

Alternatives While Working.

Self-Reliance

By. Reggie West

A Community's people, with their creative energy and labour, are the greatest resource it has, but an increasing number, **mostly** young, are MIA in groups or prisons, into which so many rush obliviously when they act out Hollywood-constructed dramas, images, and stereotypes to "make it" in the midst of still-white supremacist and hierarchical America. Far too many have embraced the 30 years of culturally-contrived amnesia that has mis-educated them to believe in the very system that exiles them to the cages. Valuable human beings - Community residents, who could have and should have been the teachers, nurses, doctors, mechanics, public servants, and builders of their Communities are disappointed.

Among the disappeared and exiled, many haven't been formally educated or taught to read well, having dropped out or been driven out of the failing School systems, weakened both by funding and general disregard for and animosity towards the children of the working and underemployed classes, particularly when Black, Latino, or Asian. There are a few, if only, educational or rehabilitation-oriented programs within prisons. On a recent KPFA radio program, a fraud artist pointed out that many of California's prisons are on lock-down at any given time, meaning that the few programs that do exist, however reluctantly and apathetically, do not function much of the time.

In the prison Channel houses, forgetfulness or oblivion

Battles like quicklime on the spirit, intelligence and bodies of exiled and marginalized young people. A sense of responsibility to the community is replaced with rage, and beneath only posturing, despair, self-mutilation, and suicide.

Alternatives? To re-imagine communities with resources to educate children, to provide work with sufficient income, to get drugs and the weapons of collective suicide out, to make the streets safe again for children, elders and the young woman and man. This is similar to the 10-point program the old Black Panther Party called for, a program that in slightly different manifestations is still understood world-wide as necessary for community and nations' health and well-being for peace and justice.

It's time to take to learn, to get educated or develop the social or political conscience necessary to challenge the systematic social genocide of our communities. No one has to stay lost; no one is not subject to change. The question is: will you change yourself, have a hand in your destiny and development, or will you accept the changes forced at you by the prison systems' dog-eat-dog programming that wants you to become a gladiator and a puppet?

There are many who are looking for ways to break such a deterministic cycle. Meanwhile, what? The prisoner's alternative is not to wait for alternatives and social change from the outside, but to begin a process of reconstruction on the inside.

To be a builder, or to be a demolisher, those are the



choices. It's easy to demolish, to destroy. You  
can have a one-man or 100-man working crew, but  
to build you have to have a bricklayer willing to  
lay foundations, willing to take care of your masonry-  
work and work with others. It means being humble  
and of being work because you have to take a  
whole lot of human and community potential with  
you. It means learning what you need to know. Find  
a teacher, no matter what that may be. Colors,  
or your color, or are low on the ladder of that oc-  
cultural prison concept of "respect". Prison culture  
doesn't challenge any prisoners true respect, or better  
said, dignity; the man's still pulling the strings. If  
you can't learn a skill you want where you are like  
being a doctor or an environment engineer, learn all  
you can about the world. Learn about Spanish,  
or English or Chinese or history. Learn about other so-  
cieties. Learn about communities' fight for self-deter-  
mination and self-determination. The more you study  
about the world, the better able you will be to see  
where you are and how you fit in the world. Choose to be  
on the side of the people who are not the greedy ones  
and bosses.

Of course it's easier to succumb to the haters who  
want to demolish your community and to hang with  
those who participate in the evils of their own commu-  
nities through ignorance and individualism. Let's hope you  
choose the path of self-determination that you have put aside  
when you were 14 or that was discouraged in school.  
There is nothing more from without, and nothing from  
within. Nothing can be put inside of you, and con-  
tinue to be put inside of you from the world from  
within. Without skills, knowledge and dignity of

connection to and love for your community. Become  
a warrior for reconstruction.

Set a premium on education. No one can take  
it from you. Ultimately, knowledge and skills are  
more valuable than gold and gems, or anything  
you may have possessed for a few brief moments  
in life. When prison became your home with its  
prolonged lesson in absence.

Love, Peace and Power  
Your Brother in Struggle  
Ruggin...