



Media Kit:

Amnesty for Prisoners of Katrina Weekend

**Saturday, December 9, 2006
International Human Rights Day
Teach-In featuring Angela Davis**

In recognition of International Human Rights Day, **Angela Davis** makes her first trip to New Orleans Post-Katrina to speak out against human rights violations here.

Davis' visit is part of *Amnesty for Prisoners of Katrina: A Weekend of Reconciliation and Respect for Human Rights* – a two day series of events organized by Critical Resistance New Orleans, the local chapter of a national grassroots organization whose mission is to end society's use of imprisonment as an answer to social problems.

Davis will be joined by a diverse group of local leaders, including **Pastor Tom Watson, Minister Willie Muhammad, lawyer Bill Quigley, social justice activist Malcolm Suber, organizer Patricia Jones, prisoner of Katrina Rachel Francois, prisoner family member Viola Washington** and others who were criminalized during and after the flood.

**Sunday, December 10, 2006
Amnesty Sunday
Faith communities across N.O. call
for healing & reconciliation**

Local leaders and hundreds of members of the New Orleans faith community will come together on Amnesty Sunday, December 10th, to call for healing and reconciliation following the disaster of Hurricane Katrina.

Worship services will include a powerful display of solidarity with the prisoners of Katrina, as members pray for healing and reconciliation for the people and the city.

The media is invited to a pray-in outside immediately following the service at Watson Memorial Teaching Ministries, 4400 St. Charles Ave., at 12:30pm. Senior Pastor Tom B. Watson will be joined by congregants, community members and Angela Davis. The dramatic display will feature hundreds of congregants in prayer holding aloft brilliant blue fans with white doves to highlight the connection between faith-based communities and the call for human rights and amnesty.

**Abbreviated Schedule of Events:
SATURDAY, DECEMBER 9, 2006
Human Rights Teach-In**

4-6pm: Workshops

6-7:30pm: Roundtable: What do we really need to make us safe in a post-Katrina New Orleans?

8:00pm: Keynote Address by Angela Davis:
Amnesty for Prisoners of Katrina

**SUNDAY, DECEMBER 10, 2006
Amnesty Sunday**

12:30pm: Pray-In and Dove display

**ALL MEDIA EVENTS AT
WATSON MEMORIAL
4400 St. Charles Ave.**

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Media Contacts:

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: 11.30.06

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**Angela Davis to Speak Out against Human Rights Violations
in New Orleans,
Call for Amnesty for Prisoners of Katrina**

**Hundreds from Faith, Legal and Activist Communities
to Gather for Human Rights Teach-in**

Survivors of Criminalization and Imprisonment Tell Their Stories

NEW ORLEANS — In recognition of International Human Rights Day, long-time activist, former prisoner and scholar **Angela Davis makes her first trip to New Orleans Post-Katrina to speak out against human rights violations here on Saturday December 9, 2006.** With New Orleanians arrested for the “crime” of trying to feed themselves after Katrina, prisoners left to drown in locked jail cells, and many held past release dates, Davis will come together with local social justice leaders, the faith community, prisoners’ families and Katrina survivors to demand Amnesty for the Prisoners of Katrina.

Davis' visit is part of *Amnesty for Prisoners of Katrina: A Weekend of Reconciliation and Respect for Human Rights* – a two day series of events organized by Critical Resistance New Orleans, the local chapter of a national grassroots organization whose mission is to end society’s use of imprisonment as an answer to social problems. Davis will be joined by a diverse group of local leaders, including **Pastor Tom Watson, Minister Willie Muhammad, lawyer Bill Quigley, social justice activist Malcolm Suber from the People’s Hurricane Relief Fund, and local organizer Patricia Jones with the Lower Ninth Ward Empowerment Network Association.** **Rachel Francois, who was imprisoned during and after the flood, and Viola Washington, a family member of another prisoner of Katrina,** will speak about experiences of people being abused by guards, imprisoned for long periods without legal representation, and moved around the country for months without being able to contact family members.

Saturday events will begin at Watson Memorial Teaching Services, 4400 Charles Ave., with a Human Rights Teach-in from 4-6pm, followed by a Roundtable Discussion with local leaders from 6-7:30 and a keynote by Angela Davis at 8pm. Immediately preceding Davis’ address she will be joined on stage by local leaders to issue a unified call for Amnesty. Sunday December 10 events are detailed in a press release following this one.

“Locking people up in this crisis was a cruel mismanagement of city resources,” said Robert Horton, New Orleans-based Organizer with Critical Resistance, “Katrina’s aftermath reflects the way we as a nation increasingly deal with social ills: police and imprison primarily poor Black communities for ‘crimes’ that are reflections of poverty and desperation

The continuing reality in New Orleans is one of vast criminalization and mistreatment of the prisoners of Katrina, current residents and the returning population. “We need to start making the connections in our discourse and our strategies between how current overt criminalization – which is reminiscent of the use of the term ‘looter,’— is tied to our inability to return home, and how denial of basic services and employment in certain parts of town gets linked with so-called ‘crime’,” said St. Claude resident Lorie Seruntine.

In this unfolding crisis, New Orleanians face invasive background checks when seeking housing and employment. Students attend schools with more security guards and police officers than teachers and books. Drivers are racially profiled and parole checkpoints are set up in Black neighborhoods and used to violate people on parole on bogus charges. Amnesty Weekend provides a rare and exciting opportunity to learn about the uses of international human rights standards in the wake of Katrina and demand that local civic leaders remedy these violations immediately.”



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: 11.30.06

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Faith Communities call for Healing and Reconciliation during Amnesty Sunday Services Across New Orleans

Beautiful, powerful display of hundreds of brilliant blue fans with white doves to be raised in solidarity with the prisoners of Katrina during pray-in after services

NEW ORLEANS — Local leaders and hundreds of members of the New Orleans faith community will come together on Amnesty Sunday, December 10th, to call for healing and reconciliation following the disaster of Hurricane Katrina. "Our call for amnesty reflects broad community support for the reconstruction of New Orleans, one not built on a foundation of jail cells," said Pastor Tom Watson of the Watson Memorial Teaching Ministries on St. Charles in New Orleans.

When Hurricane Katrina hit, hundreds of people at Orleans Parish Prison were trapped by the flooding; even more people had their cases impacted due to multiple transfers and ruined evidence as a result of the storm. In the aftermath of Katrina, hundreds of New Orleanians with criminal charges like public intoxication and sleeping in abandoned buildings spent time in jail. Many never set eyes on a lawyer. Today, some of these New Orleanians are out of prison and still awaiting court appearances. Some are still imprisoned, and still others have a conviction on their record – damaging their present and future opportunities for jobs, housing, and education.

The themes of forgiveness, reconciliation and healing are a part of every faith tradition. A call for amnesty recognizes that the storm, the flood, and the conditions everyone faced were violent, and that in the context of that violence, an unjust system already in substantial chaos and disorder fell apart even further. "People did what they could to protect their families, to feed their neighbors, to find safety," said Walter Umrani, Officer of the Millions More Movement, Muhammad Mosque #46. "Amnesty Sunday will be an opportunity for people of faith to address genuine public safety and community needs in ways that are not about locking people up."

A powerful display of solidarity with the prisoners of Katrina will involve hundreds of congregants across New Orleans praying for healing and reconciliation for the people and the city. Immediately following the morning service, congregants will gather outside of Watson Memorial Teaching Ministries for a pray-in. The dramatic, beautiful display, featuring hundreds of congregants in prayer holding aloft brilliant blue fans with white doves, highlights the connection between faith-based communities and the call for human rights and amnesty. In most religious traditions the dove is an icon of great significance. In

the Christian church, it was the dove that brought the news that the great flood was over. In Islamic tradition, the dove protected Muhammad from his enemies. The Hindu god of love, Kamadeva, is depicted riding on a dove. In some Native American cultures, the spirits of the dead take the form of a dove immediately after leaving the body.

“Doves are known for having a fierce desire to return home to their nest and their family, much like folks who remain imprisoned or displaced because of the storm,” said Ebony Hawkins, member of The Sixth Baptist Church. “It is our responsibility as people of faith to promote healing and reconciliation and to bring them home.”

Participating houses of worship and religious leaders include: Christian Unity Baptist Church, Rev. Dwight Webster; Muhammad Mosque #46, Minister Willie Muhammad; The Sixth Baptist Church, Pastor Torin Sanders; Watson Memorial Teaching Ministries, Senior Pastor Tom B. Watson; and Zion Baptist Church, Reverend Tyrone Edwards, with more to confirm.

The media is invited to a pray-in immediately following the service outside Watson Memorial Teaching Ministries, 4400 St. Charles Ave., at 12:30pm. Senior Pastor Tom B. Watson will be joined by congregants, community members and Angela Davis.

Amnesty Sunday is part of a weekend of events entitled *Amnesty for Prisoners of Katrina: A Weekend of Reconciliation and Respect for Human Rights* – organized by Critical Resistance New Orleans, the local chapter of a national grassroots organization whose mission is to end society’s use of imprisonment as an answer to social problems.

Saturday December 9 events will begin at Watson Memorial Teaching Services, 4400 Charles Ave., with a Human Rights Teach-in from 4-6pm, followed by a Roundtable Discussion with local leaders from 6-7:30 and a keynote by Angela Davis at 8pm. Immediately preceding Davis’ address she will be joined on stage by local leaders to issue a unified call for Amnesty.



Critical Resistance hosts Amnesty Weekend, a time of reconciliation & respect for human rights Dec. 9th & 10th.

Saturday 12/09/06

In recognition of International Human Rights Day, long-time activist, former prisoner author and scholar, Angela Y. Davis will speak out on Amnesty for Prisoners of Katrina.

SCHEDULE OF EVENTS:

4:00-6:00PM - Skill-Building Workshops:

Fighting For Your Human Rights

6:00-7:30PM - Roundtable Discussion:

What Do We Really Need to Make Us Safe in a Post-Katrina New Orleans?

8:00PM - Keynote Address:

Amnesty for Prisoners of Katrina

SPEAKERS & WORKSHOP FACILITATORS:

Rev. Daniel Buford, People's Institute for Survival & Beyond,
Allen Temple Baptist Church, Meiklejohn Civil Liberties Institute

Rachel Francois, Prisoner of Katrina Survivor

Masai Ehehosi, American Friends Service Committee

Mwalimu Johnson, Executive Secretary,

Capital Post-Conviction Project of Louisiana

Patricia Jones, Founder and Executive Director,
Lower Ninth Ward Neighborhood Empowerment

Network Association
Mayaba Liebenenthal, Critical Resistance

Minister Willie Muhammad, Muhammad Mosque #46
Bill Quigley, Professor of Law, Loyola University, New Orleans

Malcolm Suber, National Organizing Coordinator,
Peoples Hurricane Relief Fund

Linda Thurston, Critical Resistance
Viola Washington, Family Member of Prisoner of Katrina Survivor

Tom B. Watson, Senior Pastor,
Watson Memorial Teaching Ministries

Sunday 12/10/06

SUNDAY DECEMBER 10, 2006

Local leaders and members of the New Orleans faith community will come together on AMNESTY SUNDAY, to call for healing and reconciliation following the disaster of Hurricane Katrina.

PARTICIPATING HOUSES OF WORSHIP & RELIGIOUS LEADERS:

Muhammad Mosque #46, Minister Willie Muhammad;

The Sixth Baptist Church, Pastor Torin Sanders;

Watson Memorial Teaching Ministries,

Senior Pastor Tom B. Watson;

Zion Baptist Church, Reverend Tyrone Edwards

(list in formation)

SCHEDULE OF EVENTS

12:30PM—Pray-In -

Watson Memorial Teaching Ministries

4400 St. Charles Ave.

Immediately following the services at Watson Memorial Teaching Ministries, congregants will gather outside to pray for healing and reconciliation for the people and the city of New Orleans. Senior Pastor Tom B. Watson will be joined by congregants, community members and Angela Davis.

criticalresistance.org/katrina

504-304-3784

2601 Tulane Avenue, #444



Criminalization

Louisiana Weekly

'Looter' label inappropriate according to respondents of a national poll

November 7, 2005

A nationwide poll has found that a majority of people of color view Hurricane Katrina survivors accused of looting as simply trying to take care of their families and their needs.

Among other questions, the poll asked "Thinking about the people in New Orleans who entered stores and took food, furniture, clothing and TV sets in the first days after Hurricane Katrina, do you think they were looters and criminals or do you think they were people trying to take care of their families and their needs?" By nearly a 2 to 1 margin (57% to 29%) African Americans answered that they were people trying to take care of their families and their needs. Similarly, the poll found that more Asians and Hispanics agreed, but by slimmer margins...

Hundreds of people have been booked in a makeshift jail set up in a Greyhound Station, many for the 'crime' of feeding and clothing themselves during the hurricane. Under Louisiana law looting is a felony that can carry a sentence of up to 15 years in prison at hard labor... Louisiana has had the highest rate of incarceration of any state in the U.S. Blacks are grossly over-represented making up 72% of the state prison population, while only representing 35% of the total population.

The New Orleans Times-Picayune
**Inmate lost in system resurfaces:
After 13 months he gets day in court**

November 29, 2006

After spending 13 months in three different state prisons without speaking to a single defense attorney, prosecutor or judge, Pedro Parra-Sanchez pleaded innocent... to an assault charge levied against him six days after he moved to New Orleans to work in the battered city's recovery... At his arraignment -- a court proceeding the law requires to take place within, at most, a month after charges are filed -- [he] could speak only through a translator... [He] disappeared into the chaos of the post-Katrina collapse of the city's legal system, which after the flood booked suspects through "Camp Greyhound" at the bus station, and scattered thousands of pretrial inmates across the state with no access to legal assistance for months.

Associated Press

Sausage lands elderly church leader in prison: Despite age, diabetes and desperate pleas, she remained in jail 16 days

September 16, 2005

A 73-year-old church deaconess, never before in trouble with the law, spent two weeks (in jail)... her bail a stiff \$50,000. Police say the grandmother from New Orleans took \$63.50 in goods from a looted deli the day after Katrina struck. Family and eyewitnesses insisted Maten was an innocent woman who had gone to her car to get some sausage to eat only to be mistakenly arrested by tired, frustrated white officers... Even the store owner didn't want her charged.



Criminalization (continued)

New York Times

Judge Steps In for Poor Inmates Without Justice: Judge Arthur L. Hunter Jr. has suspended criminal prosecutions in most cases involving public defenders in New Orleans.

May 23, 2006

...Nine months after the storm, more than a thousand jailed defendants have had no access to lawyers, the judge says, because the public defender system is desperately short of money and staffing, without a computer system or files or even a list of clients.

...Judge Hunter, 46, a former New Orleans police officer, is moving to let some of the defendants without lawyers out of jail...suspended prosecutions in most cases involving public defenders (a)nd...granted a petition to free a prisoner facing serious charges without counsel, and is considering others. It is, he said in an interview, his duty under the Constitution.

Ronald Dunn... was arrested...10 days before Hurricane Katrina hit, on a charge of possessing crack cocaine. Like the vast majority of the defendants in criminal court here, he cannot afford to hire a lawyer, and so would normally be represented by a public defender. Handcuffed, shackled and wearing jailhouse orange, Mr. Dunn told the court that as the water rose, he spent four frightening days without food in the House of Detention, and was then moved from prison to prison, losing touch with his family. In the nine months since the hurricane, he said, he has never even spoken to a lawyer.

Associated Press

Katrina looters get 15 years in prison

June 29, 2006

Three people convicted of hauling away liquor, wine and beer from a grocery store after Hurricane Katrina were sentenced to 15 years in prison.

The judge said he wanted to send a message that looting would not be tolerated when he gave the maximum sentence...A jury convicted the trio May 2 on a portion of the state's looting law that took effect two weeks before the Aug. 29 storm. The amended law set a three-year minimum sentence, and a maximum of 15 years in prison, for looting during a declared state of emergency.

They were convicted of attempting to leave the grocery with 27 bottles of liquor and wine, six cases of beer and one case of wine coolers, six days after Katrina made landfall.



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| <p>The problem:</p> | <p>The U.S. relies on prisons and policing as “solutions” for social problems. That approach fails daily, and as a result, our communities are being destroyed. Some examples:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In the past two decades, the number of people in U.S. prisons increased 400%. • Prisons are filled with 68% people of color. • 4 million people who have been in prison face barriers to jobs, parental rights, public assistance, and housing. • In neighborhoods where people are most affected by mass imprisonment and policing, we see the direct impact of our annual \$50 billion investment in prisons and policing: closed schools, homelessness, basic health care is out of reach, and poverty remains a reality in the richest country on earth. |
| <p>Our vision:</p> | <p>Genuinely safe, healthy communities that do not rely on prisons and policing to respond to harm.</p> |
| <p>Who we are:</p> | <p>Critical Resistance is a national grassroots organization whose mission is to end society’s use of imprisonment and policing as an answer to social, political and economic problems. CR has multiple chapters across the country and thousands of members and supporters.</p> |

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| <p>What we do:</p> | <p>Toward the goal of building a grassroots movement to demand change, Critical Resistance works to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shrink the system by stopping prison and expansion and promoting policies that reduce the number of people in prison and the reliance on policing. • Shift public opinion and public policy through media and public education work. • Build & support leadership of people directly impacted by the prison industrial complex . |
| <p>Our history:</p> | <p>Critical Resistance's achievements include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Organizing three major conference where people most impacted by imprisonment served as the experts, bringing together thousands in New Orleans, New York and California. • Building multiple grassroots chapters across the country. • Forcing a halt to California's massive 20-year prison-building boom. • Creating unique and broad based coalitions that reach far beyond the usual participants. • Building leadership development projects with people in post prison and alternative prison programs. • Helping to defeat moves to increase policing and jails. • Producing two prisoner newsletters and Critical Resistance Radio — giving voice to people inside prisons. • Developing alternative public safety models. • Working to popularize the idea of abolition of the prison industrial complex as part of a long term strategy to build safe & healthy communities. |

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