

*Black August*¹ is a month of celebrating, self-sacrificing and uniting with like-minded energies worldwide for the current and “fallen soldiers” of revolutionary-liberation struggles. With its origins in the California prison system of the 1970s, specifically organized points of honor and procedure, and lastly its emphasis on a strategic, militant and dynamic history—it is a hugely noted difference from its cultural parallels in *Black History Month* and *Kwanzaa*. Black August stands out to Emma Lee not just in its rejuvenating spirit and re-positioning of the diluted, “white-washed” history of freedom fighters, but in its ongoing delay to honor and highlight more women. This in spite of women being the fastest growing prison population² as well as continuing to play critical roles in the ongoing movements against oppression.

It was during the first commemoration of Black August for Emma Lee in 2015 that a noted figure of the prison and resistance movements, named Hugo Pinell, was murdered in a California state facility. Hugo was the last jailed member of the “San Quentin Six”³ and spent forty plus years of his incarceration in solitary confinement. He had been a political figure while in prison and while facing murder and gang affiliation charges he denied, was also responsible for uniting White, Black and Hispanic prisoners to halt interracial violence in 2012.⁴ Like his globally renowned comrade **George Jackson** he continuously spoke on justice, capitalism, social control and demonization of the prisoner identity rooted in his political education. And like George, he spoke with a spirit of the street—clear, intelligent, critical, and full of character. His death was a shock to many, and his life an inspiration to more.

By her upbringing and association with freedom fighters and “socially-conscious” artists such as from the Black Arts Movement,⁵ Black Panther Party and “Black Lives Matter,” Emma Lee is well learned of the important role women have continued to play in bettering quality of life. Such women include **Afeni Shakur**,⁶ mother of Hip Hop superstar-icon **Tupac Shakur** who was also a speaker, leader and member of the New York “Panther 21.”

This song is an urgent meeting of the minds called by Emma Lee to address “black, brown, yellow, and red politics” affecting inmates and communities. The current attention on the United States prison system including the suicide of **Kalief Browder**⁷ and unsolved water crisis in Flint, Michigan⁸ further convey urgency is necessary.

¹ Malcolm X Grassroots Movement. *Resistance: The Origin Of Black August*. 4StruggleMag. (August 21, 2009).

² ACLU. *Facts About the Over-Incarceration of Women*. <https://www.aclu.org/facts-about-over-incarceration-women-united-states>

³ Wald, Karen. *The San Quentin Six Case: Perspective and Analysis*. Social Justice 40.1/2 (2014): 231-251.

⁴ Martin, Patrick and Blake, Evan. *Hugo Pinell, last of the “San Quentin Six,” murdered in prison*. WSWS. (August 2015).

⁵ Neal, Larry. *The Black Arts Movement*. The Drama Review. MIT Press. (1968): 29.

⁶ Guy, Jasmine. *Afeni Shakur: Evolution Of A Revolutionary*. Simon and Schuster. (May 2010).

⁷ Lee, Jessica. *Lonely Too Long: Redefining and Reforming Juvenile Solitary Confinement*. (January 2016).

⁸ Goodnough, Abby, Davey, Monica and Smith, Mitch. *When the Water Turned Brown*. New York Times. (January 23, 2016).