

Troy Davis & Life after Death. Where do we go from here, chaos or community?

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On Wednesday September 21st, 2011 at 11:08 pm

Troy Anthony Davis, a Black man, was murdered by lethal injection for allegedly killing a white police officer. Despite the millions of people worldwide, including former Commander In Chief Jimmy Carter and the Pope, calling for his clemency, a new trial or a pardon, the Supreme Court of the United States took it upon themselves to have the moral authority to decide the value of his life. Throughout the 22 years of his incarceration he maintained his innocence. In addition to that, no murder weapon was ever located and several of the witnesses have retracted their statements because they were coerced by police offers to name Troy Davis as the guilty party. Ironically, three months earlier Johannes Mehserle, a white police officer served only 11 months on a two year sentence, after being captured on video killing 22 year old Blackman named, Oscar Grant in Oakland California. Oscar Grant at the time of his murder was facedown, handcuffed and unarmed. A California judge ruled that Mehserle should be released for good conduct and time served. Even more ironic, is that the day Troy Davis was executed, the Congressional Black Caucus without even publicizing a statement to the family of Troy Davis, began its annual legislative session a few blocks away from the Supreme Court of the United States. Finally, the most ironic fact of them all is this is happening under the watch of America's first Black president, Barack Obama. Barack Obama choose to remain silent, even with hundreds of Howard University students protesting (some of whom were arrested), in front of his home at the White House.



How was this able to happen during a time when there are so many Black people in prominent positions of influence and power? How was this able to happen when thousands of people across the country took to the streets in outrage and protest? This was able to happen because the Black community, as a whole, is not organized. As a whole, the Black community in America lacks organized votes, lacks organized economic resources and lacks the ability to defend its community in an organized fashion.

Malcolm X once stated, “Of all our studies, history is best qualified to reward our research.” History has shown that constructive institutionalized change in America for people of African descent has only taken place when demands were backed by the power of an organized body. An example of this can be seen in the *Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters and Maids*.

In 1925 a group of Pullman Porters and Maids were organized to put their collective labor into a union, so that they could receive better wages and working conditions. Through years of consistent uncompromising struggle and sacrifice and leadership of A. Phillip Randolph, C. L. Dellums and Milton Price Webster, they were able to receive a charter in the American Federation of Labor (AFL).

Another example of the power of organization can be seen in the movement of the late 1970's in New York City, by a group called *Concerned Leaders and Citizens to Save Our Youth*. Initiated by Sam Pinn, Jitu Weusi, Albert Vann and Rev. Herbert Daughtry, this organization worked to give an uncompromising voice to the Black people of NY, in response to the numerous unchallenged acts of police brutality. In December of 1977 the group mobilized what they called “Black Christmas 1977”, which would lead to ten months of citywide economic boycotts and demonstrations. As a result of their consistent efforts, they were able to achieve a

ten point agreement which included: minority bank deposits and media advertising, employment in the construction and maintenance of Fulton Street Mall, and a community crisis fund financed by the businesses in the community. Moreover, the group established a police investigation unit, a community patrol task force, and held political conventions to educate the masses of people on electoral issues.

Based upon its local success, in the summer of 1980, this local group held a convention in which over 1,000 delegates from 35 states and five foreign countries came together and formed the *National Black United Front (NBUF)*. Due to consistent hard work, dedication and sacrifice, NBUF is still in existence today with chapters in every region of the country and international affiliates.

These examples are cited to show that only way forward for people of African descent after Troy Davis is through **ORGANIZATION**. As seen in the cases of Sean Bell, the Jena Six and Rodney King, the Black community has too often mobilized into large numbers, but was left feeling like “*now what?*” The energy and the spirit of the people, in particularly the Hip Hop Generation, surrounding the case of Troy Davis must be channeled correctly into organizations working for self-determination, self-respect and self-defense of African people.

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