

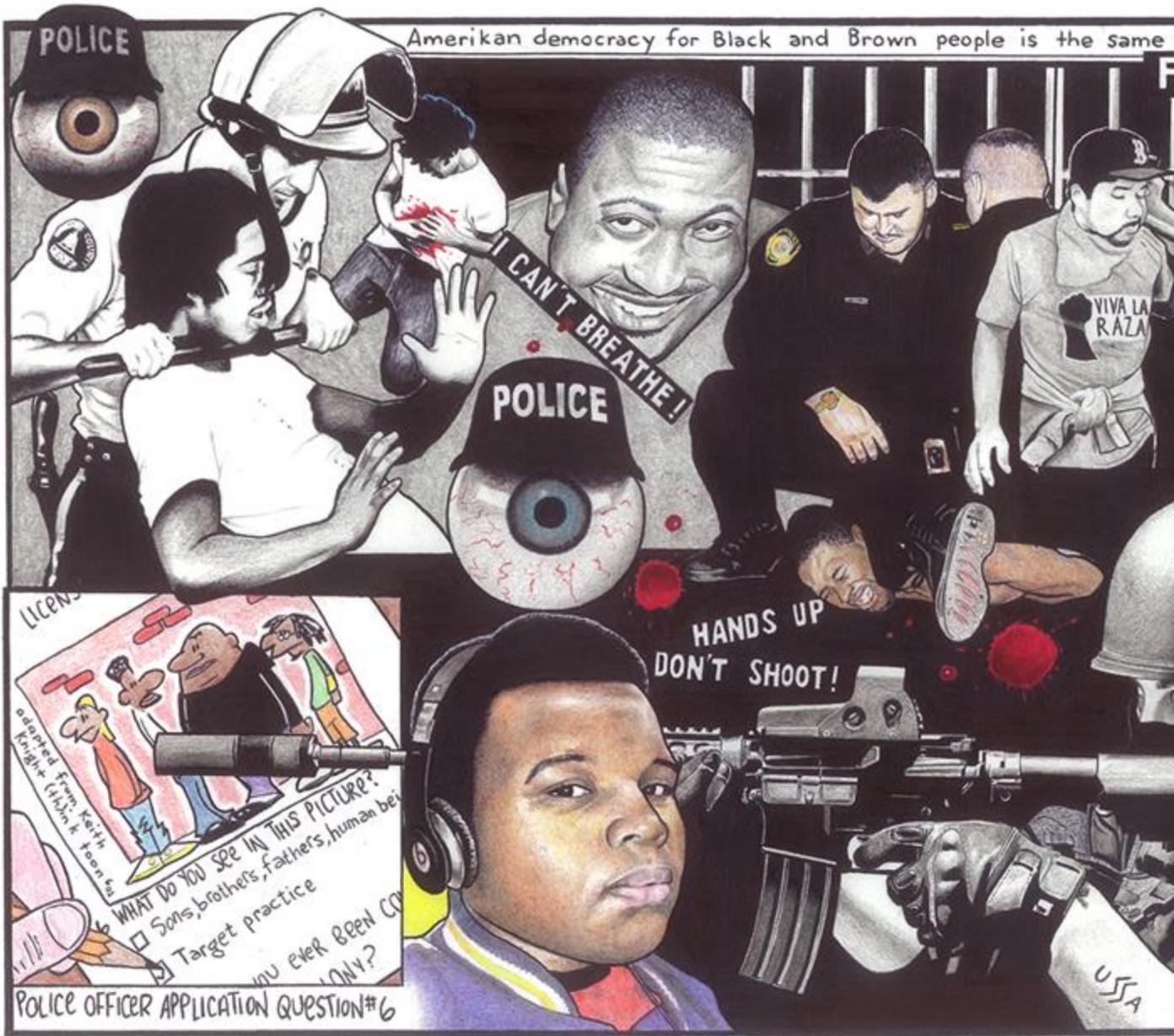
Reflections on White Supremacy by Anti-Imperialist Political Prisoner Jaan K. Laaman

This wide-ranging essay, written by anti-imperialist U.S. political prisoner, Jaan K. Laaman, one of the original Ohio-7/United Freedom Front defendants, lays out a historical and current analysis of white supremacy in the United States. This essay is part of Abolition's inaugural issue.

Recently a smart progressive retired English professor remarked, "how can it be that in late 2016, police are routinely shooting and often killing Black people with almost no legal consequences?" Police in the United States have been killing Black and other people of color, just like this for 20, 30, 50 years and more. Back then they used to totally get away with it and today, not much has changed.

One big difference now, is that many of these killings are caught on phone cameras and put online and thus, seen by millions. In the last few days, we are again witnessing footage of police murdering Black people making the national news, and new protests and resistance are erupting as a result of these murders. Nonetheless, cops are rarely charged with any wrongdoing and even when they are, very few are ever convicted of any crime. For example, in April 2015, Freddie Gray Jr., a 25-year-old Black man, was arrested by police in Baltimore. Freddie Gray had three fractured vertebrae and a crushed voice box, which he suffered during transport in a police van. While in the police van, Gray fell into a coma and subsequently died; his death was due to injuries to his spinal cord. Although six officers faced charges related to the murder of Freddie Gray, they were all ultimately let off without any convictions.

An even more typical example, of police killing with impunity, is the decision of the Prosecutor and Grand Jury in Cleveland not to charge the two white cops who shot and killed a 12-year-old Black boy named Tamir Rice. In 2014, Tamir Rice was playing with a toy pistol in a park outside a recreation center near his home. Two Cleveland cops drove up and within 2 seconds, one cop repeatedly shot him. They left him lying on the ground, not even attempting to give him first aid. Tamir died of the gunshot wounds. The Cleveland Prosecutor said, "it was a tragedy," but the police did not break any laws or regulations and a Grand Jury absolved them of any wrongdoing.



“Police Fascism” – Art: Kevin “Rashid” Johnson, 1859887, Clements Unit, 9601 Spur 591, Amarillo TX 79107. (image [via SF Bayview](#))

Police Violence Today

Life in the USA means white cops routinely, that is, on a daily basis, killing people of color. The government and legal authorities always have and continue to rule almost all of these killings as lawful and acceptable actions of the state. So how can this be, that in the 21st century in a country supposedly based on law, Black people and other people of color can be routinely abused and even killed by agents of the state?

It’s not a mistake and it isn’t about Republicans or Democrats. It is a historical and ongoing reality that people of color face institutional disparity and discrimination from all aspects of the U.S. state

apparatus. On a human individual level, a large percentage of white people have at least some prejudicial attitudes towards people of color. It is true that throughout history, especially in the 20th century, great leaders and massive popular struggles confronted and challenged institutional discrimination and racist practices. Marcus Garvey, W.E.B. Dubois, Malcolm X, Rosa Parks, Martin Luther King Jr., Cesar Chavez, Fannie Lou Hamer, H. Rap Brown, Huey P. Newton, Assata Shakur, all these and so many more outstanding reformers and/or revolutionary leaders and activists, contributed significantly to the struggle for justice, freedom, and equality for Black people and all people of color in the United States.

Yes, progress has been made. Barack Obama, the first Black man to be President, was twice elected. Yet everywhere we look, right on the surface and especially if we dig deeper, institutional discrimination, prejudice and racist practices and abuses continue in all aspects of life in the United States.

In 2016, the USA is a majority white country. The United States comprises 5% of the world's population, but incarcerates 25% of the world's prisoners. The majority of prisoners across the U.S. are people of color. And on a daily basis Black men, women and even children are shot and often killed by mainly white cops, who almost always are cleared of any wrongdoing.

These are the indisputable realities in early 21st century life in the United States. If we look back historically we can see even more blatant and vicious racist abuses and practices in all areas of life, directed against all people of color. This began with the earliest European contact and conquest of the Americas. Genocide, land theft, slavery of Indigenous people and the African slave trade, this was the origin of all the modern countries in North, Central and South America.

Resistance to Racism

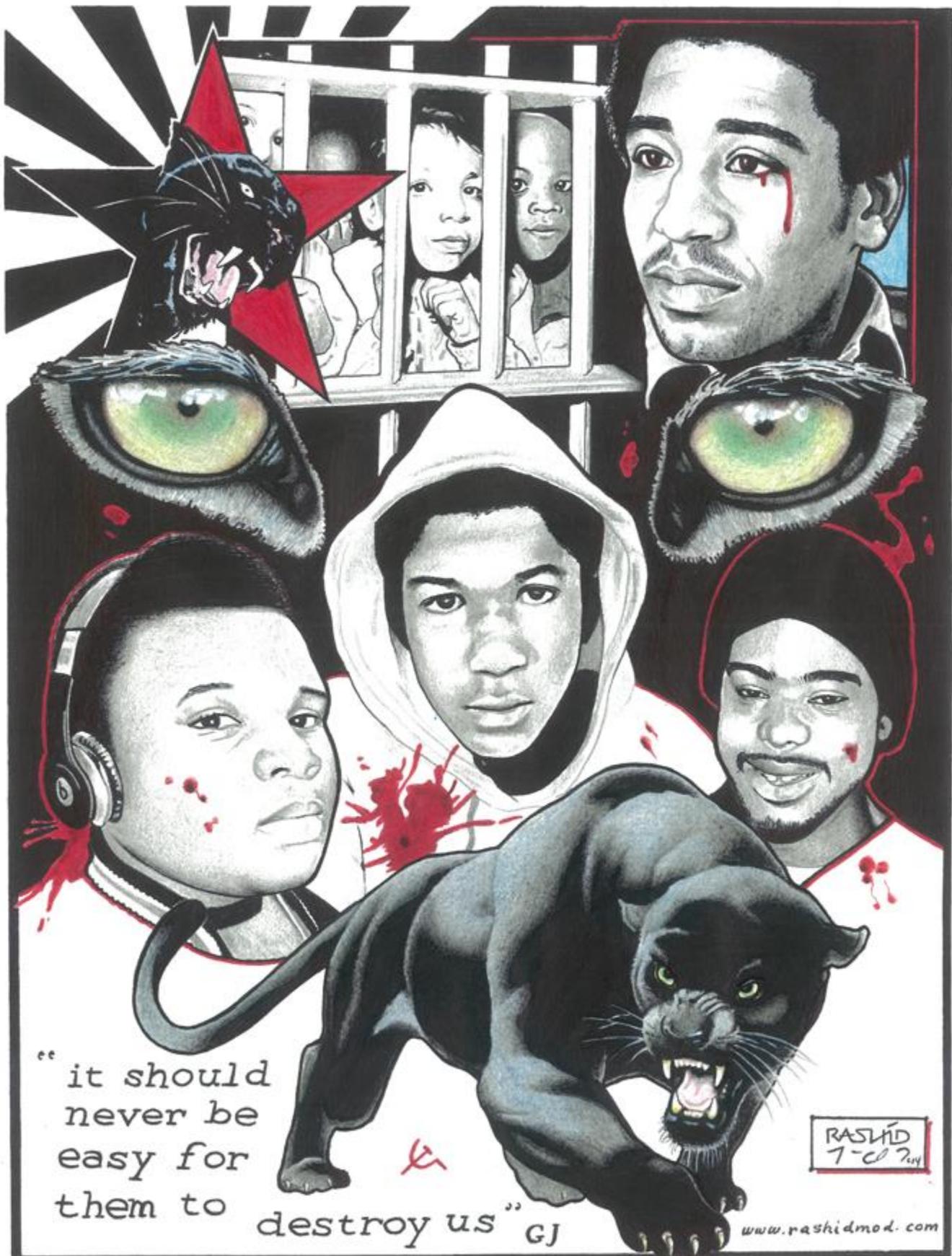
From the early period of colonialism, when white supremacy was being constructed on lies, material benefits based on white skin privileges and the super exploitation of Black labor, there also was opposition and resistance to this hateful thinking and practice. Native and Black people found many ways to resist and oppose slavery, from running away to burning down the plantation, sometimes with the slave owner still inside. From these earliest times of resistance, there were white people who supported and assisted with the escapes and uprisings. The "underground railroad" was operational for well over 100 years. Networks, often of white homes and farms, gave refuge and assistance to Blacks who escaped from slave plantations and traveled north, sometimes all the way to Canada, to seek freedom.

The Abolitionist movement, actively worked for the end of slavery. It included many white activists and leaders. Although fewer in number, there also were militant white abolitionists like John Brown, who literally, with guns in hand, freed Black people held as slaves on plantations in Missouri and Virginia.

There have always been white people, often in leftist and revolutionary organizations and sometimes from religious groups, who have allied with and supported the freedom struggle and the National Liberation struggles of New African/Black, Native/Indigenous, Puerto Rican and Chicano people. White people were in the Civil Rights movement, Communists in labor and community struggles, students, anti-racists and anti-imperialist activists supported the Black Power struggles. In the 80's and 90's the John Brown Anti-Klan Committee actively organized against racist attacks and terror, whether the racists were in white robes or blue uniforms. Other anti-racist formations, like the Partisan Defense Committee, which is still active today, organized large anti-Klan rallies in many cities. In 2016, we see the Movement for Black Lives mobilizing on a nationwide level, including the recent release of their comprehensive [platform](#). We also see this movement gaining solidarity and

support from a variety of white activists and organizations, as well as from other communities and people of color.

White supremacy, in theory and in actual racist practice, has always had opposition. This resistance has and does include white people acting as allies and supporters of nationalist organizations and working in multinational formations.



"it should never be easy for them to destroy us" GJ

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“It Should Never Be Easy for Them to Destroy Us” – Art: Kevin “Rashid” Johnson, 1859887, Clements Unit, 9601 Spur 591, Amarillo TX 79107 (image [via SF Bayview](#))
“Freedom is a Constant Struggle”

Many changes have and continue to occur in U.S. society. Change, of course, is the only constant in all life and reality. But the question my sister, the English professor, asked, how can racial discrimination and racist murders of people of color still be happening every day, can only be understood and answered by realizing that the false and ugly ideology of white supremacy continues to exist. This false ideology was the underlying ideological foundation of what were the British colonies that transformed into the slave owning U.S. republic, which grew into U.S. imperialism and that today exists as the main military and imperialist superpower in the world. Many changes have occurred, including progress and advances in human and public rights, but underneath it, the ideology of white supremacy still exists and corrupts the U.S.. This false ideology manifests itself in public acts and attacks, and in private thoughts and motivations.

White cops murdering Black children, millions of people of color facing discrimination in a myriad of ways, even while we have a President who is Black. So, a final point about the false ideology of white supremacy. The fundamental and necessary changes, that we the vast majority of people in the U.S. very much need and want, will only be achieved once we can unite and work together for our common good. Racism and prejudicial thinking has been the main weapon used against working people – common people, to break our unity and defeat our struggles for progress, justice, a better life, for a revolutionary future of hope and peace. Again and again strikes have been broken, community efforts derailed and sections of people have been misled and misdirected to act against their common interests because of racism and racial prejudice.

The false ideology of white supremacy has been the main weapon used against us, common people, working people, farmers, miners, teachers, shop keepers, unemployed people, and yes even prisoners too. Most of us have had some direct experience dealing with the negative impact of white supremacist ideology. Whether at work, in school or in the community, it is likely that some of our struggles have come up short or were defeated, because we were unable to sustain our unity in the face of the old “divide and conquer” tactics, based on racist thinking and perhaps weak or racist leadership. Many decades of community activism and revolutionary organizing all across the U.S., have made clear that no matter what the specifics of the struggle, unity is always necessary to sustain the effort and to actually win. As Mumia Abu-Jamal has famously stated, “when we fight, we win.” The main weapon used against popular struggle is and has been, to divide us based on racism and playing to lies of white supremacist ideology. Unity is our strength and rejecting racism is necessary for unity. Racism will continue to be used against us, until we expose it and simply reject it, for the lies and fabrications that it is.

About the author: Jaan K. Laaman is a long held U.S. political prisoner, one of the original Ohio-7/United Freedom Front defendants. Jaan is the editor of [4struggle.org](#), a primary voice of political prisoners in the U.S. Jaan has two BA's, one in Sociology and one in Psychology, from Saint Mary College in Kansas. Jaan can be directly contacted at:

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