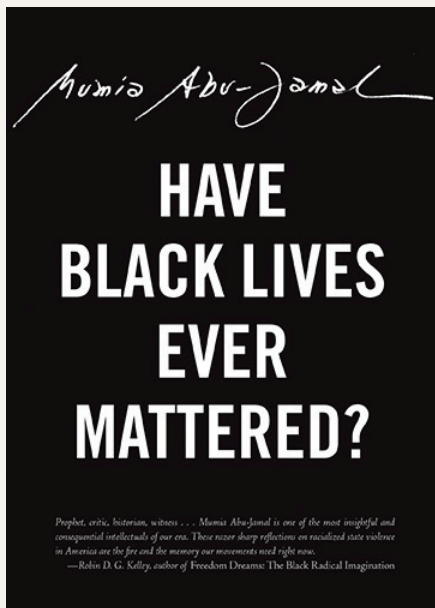


“To Protect and Serve Whom?”
by Mumia Abu-Jamal

From the collection titled

HAVE BLACK LIVES EVER MATTERED?



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TO PROTECT AND SERVE WHOM?

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What makes a movement, a *Movement*?

What social forces come together to make it cohere, to build it into something that can stand in the world, like a new-born thing, able to drop, rise on unsteady legs, breathe deeply, and then run its course?

Consider this: There has never been a time since the “founding” of the U.S. government that there has not been a movement of some sort, but, like any other thing in life, such movements have been weak or strong, in ebb or flow, depending on the social conditions from which they emerge.

We live in an era where the very notion of a movement seems strange, or out-of-time.

That may be because over the last half century, the state has worked hard to counter the influence and memory of movements as soon as possible.

The state projects itself through the institutions of media, the academy, and public schools so as to present a false, misleading historical narrative that confuses people. As a result, it becomes difficult to see a social movement grow, interact, swell, and finally, present its positions in the public square so that they cannot be easily refuted.

Thanks to movement scholars, we know of the deep hatred and venomous methods deployed against the late Rev.

Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., a man whom the U.S. government nefariously pressured to kill himself.

The Reverend's greatest enemy was his own government, a force crystallized in the person of the director of the FBI: J. Edgar Hoover.

Hoover, an unabashed racist, used his powers to try to destroy any movement that questioned the status quo. But Hoover seemed to reserve his deadliest assaults for members of Black freedom movements.

This may be perhaps best seen in the program code-named COINTELPRO, code-speak for the Counterintelligence Program operated for decades by the FBI against U.S. citizens, particularly Black movement leaders from Dr. King to Dr. Huey P. Newton of the Black Panthers. All were treated, in the words of William Sullivan, Assistant Director of the FBI, while speaking to staffers of the U.S. Senate committee investigating COINTELPRO, as enemies of the State:

This is a common practice, rough, tough, dirty business. . . . To repeat, it is a rough, tough, dirty business, and dangerous. . . . [N]o holds were barred. We have used that technique against foreign espionage agents, and they have used it against us.

Questioner: The same methods were brought home?

Answer: Yes; brought home against any organization against which we were targeting. We did not differentiate. This is a rough, tough business.³⁵

Nor should we forget how the FBI viewed Dr. King. Again, Assistant Director Sullivan's words: "We regard Martin Luther King as the most dangerous . . . Negro leader in the country."³⁶

Why is this important to us, now, in the womb of another emerging national movement? It is vital, for it teaches young activists and revolutionaries in the making, that this is the real, essential nature of the state: militant opposition to any social force that seeks to make it more open, democratic, and accountable, and that threatens to increase public control over public resources, institutions, and affairs. If you begin a social movement and fail to understand this historical reality, you will march into a buzz saw that will leave you in pieces.

The Reason Movements Emerge

When a society reaches a dead end, when it can no longer persist in its old ways, social movements arise to push it to its next stage of development. If that social movement is able to project its ideas, and spread them widely enough, and these ideas find room in the hearts and minds of the People, such movements may make that next step, and define the era's zeitgeist and what is and is not the common good.

History shows us that social movements can transform society, but they do not go uncontested, for the status quo of the state abhors change. The state always sees change as a challenge, and it utilizes its vast power to counteract any such change.

Note well that we have been using the well-known and well-documented example of the U.S. Civil Rights

Movement to proffer these ideas. On its face, such a national movement seems benign today, for in some ways, it has succeeded in integrating its narrative and perspective into the nation's narrative and perspective, and into the hearts and minds of people around the globe. Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. is a national hero who is honored with a national holiday and a towering granite statue of his likeness on the Mall of the nation's capital. Moreover, his visage stares out from the semi-grottoed wall of the Church of England, where he is recognized as a saint.

If the state could do what it did against a mild-mannered minister such as Martin Luther King, what can it do to you?

Answer: *Whatever it wants to.*

Activism is neither easy nor necessarily safe, and that is especially so in this age where the people are exposed to an Orwellian level of internal surveillance, police militarization, and criminalization of dissent unprecedented in U.S. history. Being active in the movement to hold police accountable for their crimes against people and their communities seems only to increase exposure to such forces of intolerance.

This Movement for Justice Against Police Violence

It is no coincidence that the words “police” and “politician” are so similar, for they both derive from the same Greek term for city-state: *polis*. Police are the employed servants of the state, and as such the instruments of state policy. And what is the state? Marx and Engels said: “The executive of the modern state is but a committee for managing the

common affairs of the whole bourgeoisie.”³⁷ Thus, police serve the ownership and wealth classes of their societies, not the middling or impoverished people. For the latter, it is quite the reverse.

That’s why we see the police utilized to surveil those who organize labor, the oppressed, social movements, and networks of resistance, and why they beat down those who dare to speak out and protest.

In Brazil, state authorities casually slay street children, for they are seen by shop owners and elites as a kind of public pestilence. In Iguala, Mexico, officials team up with narco-traffickers and disappear dozens of students. In China, police beat down students who demand real representation in state power. In New York, and across the country, cops coordinated surveillance and mass arrests in an attempt to criminalize the Occupy movement, and forced its supporters and their message, not just from the street, but from public view.

Police, therefore, don’t only perform a public anti-crime policy; in order to serve their financial and political masters, they must also commit crimes themselves, crimes that involve violence, abuse, and thwarting basic constitutional freedoms and human rights.

When you look at a police car and see the motto “To Protect & Serve,” don’t be fooled. If you are a person of color, an immigrant, a person of conscience ethically compelled to protest, the armed authorities may not protect and serve *you*. And that is especially so if you live in a low-income community, a barrio, or in the darker-skinned part of town. If you are wealthy—what the Occupy Movement

made infamous by calling it “the 1%”—then, yes, they protect and serve *you*.

What happens every day in economically disadvantaged neighborhoods of color would shock whites who live in better-secured middle-class neighborhoods. For the fact is, police relate to each community in a completely different posture.

Changing an institution requires knowing its origins. Therefore, activists committed to holding police accountable for chronic violence in our communities must know who the police really are, historically, and what social function they have performed; if activists are under-educated in this regard, or misinformed, they will not be able to see how best to approach and change the police as an institution. Understanding history keeps activists from accepting cheap reforms that act as institutional covers for the growing repressive powers of the police in an era of mass surveillance and open authoritarianism.

Taking the time to study and understand America’s deep history is essential in order to see, anticipate, and plan for what is before us.

In the Beginning . . .

The vivid, energized eruptions of protest across some 200 U.S. cities in the wake of the monstrous grand jury decisions not to pursue criminal charges against the police who killed Michael Brown in Ferguson, Missouri, or Eric Garner in Staten Island, New York, were not the beginnings of the movement; if anything, they were just the most visible response of something that had been boiling and bubbling

in the Black American psyche for generations. Similarly, the chronic injustice itself—illicit police violence and impunity—has rankled Black life in America for an equally long period of time.

If we read any traditional history of American policing, we will likely encounter tales that the American system was derived from the British effort to establish the London Metropolitan Police of 1829. This assertion is in error.

Two centuries before the institution of Scotland Yard got into the game, armed, violent police forces were operating in the United States with a specific role: to keep enslaved Blacks in bondage, to punish those who attempt to escape to freedom, and to deter Blacks from revolting against the system that enslaves, commodifies, and terrorizes them.

Originally known as “slave patrols,” thousands of armed British soldiers were dispatched to Barbados to form the core of forces used to keep Africans in complete subjugation to their white oppressors. Indeed, this was their only job. Their import from the British West Indies to the British colonies in North America, circa 1696–1702, marked the introduction of what were then termed “militia tenants.”

Their job, researcher Kristian Williams explains in *Enemies in Blue*, was to stop, interrogate, and punish any “stray” Africans, that is, any Black person who was not on a plantation and directly under white control. It was this racialized system that was imported from the British West Indies to their North American colonial outposts.

When the British enslavers spread from Barbados to what is today South Carolina, they brought with them more than the people they damned to a life of forced labor. They

brought with them an armed system of enslavement and perpetual surveillance, a feature of all Southern slavery, but one particularly intense there so as to protect the minority whites from the massive enslaved Black population that outnumbered them from the earliest years. By 1860, the eve of the U.S. Civil War, South Carolina's population was 704,000 persons. Of that number, the Black population was 412,320, approximately 60 percent of the state total.

This massive number of brutally oppressed people required the minority of whites to bolster the role of the City Guard, South Carolina's early name for the slave patrol, and it demonstrated why the entire white male population was compelled to support institutional white supremacy over Blacks, and faced enlistment under pain of a substantial fine (some 40 shillings), for adult males.

"South Carolina passed laws restricting the slaves' ability to travel and trade, and created the Charlestown Town Watch," writes Kristian Williams.³⁸ "Beginning in 1671, this watch consisted of the regular constables and a rotation of six citizens. It looked for any sign of trouble—fire, Indian attacks, or slave gatherings. The laws also established a militia system, with every man between sixteen and sixty required to serve."³⁹

Slave patrols were designed not just to deter Black revolt, but to suppress Black solidarity through music and culture. For example, Williams writes, among the duties of this early-created armed body were to "prevent all caballing amongst negroes, by dispersing of them when drumming or playing, and to search all negro houses for arms or other offensive weapons."⁴⁰

Armed white supremacists, not Scotland Yard's Sherlock Holmes types, were the true Founding Fathers of America's police system; and fear of Blacks and Native Americans drove whites to add the Second Amendment to the U.S. Constitution.

Police, like slave owners, were given legal and customary immunity from anything done to Africans, whether enslaved or free.

That, too, is a fact; one we must come to terms with.

To be sure, every state wasn't South Carolina, nor was South Carolina every state. But it should be noted that this was an important feature of Southern society, one that centered on institutional white supremacy and enslavement of Blacks to generate enormous amounts of white wealth. And given the particularly American lust for wealth, we cannot ignore that the North, not to mention the so-called border states, also had a hand in the flesh markets of slavery. In 1790, New York led all Atlantic states in the number of enslaved people held, with some 21,000 people there forced to live in bondage. That same year, Pennsylvania had about a fifth of that number, but by 1820, Pennsylvania's enslaved population had mushroomed to 30,000. This, however, was roughly a fifth of the number for the average border state, such as Maryland and Kentucky.

That said, New York, the bustling economic whirlwind of the colonies and post-Revolution states, had its own history, in ways quite diverse from its sister states in the South.

New York, during the 19th century, was home to millions of European emigrants, many of whom were fighting anti-immigrant antipathy. The anti-Irish feeling of the

British elites carried well into the Atlantic states, and Irish folks were subjected to brutal and unrelenting prejudice in Philadelphia and New York. On the bottom economic and social rung of American society, they were not seriously regarded as white.

In Noel Ignatiev's groundbreaking 1995 work *How the Irish Became White*, he recounts the peculiar origins of the Philadelphia Police Department. There, Irish were involved in running battles with nativists who, deeply imbued with anti-foreigner, anti-immigrant, and anti-Catholic fervor, staged violent attacks on Irish people, and even attempted to burn down their churches. Irish folk in Pennsylvania and New York responded to such provocations as people in cities have done since Rome: they banded together, established gangs, and used their numbers, their grit, and their smarts to defend their communities. They also engaged in illegal activities to hustle money and boost local influence.

In mid-19th-century Philadelphia, one of the more notorious gangs, the Killers, used the local Moyamensing Hose fire department as a gang hangout. Its leader, a crafty Mexico War veteran named William McMullen, wanted to take the gang into politics.

This era featured the rise of the so-called Know Nothings, an anti-immigrant, nativist faction that commanded considerable national influence in politics during the 1850s.

By 1856, however, McMullen's organizing ability, skill at stuffing ballot boxes, and intimidation of political opponents resulted in his fellow gangsters opening up the mayorship to a Democrat, Richard Vaux, who returned the favor.

McMullen immediately offered six members of Moyamensing Hose (and also the Killers) jobs as cops. They were later known as “Dick Vaux’s police,” and became infamous for their epic brutality, especially against Black Philadelphians.

Through their public offices, they rolled back the nativists and formed a barrier against Black advancement in the City of Brotherly Love.

In many ways, today’s institution of policing extends from a historical continuum that began with white supremacist slave patrols and, in cities like Philadelphia, organized gangsterism. And in those origins lie many of the defects of the present system. They remain racist; they remain conservative; and like the gangs that their grandfathers belonged to, they remain cliquish, clannish, and aggressive toward outsiders.

In 1850s-era Philadelphia, they didn’t preserve the peace, or strive for justice. They started riots. Race riots.

Cops Riot Against the People

In early Philadelphia, both politicians and police saw race riots as important tools to establish dominance and “place”—as in keeping Blacks in theirs. This was especially so during mayoral election periods, when power was faced with challenges. Ignatiev writes:

Election day saw continuous fighting between Negroes and whites, often initiated by Democratic police who feared for their jobs. Hundreds were injured, and three Negroes were killed; among

them was Octavius Catto, a prominent figure in the Afro-American community and leader of the campaign to desegregate the streetcars, shot in the back by a white man who was then ushered from the scene and out of the city by a policeman.⁴¹

Philadelphia was an urban hell for Blacks in Philadelphia for much of the 19th century. As in many other cities, Blacks suffered from the impact of a heavy, threatening, and repressive police presence in their everyday lives. And this wasn't only a 19th-century matter, for it continued throughout the 20th as well. Philadelphia, moreover, has been no different from the many American cities that became flash-points for social conflict and racialized violence.

All over the country, low-income Black neighborhoods went up in anguished flames, and guess what the trigger was in virtually every case?

Summers of Fire

In 1965 and again in 1967, cities across America burned, set ablaze by Blacks who felt that the system was hopeless. Watts. Detroit. Harlem. Newark. Plainfield, New Jersey. And beyond.

In 1968, the Kerner Commission Report was published, and at its core sat the answer to this long train of angry, incendiary responses to chronic social discontent: joblessness, poor housing, disrespect from politicians, and the like. But one thing centered the report: "Almost invariably the incident that ignites disorder arises from police action. Harlem,

Watts, Newark, and Detroit—all the major outbursts of recent years—were precipitated by routine arrests of Negroes for minor offenses by white officers.”⁴²

The Kerner Report, published nearly 50 years ago, could have been published almost anytime since, as seen in the dark parade of events from coast to coast, from Rodney King in L.A. and Oscar Grant in Oakland, to Michael Brown in Ferguson and Eric Garner in New York City. Being able to witness police beat, abuse, and use lethal force against unarmed Brown and Black Americans on TV, computers, and mobile devices is the only new piece in the picture, for police terrorism of Black populations dates back to their genesis in slave patrols.

The recent cases of Michael Brown and Eric Garner have relit the fuse of civil activity and widespread social indignation. People nationwide are now deeply questioning the structures of policing that were previously less visible, beyond reproach, and unquestioned.

Why do police act as they do, especially with regard to Black Americans in the urban cores of cities?

Why do they continue to do so, when it clearly incurs such profound social costs?

Kristian Williams gives us some idea, writing of two specific, police operations against the African American communities in Chapel Hill and Los Angeles. Williams writes of “Operation Ready-Rock,” in which, in November 1990, some 45 state police, canine units, and a militarized Special Response Team hit the 100 block of Graham Street in Chapel Hill, North Carolina, as if it were D-Day.

The cops declared *de facto* martial law, closing down the streets, bringing out their dogs, and raiding the neighborhood pool hall.

Residents were not allowed to leave, as cops were legally armed with a “blanket” warrant for the persons, homes, and vehicles of everybody on the block. Everybody.

But when the actual raids went down, the warrant didn’t really “blanket” everyone, for only Blacks were targeted and searched, often at gunpoint; white people in the area were allowed to go their merry way.

The raid resulted in 100 detainees, 13 arrests, and zero convictions. Despite the victims’ successful class-action suit, the local police continued to defend “Operation Ready-Rock.”

Just a few years before the assault in Chapel Hill, cops in L.A., perhaps thinking of their Hollywood environs, went bigger, bringing in hundreds of cops, arresting some 1,500 people, taking 500 cars, all under the cool eye of LAPD Chief Daryl Gates, who launched the raid, “Operation Hammer,” on South Central.

In this operation there were 1,500 arrests, resulting in 32 felony charges. After the big show, charges against 90 percent of the people were dropped.

Sociologist Randall Sheldon examined the raid and concluded: “The overall purpose was merely social control (of African-American youth) rather than a serious attempt at reducing crime.”⁴⁴

With themes similar to those of vintage Arnold Schwarzenegger flicks, it is hard to resist the impression that

the state wasn't waging a form of low-intensity warfare, including psychological operations, against Black folks.

Williams tells us: "Though individually they receive just a meager portion of capitalism's benefits, the police represent both the interests and the power of the ruling class. Like managers, police control those who do the work and they actively maintain the conditions that allow for profitable exploitation."⁴⁵

An Inside Look

Retired police chief Norm Stamper spent his entire adult life employed as a cop. He joined the police department as a young man, rose up through the ranks, and ended up heading the police departments in two major U.S. cities: San Diego and Seattle. In his 2005 book *Breaking Rank*, Stamper discusses the chronic racism he witnessed during his years of experience in cop culture:

Simply put, white cops are afraid of black men. We don't talk about it, we pretend it doesn't exist, we claim "color blindness," we say white officers treat black men the same way they treat white men. But that's a lie. In fact, the bigger, the darker the black man the greater the fear. The African-American community knows this. Hell, most *whites* know it. Yet, even though it's a central, if not *the* defining ingredient in the makeup of police racism, white cops won't admit it to themselves, or to others.⁴⁶

In his book, Chief Stamper shares a personal story about how, shortly after he left the police academy, his gruff sergeant told him to march into the neighborhood Black tavern, walk up to the biggest, meanest-looking Black man in the joint, and treat him in an insulting fashion.

Stamper, scared as hell, but not wanting to disappoint the old cop, mustered up his courage, and marched into the “Bucket of Blood.” Before he could reach the biggest, meanest-looking Black dude in the joint, his superior rushed in, and called him off.

It was a test, he explained.

On a more serious note, Stamper recalled his academy training when another wizened geezer went “off book” to teach the young recruits an important lesson that was designed to save their lives. The trainer explained to them about the existence of the Nation of Islam, described as a “Black Muslim cult” that had pathological hatred of white people. The elder instructor warned them to be especially wary of Nation of Islam members, for they believed that white cops were “devils,” and it was their duty to send them to the next world.

Stamper said that hearing such things scared him shitless.

Of course, this doesn’t explain every interaction between Blacks—especially Black men—and police, but it does provide some precious insight. For when men fear, they are halfway to hate; for we hate that which evokes fear in us. And as Stamper suggests, we are loath to admit our fears. It makes us angry, for it seems unmanly. A sexist view, perhaps, but there it is.

How Black Politicians Have Failed (And How White Politicians Have Acquiesced)

As these words are written, marches and demonstrations continue to erupt all across the country. These demonstrations have caught the national Black political machinery off guard.

For many of these figures have run for, and risen to, political office, but their ties to the grassroots Black community—their voter base—are tenuous, at best. As these Black office holders most often come from the professional class, they rarely have strong backgrounds in activism.

When these Blacks enter office, they usually are most concerned with their personal, professional, and political concerns, not the suffering and injustice endured by people in impoverished communities.

This is so primarily because the media act as disciplinarians against Black politicians, who are punished if they dare challenge the status quo by speaking on behalf of the most marginalized populations in the country: the Black working class and voiceless impoverished class.

When these sectors of the country are mobilized, they can impact political races, media, and policy. However, more often than not, they are mobilized on behalf of politicians who, once installed, couldn't care less about the real life-and-death vulnerabilities of their constituencies.

Why is this so? Because, in the absence of a powerful movement, in the absence of pressure from people in the streets, members of the political class serve those with more wealth and power as a way to increase their own. Instead of serving the public interest, office holders flow toward a rancid pool of financial self-interest and self-aggrandizement.

Rather than represent the social justice needs of their communities, Black office holders seem to imitate their white colleagues who serve financial power and use the privilege of their office to build up their own bank accounts, one thousand dollars at a time.

It should also be noted that many of these Black politicians hail from low-income and working-class families, and have less resources compared to their white colleagues. This means that they may be more easily lured to take extra campaign funds and become beholden to private interests rather than to the social needs of their public communities. Doing so creates a classic conflict-of-interest scenario that prevents such office holders from taking stands that might displease their big financial donors. This renders them unable to truly serve the public interest and put in some work to improve the miserable realities of Black people: chronic impoverishment, neglected schools, neglected housing, police violence, mass incarceration, prison violence, and financial predation of low-income people and communities of color. They are thus politically compromised and ideologically isolated, for, in a state that places white wealth and security above those of other Americans, to really serve communities of color constitutes a betrayal of the status quo.

Only a social movement can build the political force required to get some traction with this ilk of Black leaders. And if that don't work—and, let's face it, it may not—then old leaders gotta be rejected, and movement-supporting and movement-conscious leaders must take the helm of power.

This is especially so when it comes to Blacks in blue, who are under intense pressure to serve the white privilege

structure and worldview that continues to institutionally dominate most law enforcement and judicial systems nationwide. For Black cops, like Black politicians, function in predominantly white environments, where their opinions and objections hold less sway.

Kristian Williams, in a footnote, cites an Atlanta police chief who describes his department's bargaining unit (the so-called "union") as "not a union at all, but in fact a thinly veiled cover for [Ku Klux] Klan membership."⁴⁷

Reforms? Or Revolutionary Changes?

In the wake of the horrendous instances of police violence against unarmed Black men and boys that ignited mass marches across the country, what is the way forward? What are leading political and civil rights voices saying in response to these chronic, and increasingly publicized violations of human rights?

The responses, to be sure, seem markedly anemic and pathetic, considering the gravity of the grievances raised by the people. In a nutshell, the proposed solutions offered by local and national (primarily Black) leaders includes the following:

- body cameras for cops,
- civilian review boards of police violence,
- opening of grand jury records.

This is, to say the least, a sad and depressing set of proposals that can barely be called reforms. They are sops to the masses, stale crumbs for pigeons.

They solve nothing, for they change nothing.

Nor are they seriously expected to, for politicians, in their thirst to be seen as doing something, grab at sound bites being offered, but change nothing, for, as the videos of police beating Rodney King show us, cameras can show a lot but still not result in anything except acquittals.

What people are demanding is a real solution, not nonsense about “body cams.” Such discussions are frankly meaningless.

Decades ago, at the tail end of the fiery 1960s and chilling 1970s, Dr. Huey P. Newton, Minister of Defense of the Black Panther Party, wrote several articles proposing how we might totally transform American policing.

His articles followed years of on-the-ground organizing, demanding not “community policing,” but “community control of police.” The core of this concept is for police to live in the community that they are employed to police, and subject to the will of the people that they allegedly “serve.”

Dr. Newton gave that idea much thought, and in a series of articles published in *The Black Panther* during February and March of 1980, he presents an alternative view of how police should be structured. We here summarize his ideas:

- Existing police departments would be abolished;
- A Citizen’s Peace Force (CPF) would be established to serve local community needs;
- The persons serving on the Citizen’s Peace Force would be selected per council districts, starting (part-time) at age 15, for two-year terms;

- Those chosen would be trained, but also educated in areas of urban problem solving.

Dr. Huey P. Newton's service-oriented perspective departs markedly from the increasing militaristic and authoritarian project that now animates much of police theory and law enforcement practice.

Dr. Newton also writes about the spectrum of personality profiles considered best suited for serving the community.

The personality profile of a "conscientious objector" to the military draft, for instance, would be a potentially excellent fit for service on a Citizen's Peace Force. Motivation, in general, would be screened with an emphasis on selecting service-oriented, rather than control-oriented, personality types.⁴⁸

The central objectives of his proposal are encapsulated in three key concepts: conscription, community criteria, and civilian control. At base, he argues, the Citizen's Peace Force would also act as a militia, but one profoundly different from the police forces that exist in some 18,000 towns and communities of present-day America.

Today's Movement must be more than a Moment. It must grapple with the question of whether it is reform that is needed (body cams, etc.), or deep structural changes that speak to the present crisis facing communities across the country.

The People can—and must—build solutions to this crisis, if they but dare.

What Next?

Movements are driven by commitment, ethics, intelligence, solidarity, and passions; for without passion, the embers may dim and die.

For example, what sparked the Civil Rights Movement and kicked it into high gear?

It wasn't just Martin's magnificent oratory, as much as we lovers of words wish it were so. It wasn't just Rosa Parks defying law and custom by refusing to rise from her seat at the front of a segregated bus.

This is not to denigrate their robust and noble contributions to the Movement, but to give us insight into a larger, more salient point.

Two events gave certainty and determination to the Civil Rights and Black Liberation Movements, enshrining them into the undying hearts of millions.

They were: the terrorist murder of a 14-year-old Black boy, Emmett Till, on August 28, 1955, for whistling at a white woman in Money, Mississippi; and the September 15, 1963 terrorist bombing of 16th St. Baptist Church in Birmingham, Alabama, where four little Black girls were murdered by white supremacists.

The atrocities committed in these attacks were horrific, but they were common at the time, particularly in the South. In her autobiography, for example, Angela Y. Davis recounts that white terrorist attacks were so frequent where she was growing up that her neighborhood assumed the nickname "Dynamite Hill." "Many people assume that the bombing of the 16th Street Baptist Church was a singular event," says Davis, "but actually there were bombings and burnings all

the time. When I was 11 and [my sister] Fania was 7, the church we attended, the First Congregational Church, was burned. I was a member of an interracial discussion group there, and the church was burned as a result of that group.”⁴⁹ The white terrorist attacks against Black Emmett Till and the Black 16th St. Baptist Church were not unusual; what was unusual was the degree of attention they received, attention that caught the conscience of the nation.

Such violent events, and the tragic sacrifices to the demons of racism and hatred, gave martyred life to the cause, and touched those who could no longer resist the moral gravity of the Movement.

Similarly, while the Brown and Garner cases seem to have attracted the most press, the case of 12-year-old Tamir Rice, killed by a cop, has struck deep and powerful chords among people in this country and beyond.

In the middle of the last century, children fell at the hands of white supremacist and racist terrorist organizations such as the Ku Klux Klan.

Today, such children fall at the hands of cops—more often than not, the hands of white cops.

Any system that permits its children to be killed with impunity would seem to be a system in dire crisis. Something at the very core of our system—and society—is irrevocably broken and must be fixed.

Cops, armed with the awesome powers of the state, are now doing what Klansmen did several generations ago—and a new/ancient movement stirs from generations of chronic injustice, passionate indignation, and knowledge of successful insurrectional histories.

When the state permits its servants to take the life of living, breathing, growing, wondrous children, it ceases to have a reason to exist in the world. It has failed utterly.

Perhaps that is the force that fuels today's youth to fearlessly stand up against automatic weapons, armed Humvees, and sniper rifles, as have the youth of Ferguson. They are fueled by deep and moving forces that compel them to confront the state terror unleashed against them.

They yell, at the top of their lungs: "We Can't Breathe!"
We Can't Breathe!

"Your system is choking us!"

¡Ya Basta! Enough is enough! We won't take this anymore!

When people reach this point, when they no longer fear power, they are on the road to social change and transformation.

This is their time, their hour; their Selma, their Civil Rights Movement.

In many ways, the elders have failed them.

It's time for Youth to rush the microphone—and take the stage!

Addendum

February 1, 2017

When the words of "*To Protect & Serve Whom?*" were written, Barack Obama had less than two years left to serve in the White House. Who knew what tomorrow would bring? Few dared guess that the presidency of Donald J. Trump was actually on the cusp of becoming a reality. Yet this transition doesn't diminish any of the arguments in "*To Protect & Serve Whom?*," or any other works presented in

this volume. Instead, such arguments are deepened, made more tragic, for the 45th U.S. president is mentioned here (see “The Other Central Park Rapes”), in an unflattering light, to say the least. It’s safe to assume that he will spark far more antagonism than his predecessor, Obama, who, lest we forget, chided Black Lives Matter activists for their “loud shouting” and tried to shuffle them into voting booths to support one of the co-architects of the biggest mass incarceration boom in U.S. history: Hillary Clinton. Suffice it to say, he was less than successful.

Indeed, while as president Obama may have commuted thousands of sentences, his changes were episodic, not systematic. Thus, the day he left office, he also left the horrors of mass incarceration fundamentally unchanged, and in the hands of an ultra-right-wing populist endorsed by a known domestic terrorist group, the Ku Klux Klan. Barack Obama left behind a vast machinery of repression, added to the most intrusive surveillance program on earth.

As far as the Black Lives Matter Movement is concerned, by raising their voices while under the Obama period, they established their sound integrity—and perhaps it may be seen that it’s possible that they should have yelled louder. For Black Lives *Do* Matter. Now, more than ever.