

Which Way Forward for the Black Left: The Formation of DIGNITY

"With Dignity, we will stand up for our rights!"

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Cynthia McKinney Announces Formation of DIGNITY

The path leads in the same direction it always has: agitation, organization, and confrontation with Power.

Cynthia McKinney chose a Harlem church to announce the formation of DIGNITY, to bring the Black body politic back from its current comatose state. "Dignity is attempting to show real change is possible" – if people fight for it. "We want to organize networks so that we can relay information quickly to a large number of people."

Cynthia McKinney Announces Formation of DIGNITY

Former congresswoman (D-GA) and Green Party presidential candidate Cynthia McKinney addressed a packed house at St. Mary's Church, in Harlem, on Sunday, May 31. Also sharing the podium were Glen Ford and Margaret Kimberley, of Black Agenda Report, Nellie Bailey, Harlem Tenants Council, Prof. Anthony Monteiro, of the African American Studies Department, Temple University, and writer/activist Mae Jackson.

The event was titled, "Which Way Forward for the Black Left?"

"We agreed to found an action organization and to call it Dignity."

Thank you all for being here.

On Thursday, General Taguba spoke to journalists and said that the photos currently being withheld by President Obama show rape. On Friday, he went even further and said that he saw video of U.S. soldiers raping and sodomizing detainees. From the first batch of photos that were released, we know that detainees were also murdered. In your name and mine.

But some of us here in the U.S. are not shocked or surprised that this kind of behavior could occur. For those of us who have our eyes open, the gritty streets of America are filled with the experience of unarmed black and brown men being beaten, raped, sodomized, and even murdered by terroristic agents of the state.

We remember the Black Panther Party, Malcolm X, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., and Kwame Touré. We remember George Jackson, Soledad and Attica. We remember the American Indian Movement, the Puerto Rican Independistas, the Chicano Movement, and we remember the FBI. We know about Area A in Chicago and we've heard the San Francisco 8

recount for us their experiences of torture at the hands of law enforcement. We've heard them tell how 30 years later, the very same people who tortured them showed up on their doorsteps to re-arrest them for crimes they did not commit.

So when General Taguba verifies that torture, rape, and murder were used by U.S. service men and women, we cannot be surprised.

When we see Dick Cheney say that torture worked, we in this audience, are not surprised.

The gritty streets of America are filled with the experience of unarmed black and brown men being beaten, raped, sodomized, and even murdered by terroristic agents of the state."

When we hear that Democratic Attorney General Jerry Brown who allowed the San Francisco 8 prosecution to move forward is rumored to want to be the Governor of California, and expects our votes to win, we are not surprised.

Or that Gavin Newsome, current mayor of San Francisco who is abetting the ethnic cleansing of the last remaining black neighborhood in that city wants to be Governor and expects black, brown, and progressive white votes, we are not surprised.

So, when yet another young man is gunned down by the police, be it Oscar Grant in Oakland or Omar Edwards in New York City, and the policy doesn't change to stop it. We shouldn't be surprised.

The authorities have proven that they will do everything and more if the people let them get away with it.

Our President has breathed new life into the Democratic Party. But the fact is, our precious breath, that gives that Party life, is killing us.

Glen Ford, Roy Singham, Dedon Kamathi of the All African People's Revolutionary Party, and I all came together earlier this year, to not only lament the present, but to change the future. We decided that while our movement was nascent, coming out of my Power to the People campaign, that there was power in organization. That there was hope in mobilization. And that victory was possible in implementation. We agreed to found an action organization and to call it Dignity.

There will be some who will maintain that this country, founded as a settler state, never had any dignity since it rested on taking and not sharing land that belonged to someone else.

"We decided that while our movement was nascent, coming out of my Power to the People campaign."

After deep engagement in slavery, the take-over of whole countries, denial of self-determination, and endless war and occupation, still others would say that our country has certainly lost whatever dignity it might have been able at one time to earn.

And after Abu Ghraib, dignity is no longer possible.

For about ten years, I went around the country proclaiming the black body politic to be at first moribund, then comatose. I now see the same fate awaiting the Progressive community

even as we witness ongoing war, even ramping up the war machine during the greatest transfer of wealth out of black and brown communities by the wholesale theft of people's homes.

Bait and switch schemes, whitewashing, and red herrings shouldn't be left for the people alone to decipher as they are also trying to save themselves from drowning. Some of us know what's going on and we're organizing Dignity in order to inform and then stop it.

We are tired of watching politicians acknowledge our pain, win office, and then go about their business adding more to the existing pain.

We can change the policies only by changing the nature of the debate that leads up to the selection of our policymakers. That means that we must have a way to get our message out independent of CNN, FOX, the New York Times, Clear Channel, or Public Radio. People must know in advance what the issues are, what the possibilities of policy are, and be informed, correctly, not only in slick Madison Avenue style campaigns designed to mislead. We need media of our own.

"I went around the country proclaiming the black body politic to be at first moribund, then comatose."

And finally, we need actions that serve as a wake-up call to all of our elected officials that for a critical number of us, and Glen just happens to believe that we have the right number of people supporting us in general now, business as usual is over.

We have brains, we have brawn, and we've got guts. But is that enough?

We've learned from our neighbors to our South, from Mexico, Cuba, and Haiti; Venezuela, Ecuador, Bolivia, and Nicaragua that we don't have to settle for less than what we need from politics.

And I'm tired of feeling trapped in the politics of self-abnegation. If people in other parts of the world can do it, then we must be able to do it, too. That remains to be seen, however.

So, Dignity is attempting to show that real change is possible.

Dignity will show that just voting for special interest politicians who reflect special interest political parties in new faces is not enough.

It is clear that some people are satisfied with that, but we demand more.

Honestly, I called Glen, ready to give up, saying that I've done what I could do. And Glen, then Dedon, then Roy, and so many others across our country said, no. People began contacting me personally, as if they could sense what I was feeling. They started adding comments on our youtube videos, and I know many people are talking among themselves, expressing disappointment in whispered tones with the direction so far of the Obama Administration. "Dignity is attempting to show that real change is possible."

I was saddened to read a message from Cindy Sheehan saying that she won't run against Pelosi next election. That's a big blow to us and I hope she will reconsider.

Who was it that said the race goes not to the swift but to he who can endure?

I'm willing to try one more thing, one more time. And Dignity is our effort to endure; to deliver a much-needed victory to the people. Before it's too late.

Please support us with your money, your brain, and your time.

Please be sure to sign in. In the days ahead, we will contact you. You all have networks. We want to organize networks so that we can relay information quickly to a large number of people.

Because of your contributions today, Dignity soon will have an internet presence and a weekly television show. We intend to have a distribution mechanism so that our supporters can place our television show on cable access stations across the country; we want to be on the radio, and we also want to be in the faces of the people who got our votes or have authority over our tax dollars and who continue to disappoint us.

We are not abused spouses turning the other cheek for another slap in the face. We are individuals who know that this country can be better because we still have faith in the good will and the values of the American people.

Help us organize Dignity, and with dignity, we will stand up for our rights!

For more information on DIGNITY, contact Ms. McKinney at hq2600@gmail.com

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