

By Benjamin F. Chavis, Jr.

Freedom Now for Geronimo Pratt

The just demand for freedom of political prisoners is a demand that most Americans are comfortable with making in the interest of human rights throughout the world, but with one exception and that is when the political prisoners are being held here inside the United States. Today, however, thousands of people are now raising their voices to demand the freedom of one of the longest held political prisoners in the United States: Geronimo Ji Jaga Pratt.

For more than 21 years Geronimo Pratt has been unjustly imprisoned in the state of California. Recently, Congressman Ronald Dellums (Dem. - CA.) and renowned actor, Danny Glover, wrote an open letter stating, "We write on behalf of Geronimo Ji Jaga Pratt, a 43 year old African American man, who was framed during the height of the 'Black Power Movement' in the late 60's. Twenty-one years later Geronimo and others remain in jail for the stands they took rather than the crimes they purportedly committed. Please join with thousands of individuals throughout the world who believe, as we do, that Geronimo's release is twenty-one years overdue."

We have just returned from a trip to Oakland, California as participants in a "fact-finding mission" concerning the case of Geronimo Pratt. This mission was sponsored by the Oakland Community United Church of Christ, a newly established African American congregation. Reverend Dr. Lorenzo Carlisle, pastor of the church stated, "We begin our outreach to the Oakland community in the quest for justice for all of God's people. There is not a case more worthy of our active support at

this time in history than the case of our brother, Geronimo Pratt. His unjust incarceration stands as an affront to the Christian faith, and we intend to stand with him and his family and this community that desperately needs committed leaders like Geronimo back in our community and church."

Based on our review of the record of the trial, subsequent legal files, and other new evidence that has surface, it was concluded that Geronimo Pratt is in fact a political prisoner and is not guilty of the alleged murder of a policeman in Santa Monica, California over two decades ago. As a direct result of Pratt's effective activism in the African American community during the 1960's as a member of the Black Panther Party, he became a target of the FBI's infamous COINTELPRO counter intelligence program. Pratt and many others were falsely accused on numerous allegations in a systematic attempt to "criminalize" the just struggles of the African American community for empowerment.

For all the millions of persons in this nation and from around the world who successfully demanded the freedom of Nelson Mandela from the prison system of apartheid South Africa, this same type of massive demand needs to be made on behalf of Pratt. Pratt is a victim of American racism and repression and his continued imprisonment is an atrocious insult to human dignity.

If you would like more information on this case and wish to join this growing campaign, please contact sister Muhjah Shakir, co-coordinator of the International Campaign to Free Geronimo Ji Jaga Pratt, P.O. Box 3585, Oakland, California 94609, (415) 268-

0979.

A political prisoner is a "prisoner of conscience," a person who has been unjustly imprisoned because of their political acts of conscience to challenge injustice. The state and the government imprison these innocent persons in an attempt to "silence" their voice of opposition to injustice. Martin Luther King, Jr. was a political prisoner on many occasions.

The latest news is that the many years of unjust imprisonment has taken a toll on Geronimo's health. Assemblyman Willie L. Brown, Speaker of the Assembly of California Legislature, has stressed, to the California Department of Corrections the "extraordinary" situation of injustice in regard to Pratt's continued incarceration and deterioration of his health. It is therefore critical that immediate letters of protest, petitions, and other communications be sent in support of the "unconditional release" of Geronimo Pratt to the California Parole Board, Governor Pete Wilson, members of the U.S. Congress, Amnesty International, and to the International Campaign To Free Geronimo Pratt.

Remember that COINTELPRO was a federal program as well as a state effort to falsely incriminate and imprison African American and other activists. We all share in the responsibility to help right these grievous wrongs paid by our tax dollars.

Human freedom cannot be mitigated by the grand desires of the forces of racial oppression. Human liberty cannot politically be parceled out only to those who submit to tyranny. And we will not be at rest until Geronimo Pratt is FREE.

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Portland Observer encourages our readers to write letters to the editor in response to any articles we publish.

Clinic Offers Free Health Check-Ups For Kids

Western States Chiropractic College is sponsoring a free health check-up for children from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m., Saturday, August 24, 1991 at its Outpatient Clinic, 2900 NE 132nd Avenue in Portland. The screening will include a spinal examination and scoliosis evaluation for children up to the age of 16.

The comprehensive exam also includes screening of the eyes, ears and throat by interns at the clinic. Participants will receive a written report and referrals to other health care specialists if necessary. Appointments are required and may be made by calling 255-6771.

Youth Gang Task Force

Wednesday, August 7, 1991
King Facility
10:00 A.M.
Agenda

1. Introductions
2. Youth Gang Program Update
3. Police Reports
4. Youth Resources Update
Fire Fighter Program
5. Other
6. Adjournment

Northeast Coalition of Neighborhoods
North/Northeast Youth Gangs Task Force

Public Relations Director Joins OHS Staff

Arlene L. Layton has been appointed as Director of Public Relations for the Oregon Historical Society with the responsibility for coordinating all Society communication activities. Ms. Layton brings to the Society professional experience as public relations director for Lloyd Corporation of Portland as well as for the Emporium chain of stores headquartered in Eugene.

An Oregon native, Ms. Layton was educated at local schools and at Chatham College in Pennsylvania where she graduated with a B.A. in English. She has served on the Board of Directors of the Oregon Downtown Development Association and of the Pittock Mansion Society. She is a member of the Public Relations Society of America and of Portland's City Club.

VISION CENTER

Offers Low-Cost Care/Free Screenings

QUALITY VISION care based on ability to pay is available at the Pacific University Cascade Campus Family Vision Center, located at 600 N. Killingsworth, across

the street from the Portland Community College Cascade Campus.

SERVICES INCLUDE complete vision exams, specialty care, patient dispensary, and free vision screenings for all ages. Patients pay for services according to individual or family income. The Center does include a minimum pay level and most patients receive some fee adjustment due to limited income.

THE CASCADE Campus Family Vision Center is open Tuesday, Wednesday and

Thursday during regular business hours. The Center will expand to a fourth day of service this fall. For more information, scheduling, and free vision screenings, please call 240-5319.



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