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The Black World Can't Wait and Neither Can Colombia
Afro-Colombianos Conference
February 16, 2007, Cali, Colombia
Cynthia McKinney

I am pleased to participate in the second annual Afro-Colombianos Conference being held here in Cali, Colombia. I was wondering how reserved I should be in my remarks, not wanting to offend your sensibilities with my kind of straight talk. But after I heard Senator Piedad Cordoba yesterday, I knew immediately that all subjects could be on the table. Senator Cordoba, my brilliant, beautiful sister was on fire -- exactly the kind of fire we need if our conditions are ever going to change.

Actually, my activism in Congress for Colombia started with the U'wa people who were trying to save their sacred lands. In their fight for the land, I stood with them as they battled Occidental Petroleum. And then Senator Cordoba visited me in Washington and told me a horrific story of being exiled in a foreign country after escaping from a kidnap. The people who deny our rights will employ any method to keep us from having authentic leadership. That is the kind of leadership that speaks truth even to power.

I took Senator Cordoba's situation directly to the U.S. Secretary of State at the time, Colin Powell. I am proud to see my sister in her rightful place back home exposing the conditions and the political situation so that your lives -- and our collective lives -- can be made better.

But that was not the end of my relationship with your great Senator. When her chief of staff was murdered and his bones sent to her as a message to keep quiet, I took her through the halls of Congress to the leaders of the Armed Services Committee -- that's the Committee that funds Plan Colombia -- and demanded that Uribe's office be contacted for an explanation. I offered an amendment to that Committee to cut off funds for Plan Colombia arguing that the money should, instead, be given to the various black organizations here.

Just imagine what billions of U.S. dollars could do to improve the Pacific Coast if the United States policy were right. In my most recent dissent to the House Armed Services Committee budget, you can see the pictures that Senator Cordoba gave to me of her assistant's remains in all their gory detail for the world to see what happens to black people in Colombia who stand up and speak out.

It is important for you to know that you are not suffering in secret.

And of course, as a black woman in the United States and as a pan-Africanist, I understand that we are all one. As I look into this audience, I see my aunt, my uncle, my sister, my brother. I see my mother, my father, my son, my child.

In the truest sense of the word, We are one. And those who join with us are one

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with us, too.

That's why I hosted the first Afro-Latino summit held in Washington, D.C. on Capitol Hill.

There, for the first time, I met black people from every country in Latin America. I learned that you, my friends, are a force to be reckoned with.

My objective was to link with you, in a substantive way, to change first our understanding of each other, and then to change U.S. policy: so that no black person -- anywhere in the world -- should feel the sting of the U.S. corporate-media-military-intelligence complex.

Unfortunately for you, that corporate-media-military-intelligence complex treats blacks in the Diaspora exactly like it treats blacks in the U.S. What the U.S. government does to you -- and allows your government to do to you -- reflects how the U.S. government treats blacks in the U.S. It also exposes the fact that we blacks in the U.S. have lost our way. In the same way that Hurricane Katrina exposed how the U.S. allows blacks to live, it also exposed to the world that we blacks have not emboldened ourselves to struggle for what we know is right. Furthermore, we have not adapted our struggle to the new suppression techniques that have evolved since the brazened murder of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

We blacks in the United States suffer today from the lasting effects of a continuing COINTELPRO against us, and we have not effectively implemented a counter-strategy to rescue us.

I call it "regime change" on blacks because we are denied authentic leadership. And in the most cynical bait-and-switch tactic, someone who looks like us is thrown to us as our leader when, in fact, that person had already been selected by the elite outside our community to speak to them and interact with them on our behalf.

This inauthentic, "regime change" leadership leads directly to the kind of black misery exposed by Hurricane Katrina.

You can research this on the internet if you put into your search engine, C-O-I-N-T-E-L-P-R-O. You will see the original U.S. government documents outlining this program.

Regime change inside the U.S. was initially conceived as a means to control black leadership that might "excite the Negroes." Excite the Negroes is a quote. Those are the words used by J. Edgar Hoover in 1919 when The Honorable Marcus Garvey was first noticed by the United States government and then targeted by it, so that Garvey could never influence U.S. politics. J. Edgar Hoover wrote in 1919 that Marcus Garvey, "excited the Negroes," and that it was too bad that he hadn't committed any offense so that he could be deported.

So, the U.S. government proceeded to find a black man to pay to stand close to Garvey and inform them of all his activities. Garvey was then set up on fake charges and deported, just like the U.S. government wanted. But fortunately for us, not until after Garvey had been able to amass millions of followers and had made a lasting imprint on blacks in the United States that lasts until today.

Of course, that was 1919. And the U.S. government institutionalized its covert actions against U.S. citizens in the Counter-Intelligence Program. During the days of Elijah Muhammad, Malcolm X, and Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., COINTELPRO's mission was to "expose, disrupt, misdirect, discredit, or otherwise neutralize" the activities of black nationalist leaders and organizations. Those are the words of the U.S. government, and we all know what neutralize means.

Now, by way of COINTELPRO, the U.S. government disrupted marriages, put innocent people in jail on trumped-up charges, sowed dissension among members

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AMERICAN CASUALTIES OF IRAQ AND AFGHANISTAN

Dead:	4,503
Wounded:	31,187
Injured:	9,984
Ill:	27,890

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of the same group, like what happened with the murder of Malcolm X, and between members of different groups like what happened between the Black Panther Party and United Slaves. They also murdered people. Fred Hampton of Chicago was murdered in his bed as his pregnant wife lay next to him. He had been drugged by a black FBI informant who drew a map of Fred Hampton's house for the Chicago Police who finished the job.

COINTELPRO's architects sought to deny black nationalist leaders any sympathy from whites, and they targeted our youth so that young blacks would never adhere to a black nationalist ideology. COINTELPRO is the genesis of the law enforcement surveillance that accompanies young hip hop artists of today.

Why is it that we don't know who killed Tupac or why?

And why is it that the media complex promote a 50 Cent, but refuse to play the conscious music of Dead Prez, Nappy Roots, Talib Kweli, Mos Def, Immortal Technique, and others?

In 1978, Zbigniew Brzezinski consolidated and expanded the ideas of COINTELPRO to include any contact of blacks in the U.S. with other Africans because he correctly foresaw that unity among us would make the U.S. change its foreign policy. In short, the U.S. policy establishment didn't want black solidarity to trump -- or nullify -- its own.

And so it remains today.

The triumph of COINTELPRO gave us what the FBI back then calls "responsible Negroes." Today, we would translate that to people of black skin like Colin Powell, Clarence Thomas, or Condoleezza Rice. No one would ever say that their service helped to promote the interests of the dispossessed or marginalized inside the United States, and certainly not outside.

Therefore, in order to maintain the status quo, blacks must not have the freedom to choose their own leaders. If they did, Piedad Cordoba would be President of Colombia because blacks and progressive whites know that she is right!

We must understand why Senator Piedad and others who are outspoken like her are targeted: because they are effective.

So I conclude by asking you, Why shouldn't Colombia join the world's millions who have taken center stage by standing up to the Bush Administration's senseless and criminal wars? Why shouldn't Colombians say that Colombia belongs to us and we will guide its future?

If the Colombian Constitution can be changed for one man, certainly it can be changed for a million.

I stood up to the Bush Administration and told them to tell the truth about what it knew about September 11th. I filed Articles of Impeachment against President Bush, Vice President Cheney, and Secretary of State Rice to stop the madness and get them out of the White House.

As an American patriot, I don't want my country to be left behind. At the dawn of the 21st Century, "something is happening in our world!" The world's marginalized, exploited, and dispossessed have decided to defy imperial domination. They are saying that resource wars that hurt the masses and benefit the few are illegal and immoral. My struggle in the United States and your struggle here is to join with the valiant people of Cuba, Venezuela, Cote d'Ivoire, Argentina, Spain, India, Bolivia, Chile, Ecuador, Nicaragua, and Haiti who have defied all the odds and taken their countries back.

In the 1960s, an idealistic young Berkeley, California student admonished the young activists of his day to put their entire bodies against the levers and the gears and the wheels of the machine and say to the owners, if you don't stop it,

we will stop your machine. The people of these countries stopped the machine. And I am working now with dedicated people in the United States so that we can do it, too.

For us, nothing less than the soul of our countries is at stake. But for the world, nothing less than the fate of mankind is at stake.

Thank you for inviting me to speak to you today. And let us now work together to provide authentic leadership for dignity and justice, based on peace and love.

Thank you.

You can learn more about Cynthia McKinney at

www.allthingscynthiamckinney.com.

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