Race Today

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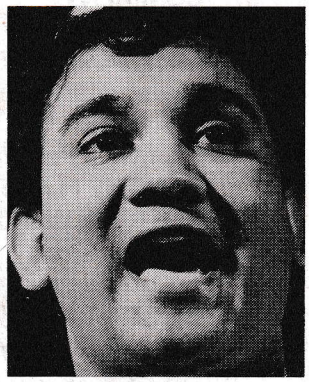

BLACKS IN PARLIAMENT: the Anti-Racist Road



CBS/3/844

SHARON IS BETTER OUT THAN IN Darcus Howe

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THE NEW BLACK MIDDLE CLASS
John La Rose

EDUCATION IN BRENT
Farrukh Dhondy

CLINTON McCURBIN:
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THE BLACK WORLD – AN OVERVIEW
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Editor: Leila Hassan
Assistant Editor:
Lorine Stapleton
Arts and Poetry Editor:
Linton Kwesi Johnson
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Michael Cadette
Sub-Editor: Trevor Esward
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Letters

KENYA — CONTINUED DETENTION FOR WANYIRI

Dear Race Today,
This letter is very long overdue and I apologise sincerely.

I want to say thank you very much to all the members of the Race Today Collective for your support and solidarity in publicising Wanyiri's illegal detention without trial in Kenya.

After the article appeared in *Race Today*, I received numerous telephone calls, letters and messages of solidarity and I cannot adequately express the gratitude I feel for the encouragement and strength I have got from these expressions of concern.

Very few things have changed since your article appeared.

On October 10, Wanjiri was served with an official detention order and the Order appeared in the Kenya Gazette on October 17, 1986.

We were allowed a visit on October 26 but were not really free to talk to Wanyiri. The visit was at the Nairobi Divisional Headquarters in the presence of four plainclothes policemen — three of whom took notes of our entire conversation. We were not allowed to discuss any current affairs or politics, and Wanjiri was not allowed to tell us which detention camp he was being held at or the conditions under which he was being held.

Wanyiri appeared to have lost a great deal of weight and looked extremely weak — he was shaking a lot, especially his hands. He also complained of stomach pains. Despite the battering to the body that he seemed to have suffered, he was very strong morally and reassured us that detention was not going to break his commitment to freedom and justice.

He is allowed to write one letter a month, but we have only received one letter in the past six months. My parents and sister-in-law have been applying for visits since November but have not been allowed to see him.

The Africa Centre has made representations to the Kenya High Commission and the Director visited Kenya in February and saw various government officials but no reason has been given yet for Wanyiri's illegal detention. In addition, a number of organisations, MPs and individuals have written letters calling for Wanyiri's release.

A recent event and one that has caused considerable concern is the detention without trial of Kamau Kuria, the lawyer who was representing Wanyiri. Mr Kuria is a highly respected human rights lawyer who has fearlessly and consistently acted on behalf of detainees. He was arrested in mid-February a few days after he had filed a notice to sue on behalf of Wanyiri and two other detainees: lawyer, Mirugi Kariuki; and lecturer, Mukaru Ng'Ang'a. The detainees were suing the government for illegal detention and torture. Kuria was later declared detained without trial. The other partners in his law firm are continuing with the law suits.

The situation in Kenya has worsened. There are now more than 70 people serving jail terms for offences related to the underground opposition movement "Mwakenya". Together with Wanyiri, there are a total of 11 people "officially" detained without trial. These include: businessmen, Israel Otieno Agina; lecturer, Kariuki Gathitu; lawyer, Mirugi Kariuki; a former university dean, Ngotho Kariuki; lawyer, Kamau Kuria; former university student, Gacheche wa Miano; lecturer, Katama Mkangi; lecturer, Mukaru Ng'Ang'a; civil servant, Raila Odinga; and former student leader, Patrick Ouma Onyango.

There have been numerous reports of police torture and there are at least three known deaths of political prisoners: Stephen Wanjema, a carpenter, died after being held for 11 days by police in Nakjuru (September 1986); Peter Karanja Njenga, a former Nakuru businessman, died after being held incommunicado for nearly one month in February and George Byaruhanga, a Ugandan teacher, was tortured to death in March.

Recently the regime has taken to arresting wives of political prisoners. In April, Mumbi wa Maina, wife of jailed historian Maina wa Kinyatti, was held for 36 hours and was only released following a massive international protest. Soon after she was released, Aida, wife of Raila Odinga, was arrested and interrogated for 26 hours and then ordered to report daily to the police after her release.

But as the repression intensifies, so too has the resistance. Church leaders and other democratic-minded Kenyans have boldly denounced the violations of human rights in Kenya, with one Anglican Bishop, Alexander Muge, saying the situation in Kenya is worse than that in racist South Africa. You, of course, know of the development of external democratic organisations of Kenyans opposed to the Moi regime. In Europe, Ukenya (Movement for Unity and Democracy in Kenya) was launched on February 18, 1987, with Yusuf Hassan as its Chairman.

And so the struggle for a democratic Kenya continues. It will succeed especially with the support and solidarity of people like you in the Race Today Collective and all those who have joined in the campaign for the release of Kenyan political prisoners. As we continue in the struggle for a Kenya where no one is harassed, arrested, tortured, jailed, detained, exiled or killed for holding differing political views, we are glad we can count on your invaluable support.

Let me, through you, thank those of your readers who have written letters calling for Wanyiri's release and ask them to keep the letters going and demand the release of all Kenyan political prisoners.

Yours in Struggle
Wanjiru Kihoro

Anyone who wishes to express concern and to protest against the arrest of Wanyiri Kihoro and all other political prisoners in Kenya, should write to His Excellency, the Hon. Daniel Arap Moi, President of the Republic of Kenya, Office of the President, PO Box 30501, Nairobi, Kenya. For more information contact Nish Muthoni c/o 39 King Street, London WC2E 8JT. Tel: 01-836 1973.

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