

A photograph of Mwalemu Shakur, a man with a beard and sunglasses, wearing a white long-sleeved shirt and white pants. He is standing in front of a wall covered in graffiti. The image has a blue tint.

**UNITY AND  
STRUGGLE  
THROUGH  
THE BARS  
WITH  
MWALIMU  
SHAKUR**

**THE FINAL STRAW RADIO - Aired On August 15, 2021**

**TFSR:** Hi, I'm wondering if you could introduce yourself for the audience, maybe like your name, your location, if that's useful, any pertinent information that will help the audience understand you.

**Mwalimu Shakur:** My name is Mwalimu Shakur, and I'm in Corcoran State Prison, where I've been for the last 17 years, 13 of which were in solitary confinement. But, you know, due to our massive hunger strikes in challenging this legislature inside of prison, the bureaucrats decided to let us out to the general population.

**TFSR:** Can you talk a little bit about some of your background, where you came from, how you became politicized, and how you identify politically now?

**MS:** Yeah, well, I came from Los Angeles, California. You know... gang violence was a problem in every neighborhood around the whole LA County area. As well as most of Southern California, but I grew up in a gang neighborhood, and not having really no political education, and only knowing the street way of life. You kind of navigated through court cases, you know, cases that put you in prison. But once you come inside of here, you have older individuals from your same community and other communities around the country who became politicized. And they became politically mature, so they can re-educate others that come in.

And for me, landing in prison, or what the drug mentality, gang mentality, criminal mentality all together. It put me in a situation where I was always involved in physical combat with others. You know, people I knew from my area, and then we have race riots. So those types of things that put you in solitary confinement. And when you go to solitary confinement, or you catch an infraction, those in SHU term, they'll place you around more politicized individuals, who've educated themselves, studied their own history, study, politics, economics, a vast array of things. And being around those guys, that was the program on the inside. So I was able to start educating myself. I educated myself, so much so that I developed it into my practice. And it gave me a discipline, that became second nature to me. And once my mind started opening up to this new reality, I started seeing things more clearly, and I realized and understood why my community was the way that it was.

It wasn't because we wanted to do these things, it was by design by those who oppress us and control us so that they can put us in their prisons and enact a modern day slavery type practice. Being in prison, that's exactly what it is. So that's what happened to me. And now, the more I still learn, the more I'm able to teach, and hopefully stop others from making those same mistakes. And

if my teaching is correct, the way it was with me, then we can stop this school-to-prison pipeline which is what we say when you have a lot of people from inner city coming to prison, not knowing what to do with their self, they usually end up here. And we're trying to break, break that curse, break those habits.

**TFSR:** A lot of people in the listening audience may not understand what you mean, with talking about how the situation was set up, particularly at this time, like you went in during what could be called like the heyday of mass incarceration in the United States. And if you could maybe break down, since you've been in for a while and some things have changed greatly, somethings have stayed the same. There's this guy named Biden, I've heard about that has a still pretty prominent politics, that was pretty prominent. And some of the political decisions that put a lot of people in particular, Black and brown folks behind bars at that time. Can you talk a little bit about that context?

**MS:** Yeah, well, in the inner city, they flooded it with cocaine. You know, as if to say that the little progress we've made in the 70s, from the 60s revolutionary era, would quiet us and stop us from progressing as a people and as a culture. So you flood all the inner cities with this cocaine, okay? A lot of us partook in selling it, not knowing or really having a vast understanding and just further destroying our community and our people. So we became hustlers in the drug game. Gangs were rapidly building and growing. And then they put guns on the streets.

So now with the gun wars, and drug wars... basically the administration, I think and believe, had it set up that way so that they can take taxpayers money to build more prisons and create more laws to put us in and clearly show you the problems that are happening in those inner cities. And they created it, you know, and when you study it, you see it unfold that way because the only ones being hauled off into these prisons is Black and brown people. And the sentences are outrageous. Without a murder just for like selling small amounts of cocaine, you can get a lot of times - double digits, Okay? And then they enacted other laws, like the three strike law and made it seem like we were the worst people on planet Earth.

And in all actuality, that's not really true. If you wouldn't flood the inner cities with that cocaine and had made it possible for us to have better quality education in our schools, made it affordable to go off to college and learn a higher field of study so we can be successful in this country, we would have had more success. But the ratio, you know, people Black and brown playing sports was very limiting and that was the only ticket that I see out if you weren't being a drug dealer. So that's why I say it was by design,

when you studied you see that mass incarceration boom, is still in effect right now, right? And what we're doing is trying to challenge some of those laws and get them out of here. Because we recognize what they did. And with some of the laws changing, it's like they're admitting it, that they did do this and now it's time to make it right. So that's what I see.

**TFSR:** Awesome, thank you so much for sharing that. Part of the context that I have for you and was excited to have you on the show is because you have a long history of struggle alongside of other prisoners against unethical situations, against cruelty, against mass incarceration. One of the points in the struggle of prisoners that I've heard you refer to was participation in the hunger strikes against basically unending use of the SHU or solitary confinement. Can you talk a bit about it? People may have heard of the term SHU or secure housing unit? How does that differ from solitary confinement more generally? Is there a difference?

**MS:** Well, no, there's no difference. I mean, we refer to solitary confinement is to AD-SEG, administrative segregation, which is what they first put you before you get the SHU term. The situation is the same. 23 hours locked down. Except for once you once you go to the SHU, that's when you can have appliances like a TV or radio, okay? In AD-SEG, you can't have those two things, but you can have everything else. You still go to yard every other day for a few hours. And you're in a dog-like kennel-type cage, where they put a urinal, so that you can use the restroom. But you have no contact with another human being. You can see from cage to cage, but you can't contact them, you can't touch them.

The only human contact you have is if you have a celly. So the practices are the same. The length of time, in AD-SEG is not as long as it is in SHU. Like I said AD-SEG is like a pit stop before you get to Security Housing Unit. And within a Security Housing Unit. You can't have the type of things you can have on in the general population. You can't take college courses, you can't go to school. You can't take a vacation. You can have a few books. You can have no tennis shoes. Just like, some type of shoe that's not really designed to protect your feet, you can put on like a shower shoe, but with a little bit more support. You could have no athletic shorts, no T-shirts. We took like two pairs of T-shirts to make a long sleeve T-shirt in case it was cold. So you couldn't have sweat suits, thermals, beanies, nothing like that, to keep yourself warm.

It's a real inhumane practice to have. You pretty much break a person down to nothing. And you put them in a cell, like I said, confined for 23 hours a day. And it was just because of those conditions: the small portions on the trays, the lack of quality healthcare,

always being handcuffed every time you do come out of the cell to go to a shower, which is like five minutes. If you're in Pelican Bay, then you're not in a dog cage, you are in a little cage right behind your cell so you see nobody.

So yeah, we all came together talking through the doors, talking through the toilets, to each other and decided to come up with a strategy to get out of here. To get released. It worked because, united we stood on a hunger strike. And then we started challenging the injustice that puts you in there, like the gang validation. And then we start challenging the practices that they use to keep you in there. Like, if you talk to another inmate who's a gang member, then you get another point, and it keeps you in there longer. And mind you, you are going through a classification every six years to get considered to be released. So it was really inhumane, the practices were. We just came up with the hunger strike strategy as well as challenging the rules in order to get up out of here. And for the most part, it worked.

**TFSR:** You talked about participating in the hunger strikes against SHU containment. Can you talk a little bit about the relationship between the administration and gang status? There's a term, you'll be able to come up with it, but, basically where if you're assigned a gang status, because somebody else pointed at you, the only way in a lot of cases to get out of the SHU at that point was to basically claim that someone else was a gang member, and give false testimony in a lot of cases, to be able to reduce SHU time. Is that a fair description? Is that what happened?

**MS:** Yeah, well, what it is, is the administration, they look at who they feel is against them as far as political-ness. Like for us New Afrikans, I could speak on that. We're not a gang, but being a politicized, conscious, New Afrikan means you can challenge the conditions and wake others up to that knowledge on how to do so. And what they do is they'll put that gang label on you, because they put the gang label on the other ethnic groups, and it will stick with the other ethnic groups, if you're a gang member that came from society, and you come up inside of these prisons and you group together, and you form your structure.

So what they do is they put that label on you. So they can get away with the type of law book that they write. They come up with these rules, just like the bureaucrats and society come up with rules and different laws to get legislation passed, okay? The bureaucrats in prison do the same, they get a book where it gives them the rights to whatever they consider gang practice: like reading certain types of books, certain type of cultural literature, a certain type of drawing depicting that literature. Anything you read, study, or

practice, if they consider that gang participation, they'll slap you with that label.

Okay? And if you rack up... they give you points for everything you do. Okay, if you speak this Swahili language, they say you are communicating in code. Okay, so that becomes a gang point. If you exercise a certain way, in military form, that shows unity. They look at that as gang participation with other gang members. So it's whatever the rules they can try to come up with to make stick on you, which gives them their little right to hinder you. And once they have enough points, like three to four points, they then can put you in solitary confinement indefinitely. And what it does is, they give you an indeterminate SHU, which is only six months. But every six months, they just keep stamping it. So then you stay in there for years and years and years and you only go to committee every six years if you have an indeterminate SHU. So that gives me the right to keep you in there. And then when you go to that committee, they stamp you again. Saying, "well, we see them talking to another gang member, he hasn't denounced his association".

So, you know, those little things keep you in solitary for that length of time, and the only way to get out is parole. And if you debrief, go through the little process of dry snitching or telling on others, informing on others and work for them, or you die. You know? And we wanted to take that power back. So we all got together and decided, you know, let's come up with these strategies to do so. But it's a flawed system. We challenged it, it worked because we didn't have the political maturity to understand that in order to beat their system, we should unite. But once we develop that, we found those strategies to be significant in winning our freedoms from behind that wall. So now, they can only use this SHU practices, if you catch a SHU-able offense. You know, whatever they deem a SHU-able offense by getting caught with a weapon or participating in some type of a riot or melee, assault on the staff, anything that will warrant SHU placement?

**TFSR: Mwalimu, just to make a point, on the on the gang jacketing, and the files, and the debriefing and everything. Like, if you get paroled out... and like a lot of people are going to end up staying with their families because they don't have money. So if they can go anywhere, they'll try to stay with their family. Oftentimes the ways that the California government defines gang membership, there's a relationship to... they say like, "Oh, it overlaps with family." So it seems like it complicated it too, when you go and you stay in your cousin's house or whatever, they are then associating with a known gang member and this kind of thing. I'm not sure if it still is the case, but I think in 2013 this was still the case, gang injunctions would then come into play where maybe if because you've been communicating**

**with your cousin, who's on the outside. When you get out maybe you can't go to the neighborhood that your your cousin lives in, because they're considered to be gang associated through family connections or whatever. Is that right?**

**MS:** Well, it's true still because yeah, they can gang jacket you. But once they do background checks on your family, and they see that they're not involved with the street gang or anything like that, they will back up but they will still watch you. Most people, the family already knows about them, and what to expect in case they parole to a loved one's house. Now, if you go to your neighborhood, and you are a member of a street gang, then the parole department is going to watch a lot more, because if the street gangs is under any type of surveillance for any type of activities that they have, they're going to see if you're participating in things like that. And that's also avoidable. It's all about you and what you want to do to integrate back into society.

For me, I was working, went back to school, and living a productive life, where they couldn't pinpoint me for doing things with known gang members from my area, or anybody else I might have ran into that I knew, because while they're watching me, they're seeing that "Okay, he may be speaking to people, but he's not doing anything that we consider illegal or gang activity." So, they won't push on you so hard, they'll give you a little leeway. But for those that do go back out there and do anything like that, you're just setting yourself up for failure, you know? Surveillance capitalism, you see it all over now they got cameras on telephone poles, and certain community areas where they can watch the neighborhood and see what they're doing, and things of that nature. So the community is under surveillance, you know, normal people under surveillance. I mean, so they're watching everything you do. But it's up to you, that individual, on how well they want to be productive out there and what they want to do while they're out there.

**TFSR: Yeah, what you're describing, though, with, like the inside / outside affiliations, and the constant surveillance is counter-insurgency. Right?**

**MS:** Right. Right, right. And they do that in here as well as out there. I learned that firsthand by being in the SHU and being investigated by ISU officers and IGI who are supposed to work with gang members in prison. But they're going out there in society and work on parole agents, and other Sheriff departments and patrols certain gang neighborhoods. And that's how I got arrested, actually, on three violations that I obtained. I was arrested by them, you know, and I didn't commit a crime. But one of my violations, they put me

back in prison for being out past curfew because I stopped at a gas station before I got home, and then they were the one's harassing me! Okay? Then I'm at home, you know, it's a decent hour, but they came to my house, saying "Well, you are living above your means." You know, just little chickenshit things like that. It's the thing that they do when you have their gang jacket on. And like I said, it gives them that right, because of their flawed law book that they put together, that they target us. You know?

**TFSR:** During the last portion of our conversation, you were talking about the the prison strikes, the hunger strikes across California prisons that actually spread way beyond that, around concerns of solitary confinement. And you talked about when people realize that when they were unified, they have a lot more strength. Can you talk about that sort of organizing. That inspirational moment and the hard work that you all put into create negotiations and some sort of like, de-escalation between different crews, whether they be specifically racialized crews, like the Aryan Brotherhood? That sort of stuff that inspires people still from the Lucasville uprising and from Attica before it?

**MS:** Yeah, yes. When you show a person your purpose, and you can sometimes take race even out of it, and just show the love for humanity. When you take a stand for others who are being oppressed. And you show them the conditions in which they're being oppressed, they can understand and say "That makes sense." So what we was able to do was, let them know that there's a bigger picture than this little bickering that we had going on for generations and generations. And when you show them that bigger picture, and they see that "if we unite with you all, whether our interests are the same or not, and we can reach the objective by doing so, then let's do it." And then the whole time, while you're doing that, you still show them your correct views, your correct ideology, what you proceed. You show them the incorrect ways in which they're being treated by the government. You show them that it's a class struggle, and not a race struggle, and you use these teaching moments, you know, to show them that it's the race caste system was devised by the two party government system. To show you that "look, if you divide yourself from the Negroes and the Indians, then we will give you special privileges," but they're not getting as those privileges. So now you show them that, "look, you're serving their interests as much as we do, or we are. And if you believe in American values, you're going to lose because they're not going to treat you the way you think you deserve to be treated." And you can clearly see that with people that go off to war. So when you show people where they're wrong is that and who is responsible for the wrong they'll

lean more towards you.

And that's what we were able to do with the other ethnic groups in California, as well as when we got the word out to society, and had a lot white people, a lot of Mexican people, a lot of other ethnicities join forces with us, in solidarity, to help us overcome the challenges that we were facing here. And we had a lot of people from other countries like maybe Europe, you know, where there was a lot of civil unrest, and a lot of organizations who established themselves, they were poor people organizations. They realized that it was a class struggle. And that's how you win the masses over. You know a lot of times people just, they have a feeling, they have a thought, they just need to be pushed to exercise that thought and give into that feeling. And when you show him that you've got that love and support for them. And they feel that strength, they tend to latch on, too.

**TFSR: What were some outcomes actually, of those strikes. I know it led to higher court responses and admonition of the state of California for its practices. How have things changed because of that mass movement of people, and how has that peace that was brokered, and reflection, that it was a class struggle, and not a race struggle... Where does that seem to fit in the California system to you now?**

**MS:** Well, now that they let us all out of solitary confinement, you know, that was one win. And then they can only use solitary confinement or the SHU for if you catch a SHU term. You know, it would have to be a criminal infraction, just like if you're on the streets, and you catch a case and you go to prison. They have to utilize it the way it was designed. So they can't use those practices no more. Also the guard union took a hit, because a lot of them can't work in the SHU no more and get that hazardous pay, which is like triple pay. So they lose out. The Board of Prison Terms has said "You know what? We're going to have to start letting some of these people out of prison and back into society." So the laws have been changing.

Since we've gotten into the general population, and utilize our practices, and shown them, you know, this revolutionary way of doing things. When they implemented their own self-help groups, which are like robotic programs to teach you how to have common sense the way they want you to, you see how they're doing it, and you change that narrative and create your own self-help groups. Things that you know will really work. And you're working together with other ethnicities, and you're increasing the peace and showing this younger generation "You've been misled, you've been misguided. You know, we're the ones who made mistakes, and had the

faults, it's time for us to change that." And when you do that, you see legislature saying "Okay, well, they know the truth now. They know what really happened. They know how the Three Strikes were devised. They know who pushed the crack cocaine into the neighborhoods." we're taking the power back by realizing that there's a peaceful way to get things done, there's a peaceful way to bring these changes.

And if you keep telling the truth, you take the power out of their 1% class of hands, and you win more of the masses over. Because you make people who didn't know, understand, you know, by teaching them those truths. And then they research those facts on their own and they're more willing to want to help you. So a lot of changes are still needed, but we got the ball rolling. And that's one thing that I can say is happening right now throughout the California prison system.

**TFSR:** So this year, Jailhouse Lawyer Speak, which is a coalition based around and in prisons around the US and a lot in the South, is calling for days of action, solidarity and education on the outside with folks struggling on the inside on August 21, and September 9. And I'd like to hear later about Black August and about education and the 50th anniversary of George Jackson's assassination, and how people participated in the Attica Uprising also. But I'm wondering if you can say a little bit about the importance of having people on the outside acting in solidarity and understanding the unity between inside and outside as well as the differences. And just to sort of like point to that trajectory of activity... the inspiration of the hunger strikes in California that spread the movement in Georgia, in the early 2010s, the Free Alabama Movement and the strikes that were happening in Alabama and Mississippi around that time and the sort of like chronology of struggle. Could you talk about the importance of the inside / outside solidarity and the upcoming dates of the action and education?

**MS:** Yeah, well, the inside outside solidarity is of paramount importance because we don't want separation. We don't want the 1% class to think that people in society look at us as bad people, you know? They need to understand that it's important to support us on the inside because we are the ones who will be fighting once we get out, we're the ones who are going to fight with them, to help them challenge different conditions out there that are still oppressing them out there is as it is in here. You know, it should never be a divide. It should always be unity.

You know what we sparked in California by recognizing our conditions, we're glad that it trickled over into the other states because they were up against the same type of oppressive slave conditions. I mean, they didn't start in California with the three strikes,

for example. They started in California, and that actually spread to other States, and they just call it something different, but the condition is still the same. So the importance of knowing that, will build that unity, and people outside will see the importance of this, to stand in unity with us on the inside to get things done because it takes us all in order to beat back Capitalism and Imperialism.

What we would love to see more of, is a lot more changes being done in the Constitution, like Amendment 13. Keeping those clauses there allows them to still keep those practices, those slave practices. And people on outside needs to really understand a lot more of what they're up against. And if they are working with anybody in here, we can always show them to look at Liberation Schools. It teaches you something that the American public school system didn't teach you. We teach the truth based on all cultures, how they've been oppressed, economically, politically, militarily. And the need to eradicate those backwards ways of thinking and doing, because you know who established them. And if you know that, then you can fight them a whole lot easier. So we look forward to continuing our Liberation Schools and winning the masses over that way. We look forward to supporting you all out there. As well as I know, you guys will look forward to helping us on the inside. And yeah, we can talk about it a lot more than next time I get a chance to call.

Working inside and outside is the best thing possible so that we break away from that dividing line, that they try to put there because they want to keep you separate. Unity in the masses is of paramount importance, if you want to go forward in this class struggle, because we need to unite, helping each other with whatever we got going on, that reaches a positive objective of change. You know, and like what you're doing now, this right here builds unity of the masses, builds solidarity, this reaches people so they can see their purpose. And if they need help with anything, and there's others who might have a semblance of how to make it happen for them, then, you know, by all means you should always assist. You know, and that's what will keep the unity strong. People always want to be able to lean on their comrades and loved ones and sometimes other people have better programs or something else is working, that they might not have working. And you always want to help people so that they can achieve their goals, just like how you want to achieve your goals.

**TFSR: So we're talking right now, in August, that's the 50th anniversary of the Attica uprising as well as the assassination of George Jackson, which, as I understand in 1979 began being practiced mostly by Black radical prisoners, and then by others in solidarity, the practice of Black August.**

**Can you talk a little bit about the practice, it's important to you? And also a bit about the education and the Liberation Schools?**

**MS:** Yeah. Well the purpose of keeping the practice going of Black August is what the month means to New Afrikan revolutionaries and fought and gave their life to win freedoms that we have in here. They put their life on the line to challenge these conditions. So, the Liberation Schools, from the onset is to teach that, about our history, our cultural practices, because this is something that we didn't learn in school. And when you learn through the Liberation Schools, it allows you to go out there and not compete in the capitalist market, but understand what Capitalism is all about and utilize your finances for socialist practices. You know, helping grow Black-owned businesses or other oppressed ethnic groups in the communities, businesses, and building that unity and solidarity. Because what you learn is that we all have shared cultural practices. In Howard Zinn's book *The People's History of the United States* you learn how divided line was established and by whom. You learned the importance of solidarity and unity and how to help each other, you know "Each One Teach One" practices come to mind. And you see the importance of doing so. So yeah, this whole month, we pay reverence to those who paved the way for us, basically, and continue with this study. And practice the exercising, something we do in unity. Just to feel strength.

**TFSR:** So you mentioned, like the practices and the importance of sharing this, learning and mentoring, and study, and focus, during the period of Black August, and also like redirecting funds back into socialistic endeavors. Could you talk a bit about sort of the legacy for you of some of the big ideas, and some of the big thinkers. George Jackson obviously comes to mind. His struggle, his writings have been like greatly influential to folks that are doing study behind bars. I know that you've done work on projects that have collaborated with George Jackson University. And also, I would like for you, if you if you're okay with it, to break down the term New Afrikan, which you've defined yourself as. I think some listeners may be unfamiliar with that term and some of its lineage.

**MS:** Well, the New Afrikan term is your ideology. You know, we consider this our New Afrikan being as we're descendants of our ancestors who came over here as slaves. So we don't use the term African American or Black or... We try to refrain from those terms, because those are the terms that the oppressor wants to call you and to see things in his way is just not the correct way. So that's why we call ourselves New Afrikans, it's an ideology. And all ethnicities who are revolutionary nationalists should always refer to their self

in a way that they feel comfortable, not in a way like the oppressors feel like referring to them. And you know, most of my role models, so to speak: yeah, George is one; Mao; Marx; Engels; Amílcar Cabral; Patrice Lumumba; Kwame Nkrumah; Jomo Kenyatta. All those who took the liberation stands, Che Guevara, to challenge oppression, and unite the people, and challenge the conditions that were oppressing them, not just the people. Those who sacrificed their life, paved the way for us. The spirit lives on in the hearts and minds of all of those who continue to do the same, because, as you can see, the problem still exists.

I do like Huey's concept as well, because, creating a party, which Lenin spoke about, a party or self-governing organization of the people. You know, that's basically what Communism is. And Socialism is your economic practices. So it works in hindsight, as long as you're always keeping the People in mind. When you create programs for the People, they are programs designed to help further the people along, and keep them thinking about self sufficiency. Because that's what it's all about. You don't need to compete in the capitalist market, work your way up the capitalist chain, because you'll never make it to the top. In understanding that, you want to wake up the minds of others who don't yet know that. And that way they won't be running around like dogs chasing their tail, so to speak. Lost and caught up just trying to make ends meet. They'll make things better for themselves. Okay?

**TFSR: You were just telling me about the liberation Schools. Can you talk a bit about what y all do and what the idea is?**

**MS: Okay, with us, it's always about need. So, as far as like the Liberation Schools, we try to bring the material, the cultural material, historical material, where we read it and studied it, and we practice our way of life like our ancestors did. And every program we create, is a program of need. So when we grab the certain books, by for instance, Chancellor Williams has a book called *The Destruction of Black Civilization*, and it tells you how it was destroyed in Africa. Okay, Then he tells you, he does a sequel, part two: *The Rebirth Of African Civilization*. And that tells you how to build these self sufficiency programs that are designed to allow you to implement socialist practices that are programs of need that people have, so that they can continue to raise healthy families. You know?**

Like for instance, we created one program, I have to use a pamphlet so you can get the in depth details of it. But like for instance, one of them was like building a community grocery store. And let's say for instance, I have enough finances to rent a space and build a grocery store. I use a comrade or friend in the community

that has their own construction company, and I spend money with them who is not going to charge me a lot to build the grocery store. Okay, the grocery store, all the stuff that I'm selling in a grocery store, let's say or instance there are four or five people on my street who have organic fruits and vegetables. The soil is ripe for planting and growing foods and vegetables. So I take all their groceries, all their stuff, I pay them what they want for this, reasonable price, and I turn around and sell it to other people. And what you see is the practices of implementing that. And everybody has enough. Everybody is not in need. And the concept continues.

And you can use it with other things like a clothing store. I have a friend of mine who's a good artist. So I might want to go to another friend of mine who has a linen shop, and buy some linen, and then take my other friend's art and transform the art onto the clothes and start a clothing line. You know what I mean? And go to another friend of mine who owns like a store similar to Walmart, and put my stuff in his store and have him sell it for price. So that everybody has enough money. Everybody is working and contributing to each other's businesses, and we're growing and thriving those businesses and living off of that. Those socialist practices are what's missing in the communities. And if there is a lot of, you know, what we call a mom and pop spots, the community businesses, thriving those businesses allows for a safe environment in a thriving community. And that's one of the things we teach in the Liberation Schools. One of the ways that we'll be able to implement socialist practices.

People get other things out of it. Because we don't just study New Afrikan history, we study all oppressed people's history. Mexican history, First Nation peoples history, which they call them Indians or Native Americans, because that was all of Central South America. We study American history. When you study other culture's history, you fill in the gap that's left out of American history, where all of us played a part in history, and we fill those in. We study theology, break down the different religions, show how cultures worship God in different ways. Some comrades are Muslim, so they can talk about that. Some comrades are Christian, Hebrew Israelites, Judaists, you know, I've heard all different types. We just study all the sciences that we can and some of the arts. And there's people who are more well versed in languages and in other forms of study than a lot of others, so they study on an advanced level, and then some study on a beginning level. And as long as you can grasp the concepts, and implement them into your practice it will change your way of thinking and how you relate to each other. When you see that each other has a need, and you learn about core value systems, and you try to complement those needs based on their core

value system.

**TFSR:** So, to go back to the example that you gave, of both starting markets and trading with each other and using each other's resources and such, how does the socialist approach not allow for the re-creation of a bourgeoisie within that community? Certain people have access to certain resources? And if they continue to hold on to it, doesn't that just reproduce the class dynamic?

**MS:** Yeah, if you can't show people the importance of the socialist practice, then yeah, they'll stay with a bougie mind. And that's middle class mainly because they try to reach for that 1% class. A lot of them don't make it. So if they want to continue to reach for it like that, then you have to just let them do what they do. You know, but for those who see the importance of the socialist practices, you continue to welcome them in and show them the importance of sharing those resources. Because you don't want to be materialistic, if you if you become too materialistic, then the capitalist mind has as engulfed you. You continue and you start thinking like the 1%, which is what they they want. You see it on a TV screen all the time, the lavish lifestyle. They want to showcase that so that you can see that that is success. And it's really not. You know?

I was in the streets, and I was a hustler and I used to think that that was the way to be successful. When I realized, after studying my history, when I came to prison, that all I'm doing is stepping on my own people, hurting my own people and creating genocidal practices as well as menti-cidal practices by destroying people's mind. Making them think that this is the way to be, and it is not. So you have to use a practice that we call "eradicating backwards and unprogressive ways of thinking and behavior." And when you read and study more, you see that that's the most important thing to do. You know? And when you apply that mentally, you have to encourage others to do the same. But yeah, if you can't reach everybody, so if you can't, you just got to let them pretty much fall to the wayside.

**TFSR:** I'd love to hear more about your ideas on, for instance in Corcoran, in your study group where, like people have limited access to material resources, there's... literally the institution is there to keep people separate from each other and monitor their relationships. Sharing knowledge is definitely an aspect of socialism. But is there are there other practices or or ways that people relate to each other that sort of reflect on this socialist practice you're talking about?

**MS:** Us who come from the inner city, you know, we've swallowed a lot of our differences. And we see that there's a common goal. And that common goal is keeping it peaceful on the prison yards,

and not let anyone disturb that peace so that we can make it back to society where our families and our community needs us. So we can undo the damage that we did with the selling of drugs and the gang banging and the, you know, things like that. So we pretty much understand our conditions. And we know that we are our own liberators. So we fight to do just that. We've already, because of our agreement to end all hostilities, we've already got football tournaments going, basketball tournament, softball tournaments, handball tournaments, things like that. We share in the practices of implementing the self-help groups. We know how to build better men. We know how to interact with each other to help each other thrive and overcoming any injustices that come our way. So we help each other with law work and stuff like that, filling out 602's, medical forms. Anything like that to show and build unity, which helps with the solidarity.

So coming across those lines, youngsters coming in here who have a different mindset, they see that, and then they realize "Wait a minute, we thought it was like negative and violent!" And we show them "No, this is why it was violent at first, it was CO's behind it starting all that." You know? Then of course when there is bloodshed, it's hard to stop it. But we show them the importance of building that unity, and why we're resorting to a different way of doing things. And they're starting to relate to that more. So it is a lot of action. And we were trying to take the hands out of these CO's, slowly but surely.

I mean, we're up against the California Guard's Union. It's real big and powerful. But, you know, we're not going to let that discourage us. We're going to keep doing the best that we can, so that we can overcome this and get these laws to change, get these Parole Boards, hopefully, with people from the community on them, that would have more sympathy towards us. And let us out instead of believing in Capital Punishment. But yeah, it's still a work in progress, but it's working. It's working in a good way. So much so that the governor is letting people off death row, and letting them transition into prison, so they can function in a normal environment. So hopefully they can get a Parole Board date or win their case in court. You know what I mean?

**TFSR: So I guess the specific question, again, about the place that you're being held, or at least the state. So in terms of the demonstrations that are being called for by JLS that we've talked about, or mentioned before, between August 21 and September 9, asking for folks on the outside to spread the Abolitionist message and work with comrades and connect with comrades behind bars. I was wondering if you could talk about some of the issues that are specific to the California Department of Corrections**

**and Rehabilitation system, where you're currently being held. And any sort of insights on what you would like folks on the outside to be working on, or programs that they could be coordinating with, based on the conversations that you're hearing and the reality on the ground, where you're at.**

**MS:** Well, where we're at, if comrades on the outside were building Liberation Schools, that will be of paramount importance, because now they're educating themselves on the need and the importance of transforming the inner cities into positive places, getting rid of all the negative things. And that's mainly what we're doing in here, because our self-help groups, we're finding needs, and trying to meet those needs. And what the state does is they want to create self-help groups that the prison board will accept. So they can transition back into society and be a robot basically, for them. And we don't want that, that's not therapeutic programming. Rehabilitating is people who want to change. And they know what they want to change. And if you create certain types of programs that help that change prosper and thrive, then that's what's needed.

And that's what we're trying to do. What outside comments can also do is work with organizations that are already doing things in prisons, whatever it may be. If it's creating newsletters, newspapers, podcasts. Whatever it is, so that people in here can let you know what's going on. And you can find ways to help that, to bring about those changes, that's what's needed. We really would like to see people from the community on these Parole Boards, instead of ex-police, DA's and people in the legislature who only want to control us all. We don't want to see them because they don't really want to help you. You know? If they help you transition to society, then they don't have a job. They have a job when all these prisons stay full. So that's basically what's needed.

**TFSR: Are there any sort of organizations that you want to name that folks would get involved in? Like, you were one of the founders of the Incarcerated Workers Organizing Committee? So I don't know if that's one that you'd want to name or Oakland Abolition or any other sort of groups?**

**MS:** Yeah, IWOC is always... whatever state you're in, whatever city you live in, there's a chapter, and we're trying to create more chapters. But yeah, IWOC is a good group to get involved with because their Abolitionists and activist, and a lot of them have other professional fields where they can utilize those tools to help transition us out into society and create safe space for us to be involved in community work. They challenged legislature. Initiate Justice is another organization that they really challenged legislature and try to get... They're guiding Senators and State Council members

to pass certain laws that will let us get out of prison earlier than what is expected. You've got Critical Resistance, they're pretty big, and they work to abolish prisons altogether. But a lot of them are activists. You got California Prison Focus. There are some other organizations out there in society and different states. I can't think of them all right now, but any organization that's working with inside people to make conditions better on the inside, as well as transform those communities into positive places like the Malcolm X Grassroots Movement in the South. You know, those are organizations you want to be a part of. We have a lot of organizations that we've established like the Revolutionary Intercommunal Black Panthers Party. That's an organization that deals with racial schools. Prison Lives Matter is a new organizations like Jailhouse Lawyers Speak, where we're trying to continue to connect ourselves to these other prison plantations throughout this country, where we continue to develop consciousness through our education, and our revolutionary theory. We can apply that to practice so that we can continue to grow and thrive as a class, not just as a nation, but as a class of all ethnicities, and struggle to win our freedoms.

You have to liberate the mind first before you can liberate the body. That's something that I always tell people. That's something that people can get involved with, and if they're not working with anybody on the inside, they can always go to my website and contact me, go to other comrades who might have websites and contact them directly. So that that way we can help them get that extra push they might need to get involved in something.

### **TFSR: Can you say what the what website publishes your writing?**

**MS:** Yeah, I got two different websites. One's a penpal website and it's called Wire of Hope. You can go to [wireofhope.com/prison-penpal-terrance-white](http://wireofhope.com/prison-penpal-terrance-white) and you'll see some of my writings on there. My comrade she put that that website together in order to establish relations, not so much as romance. If that happens, that's a good thing, but to get us a voice out there as well as have people in the community connect with some of us on the inside so that they can work with us with doing positive things out there. And then I got my own website is [ajamuwatu.wixsite.com/ajamuwatu](http://ajamuwatu.wixsite.com/ajamuwatu)

Ajamu means "he who fights for what he wants" and Watu means "people". So if you put that together, it's saying "he who fights for the people", a Swahili word. And you'll see a lot of my writings. My writings are mainly about education. How to build and create self-sufficiency programs, how to develop political thought, how to apply revolutionary theory to practice.

And one thing I always tell people is never be embarrassed

if you go through the political immaturity stage, because that's a given. You have to develop your own way of doing things based on your understanding. There's no big me's there's no little you's. But as long as you are studying cultural history, politics, economics, African history, you will see the holes in American history. And you'll be able to see the lies that they put out there. You know, a lot of the reading material that we read is like, Howard Zinn's *A People's History of the United States of America* which shows you how the 1% class divided the rest of us in the 99%, and how they're continuing to exploit us through their Capitalist system. The more you read, and learn, and study, the more your mind will open up. So you'll see where there's a problem, and you want to challenge that problem any way you can, as long as it warrants success. I would always encourage people to do that.

**TFSR: And Mwal... Mwalimu... \*laughs\* Sorry, I'm still learning, you know? I guess we are all learning right?**

**MS:** Yeah, well we're all alive and learning. It took me a while to pronounce them all right too. You know, it's funny because in Swahili dialect, the A's are pronounced like "e" and the I's are pronounced like "e". So it's backwards for the English vowel sound. The U was pronounced "oo" The M is pronounced "oom" you know, so it takes a while, but once you get the hang of it, it'll flow like water. \*laughs\*

**TFSR: Yeah, I guess it's just about practice, and praxis. Comrades, thank you so much for having this conversation. I really appreciate it. And I really value you taking the time and making the effort to get in touch and be in touch about this. I wish you total solidarity and take care of yourself. Keep in touch.**

**MS:** Well, thank you. Thank you. I appreciate you for having me, man. It's always a pleasure to talk to you, comrade, people of like mind, in order to go forward is always a beautiful thing. You know, I enjoy meeting new people. I enjoy working with people and helping them out as best I can. "Each one, teach one" is something that we have to continue to do. And "can't stop, won't stop" is something we have to continue to be mindful of. So yeah, I'm always here for you all as well. Thank you. Appreciate you all so much. It's always a pleasure.

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