

# BROTHER

a forum for men against sexism

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## "WE ARE MEN. WE ARE NOT BEASTS."

The creation and destruction of the Attica Commune were very significant events in my life, though I have never spent much time in prison. As the black, brown, and white men inside Attica united to confront the institution that demeaned and exploited them, I was roused, by their exemplary brotherhood, from the deep depression I was feeling at the time. They were demonstrating that we could defy the limits of our existence; that I could break out of my sterile isolation.

I felt, as I did the first time I broke thru my defenses with a small group of men to a state of collective vulnerability, that brotherhood was powerful, possible, and good. They were reaching out with their solidarity to people outside the prison; and I responded to the assertion of their humanity, and to their demands for basic survival and dignity.

In confronting the prison, the prisoners transformed themselves. For four days, they democratically rationed their scant water, food, and blankets, sharing them with the guards they held hostage, with whom they dealt with far greater humanity than they had been treated. Some people were killed during the period that the inmates ran the prison, but my primary impression was that they were exercising incredible restraint, and that they did not feel a need to use vengeful macho violence to prove their masculinity. Compare this to the State Troopers who later gloried in their killings.

The groundwork was laid for the bloody invasion by the lies that the prisoners were murdering and sexually mutilating the guards. Rockefeller was playing on the sexual fears and animosities that lie at the root of racism. Yet inside the prison,



the inmates, organized around their common oppression, were able to transcend those deep-rooted racial divisions.

Because of that, the state moved to crush them. They were murdered and tortured, and reviled in the pig media. But we shouldn't forget the lessons they taught.

I feel like I owe the men in Attica something because of the energy and the enlarged capacity for freedom they imparted to me through their struggle. I feel like I must make the pigs answer for their brutality, or be brutalized by my passive acceptance of it. And I feel that I cannot abandon my brothers to a slow death at the hands of their captors, with their prison anonymity restored. That's why this headline still says Attica: because for them, Attica continues.

When they fought for freedom, I began to recognize more fully the many ways I am unfree. The racism which prevents me from seeing the humanity of black men and women must be dealt with as surely as the sexism and sex-role stereotyping that I struggle with more comfortably in my everyday life. It became impossible to ignore the armed, repressive power of the state. Attica taught me how much I have to deal with that stands between me and "brotherhood."

Men and women in prisons are victims of this white/hetero/male-dominated society who are beginning to fight back for their survival. We must stand with them, in as many ways as we can. Donations can be sent to the ATTICA DEFENSE FUND % THE BLACK PANTHER PARTY, POB 8641, EMERYVILLE, CALIF. or ATTICA DEFENSE FUND % THE BLACK PANTHER PARTY, 367 SUMNER STR., BROOKLYN, NEW YORK.

-M.N.

## ATTICA

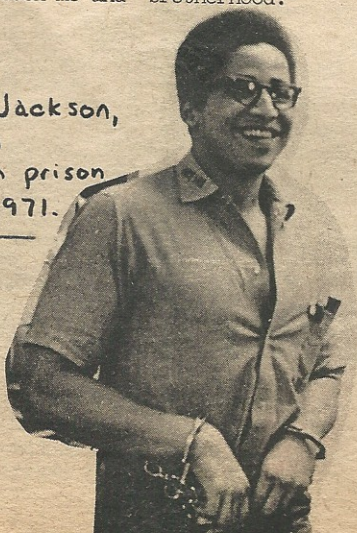
Elliot "L.D." Barkley, leader of Attica Liberation Faction assassinated by State Troopers after invasion of prison.



Samuel J. Melville, killed in Attica.



George L. Jackson, murdered in San Quentin prison in August 1971.



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