

A Short Biographical Profile:

DHORUBA AL-MUJAHID BIN-WAHAD

Dhoruba Bin Wahad, age seventy-three is a former Black Panther Party leader from New York. Once a Black Political Prisoner in the USA for nineteen years Bin-Wahad is a long time Pan-African activist, writer, and lecturer. Born to parents from the former British colony of Antigua in the Caribbean and Southern United States, Bin-Wahad was raised in the Southeast Bronx and Harlem, as “Richard Earl Moore” several years after his Family moved from Harlem, NY to the Bronx. Once a South Bronx gang leader of the Disciple Sportsman with the street name “Torch” and a fledgling artist, Bin-Wahad’s social and political consciousness developed during the cold war era in an America deeply polarized by institutional racism. Characterizing himself as a “victim of public school education”, Bin-Wahad found Public schooling boring and unwittingly embarked on a life long journey of ‘self-education’, with only two years of college as an academic respite. He has always viewed academic pursuit as tool enabling social activism – not as an end in itself or merely a means for personal success at the expense of others. For Bin-Wahad, “pursuing education” is to prepare oneself for personal struggles in the context that will enrich and free Humanity not enslave it – for Bin-Wahad ‘social practice is the criteria for evaluating the efficacy of education’, especially when engaging elitist institutional education”. Refusing to be sucked into the standard western educational systems, which he defines as an “elitist system of mental engineering which teaches people what to think rather than how to be better people”, Bin Wahad has engaged scholars internationally on issues of racism, role of European history and culture in global underdevelopment, and the politics of modern nation-states for over two decades. His radical and often controversial analysis and essays have received wide spread acceptance among many Black and Third-World students and critical acclaim from Progressive activist-intellectuals ranging from a broad spectrum of Black activism, Clergy, and intellectuals. Few institutional Civil Rights leaders know him but many grass-root politicians Black urban activists from diverse ideological backgrounds respect and acknowledge the depths of Bin-Wahad’s “no holds barred” commitment to Pan-African revolutionary analysis. Currently, on extended hiatus, from his home in West Africa where he is the resident *Director of the Institute for Development of Pan-African Policy*, IDPAP is a West African Based NGO, which attempts to coordinate expatriate expertise to evaluate and study policies from a grass-root Pan-African perspective and perform advisory and liaison work for the African Diaspora and African Civil Society.

Bin Wahad on several occasions has appeared before United Nations commission on Human Rights and its commission on Decolonization as a non-governmental organization representative, as sponsored by various European anti-racist NGOs. He has participated

in and organized several International Tribunals on Political Prisoners and American human rights violations. Recently, Bin-Wahad attended the United Commission Against Torture hearings on U.S. Treatment of COINTELPRO Black Political Prisoners as the personal envoy of his still imprisoned comrades. As a Muslim and African expatriate Bin-Wahad is also involved in conceptualization of a *Pan-African Refugee and Relief Foundation*, (re-registered as Community Change Africa 2017) to channel talent and resources of the African Diaspora into a “Pan-African Humanitarian and Relief Agency to assist and sustain African’s subject to natural or manmade disaster as well as help displaced persons in Sub-Saharan Africa. Having worked with scores of civil war refugees in West and central Africa seeking asylum in the United States and elsewhere, Bin Wahad is now an advocate for the establishment of an all-African international relief agency under the auspices of the African Union.

As a writer Bin Wahad’s writings have appeared in numerous publications from the “Covert Action Bulletin” to a number of anthologies featuring African-American activist writers. He has written in several editions of the ground breaking intellectual publication “Black Scholar”, collaborated with Mumia Abu Jamal, and Assata Shakur on the book, “Still Black Still Strong”. He continues to write for various Black publications and weekly newspapers. His writings have been published in African and Middle-Eastern newspapers. He is co-author in “Look for Me in the Whirlwind (PM Press). Bin Wahad’s experiences were featured in two award winning documentaries “Framing the Panthers in Black & White” and “Passin’ it On”. Both videos are available for viewing and are currently on file at the Schaumburg Museum of African History in his native, New York, and the W.E.B. Dubois Center for Pan-African Culture, in Ghana, West Africa.

Some Comments on the Political Biography of Dhoruba Bin-Wahad:

The Nobel Laureate for literature, Mr. Harold Pinter said it was the duty of the writer to hold an image up to scrutiny, and the duty of citizens "to define the real truth of our lives and our societies." "If such a determination is not embodied in our political vision, we have no hope of restoring what is so nearly lost to us - the dignity of man," he said.

In many respects the “Biostory” of Dhoruba Bin-Wahad is a personal account of a deeply committed social activist. Although told in personal and episodic terms, Bin-Wahad’s life and generation were distinctly influenced by a Black militancy nurtured during cold-war America, a society divided by race with two perspectives and two realities – one Black and one predominately White. “Separate and Unequal”. The Future Past is a story of one man’s victories, failures, challenges and sacrifice, but it is also a story about the ideals of liberation and “freedom dreams” that informed his generation. Bin-Wahad may be the only living former Black Panther who consciously evolved and theoretically developed the Black Panther ideology to define the reality of post cold war globalization. To better appreciate the non-institutional “intellectual” stature of the author, and thereby the important role of organizations such as the Panthers in the political life of African-

Americans, the following brief political biography by a graduate student has been revised and attached. I think it enables the reader to better appreciate the untold story of someone like Dhoruba Bin-Wahad. I am also attaching a recent interesting article on the Nobel Laureate for Literature, Harold Pinter, whose outspoken views on U.S. foreign policy seemed of little impediment in him achieving literatures most prestigious awards and accolades. Often, the stories and writings of people like Bin-Wahad go unpublished because publishers are afraid of challenging conventional “wisdom” and the status quo. As Mr. Pinter noted, ““The crimes of the United States have been systematic, constant, vicious, remorseless, but very few people have actually talked about them.” American’s suffer as a result of silencing the Bin-Wahads because we are not permitted to glimpse the uncomfortable truths of our society. Bin-Wahad helps us peer dimly at our own reflections and look into our “Future Past”.

DHORUBA BIN WAHAD, POLITICAL BIOGRAPHY

By Yvette Koch

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“My point is that nineteen years of isolation, and nineteen years of negation of what you have stood for and fought for, take their toll on an individual... People ask me, ‘Are you bitter that you spent nineteen years in prison?’ and I think bitterness is an inappropriate word. I have mixed feelings about it, but it was something that came as a consequence of taking a position, and taking positions as a Black person, in a racist society. And I had to accept that.

Dhoruba Bin Wahad, “War Within”

On March 22, 1990, spectators in a New York Supreme Court courtroom “erupted into a thunderous, foot-stomping celebration” [ii] as a New York Supreme Court Justice, Peter McQuillan, released Dhoruba Bin Wahad after a nineteen-year imprisonment. The scene marked the turning point in the case of *The People v. Dhoruba Bin Wahad*, which began with the arrest of Bin Wahad for the alleged attempted murder of two NYPD officers in 1971. It took another five years of appeals for the District Attorney’s office to concede its appeals process and dismiss the indictment against Bin Wahad on January 19, 1995. With his exoneration after over twenty years under the direct control of the United States penal system, Bin Wahad became the first incarcerated leader of the Black Panther Party to successfully overturn his conviction based on evidence released from the Federal Bureau of Investigation’s Counter-Intelligence Program (COINTELPRO).

At the time of his release, Dhoruba Bin Wahad was Forty-five. The passions of loss and triumph, disruption and continuity framed the “success” of his release from prison and the “thunderous” celebration that greeted the judges decision. As Bin Wahad states, “it’s not easy to reconcile the fact that you’ve spent most of your adult life in prison because of certain political positions you’ve taken against your people’s oppressors. In a lot of respects it would have been better if you were killed during the course of struggle rather than buried alive in prison” [iii].

The majority of his adult life occurred under conditions of physical, spiritual and moral degradation reserved for political prisoners housed in the country’s numerous maximum-maximum security prisons [iv]. He survived, he says, by “focusing [his] attention on the struggle, on the outside” [v]. He met his third wife, Tanaquil Jones, and fathered three

children (by previous “marriages”) during his long incarceration; however, he spent seven years of imprisonment under maximum-security confinement, increasing his isolation from other prisoners and his family and communities. The Black Panther Party and the large-scale Black revolutionary movement that coincided with it dissolved during his incarceration, under the strain of government attacks. He emerged from prison into a world where the terms of protest and contestation differed—radically—from the terms of the world that he belonged to prior to incarceration. Like most of the members of the Black Panther Party, Dhoruba Bin Wahad (then Richard Moore) was young, only 23, in 1968 when he left the Bronx gang, the Disciple Sportsmen, and joined the newly formed New York chapter of the Black Panther Party (BPP) at the height of the BPP’s membership and national visibility. The New York chapter quickly became one of the four major chapters of the Oakland based group, managing other chapters and branches throughout the state of New York and along the Eastern Seaboard into Maryland, and Bin Wahad was one of its early leaders. Throughout his beginning years with the Black Panther Party, he worked on a diversity of political issues that addressing the needs of communities in Harlem, South Bronx and Brooklyn. He communicated with tenants in Harlem, organizing tenants strikes and supporting homeless squatters’ rights; He also helped formulate the political strategy behind Black New Yorkers first petition to establish community control of the police (the resultant political compromise became New York’s “civilian complaint review board”) and supported development of the South Bronx’s Lincoln Detox center, a drug-free rehabilitation center for heroine addicts that was possibly the earliest practical example of a functional rainbow coalition, with the Latino based Young Lords Party and the white radical Young Patriots Party. Well-known as an orator, Bin Wahad quickly became a leader of the New York BPP, one of the public voices and faces of the group.

In the context of the burgeoning centrality of the NY Panthers, the NYPD indictment of Bin Wahad and twenty other leaders of the New York BPP, the “New York 21,” on April 2, 1969 for a range of over one hundred conspiracy charges that included plots to assassinate New York City police officers, and dynamite city department stores, a botanical garden, a police station and a railroad right-of-way, was a timely blow to one of the key arms of the national Black Panther organizing body. Eighteen of the New York 21 were arrested, three were never apprehended, but all of these individuals were unavailable to the organization for over two years, leaving a gap in the leadership of the New York Panthers. Bin Wahad and two other New York Panthers, Michael Tabor and Jamal (Edward) Josephs, fled underground during the trial because of an FBI-initiated plot to incite the national BPP leadership, under Huey Newton, to assassinate them. As the would be assassins converged on New York, Bin-Wahad and his companions engineered an elaborate escape to Canada toward the end of the Twenty-one trial. In May of 1971, after a long and expensive trial (the costliest of its kind at the time) a New York Supreme Court jury exonerated all members of the New York 21, including Bin Wahad, Tabor, and Josephs in absentia. But Bin Wahad remained underground. A fugitive.

Between 1969 and 1971, COINTELPRO and NEWKILL, the latter a joint NYPD-FBI information-sharing and surveillance task force, focused their attentions on the neutralization of the Black Panther Party. Throughout 1971, under the stress of constant police violence and media misinformation tensions grew between party chapters and

members. The FBI manipulated extant differences within the party, focusing many of their operations around tensions over sexism and regionalism. Fabricating a series of anonymous letters that ultimately sparked a split between the East and West coast Panthers, the FBI's disruption program reached its zenith in the summer of 1970 when Howard University's chancellor under government pressure withdrew as the Hosting Site for the Panther's "Constitutional Convention" Plenary Session. Later, splitting the Panthers ideologically, with Eldridge Cleaver and Huey Newton as the respective representatives of each faction, Panther internal political debates were effectively distorted by COINTELPRO. On February 13, 1971, Huey Newton authored an article entitled "Enemies of the People" in the Panther party's newspaper, The Black Panther Community News Service, declaring that the three individuals who fled underground endangered the security of the party. In the article, Newton expelled all three individuals from the party "for life" [vii]. For Bin Wahad, the mixture of state domination and internal BPP factionalism and violence intensified the dangers of being underground; according to him, it "felt like I was in a war. If kids threw firecrackers, man, I would duck... It stayed that way until I was arrested... I couldn't sleep in the same place two nights in a row. I always had to have people on security with me"[viii].

The NYPD apprehended Bin Wahad outside an "after hours" bar in the Bronx in June of 1971 and charged him with the attempted murder of two police officers, Thomas Curry and Nicholas Binetti, in Manhattan two months earlier. The case that ensued set the precedent for creation of what became known as the Joint Terrorist Task Force, a joint investigative effort between New York City Police, New York State Police, and the FBI. After three trials titled the "The People v. Dhoruba Bin Wahad", he was convicted in July of 1973 and sentenced to 25 years to life. Two years later, the U.S. Senate's Church Committee on Capital Hill brought COINTELPRO under (semi-) public scrutiny and Bin Wahad's lawyers subsequently filed a civil rights action to procure all documents pertaining to him and the Black Panther Party in New York. After long procedural delays, deceptive tactics, flaunting of court orders spanning a period of five years, Bin-Wahad's defense team received over 300,000 highly censored, excised and unreadable documents that disclosed forged letters, phone calls and anonymous articles aimed at defaming the reputation, alliances and unity of the BPP. Significantly, the documents also contained over 200 previously undisclosed pages of three FBI reports pertaining to Bin Wahad's case, including an anonymous call to the police in which the prosecution's key witness, Pauline Joseph, exonerated Bin Wahad. [ix]. Finally, the defense received the final set of Newkill documents in 1987, twelve years after the initial civil rights action to procure the evidence. Citing the inconsistency and the possible perjury of Pauline Joseph in his 1973 trial and conviction, Dhoruba Bin Wahad and his lawyers filed for a retrial. As discussed earlier, a New York Supreme Court granted a retrial on March 22, 1990, and the District Attorney's office dismissed his case on January 19, 1995, formally ending the 26-year struggle that began with the New York 21 case in 1969.

At present, Dhoruba Bin Wahad lives in Accra, Ghana and Conakry Guinea, where he continues organizing and writing, grounded in the legacy of the Black Panther Party, but developing a global perspective that spans Pan-African unity in the Americas, Caribbean, and Africa. While living in Ghana, It was Bin-Wahad who convinced African-American Black nationalists to rebury the remains of a former African runaway slave named Carson (who was buried in the New York's Brooklyn Navy Yard "Negro cemetery") in Ghana,

West Africa. Utilizing the historical nature of the occasion, Bin-Wahad help convince Ghanaian authorities to ritualize the reburial by bringing the remains of Carson and another Runaway African slave from Jamaica from the sea and through the “Door of No Return” – the first time (symbolically) in African history that remains of Africans stolen from Africa were returned through the portals from whence they were taken. It is this sensitivity to the historical, the modern, and the spiritual, that seems to distinguish Bin-Wahad from many of his contemporaries. In his personal life, he has melded his Pan-African politics and family. With a Fulani wife from Guinea Bin-Wahad has a young son, born coincidentally, or providentially, on March 6th – the date of Ghana’s independence from British rule, bringing to four his male progeny. As a “manager and counselor to young African musicians, Bin-Wahad’s protégé and local Hip-Life legend Reggie Rockstone received the “All African Music Award’s KORA for the best Hip-Hop African video, bringing to small fruition Bin-Wahad’s concept of Pan-African culture and politics. Bin Wahad connects his work to the ongoing struggle against racism and imperialism, for cultural and political liberation across the African Diaspora, maintaining a multi-fronted and coalitional approach, transcending “class and caste and gender” [x], that suggests the ongoing legacy and development of Black Panther Party ideology in transcendence of the ruptures that led to its disappearance as a national force: “While we must prepare ourselves collectively to wage many struggles at once we must do so with a common sense of mission and purpose. We must rekindle this flame and sense of purpose, but on a much higher level... We understand the limitations and imperatives of history, of a racist culture. The question is what we intend to do with it”. Echoing the Eleventh Thesis of Karl Marx [xii], these words of Dhoruba Bin Wahad, uttered in an interview at Eastern Prison in Napanoch, New York less than a year before his release, present the sophistication and growth of his analysis against the “limitations and imperatives” of his history within a racist culture. His post-prison writings and praxis are consistent with the BPP’s original ten-point program, yet a twenty-year gulf spans the two. What connects them is his prison experiences and the development of his consciousness as a movement or activist organizer and intellectual. A critic of globalization, racism and capitalism, he tackles a range of social justice issues that include, but are not limited to, the death penalty, the repression of political prisoners, social welfare, and state powers of surveillance. Following two lawsuits in 1995 and 2000, he received settlements for personal damages from the FBI and the City of New York [xiii], respectively. Clearly his legal and political strategy to hold the state at least partially responsible for the excesses of racist repression was successful. With the money, he and Tanaquil Jones founded the Campaign to Free Black and New Afrikan Political Prisoners (formerly the Campaign to Free Black Political Prisoners and Prisoners-of-War) in response to the inactivity of liberal white peace organizations such as Amnesty International around the struggles of U.S. political prisoners. Spending most of his time and money traveling to raise the issue of American Human Rights violations he became increasingly frustrated by the sectarian shortsightedness that seem to plague most nationalist, and left formations historically committed to doing advocacy work around the death penalty, U.S. political prisoners, and racist political repression. Bin-Wahad’s success against Law Enforcement in the courts made his “living” in the U.S. a risky proposition. As he noted prior to “returning home” to Africa; “America is headed toward a unique police state, where every citizen is seen as a potential enemy of the state and

therefore a potential criminal...where fascism will rule by popular demand – a unique democracy...American democratic fascism. As for me, I think I'd rather be ass out south of the Sahara on the eve of Armageddon than in New York at the turn of the century..."

Traveling throughout Europe in the nineties Bin-Wahad help galvanize European Left opposition to the United States death penalty and in support of Mumia Abu-Jamal. He works with "Cures-not-Wars" in the U.S. a small advocacy group lobbying for drug decriminalization and "harm reduction" strategies for drug users. Arguing that the economic and political unity of African-Americans is intricately intertwined with their ability "to organize Africans everywhere, internationally, around a common vision and a common perception of the African condition"[xiv], he set up the NGO, Institute for the Development of Pan-African Policy in Accra to develop policies and programs across the ¹African Diaspora. Unlike some of his more famous former Panther comrades, Dhoruba doesn't places little emphasis on trying to resurrect the past, or revise history through reunions and anniversaries or promoting his rumored culinary skills in a cookbook. Nor does he seem deprecating toward younger Black activists following in the Panther's footsteps. He believes that his generations time has come and gone, and those who survived are destined to contribute to creation of a new and more contemporary paradigm of Pan-African empowerment. This attitude was summed up in the award winning documentary "Passin it On", a personal account of Bin-Wahad's growth and politics. In his past essays, such as "COINTELPRO and the Destruction of Black Leaders," Bin-Wahad addressed questions that still remain from the Black Panther Party's vulnerability to the rapid dissolution under, government attacks on its leadership, membership and reputation. In still another (yet to be published) essay, "Beggars On Horse Back: Creating a Pan-African Paradigm in the Twenty-first Century." Bin-Wahad delves in to the global history and nature of the European state, White Supremacy, Finance Capital and the reliance of national elites on the current form of globalization he defines as "new age imperialism". Still in other essays, especially his most recent one on "The Crisis Of European Nation-States and the War on Terror", Bin-Wahad attempts to illustrate that in the modern age of instant communications information is both an objective, and strategy of war. Consequently, he puts forward the proposition that in the age of industrialization and post-industrialization there are few truly "innocent civilians". "Ignorant civilians perhaps, but not innocent". Recent events have proven him correct. Bin-Wahad's claim that "information is intelligence" has been amply verified by post 911 events as choreographed by Washington and London's "information warriors." It was his early analysis that led him to conclude that "power is not how strong one is physically, but how effective one is at creating and managing perceptions of reality –in the words of Panther co-founder Huey P. Newton, 'power is the ability to define phenomenon'..." But Bin Wahad is a student of the history that forced him underground and then imprisoned him goes even further in analyzing the importance of intentionally created "misperceptions" in maintaining global balances of power in his soon to be published essays. In the essay Beggars on Horse Back , which was derived from a series of talks he gave in Europe, and Africa in 1992, he turns the idea of Capitalist and Socialist struggles for hegemony in on itself, questioning how the "West" through the perceptual device of a "cold-war"

succeeded in defeating the idea of socialist development in Africa, and the Middle-East identifying the weaknesses of Africans that European and American Finance Capital used to their advantage, and finally, creating a structural analysis of Pan-African collaboration that can bring revolutionary nationalism, in his earlier quoted words, to a “much higher level”. According to Bin Wahad’s model, “Global Finance Capitalism’s supremacy significantly hinges on the centrality of national cultures and their individual tolerance for their own elites versus the masses requirement for a better “quality of life”. This dynamic is in part determined by “expectations” that are governed by availability of technology and its impact on culture. As Bin Wahad argues, “all revolutionary movement coincides with a cultural, religious, or spiritual movement, but none of these movement will empower people unless they are politicized. On the one hand, forms of cultural nationalism precede mass awareness. It is what binds oppressed individuals together with a sense of communal identity. On the other hand, political awareness precedes political power. Lets take the creation of a Pan-African Confederation - which by its very conception is consciously revolutionary and politically strategic—it would be an actualization of awareness- of the common solidarity and historical roots of identity and oppression and the translation of that awareness into geo-political power. It is a consequence of a higher form of thinking.” Conceptually speaking, Bin-Wahad’s Pan-African view requires an evolutionary change of mind, from thinking of oneself as a “minority” to perceiving oneself as a Global entity. In Bin-Wahad’s view, “European Imperialism succeeded because it compartmentalized the political consciousness of Africa’s fractious elites while the economies and influence of traditional centers of power were moribund, and migratory patterns had redrawn the authoritarian boundaries of African Empires, renewing social pressures on tribes and people to think narrowly and tribally”. Bin-Wahad still see Africa’s leaders as “clueless elites”. After routine hearing in Federal Court one day, while downing a plate of Oxtails and Candied yams, Bin-Wahad looked around the West Indian Diner in Central Harlem and said matter of factly; A signal triumph of post American Industrial culture is its capacity of cooptation...to disseminate the false notion that your cultural identity is equivalent to social and political status – America is an equal opportunity exploiter- except some people are more equal than others...which is why Oxtails uptown are not equal to French Cuisine downtown in the infinite wisdom of the New York’s Restaurant Association. He had just returned from Africa and seemed “vibed up.” Bin Wahad made his agenda clear: Black and Pan-African economic, cultural and political sustainability requires the intentional study of history as a mechanism of personal, communal and national growth. In this light, his “success” at securing his own freedom within the United States legal system must be underótood as a compromised victory, or a step in an ongoing struggle, because true “freedom” requires the “radical dislocation of the social status quo and a complete reevaluation of the dominant values and norms. The nineteen pivotal years of his life that he spent in prison as “a consequence of taking a position, of taking a position as a Black person, in a racist society” are part of an ongoing struggle for direct action against and interrogation of the structures of that racist society. His activism and writing are an extension of that struggle, exemplary of his multi-fronted and coalitional dedication to revolutionary consciousness, Pan-African internationalism, and Black nationalism—at its base. It is truly fascinating that beside the complexities of race, caste, gender and class, that have shaped Bin-Wahad’s sense of himself and the world around him, he is a

Muslim. Three of his four children have been and are raised as Muslims, and Bin-Wahad divides his African household between predominately Muslim Guinea, and decidedly Christian Ghana. In his soon to be published "BioStory" Bin-Wahad talks about the politics and spirituality of Islam in America's Black ghettos and within America's toughest prisons. Dhoruba Bin-Wahad has proved to be both a provocative figure and enduring reminder of a time in American history when radical change seemed both possible and inevitable, an era when young Black men and Black women of unusual courage and humanity stepped forward to proclaim their humanity and revolutionary spirit.