

Prisoners Write On: “What to the Prisoner Is Your Fourth of July?”

In early June, *Revolution* issued a call to our readers in prisons to “draw on all you have learned about the world and your life experience” to express their thinking on the theme “What to the prisoner is your Fourth of July?” The call began with a quote from a 1852 statement by Frederick Douglass, a former slave and a leader in the struggle against slavery, titled “What to the American slave is your Fourth of July?” Here are some letters we have received so far in response to the call.

“To this prisoner and great-great-grandson of a slave... ‘their’ Fourth of July is a very blatant unapologetic lie!”

What to the Prisoner is Your Fourth of July?

I don’t know what “Their” Fourth of July is to my fellow prisoners. But, to this prisoner and great-great-grandson of a slave (how can I call myself an African-American, when I don’t see the same equality as other Americans?) “their” Fourth of July is a very blatant unapologetic lie!

“Their” Fourth of July shall remind me of the arrogance and ruthlessness they showed in forming this so-called Republic. As it shall remind me that “their” amber waves of grain was fertilized and irrigated with my ancestors’ blood, sweat, and tears!

“Their” Fourth of July, shall remind me that when the “Founding Fathers” declared that all Men are created equal, that they’re endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty, and the Pursuit of Happiness: That they hold these truths to be self-evident; they were not thinking of my ancestors as Men, nor humans, for that matter!

“Their” Fourth of July, shall remind me that when Rev. Samuel Francis Smith penned, “My country, ‘tis of thee, Sweet land of liberty,” he was, definitely, not including my ancestors!

“Their” Fourth of July, shall remind me of the double standards, and different interpretations of the Laws for certain “caste” of individuals that live in America nowadays!

Now on this Fourth of July, as I sit in my High Security Cell, I shall feel the lashes on my back from long ago; the heartbreak of the families that were sent to different plantations. I shall feel the slave masters’ violations of the slaves they raped; mentally, physically, and emotionally. I shall feel the grip of death, just as Ramarley Graham, David Sal Silva, Terry Laffitte, Trayvon Martin, and many others did at the hands of the “so-called good Americans.” I shall feel the desperation, but, also, the determination of all the women who are fighting those who are trying to oppress and repress them!

So, as this Fourth of July reminds me that the more things change, the more they remain the same. I shall contemplate on the fact that I was born in America, but never truly treated as American. And wonder if I should take pride in being a bad, un-American person of color?

Oh, one more thing this Fourth of July shall remind me of—Revolution—nothing less!

In The Struggle!

“A ready made plate of illusory freedom”

“What To The Prisoner Is Your Fourth of July?”

To me it is a ready made plate of illusory freedom served to us that we are coerced into accepting.

The 4th of July is yet another facade of illegitimacy that the system perpetuates by alleging it is built of freedom and liberty for all. When is actually it is a capitalist machine of exploitation, assassination, control, imperialism and mass incarceration.

The 4th of July popping of fireworks sounds like a totalitarian hand slapping the face of a slave. While their celebrative clacking of champagne glasses sound like the clinking of our shackles and handcuffs closing around our lives.

So as I sit here in prison I think the 4th of July isn’t so much a celebration “for us” as it is “of us”... of us being exploited, led to believe a huge fallacy and of our slow demise.

“The height of hypocrisy on display”

...I wanted to quickly answer the call made to prisoners in *Revolution* asking, “What to the Prisoner is Your Fourth of July?” The height of hypocrisy is on display every 4th of July and it’s important for all to know that the birth of this nation is nothing to celebrate. To celebrate the 4th of July is to celebrate the freedom of white settlers to massacre indigenous people and steal their land further west. It means celebrating the freedom of slaveowners to expand the slave system beyond the thirteen colonies. It means celebrating the freedom of Manifest Destiny advocates to wage war and steal half of Mexico. And it means celebrating the freedom of capitalist-imperialists to viciously exploit and violently oppress people the world over ever since. Objectively, that is the freedom that is being celebrated. Across the country people will defy all logic and express their gratitude to soldiers for the sacrifices they make to protect “our freedom.” It doesn’t matter that these troops are actually waging imperialist wars in order to DENY freedom in the countries they bomb, invade, and occupy, or that the only real threat to our freedom is here in this country and is posed by our own government. I like to tell people that in order to be patriotic in this country you have to be either a white supremacist or completely ignorant of its history. For anyone who approaches a study of history and current events with an open mind, who honestly pursues the truth no matter where it will lead, Frederick Douglass’s words will ring as true today as they did in 1852 and they “will say with me, that, for revolting barbarity and shameless hypocrisy, America reigns without a rival.”

Thanks again to you, all the PRLF volunteers, and all your donors for the very important work that you do. You’re changing lives that will help you change the world. Keep up the great work. I hope to hear from you soon.

In Solidarity

“The day of genocide unleashed on the oppressed”

I seen your call for thoughts on July 4th so i thought i would send you this short writing on thoughts i had on the subject, i hope they help in some small way...

The day of genocide unleashed on the oppressed that remains hanging around our necks like a heavy chain dripping in blood, this is the Amerikkkan holiday of July 4th.

A day that celebrates colonialism and its tentacles, that have sucked the life force of so many on this continent and around the world, from that first day of tragedy.

The oppressors holiday which seeks to uphold white supremacy through its jingoistic spirit and well heeled vestiges, candy coating exported horror and internal oppression is this Imperial cookout.

The tombs that hold the poor in cells, Padded in concrete see not the fireworks that sear societies hearts and minds with illusions of grandeur on this day of mourning.

Torture centers have captured thousands who continue to resist the colonizers holiday who are isolated until we surrender, until we become numb, until we expire or until we transform because of this day of Contact.

I stare at the off white wall in front of my torture cell and i listen to extreme silence, i look for a window or shaft of light and none exist and once more i grasp how foul is the Fourth of July to the prisoner.



Under California’s three-strikes law, Donald Jones, 42, was sentenced to 76 years to life after being convicted of having a stolen lawnmower and an illegal knife while on parole in 1996.