

*Beaten and Paralyzed by Cops, Cut Off Medicaid, Ignored by the Press*

# Max Antoine: New Jersey's Louima

Is there a rationing policy by the press that we are allowed only one atrocity against a Haitian per decade? While the recent guilty plea of Justin Volpe in the Abner Louima torture trial generated some headlines, an equally brutal incident in Irvington, NJ, has passed by virtually without attention. This case involves a gang of cops who forced their way without probable cause into an apartment where a party was going on, hurled racist language, beat up several guests and nearly killed one of them, after he asked for their badge numbers. It also involves complicit emergency medical teams who refused treatment to the battered victims, a prosecutor's office that chose to go after the victims rather than the cops and an utterly indifferent press. In other words, a typical day on the streets in black America.

On June 2, 1996, Marie D. Antoine, a Haitian immigrant, was hosting a family birthday party at her apartment in Irvington. Apparently, one of the neighbors called Irvington police to complain about the noise. At 2 a.m., three Irvington police officers, Phillip Rucker, Alfredo Aleman and Keith Stouch arrived at the apartment and asked that the music volume be lowered. The stereo was turned off.

But 15 minutes later the police returned and forced their way inside. The officers entered without a warrant and without the consent of Marie Antoine.

When they came through the door, one of the officers allegedly yelled, "Get the fuck out, the party's over!" The officers searched the apartment, apparently for drugs, with flashlights. Frustrated that the guests did not immediately begin to leave, the police began pushing and shoving people out the door. At this point, Marie Antoine's brother Max, a paralegal who ran an accounting service, told the guests (most of whom were Haitians) that they had the right to be there and that in America the police weren't permitted to "act like the Ton Ton Macoutes." He asked his sister, Marie, to write down the officers' badge numbers so that he could file an official complaint.

Officer Rucker apparently overheard Max Antoine's comments. According to

numerous witnesses at the apartment, Rucker pushed his way through the crowd, knocking to the ground Marie (who was six months pregnant at the time), and grabbed Antoine by the neck. Rucker allegedly rammed Antoine's head into the wall. Then, guests say, Antoine was hit in the head by a nightstick swung "in a baseball-like fashion" by Officer Aleman.

Antoine dropped to the floor in agony. Now all three cops were on top of him, and witnesses say that Officer Stouch stomped on him while the other officers flailed away at his head and body with their nightsticks. Several of the guests tried to intervene, but they were shoved aside.

Meanwhile, the three cops dragged Max out of the apartment and into the hall, where he was kicked and beaten again. Marie Antoine tried to stop the abuse, asking, "What are you doing to my brother?" According to Marie, Officer Rucker turned to her and said, "I will teach him about

**According to Marie, Officer Rucker turned to her and said, "I will teach him about American law".**

American law." Max was then handcuffed and dragged down a flight of stairs, screaming in pain, as his five year-old daughter, Nelchael, watched in horror.

At the bottom of the stairs, witnesses report, the police picked Antoine off the floor and shoved him through the doorway, pushing his head through the glass pane on the storm door. Max was then placed in the back of the police cruiser and sprayed in the face with a burning chemical, most likely pepper spray.

By this time, 10 more police officers arrived on the scene. As in the Rodney King beating, none of them attempted to stop the attacks on Antoine. Instead, they cordoned off the area and sent all the guests inside the apartment.

Max Antoine's ordeal was far from over. When he reached the police station, he repeatedly asked for medical treatment. Instead, he was led across the lockup area and, still handcuffed, thrown into a cell and beaten and kicked again. Antoine says that when he asked to use the phone to call for an attorney, one of the officers snapped,

"Shut up and die like a man."

Despite the fact that he was bleeding profusely, police didn't call the emergency medical team until after Max Antoine had been booked. When the medics arrived, they refused to give him any medical attention. Antoine, whose injuries were numerous, excruciatingly painful and life-threatening, spent two nights in jail before he was released to his family.

Antoine was taken to St. Barnabas Hospital, where he was placed in intensive care. His injuries were serious and debilitating. He sustained a fractured left eye socket, a broken jaw, bowel and bladder damage and spinal injuries. Over the next few months, he underwent 17 surgeries, including lumbar and spinal implants.

The beating left Max Antoine permanently disabled. He is now paralyzed below the waist and blind in his left eye. He has suffered brain damage and has lost sexual function. According to his wife,

Max is often depressed and suicidal. His medical bills are piling up and he has no way to pay them off.

Antoine and several of the guests at his sister's party lodged complaints with the Irvington Police Dept. and the prosecutor's office. Ultimately, a grand jury was convened. But the prosecutors never called any witnesses and no charges or other disciplinary action was taken against the police officers.

The Antoines also sought the help of the Clinton administration. However, the Justice Dept. has so far refused to investigate the case.

Antoine, however, has been charged with resisting arrest and assaulting a police officer. He is slated to go to trial on July 26.

Antoine and his family have filed a civil suit against the Irvington police and the emergency medical service, saying his civil rights were violated and that he received inadequate medical care. Certainly, he has suffered awful ordeals because of (Antoine continued on page 7)

# *Will Bombing Always Be Risk Free For the Bombers?*

## First Iraq, Now Serbia

**D**espite almost three months of sustained bombing, the Serbian military appear to have been relatively unaffected by the air assault. Serb units withdrawing from Kosovo offered little confirmation of the triumphant bombast spewed forth daily by Pentagon spokesmen and Jamie Shea, the Dr Goebbels of Brussels. Well shaved and fed, in clean uniforms, they had plenty of fuel, and moved with ease along a supposedly shattered road and bridge network. Hardly the demeanor of an army battered into submission by high assaults.

This is not to deny that the bombing campaign was disastrous for the Serbian economy. Nato, conscious that the vaunted precision systems are little of use against a well dug in military, devoted the bulk of its attention to civilian targets, notably electrical power systems and the Danube bridges. While Milosevic would probably have been able to continue his defiance of Nato under these attacks, the fatal blow for him was the loss of Russian support.

Such realities will have little effect on official postwar analyses. Instead, key "lessons" of the war are being eagerly retailed by the press, the most significant being that the European air forces could make only marginal contributions to the bombing campaign because they lacked precision guided bombing systems and that therefore they had better hurry up and buy some — from the U.S. of course — so that they too can lay waste irksome states at will.

On the face of it, once such delights as JDAMS precision guided bombs (the kind that took out the Chinese embassy) repose in their arsenals, the Europeans will be able to attack civilians without fear of casualties. Serbian air defenses, though they did succeed in forcing Nato to bomb from 15,000 feet and higher, managed to shoot down only two of the attacking planes in the entire war. Such ratios, according to friends of CounterPunch in the weapons design community, are unlikely to last for ever.

Ever since the 1950s, the air defense sector has whored after the false gods of radar guided missile systems. In essence, these rely on a ground based radar "illuminating" the target and then relaying in-

formation on its position to the missile. This was the basis of the Serb air defense network, equipped with Soviet designed SAMs. Radar guided missiles are unsatisfactory in many respects. Because they are necessarily emitting information—the radar signals—the ground based radars must inevitably advertise their precise location, thus rendering themselves liable to targeting and destruction by anti-radiation missiles, launched from planes, which simply home in on the source of the radar beam. Failing that, the signals can be jammed. (It is true that the Serbs did employ a certain amount of cunning in the deployment of their system, evading destruction by keeping the bulk of the radars switched off, thus forcing Nato to take account of the potential threat posed by these withheld assets and exercise commensu-

rate caution.) A further disadvantage of radar guided missiles lies in their lack of maneuverability. Ever since the Vietnam war, U.S. pilots have been aware that these missiles, especially large models designed for high altitude such as the SAM-2 and the mobile SAM-6, are easily evaded since they cannot follow a target in even a gentle turn.

Despite these proven drawbacks, the weapons-producing countries of the developed world (including the Russians) have shown little interest over the past few decades in pursuing imaginative concepts that can be effective against bomber attack. This is to the obvious detriment of developing countries who, since they are the designated targets, are the market for such weapons. Sooner or later someone will realise that there is a rich market waiting for anyone who

## *Words That Stand the Test of Time*

**B**ack in 1994, our friend Doug Lummis, who teaches in Tokyo, wrote a prophetic attack on the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia. It appeared in *The Nation* for September 26 of that year. Pointing out the dubious legal standing of this body conjured into being by the UN Security Council, Doug reflected that the Hague-based Tribunal, not to be confused with the World Court, would most likely be "yet another instrument to bind new fetters on the poor, and give new powers to the rich."

Then Lummis goes on: "It is a scandal in contemporary international law, don't forget, that while wanton destruction of towns, cities and villages' is a war crime of long standing, the bombing of cities from airplanes goes not only unpublished but virtually unaccused. Air bombardment is state terrorism, the terrorism of the rich. It has burned up and blasted apart more innocents in the past six decades than have all the antistate terrorists who ever lived. Something has benumbed our consciousness against this reality. In the United States we would not consider for the presidency a man who had once thrown a bomb into a crowded restaurant, but we are happy to elect a man who once dropped bombs from airplanes that destroyed not only restaurants but the buildings that contained them and the neighborhoods that surround them."

On this very topic, we should add that a Spanish pilot has charged that he and his fellow pilots were given targeting orders by US officers, requiring them to bomb civilian targets. In the Spanish periodical *Articulo 20*, Captain Adolfo Luis Martin de la Hoz is quoted as saying, on his return from the bombing war, that "Several times our colonel protested to NATO chiefs as to why they select targets which are not military in nature. They threw him out with curses, saying that we should know that the North Americans would lodge a complaint to the Spanish forces, both through Brussels and to the Defense Minister. But there is more and I want to disclose it to the world. Once there was a coded order from the North American military that we should drop anti-personnel bombs over Pristina and Nis. The colonel refused this altogether and a couple of days later the transfer order came." ■