he accepted their invitation, he was asked for a copy of his remarks in advance. Upon seeing that his view of the history of the Pilgrims did not agree with theirs, the planners of the event first

attempted to write a speech for him to recite, then, upon being told he would not have words put in his mouth, they withdrew their invitation and chose not to allow him to speak. With that, he and other Indigenous people from throughout the country called for “Thanksgiving Day” to be observed as a Day of Mourning for Indian people. It has been so observed every year since that time.

Most of us know well the story of the Pilgrims as was taught in school. Upon landing at Plymouth

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transferred ownership of the Louisiana Territory (stolen from the Indians) from French to American hands, the French influence there remained strong. New Orleans, due to its position as a major port, was one of the hubs of trade, including that of Afrikans for enslavement. As the colonial slaveholders of Haiti fled there, they brought many of their slaves with them.

The "peculiar institution" of southern chattel slavery was the most brutal form of slavery man has ever known. Aside from the fact that a slave was doomed to live out his or her life in bondage with no chance at freedom, their children were born into slavery as well. The master routinely had his way with his female slaves, refusing to acknowledge the children born of his acts of rape. Families were split up. Slaves were punished for learning to read and write. The Afrikan drum, language and religion were forbidden. Afrikans were often forcibly converted to Catholicism to make them more compliant as slaves. Implements made of metal were locked onto their backs, necks and faces to prevent them from sitting, laying down or consuming food. And they were literally worked to death. Seven years was considered to be an acceptable time for the slaves to work before they died. Transgressions of even the most trivial rules were punishable by torture, or execution, or both.

Not surprisingly, many slaves rose up, escaped their captors and formed groups that would later raid the plantations as well as New Orleans itself (then primarily the area we now know as the French Quarter), retreating between raids to their encampments in the swampy areas between there and Lake Pontchartrain to the north. These were the Maroons. During the entire era of chattel slavery, the Maroons staged raids to free slaves from their masters, to obtain weapons or other supplies.

Isolated rebellions occurred throughout the era of chattel slavery. The greatest rebellion, indeed the largest slave revolt in the history of the United States, started on Tuesday, January 8, 1811. **Charles**, a slave on the *Deslondes plantation*, met with his lieutenants on nearby plantations several weeks prior to the Revolt. On the fateful day, the insurrection started on the plantation of *Manuel Andry*, about 36 miles above New Orleans on the east bank of the Mississippi River. The plan was to create a slave army, capture the city of New Orleans and liberate the tens of thousands of slaves in the territory of Louisiana. Armed with cane knives, hoes, clubs and a few guns, the rebels marched through the *Trepagnier, Bernoudy, Ormond, Destrehan* and *Meullion* plantations until being met by U.S. government forces at the location of the *Fortier* planta-

tion. There, the forces of General Wade Hampton and Major Durrington halted the rebels' advance and forced them to retreat back upriver to the Bernoudy plantation, where on January 10 the "insurgents" were massacred, most retreating into the swamps where some were captured and executed, their heads stuck on poles along the river road to frighten and intimidate the other slaves. Others escaped and plotted further uprisings. As AAHAL's literature states, "the sacrifices of these brave men and women were not in vain. The revolt reasserted the humanity and redeemed the honor of their people. The uprising weakened the system of chattel slavery, stimulated more revolts in the following years and set the stage for the final battle, the Civil War (1861-1865) that put an end to this horrible system. Many of the children and grandchildren of these noble rebels went on to fight in the Civil War."

THE SATURDAY COMMEMORATION

My wife and I had just arrived at **Armstrong Memorial Park**, at the western edge of New Orleans's French Quarter, thinking we had missed it. The 5th annual commemoration of the **1811 Slave Revolt** was scheduled for this day, Saturday, January 9th, 1999, at 11:30 am, and we were a bit late. The previous day, there had been a program at nearby **McDonogh #35 High School** at which several of the local high schools had made presentations, performed skits and songs, and displayed artwork in recognition of the largest slave revolt in U.S. history. This day was for school students as well as adults, and a group was to meet outside the main gate to Armstrong Park and march briefly through the surrounding neighborhood to the **Treme Recreation Center**, where Saturday's program, like the others sponsored by AAHAL, was to take place.

When we looked down the street in the direction of the main entrance and saw the large Red, Black and Green Afrikan Liberation Flags, we felt lost no more. Upon joining the group, I was given a medium-sized flag to carry, and, after waiting a few more minutes, we proceeded to march around the north edge of the Park toward the Treme Center, chanting the refrain that was repeated by the original 1811 rebels: "*On To New Orleans! Freedom or Death!*"

Once inside the relatively warm Treme Center, the program began. **Baba Leon Waters**, President of the **Afrikan American History Alliance of Louisiana (AAHAL)**, began with a brief recounting of AAHAL's gains over the past several years, including the circulation of the story of 1811 throughout the country as a result of Baba Leon's many trips outside of

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OUR PURPOSE is to educate the public and share ideas about community news, events, health and history. **OUR VISION** is an educated, organized and mobilized populace committed to the principles of **Ma'at** (truth, justice, righteousness, harmony, reciprocity, balance, compassion, order and propriety) and the preservation of Afrikan, Indigenous and other world cultures promoting peace, unity, respect, and true freedom.

Louisiana; the renaming of a school for Charles Deslondes, the Afrikan Ancestor who was the driving force behind the 1811 Slave Revolt; and the publication of *On To New Orleans!: Louisiana's Heroic 1811 Slave Revolt* by Albert Thrasher. Baba Thrasher was in attendance at the commemoration as well, and his own revolutionary spirit was clear as he stressed some of the most important things to remember about the revolt.

"Our ancestors were revolutionaries," he explained. "They did not believe you could turn the other cheek to the oppressor. There was an unflinching commitment to freedom in their lives. They did not believe it was possible to gather a few crumbs for themselves. ... We're being confronted with a bourgeois system that is crushing us every day. We're being denied the most fundamental rights to be free from the oppression and exploitation we face today." He also stressed the need for us to train our young people "to be genuine historians of the truth about the history of our people."

Other guest speakers included **Bro. Jabari** of **The New Maroons** of Lafayette, Louisiana, who came "in the spirit of these Brothers and Sisters who never missed an opportunity to strike a blow for our freedom [to move us away from] Eurocentric Madness"; **Dr. Imaru Obadele** from the Provisional Government of the **Republic of New Afrika** (encompassing several southern states), who emphasized the need of Afrikan people for a State power to protect those things in which we believe; **Sis. Janita Obadele** from the **National Committee Of Blacks for Reparations in America (NCOBRA)**; **Sis. Catherine** of the **Saba Book Society** who chronicled the struggle to achieve a higher state of literacy and awareness among Afrikan people; and **KUUMBAReport's** Editor (this writer), who likened AAHAL's struggles with the established order in Louisiana to those of Political Prisoners and other activists to uncover the truth about the oppression of Afrikans in America.

The cultural emphasis was provided through music and dance by the **Kuji Dancers and Drummers** as well as by the **Mid City Jazz Ramblers**, two groups of students who roused the assembled crowd with Afrikan-inspired music and interpretive dance.

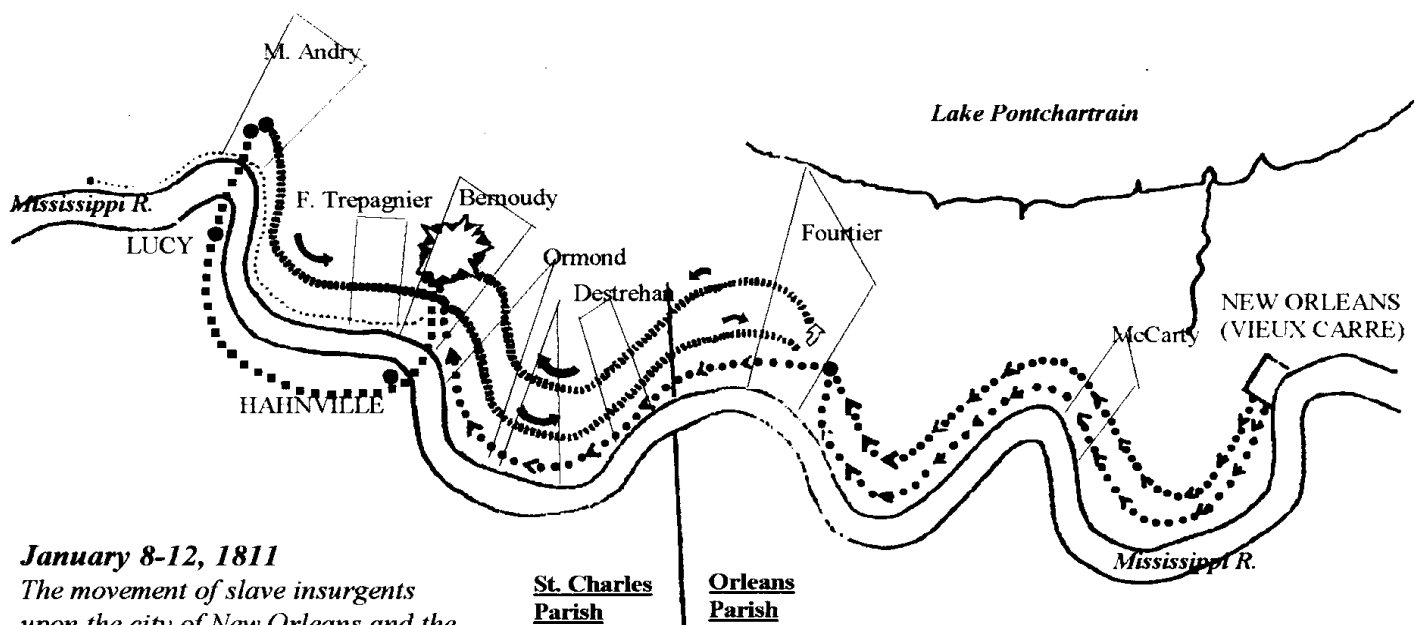
Bro. Malcolm Suber of AAHAL brought the program to a fitting conclusion by pointing out that 188 years ago, at the beginning of the Revolt, it started to rain. Bro. Charles and his people didn't say *its* raining, *lets* not rebel today. They said **Freedom or death! We're going to succeed or die trying.**

THE SUNDAY BUS TOUR

The bus tour started at Armstrong Park the next morning. From there, we rode out past **Lake Pontchartrain**, the seventh largest lake in the United States, and through the marshy areas where the **Maroons**, escaped slaves who, not content with simply living out their own lives in freedom, made constant raids into the plantations to the west to free their Brothers and Sisters in bondage, made their settlements. The first stop was a woodland marker at the intersection of Main Street and Highway 55 in Laplace, La., which makes cursory mention of the Revolt.

Red Bud Cemetery, on the grounds of the **Providence #1 Church**, was the next stop. Here is buried Civil War hero (to Afrikans, not to the Confederacy) **John Hall**, as are other Afrikan-American ancestors. Ancestor Hall was one of the founders of the **Providence #1 Church** and, after the Civil War, chose to return to Laplace to defend our community from the Ku Klux Klan and others who wished to terrorize them and return them to the plantations. Other important burial sites included the **Montz Cemetery** (Montz, La.), a burial site to Afrikan-American civil war heroes on Washington Street (now overgrown with weeds), and the **Kugler and Kenner Cemeteries**, where a marker will be erected by the Army Corps of Engineers after a long negotiation with AAHAL. Here, several wreaths and flowers were placed as those of us in the tour group recited an adaptation of the poem made famous in the movie *Sankofa*:

*"Spirit of the dead
rise up
lingering spirit of the dead
rise up and possess your bird of passage.
Those stolen Afrikans step out of your shells
from the wombs of the ships*



January 8-12, 1811

The movement of slave insurgents upon the city of New Orleans and the counter movement of U.S. government forces.

and reclaim your story.
 Spirit of the dead
 rise up
 lingering spirit of the dead
 rise up and possess your vessel.
 Those Afrikans shackled in leg irons and enslaved
 step out of the acres of cane fields and cotton fields
 and tell your story.
 Spirit of the dead
 rise up
 lingering spirit of the dead
 rise up and possess your bird of passage.
 Those lynched in magnolias
 swing from limbs of weeping willows,
 rotten food for the vultures
 step down and claim your story.
 Spirit of the dead
 rise up
 lingering spirit of the dead
 rise up and possess your vessel.
 Those tied, bound and whipped
 from Brazil to Mississippi
 step out and tell your story.
 Those in Jamaica,
 in the fields of Kuba
 in the swamps of Florida,
 in the rice fields of South Carolina you waiting Afrikans
 step out and tell your story.
 Spirit of the dead
 rise up
 lingering spirit of the dead
 rise up and possess your bird of passage.
 From Alabama to Surinam,
 up to the cane fields of Louisiana,
 Come out you Afrikan spirits
 step out and claim your story.
 You raped,
 slave raped,
 castrated,
 burned,
 tarred and feathered,
 roasted,
 chopped,
 lobotomized,
 bound and gagged
 you Afrikan spirit,
 Spirit of the dead
 rise up
 Lingering spirit of the dead
 rise up and possess your bird of passage.”

At one point during the tour, Bro. Malcolm rhetorically raised the question, “Why revolt in January, in the middle of winter?” He asked this question, of course, so he could give us the answer: “From September through December the sugar cane is harvested and the owners and overseers watched the slaves carefully. In January, after the harvesting, they didn’t watch the slaves that closely. Thus, January was chosen as the time to strike. Charles [Deslondes Plantation] met with slaves at other plantations to insure their readiness and to insure against traitors giving away



Leon A. Waters:
Griot, docent and publisher.
As a descendant of heroic noble rebels, Mr. Waters and Hidden History are committed to tell and popularize their stories. Learn what they don’t teach you in the Great American schools. (from the Hidden History Web site)

the plan. Each plantation had a captain whose job it was to organize and prepare the people for the rebellion.” The fact that this was not simply a spontaneous uprising of undisciplined slaves can be drawn from the testimony and records of those who fought *against* the Revolt. The Revolt itself would no doubt have had greater success if the rebels had succeeded in plundering an armory at the beginning, but they had to settle for some guns, rifles and machetes for weapons. As it was, they were outnumbered and outgunned by the Army forces that opposed them, but it is a monument to their courage and fighting skill that they advanced so close to New Orleans before being defeated.

During the course of the tour, we passed several of the sites that once were the icons of gracious living and culture for the Southern planters but symbols of the ultimate oppression for Afrikan-Americans, those being the plantations themselves. Plantations once owned by Colonel Manuel Andry, Judge Rost (now called Hermitage), James Brown (now called Rose-land), Delhomme, Francois and Pierre Trepagnier (Pierre Trepagnier’s plantation was later named the Ormond Plantation, and oral tradition suggests he was captured from his home one night and punished for his crimes against Afrikan people), Destrehan (site of tribunals, run by the largest slaveowners, used to determine punishment for the rebelling slaves after the Revolt was defeated) Jacques Forchet, and Meullion (destroyed in the Revolt, later named Freetown and finally St. Rose) were among the sights of the tour.

Other locations of historical significance included Francois Trepagnier’s tomb (“Killed by slave insurgents 10 January 1811” which was one of the few official acknowledgements of the Slave Revolt), an accompanying unmarked memorial to “all the loyal slaves who betrayed their people,” as Baba Leon put it (A similar monument exists at Louisiana State University’s Rural Life Center in Baton Rouge for public view), the site of the Bernoudy Massacre (the place where the Revolt was effectively defeated, although raids and skirmishes continued for years after this battle), and the Canne Brunets in Kenner, the place where Major Hampton mounted his counterattack as the rebels neared New Orleans, forcing them to retreat upriver to Bernoudy. This place is curious for what it actually does memorialize: Under a couple of dozen flying flags (including the Confederacy’s “Stars-&-Bars”), a monument dedicated in 1988 is erected to an event of obvious historical importance to the Kenner city fathers. It reads:



Malcolm Suber:
Griot, docent and researcher.
In addition to research, fact-checking, and guiding tours with Hidden History Tours, he is also a popular lecturer on politics. (from the Hidden History Web Site)

“On this site in the city of Kenner, the first World Championship heavyweight prize fight held in the United States took place. May 10, 1820, Jed Mase (Beeston, England) def. Tom Allen (Birmingham, England) in 10 rounds.”

So much for historical perspective.

Baba Leon Waters, Bro. Malcolm Suber and **AAHAL** are to be commended for doing much more than their part in keeping the legacy of the 1811 Slave Revolt alive. We at **KUUMBAReport** hope to arrange for them to come to Baltimore to tell the story of this heroic Revolt, complete with slide show and other exhibits. Thanks also go to **Baba Albert Thrasher** for his fine and scholarly work on this important event.

We returned home from New Orleans with a renewed sense of history, of the sacrifices our Ancestors made so we would not all be slaving in the rice, sugar cane, cotton, corn, indigo and tobacco fields, but also knowing that that same system exists in a different, better-disguised form today. All one had to do was think about who permeates the police force, educational system and newspaper empires in the New Orleans area today and realize that they are, in many cases, the descendants of the planters who enslaved Afrikans back in 1811, or look to the near horizon and see that, where once there were (and in many cases still are--New Orleans sponsors many Plantation Tours•even today) the large plantations run by super-rich planters and their



Baba Leon Waters discusses the Hidden History Project, which he founded to uncover the history of Afrikan people in Louisiana, with interested visitors.

families, we now see manufacturing plants by mega-businesses Dow Chemical and Shell Oil, run by super-rich corporate interests and worked, often for what we now call “slave wages”, by ... *guess who?*

ON TO NEW ORLEANS!, THE BOOK

Mr. Albert Thrasher, the grandson of Afrikans enslaved in Georgia and a longtime New Orleans resident, has written a very detailed and scholarly work on this important event. *On To New Orleans!: Louisianas Heroic 1811 Slave Revolt* (Ludlow Press, Racine, Wisconsin, 1995-1996) tells about the 1811 Slave Revolt, the transatlantic slave trade, the Revolt's predecessors in Haiti and the effect they had on the continuing story of the Afrikan liberation struggle. The book is heavily footnoted with many reproductions of documents, maps and illustrations.

The Afrikan-American History Alliance was succeeded several years ago by the Louisiana Museum of African American History (LMAAH) and the Hidden History LLC, which were founded by Baba Leon Waters and Bro. Malcolm Suber. People interested in purchasing the book, contacting Hidden History, learning more about LMAAH or continuing efforts to uncover the history of New Orleans can contact the Hidden History Web site at www.hiddenhistory.us.



DAY OF MOURNING

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Rock, these hardy adventurers, seeking only religious freedom, nearly starved to death in the first winter. But, after surviving with the help of the benevolent Indian chief **Massasoit**, the Pilgrims and the Indians got together for a feast of thanksgiving turkey. Thus, 377 years' worth of good cheer, turkey, cranberry sauce, and (finally) football games was begun.

The only problem with that scenario is that it is untrue. Yes, the Pilgrims did nearly starve to death that first winter. Yes, they would not have survived if not for the goodwill of Massasoit, if for no other reason than he chose to live in peace with them rather than try to drive them from Indian land. Today, many UAINÉ activists say the decision to live in peace with the Pilgrims was the worst mistake Massasoit could have made. This sentiment was eloquently stated in the speech that **Wamsutta Frank James** had prepared for Thanksgiving Day 1970, but his words were silenced due to ignorance, fear and greed. We reprint some of his words here as they tell the story better than ours could.

THE SUPPRESSED SPEECH OF WAMSUTTA FRANK JAMES: THANKSGIVING DAY, 1970

“I speak to you as a man--a Wampanoag Man. I am a proud man, proud of my ancestry, my accomplishments won by a strict parental direction (“You must succeed - your face is a different color in this small Cape Cod community!”). I am a

product of poverty and discrimination from these two social and economic diseases. I, and my brothers and sisters, have painfully overcome, and to some extent earned the respect of our community. We are Indians first--but we are termed “good citizens.” Sometimes we are arrogant but only because society has pressured us to be so.

“It is with mixed emotion that I stand here to share my thoughts. This is a time of celebration for you--celebrating an anniversary of a beginning for the White man in America. A time of looking back, of reflection. It is with a heavy heart that I look back upon what happened to my People.

“Even before the Pilgrims landed it was common practice for explorers to capture Indians, take them to Europe and sell them as slaves for 220 shillings apiece. The Pilgrims had hardly explored the shores of Cape Cod for four days before they had robbed the graves of my ancestors and stolen their corn and beans. Mourt's Relation describes a searching party of sixteen men. He goes on to say that this party took as much of the Indian's winter provisions as they were able to carry.

“Massasoit, the great Sachem of the Wampanoag, knew these facts, yet he and his People welcomed and befriended the settlers of the Plymouth Plantation. Perhaps he did this because his Tribe had been depleted by an epidemic. Or his knowledge of the harsh oncoming winter was the reason for his peaceful acceptance of these acts. This action by Massasoit was perhaps our biggest mistake. We, the Wampanoag, welcomed you, the White man

with open arms, little knowing that it was the beginning of the end; that before 50 years were to pass, the Wampanoag would no longer be a free people.

“What happened in those short 50 years? What has happened in the last 300 years? History gives us facts and there were atrocities; there were broken promises--and most of these centered around land ownership. Among ourselves we understood that there were boundaries, but never before had we had to deal with fences and stone walls. But the White man had a need to prove his worth by the amount of land that he owned. Only ten years later, when the Puritans came, they treated the Wampanoag with even less kindness in converting the souls of the so-called ‘savages’. Although they were harsh to members of their own society, the Indian was pressed between stone slabs and hanged as quickly as any other ‘witch’.

“And so down through the years there is record after record of Indian lands taken, and in token, reservations set up for him upon which to live. The Indian, having been stripped of his power, could only stand by and watch while the White man took his lands and used it for his personal gain. This the Indian could not understand; for to him, land was survival, to farm, to hunt, to be enjoyed. It was not to be abused. We see incident after incident, where the White man sought to tame the savage and convert him to the Christian ways of life. The early Pilgrim settlers led the Indian to believe that, if he did not behave, they would dig up the ground and unleash the great epidemic again.

“Has the Wampanoag really disappeared? There is still an aura of mystery. We know there was an epidemic that took many Indian lives--some Wampanoags moved west and joined the Cherokee and Cheyenne. They were forced to move. Some even went north to Canada! Many Wampanoags put aside their Indian heritage and accepted the White man's way for their own survival. There are some Wampanoag who do not wish it known they are Indian for social or economic reasons. ...

“History wants us to believe that the Indian was a savage, illiterate, uncivilized animal. ... Two distinctly different cultures met. One thought they must control life; the other believed life was to be enjoyed, because nature decreed it. Let us remember, the Indian is and was just as human as the White man. The Indian feels pain, gets hurt, and becomes defensive, has dreams, bears tragedy and failure, suffers from loneliness, needs to cry as well as laugh. He, too, is often misunderstood.

“The White man in the presence of the Indian is still mystified by his uncanny ability to make him feel uncomfortable. This may be the image the White man has created of the Indian; his savageness has boomeranged and isn't a mystery; it is fear; fear of the Indian's temperament!

“High on a hill, overlooking the famed Plymouth Rock, stands the statue of our great Sachem, Massasoit. Massasoit has stood there many years in silence. We, the descendants of this great Sachem, have been a silent people. The necessity of making a living in this materialistic society of the White man caused us to be silent. Today, many of my people are choosing to face the truth. We ARE Indians!

“Although time has drained our culture and our language is almost extinct, we the Wampanoags still walk the lands of Massachusetts. We may be fragmented, we may be confused. Many years have passed since we have been a people together. Our lands were invaded. We fought as hard to keep our land as you the Whites did to take our land away from us. We were con-

quered, we became the American prisoners of war in many cases, and wards of the United States Government, until only recently.

“We are uniting. ... We stand tall and proud, and before too many moons pass we'll right the wrongs we have allowed to happen to us.

“We forfeited our country. Our lands have fallen into the hands of the aggressor. We have allowed the White man to keep us on our knees. What has happened cannot be changed, but today we must work towards a more humane America, a more Indian America, where men and nature once again are important; where the Indian values of honor, truth, and brotherhood prevail.

“You the White man are celebrating an anniversary. We the Wampanoags will help you celebrate in the concept of a beginning. It was the beginning of a new life for the Pilgrims. Now, 350 years later it is a beginning of a new determination for the original American: the American Indian.

“There are some factors concerning the Wampanoags and other Indians across this vast nation. We now have 350 years of experience living amongst the White man. We can now speak his language. We can now think as a white man thinks. ... We're being heard; we are now being listened to. The important point is that along with these necessities of everyday living, we still have the spirit, we still have the unique culture, we still have the will and, most important of all, the determination to remain as Indians. We are determined, and our presence here this evening is living testimony that this is only the beginning of the American Indian, particularly the Wampanoag, to regain the position in this country that is rightfully ours.”

Thus the National Day of Mourning began.

THE 1997 MARCH AND THE POLICE BEAT-DOWN

The 1997 March evidenced a growing response from the Indian community and its supporters. This evidently was too much for the City of Plymouth to bear. The 1996 March had raised concerns among the city fathers due to what was referred to as a minor incident in which the Day of Mourning March began just as another march, called the Pilgrim Progress “which celebrated the arrival of the Pilgrims as much as the Indians mourned it” was passing Cole's Hill, the site of the Day of Mourning Rally. Apparently, the Pilgrim Progress marchers, feeling intimidated by the Indian protesters, chose to halt their procession and allow the protesters to continue through the streets of Plymouth.

In 1997, however, the City of Plymouth was apparently prepared for a conflict. As the Day of Mourning marchers began their procession and continued into downtown Plymouth, police descended upon them, arresting 25 March organizers, participants and supporters. Many marchers accused the police of brutally dragging protesters by the hair (to the extent that one man's braided locks were torn from his head), throwing and pinning people to the ground and other acts of excessive force. The police department countered that the protesters had no permit to march and that the police officers' actions were the only way to secure arrestees who trespassed and refused to comply with lawful police commands. As a result of the confrontation on November 27, 1997, the case of “The Plymouth 25” was born.

Members of this group, which included 1998 organizers **Mahtowin Monroe** and **Moonanum James**, were arraigned and charged with a variety of offenses. Letters, e-mails and faxes were sent to federal, state and local officials demanding that the

charges be dropped. Petitions were signed, and many people honored UAINE's call for an economic boycott of Plymouth. "Supporters stood with us in court every time we were required to make an appearance and made sure that information about our case was distributed internationally," said UAINE in a prepared statement. The end result was vindication for the protesters after almost eleven months of court battles. "We are pleased to announce that the frame-up criminal charges against those arrested on November 27, 1997 have been dropped," their October 19, 1998 statement continued. "Further, [UAINE] has reached a settlement with the town of Plymouth. Plymouth has acknowledged our right to walk on our own land without a permit on National Day of Mourning. Plymouth has agreed to make the truth part of its celebration of the pilgrim myth of thanksgiving. Under the terms of this agreement, we will have a number of important opportunities to address the lies and inaccuracies about thanksgiving and the history of indigenous peoples that have been disseminated not only in Plymouth but throughout the country. We are confident that this agreement represents a tremendous victory for the struggle of Native people to have our voices heard and respected." In addition to the above, Plymouth agreed to pay \$100,000 to the **Metacom Education Fund** "for education on the true history of Native people," \$20,000 to the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) for legal fees, and \$15,000 for two plaques commemorating the National Day of Mourning and the story of Massasoit's successor **Metacom** (or "King Phillip" to the Pilgrims), who, upon witnessing the aggressive tactics used by the Pilgrims, had sought to drive them from Indian land. This had led to what the Pilgrims called "King Phillip's War", during which Pilgrims and Indians alike died *en masse* and Metacom was finally hunted down and killed, his head stuck on a pike for 20 years.

Arrangements have been made to allow the Indian perspective of "Thanksgiving Day" as a Day of Mourning to be represented in the schools of Plymouth. And the events of 1997 practically insured that Plymouth, Mass. would gain more media attention in 1998 than it bargained for.

Lasana Bill Harvey's Jazz Interview with Carl Grubbs

Philadelphia in the early to mid 1960's was still a place where an aspiring jazz musician could ply a trade. But not for long. As a young alto saxophonist seeking his niche, **Carl Grubbs** ran right up against the disco boom of the 1970's which wiped out his opportunities for consistent work. "I wasn't surviving anymore" in Philadelphia, so he moved to Baltimore in search of greener pastures. However, "the gigs weren't here either. When I moved here was the first time I got a day job."

After finding his short career as a substitute teacher too taxing, he found work at a grocery store helping people load groceries. "I began to see people not from being on stage; but I began to see people *working*. I began to see why I was playing; who I was."


Thus we were introduced to jazz saxophonist Carl Grubbs, as he was interviewed by WEAA-FM's **Lasana Bill "MagicBird" Harvey** on October 9th, 1998 at **Sepia, Sand and Sable Bookstore** in northwest Baltimore's Reisterstown Road Plaza. During the interview, those of us who had come to this, the second of Bro. Lasana's "Jazz Interviews" series at the bookstore, were

THE 1998 RALLY AND MARCH

A bus carrying a delegation from Baltimore was arranged by the **All People's Congress** in response to Ms. Monroe and Mr. James's call for action. Approximately 30 travelers left Baltimore at about 12:00 midnight for the long ride to Plymouth, arriving at about 9:00 am. The weather was cold and threatening, with rain in the forecast. The assembled crowd, which was estimated to have reached 1,500, was not deterred. Better rain drops crashing on their heads than police batons, they must have thought.

After several Native speakers addressed the crowd, covering topics from the history of the Day of Mourning, the history of the Pilgrims and the previous years March to the plight of political prisoners including not only **Leonard Peltier** but also **Mumia Abu-Jamal** and **Marshall "Eddie" Conway**, the March through the streets of downtown Plymouth began. The March wound through several blocks, all the time under the watchful eyes of the Plymouth police as well as the "peacekeepers" appointed by March organizers whose job it was to insure against confrontations with the police or other potential adversaries. The Pilgrim's Progress march, which had quietly passed by over an hour before, did not conflict with the protesters.

At the end of the March, a Town Hall Meeting was held in the auditorium of a local community center. There, several March organizers spoke again, while participants greeted each other and **Food Not Bombs** provided their version of a true Thanksgiving feast--thanks for a successful event, thanks for an important victory for Indian people, thanks for rain being the only thing to pound the marchers' heads.

No doubt the success of Day of Mourning 1998 will lead to increased awareness and support for the **1999 March and Rally**. Organizations such as UAINE are working constantly to insure that the Indian perspective of history and Indian culture are preserved, just as the **Afrikan American History Alliance of Louisiana** (See accompanying article, Page 1) is doing the same for the legacy of our Afrikan Ancestors. 

given the opportunity to meet one of the great talents of the Baltimore area jazz scene, a man who has worked continuously to promote jazz music to the young and old throughout the area. He spoke on his early days with jazz legend **John Coltrane**, the state of the music today, the business of music and the future of jazz, especially as it is affected by efforts to reach young people with its message.

"Back then, it wasn't a matter of how good you were. The jobs were not there," he said. In his job at the grocery store, he found the opportunity to "meet the people on a different plane" as a fellow worker and not as a "hip" performer with his audience.

"I met Coltrane before I started playing," Mr. Grubbs said. His parents had bought him a saxophone and he saw the future jazz legend practicing what would become his groundbreaking **Giant Steps** pieces. "If you ever saw him play in person it was a more spiritual thing; I didn't know [what it was] but I had to find out." He was 14 years old and was bitten by the jazz bug. With an early push from Ancestor John Coltrane, a future star was born.

At age 15 Mr. Grubbs became a member of the Guild of

Contemporary Culture Jazz Band. "I don't know why they wanted me in the band, 'cause I shouldn't have been in the band!" said the ever-modest Mr. Grubbs. "I was always the youngest guy in the band. Back then I was into what the jazz musicians were into. Jazz musicians didn't dance, I didn't dance. I was being 'hip'." He then went on a foray into popular music for a while, which forced him to learn to read music: "I had to learn about chords and keys. The other guys were playing by ear."

In reference to the business of music, particularly Black music, in which, as Bro. Lasana stated, "it's an economic thing to push certain kinds of music", Mr. Grubbs points out the lack of Black ownership in what is largely powered by Black talent and labor: "If you don't own the record company, what are you going to do? Part of the problem is we don't own anything. Nobody owns a jazz record company. What you hear over the radio is what people are putting money out to promote. Jazz sells slow. A jazz album will sell over 20, 30, 40 years. [Pop music] is heard two to three months and then it's over." As far as his experience with his own recent CD release, which was self-published and self-promoted, "My wife and I own this CD, then you've got to persistently push it. We don't have a [major] distributor" so they have to distribute it themselves.

The pressures of surviving in this environment force some artists to "throw in raps and call it 'cool jazz' so it'll sell. I suppose that it does." Bro. Lasana pointed out that jazz, like much South Afrikan art, is considered "revolutionary art" and thus is suppressed. Mr. Grubbs sees the difference between the United States and overseas: "Go to some other country, it's a whole 'nother ball game. Even here in the U.S., some spots in Philadelphia they just want you to blast off." But the lack of current jazz venues still creates difficulties for aspiring jazz artists and even the veterans: "Back in the day [the 1960's] there were jazz clubs corner-to-corner. Now there aren't nearly as many. If you want to make it [the revitalization of the jazz club scene] happen you've got to be a soldier and march forward, either support places where jazz is playing or make your own place."

Mr. Grubbs clearly knows the difference between a jazz artist who "sells out" seeking economic benefit and an artist who incorporates elements from other musical forms to bring the public to an understanding of jazz. He cites Dontae Winslow as an artist who takes his fans from rap to jazz by starting with rap and giving them "something more than that to help bring them around, and I appreciate that. He's doing a good job of *adding* rap and jazz" as opposed to subjugating jazz to rap in an effort to secure sales. There he sees the positive influence of the "Young Lions", a tag "created by the record companies", a group that includes Dontae Winslow, James Carter and several others who "respect the history of the music; trying to move ahead." They will have an important and beneficial impact on efforts to educate young people about jazz, just as Mr. Coltrane inspired a 14-year-old saxophonist back in the day. "The thing about Coltrane, he had no ego. He'd show anybody. He wasn't worried about anybody stealing an idea. He said, "Play *your* thing. People will

buy *your* original stuff, not something somebody *else* did."

Mr. And Mrs. Grubbs currently sponsor a Jazz Camp for young people, aged 9 to 17, where he teaches them about jazz and even shows them how to use computers to compose and write music, thereby bringing young people into the "information age". And jazz is "in the colleges now. Coming down through the colleges into high school. People are getting Jazz Degrees ... [thus] they've learned all the educational things about jazz. Jazz is going strong, not necessarily coming from the community as I learned it but it's coming from the educational system." The main difference is that "I learned from *other musicians*. The masters I learned from didn't have any college degrees." The Jazz Camp is there to provide a balance with the good work the educational system is doing to help promote jazz and jazz history. "We teach kids music is supposed to be *fun*."

The enthusiasm of the youngsters he encounters at the Jazz Camps helps invigorate him as well. "They remind me of myself at that age. The questions I had--now I have some of the answers! Kids have an open mind. As you explain things to them, it helps to open your mind as well. It's like me practicing all over again. When you play, the kids help to keep you young. You've got to be in it. Kids are fun, and kids make you think. It's that kind of energy that kids'll give you."

Bro. Lasana asked how long it took for Mr. Grubbs to achieve mastery of his instruments (He plays the soprano sax, the clarinet, some piano and some tenor sax, but his main instrument is the alto sax). Mr. Grubbs replied, "I don't think I ever have yet. It's about learning as much as possible about what you do. You've got to practice and you've got to study. You have to know how to read music and know the history of music; taking lessons and going to school."

Does he still get the same feeling out of his playing now as he did earlier in his career? "Yes, but now I have much more control over it. Then I just loved to do it and I was taken advantage of [by those who better understood the business side of the music industry]. Now I've learned the business part and now I can get into the fun part. I don't have that headache anymore so I can have fun with it. If I own what I do I can just run with it."

Carl and Barbara Grubbs currently reside in the Randallstown area. Mr. Grubbs performs regularly at Baltimore area jazz clubs and lounges. The latest Carl Grubbs CD, *Inner Harbor Suite*, is available at several area record and book stores, including the following Afrikan-owned establishments: Sepia, Sand and Sable; Jazz House West; Dimensions in Music; Everyone's Place; and direct from Mr. Grubbs (Call 410-123-4567 for more information).

We would like to thank the "MagicBird", **Bro. Lasana Bill Harvey** of WEAA-FM for organizing and conducting this Jazz Interview with saxophonist Carl Grubbs. We would also like to thank Ms. Anna Curry and her sister, Ms. Clara Anthony, owners of **Sepia, Sand and Sable Bookstore** in Reisterstown Road Plaza, for hosting this event.



LIFE OF AN ICON: KWAME TURE

by William A. Curtis, Sr., Guest Columnist
"Take icon notes, my son." -- Cornday N. Earnest

The death of **Kwame Ture** (Stokley Carmichael) is the passing of an icon. Although other icons have articulated affirmative visions of Black Power, the life of Kwame Ture demonstrates a love for Black People equal to the principled lives of **Marcus Garvey, Malcolm X and Paul Robeson**. As an example of mental freedom, the life of Kwame Ture shows just what is possible when a man or woman lives a principled life. Everybody respected the man. From unconscious integrationist to conscious nationalist, Kwame Ture is the elder statesman of Black ideological, mental and emotional freedom. He is a light to all. I think that Kwame Ture's concept "**Black Power**" solidified the consciousness of a generation, and coupled with the Black Arts Movement of the time, Black People began to deliberately be positive about existence (not simply survival).

I think we miss the mark should we today take this man's passing lightly. I believe that people can do only what they know; the rest they just believe in. By the example of his life, Kwame Ture knew "Black Power" beyond a vague notion of belief or material acquisitions. It's a mindset, a psychological jailbreak.

The term "Black Power" still disturbs people because it knocks on the door of traditional oppressive thinking and demands room to exist. "Empowerment" is a bandage for survival and an insult to the legacy of solution demonstrated by the sixties. Kwame Ture knew that "Black Power" demanded responsibility for everything re-



motely associated with the mind and the means of production for the medicine cabinet. I am grateful for his life.

"Black Power" thinking pushes the envelope, stimulates considerations outside the box of traditional oppressive thinking and spurs one to live and shape an existence that reflects the dedicated best interests of new Black Power paradigm thinking. Kwame Ture departed the US 1969 to live in Guinea, Africa. The man was bold.

I was a very young child during the ferment of the sixties. The life of Kwame Ture has moved me because I can see that what was spoken in the sixties as a vision, is now out-pictured in business, politics, and church. Black Power is alive and continues to develop. The sixties have not ended; the sixties were just the beginning of mental and emotional freedom from traditional oppressive thinking.

Men such as Kwame Ture were at the right time at the right place in history to serve a people. And he served his people for his entire life. He deliberately dedicated his life to Black People. The greatness of Black People bodes well for the future thanks to icons such as Kwame Ture. Long live Kwame Ture. Long live mental and emotional freedom. African Americans are better people because Kwame Ture courageously synthesized sixties ferment into the focused, affirmative statement: "Black Power". And the United States is a better nation because of "Black Power." Black Power allows people to exist, not just survive, and that is the way it ought to be.



PROTESTS FOR EDDIE & MUMIA

With the State of Pennsylvania moving ever closer to setting an execution date for **Mumia Abu-Jamal** and the Maryland Division of Corrections implementing a variety of shakeups in the wake of a drug and corruption scandal, the Support Committees for Mumia and for **Marshall "Eddie" Conway** have planned two major events to increase the public's awareness of their cases.

On **Saturday, April 3rd, 1999**, at 12:00 noon, a *People's Protest and March for Justice* will be held at Baltimore's Billie Holliday Statue (1400 block of Pennsylvania Avenue, at Lafayette St.) in support of **Marshall "Eddie" Conway's** fight to win his freedom. The event is being sponsored by **Unity for Action**, the **All People's Congress** and the **Concerned Citizens for Police Accountability and Review**. The March is a "call for the immediate release of Eddie," according to the organizers, as well as a means of bringing attention to Eddie and Mumia's cases. A variety of speakers from Baltimore area activist organizations will be present. For more information on the March for Justice,

contact the **All People's Congress** at (410) 235-7040 or at apcbaltimore@pipeline.com.

Three weeks after the April 3rd event, the activist community will receive an international wake-up call. **San Francisco** and **Philadelphia** will be abuzz with the *Millions for Mumia Marches* to stop the planned execution and demand a new trial. "The Philadelphia police and courts--the most notorious in the U.S. for brutality and corruption--have framed a courageous journalist," as stated in the press release. An April 23rd Student Walkout is being organized. Sponsoring organizations include the **International Concerned Family and Friends of Mumia Abu-Jamal**, **Academics for Mumia**, the **Black Radical Congress**, the **Jericho Movement** and others.

Buses will be arranged to transport interested individuals to the Philadelphia Millions for Mumia March. For Baltimore-area information on buses, contact the **All People's Congress** at (410) 235-7040 or at apcbaltimore@pipeline.com.

