



Struggle-La-Lucha.org

Baltimore marches against mass incarceration

written by Andre Powell
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Baltimore residents spoke out against mass incarceration on July 4. Baltimore was one of many cities responding to the call of the National Alliance Against Racist and Political Repression (NAARPR) to use the holiday to raise the issue of mass incarceration across this country.

The march was the latest in a series sponsored by the Baltimore Peoples Power Assembly since the police murder of George Floyd. The march and car caravan gathered at the Harriet Tubman Solidarity Center just north of downtown. As in previous weeks, the route of the caravan took participants through some of the poorest neighborhoods, where the police occupation is heaviest.

Before the march stepped off, the crowd listened to a recording of noted actor James Earl Jones reading a portion of Frederick Douglass' speech given on July 5, 1852, titled "What to a Slave Is the Fourth of July?" The march then proceeded through East Baltimore as it headed toward the prison complex which sits between a public housing development and a major highway and serves as a barrier between poor neighborhoods and the downtown business area.

Upon reaching the prison complex, protesters stopped to give a solidarity message to those behind the walls. These solidarity speeches are done every time a march goes through the complex to let the inmates know they are not forgotten. The inmates can always be heard responding to the chants and the speeches, shouting back, "Thank you!" During earlier marches calling for their protection from COVID-19, many inmates were heard pleading, "Help us!"

The protesters then marched through the prison complex, surrounding it on all sides. When they reached the exit of the Central Booking building, where arrestees are held before seeing a commissioner who sets bail or releases them until trial date, they stopped and held a speakout.

The speakout began with remarks noting how laws passed in the U.S. Congress three decades ago have now resulted in the astronomical number of people in prison today, overwhelmingly from Black and Latinx communities. The sentences given are much harsher and longer than before. Speakers called the U.S. "the prison house of nations."

Marilyn Barnes was one of several speakers who addressed the crowd. Her son Marlyn died in April 2019 under questionable circumstances at the Harford County, Md., Detention Center, where it was ruled a suicide. His family continues to dispute this ruling.

From Palestine to the Philippines

A delegation from Malaya Baltimore gave a presentation on the new Anti-Terror Law that was just signed by Phillippine President Rodrigo Duterte. The law targets union leaders and the many mass organizations who have opposed the U.S.-backed dictator. This law will also lead to mass incarceration in that country and create hundreds more political prisoners.

Then, a speech was given in solidarity with the Palestinian people, who continue to face killings and jailings at the hands of the fascist Israeli regime. That speaker called for the end of collusion with Israeli Defense Forces. The Baltimore City Police Department has been sending its officers to Israel to learn terroristic policing tactics, which are then used on the people of Baltimore.

Afterward, the march-caravan wound its way through parts of downtown Baltimore with vibrant chants as it returned to the Harriet Tubman Solidarity Center.

For updates on upcoming events, contact the Baltimore Peoples Power Assembly on [Facebook](#) or call (410) 218-4835.

SLL photos: Rasika Ruwanpathirana

