



Struggle-La-Lucha.org

# Free all political prisoners! Black August in San Diego

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SLL photo: Maggie Vascassenno

This year, Black August was commemorated in cities across the United States and internationally in Central and South America, France, and Africa.

The growing international interest in commemorating Black August is evident when you search those two words online. We must always be mindful of the search results and check the source.

In San Diego, the Coalition to Free Mumia Abu-Jamal and All Political Prisoners, community activist Dahryan Muhammad, and the Black Panther Party of San Diego (BPPSD) began organizing in June for three activities at the Malcolm X Library

addressing the history of Black resistance.

The groups recognize that all prisoners are political prisoners because of this corrupt criminal justice system, and that we must emphasize the urgency in freeing all political prisoners, especially those who are sentenced to “death by incarceration.”

We have witnessed too many of our freedom fighters die within months of their long-delayed releases. We must do better at educating, organizing, and mobilizing the people. We must believe it when we say “power to the people.” We must believe that we the people, working-class people, have the power to free them all!

On Aug. 12, the Coalition to Free Mumia hosted a video screening of “Free Angela & All Political Prisoners,” an inspiring documentary that takes a gripping look at the historical incident that created an international movement to free activist Angela Davis.

That struggle ended with the acquittal of Angela Davis, but left her co-defendant Ruchell Magee to be named the longest-held political prisoner in the U.S., having been locked up since 1963 in California prisons and eight years prior in Louisiana, beginning in 1955.

Ruchell Cinque Magee was born on March 17, 1939, in the small town of Franklin, Louisiana. Across the Deep South, Jim Crow laws, white supremacist lynchings, KKK terror, segregation, and legal bias against Black people were common. He was politicized in prison and worked tirelessly as a jailhouse lawyer, helping many other prisoners win their freedom.

Magee was in the courtroom on Aug. 7, 1970, when Jonathan Jackson courageously entered the Marin County Courthouse with the intent of taking hostages and negotiating the freedom of his brother, George Jackson, and the other two Soledad

Brothers.

Magee joined the courthouse rebellion, which ended with Jonathan Jackson's death. He was charged with kidnapping and given a life sentence.

Magee was just 16 years old in 1955 at the time of his first arrest. When he was finally released in July 2023 from a California prison medical facility, he was 84 years old. Most of the youth at the video screening had never heard of Ruchell Magee.

On Aug. 19, the San Diego Black Panther Party hosted a Black August forum entitled "Our Resistance is Essential." The panelists included representatives of the International People's Democratic Uhuru Movement (InPDUM) and the Coalition to Free Mumia. Discussion focused on the importance of building the resistance.

The final Black August event at Malcolm X Library on Aug. 26 was hosted by the Coalition to Free Mumia. It began with a slide presentation with pictures of some of our current and released political prisoners, as well as those who have joined the ancestors. Most of their names can be found on the [National Jericho Movement](#) website.

### **Remembering the first Black August**

Participants included BPP-SD, John Parker from the Harriet Tubman Center and Black Alliance for Peace from Los Angeles, organizers from the Socialist Unity Party (SUP) and Women in Struggle.

We reviewed some of the many historical dates associated with Black August, beginning with George and Jonathan Jackson. Aug. 28, 1971, seven days after the prison murder of George Jackson, marked the first Black August event.

At Jackson's memorial service, there were 200 Black Panthers in full uniform, while

8,000 people listened outside, perched on rooftops, hanging from telephone poles, and filling the streets. They raised their fists in the air and chanted “Long live George Jackson” as his body was brought out.

We listened to an audio commentary by Ramona African covering the case of the MOVE 9 political prisoners, recently released after 40 years in prison. Ramona spoke of the August 1978 massive police raid on MOVE – where the cops killed one of their own and charged nine MOVE members for the murder.

She followed that with a description of the May 1985 attack when Philadelphia police bombed the MOVE house, killing 11 people, including five children. No one was ever charged with those murders.

We agreed that we will have more teach-ins discussing the history of the Black liberation struggle and educating the community about political prisoners.

We ended our discussion by asking ourselves, “What will it take to free all political prisoners?” We know that it’s going to take millions of people who are committed and ready to go out into the streets and do what it takes to support our political prisoners and demand that the U.S. criminal justice system “Free them all!”

It’s going to take a revolution! A socialist revolution!

We each grabbed a book, a poster, or just held up our fists as we shouted: “All power to the people! Free Mumia! Free them all!” We stood our ground and maintained our position for a picture to confirm our commitment. In solidarity!

### *Further reading*



<https://www.struggle-la-lucha.org/2023/09/01/free-all-political-prisoners-black-august-in-san-diego/>