

Text Transcript of “Off the Shelf” Podcast Season 2, Episode 2 with Edward Onaci

Augustus Wood:

Welcome, everybody, to another episode of “Off the Shelf: Revolutionary Readings in Times of Crisis.” I am your host, Dr. Augustus Wood and I’m proud to be sponsored by the Humanities Research Institute at the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign. And of course, this is the number one podcast that brings you the political education of Black scholars, activists, and organizers to talk about the intellectual traditions, the types of readings, books, and also figures that we should be following as we learn to intervene in these multiple, social crises that are plaguing Black America, the African American world at large, and also just the struggles that we as people have going into, of course, 2021–2022.

And I am really, really excited to be joined by by one of my favorite brothers who's out here doing a lot of extensive work on the struggle for Black liberation as a scholar and as an organizer. I'm here with Brother Edward Onaci, one of the one of the premier scholars right now. And you, we typically we use the word emerging, but because this brother has been doing it for so long now, I don't know if this I don't know if this, I don't know if this right to say emerging since he's been doing it. But I would say that we have to call it emerging because one of the best books out on struggle right now that we're going to detail during this discussion has come out: *Free the Land*. And so I just want to say first: welcome, Brother Onaci, we're doing this.

Edward Onaci:

Thanks so much, I'm really glad to be here. And I'm happy to be on this show, in particular, because you're one of my favorite brothers also doing it. Everything that I think we agree, scholars should be doing as activists.

Augustus Wood:

Most definitely. So to let our listeners know, who Brother Onaci is, he's an associate professor of history and African American and Africana Studies at Ursinus College. His book *Free the Land: The Republic of New Afrika and the Pursuit of a Black Nation-State* was released last year in 2020, with University of North Carolina Press. It is the first full history of the new Afrikan Independence Movement, which we're going to talk about in detail in a second.

When he's not doing all this amazing work, which is a lot that he's doing, he's also a DJ and producer. So he's definitely into the culture as well. And he's a he's a fellow organizing member of the Malcolm X Grassroots Movement. And so, again, we want to thank you for doing this “Off the Shelf.” Especially in the second season, we ventured out to follow a lot of the a lot of African American scholars who are out looking at how to conceptualize a vision for Black liberation. And so I think it's perfect that you're

here for that because your book *Free the Land*, particularly the idea of a new Afrikan Independence Movement, I think that kind of, I think that kind of foregrounds a lot of what we're going to talk about. And before we even get into you as a scholar, and the works that inspired you, can you talk a little bit about the New Afrikan Independence Movement? And what it means because we always want to make sure our listeners know that intellectually, there is a vision at the heart of struggle. So tell, talk to us about the New Afrikan Independence Movement.

Edward Onaci:

Yeah, absolutely. So the New Afrikan Independence Movement is a movement that has been ongoing since at least 1968 with the explicit goals of creating an independent Black nation state, taking the states of Louisiana, Mississippi, Alabama, South Carolina, and Georgia, and governing them for and by Black or New Afrikan people. And in addition to that goal of landed independence, which, which I should say land is understood as part of a reparations agreement. The other part of that reparations agreement is to get the finances, the back pay, as some folks would say, right for over 400 years of enslavement plus the even after enslavement, the continued exploitation, physical and psychological abuse, mass incarceration, I mean, come on, we can talk about drug wars and CIA, we could talk about what's happening with our folks at the border right now being sent back to Haiti, how the US is engaging with Nicaragua, which has a significant African-descended population, right. So, I'm going off a little bit. But this is a, this movement, this attempt to get land and independence plus financial reparations, understands itself as part of this broader system of oppression that places African and African-descended people at the very bottom of this global structure in terms of financial resources, the ability to govern oneself, and the ability to even control the resources, right? From food to minerals, etc. And so, you know, the folks who started it argued that and continue to argue that if New Afrikans get... achieve their goals and get their liberation, it would help all these other folks get their liberation as well. So that that's kind of the big picture of the movement.

Augustus Wood:

Exactly. And again, I love your emphasis on resources, because for those that are followers of this podcast, one of the things I often emphasize in relation to our conceptualization of liberation, the Black struggle, one of the key components have to be resources, or redistribution, the idea of what you just mentioned, the control of resources. Power analysis is a major element of understanding Black struggle and liberation. And that's one of the things that I appreciate the most about the New Afrikan Independence Movement is that it places a primary focus on how resources determine the power of groups, humanity, society, for whatever everyone's saying. So let's dig into that idea of it because for us to get to that point in understanding agency and resources, there had to be some type of a dialectical recognition of how the State operates on racial oppression. So there was always been an intellectual grounding in this movement, and also in how you chose to become a part of the movement. So can you tell us a little bit about your intellectual inspirations in the sense of what were you reading? Or what kind of scholars were you reading that really helped you conceptualize your framework for Black liberation and getting into the New Afrikan Independence Movement, MXGM, etc.

Edward Onaci:

So I'm going to expand your question a little bit because as you said, I'm also into music and things of that nature. And actually the first ones were rappers OK? I mean, listening to Poor Righteous Teachers, Wu Tang Clan, to the extent that they have that type of analysis, Lauryn Hill in the Fugees, you know, and learning concepts, right? I remember Talib Kweli back in, must have been 97–98 had this line: supplying the demand it's all capitalism, right? And what he's talking about, is how the drug trade entices poor and oppressed young Black men to sell poison to their people. It's like, people don't sell crack cause they like to see, don't sell crack they like to see Black smoke. They sell crack because they broke, right. And so it, it helps those types of things helped me start to reframe what I had been taught up to that point, I'm 16–17 at this point, helped me reframe because I'm told people do drugs because they're morally deficient. They do drugs because they don't know how to deal with life. And, and they deal drugs because they're evil. Right? And of course, this is I'm not going into all the details about the Clinton era and all...

Augustus Wood:

We were all babies of the DARE program. Yeah.

[LAUGHING]

Edward Onaci:

So, so listening to music and reading things like the autobiography of Malcolm X and novels such as Toni Morrison's *Bluest Eye* helped me realize that I had been taught to, you know, be a quote unquote, Negro and think like one. And by saying that, I mean, I had fully accepted the foundational premise of white supremacy, which is that there's something wrong with *you* people, right? And listening to these things, reading these things helped me say actually, it's not us, it's the system. And it's the people who control and maintain the system of oppression in order to, you know, maintain power and control and to get rich.

And so from there I started to say OK, well I need to do some research as I'm researching the Black Panther Party, I also started to research African liberation movements and develop the fascination with Kenya's Land and Freedom party—what we commonly known as the Mao Mao. Also started to learn about Kwame Nkrumah and Ghana, learned about the assassination of Patrice Lumumba, they basically snuff them out before he can even really get going. And you know, mentioning these individuals but recognizing that they represent thinking and movements that were taking place in the 50s and 60s, and the struggles that they represented—struggles against Western imperialism in particular—the French, the British, the Belgians, and of course, you know, I learned about more later, but, but developing that fascination made me, I think, receptive to thinking about where is the land for Black people? You know, like Marcus Garvey used to say, Where is the Black man's president? Where's his army? Where's his land? And you know, so the wheels started turning, and the thing that really did it for me was reading Imari Obadele's *Foundations of the Black Nation*, where I was able to see, OK, I've been reading this name Republic of New Afrika in a couple places. Now, I'm starting to get

the ideological content that helps me make sense of it. So I can start to move beyond the OK, it's just some thing that was happening, to what, they actually tried to do that? to OK. Some of these ideas make a lot of sense. Yeah. And I would just, I guess, finish this by saying later on, much later, I read Saidiya Hartman's *Lose Your Mother*. And one of the things that she produces some analysis about and raises questions about, critical questions is, you know, what does it mean to be stateless people? What does it mean to have no homeland, because you have that disconnection, that you're from the land that your ancestors were on, and you know, you don't even know that those are your people now and the land where your stolen selfhood was taken to, which is also stolen, you're also dispossessed of regularly, at the same time as you're dispossessed of your body. And so, you know, these things, again, it just, these ideas started to combine for me, and it really made it make sense at that level of OK, you know, at the very least, we should be asking some of those questions, and we should be trying to resolve them and not just ignore them.

Augustus Wood:

I think that's a great way to really position that the argument really is not so much about that there is something there is a criticism out there at a at a kind of at a national level. But I think what you said is very important is that there is a there was a large segment of people who think that they are engaged in struggle, who seek to push these questions of land on the periphery. That they believe that a bureaucratic structure is more so important to resolving the crisis of racism in America, versus the resource question, the land question, particularly when you have so many more... and again, something I study is gentrification. And we, as we know, gentrification really has always been about more exploitation via land, and locational advantage, and a restriction of movement for Black people in urban spaces, the Black working classes.

And so when you have all these elements rolled together, in relation to the fact that land is being neglected or being pushed to the periphery, in this current moment of Black struggle or trying to envision liberation, what are your thoughts about that particular... for lack of a better term, crisis, in that the fact that land is not now, is land not being talked about in the reparations discussions, or in the moment discussions for the protest, etc., but that land is often being told that you should not be talking about it, that you should be that there are other things that are more important than land for Black people. And based on your research into *Free the Land* and your work on the ground, that's something that we cannot afford to no longer neglect, correct?

Edward Onaci:

Yep, yep. Yeah, yeah, just I guess one response that I typically have for people who may bring those sentiments to the table is: tell that to Fannie Lou Hamer that land doesn't matter. Right? Because, you know, we're taught very specific things about some of these folks who are valorized, who we valorize and who are valorized by people who hate us. And when we start to get into what they actually were doing, right, and I, I...one of my favorite books is Monica White's *Freedom Farmers*, right? And she also has an essay that I like to assign that talks specifically about Fannie Lou Hamer and the work that she was doing in Mississippi around land. And the whole point is, if you don't control your resources,

someone else controls you. They will starve you to get you to comply, they will shoot you to get you to comply, they will evict you to evict...hold up, evict you to get you to comply. Interesting that we would say that in September 2021 when massive evictions are taking place, and the main topic that the folks who control a lot of the money resources want to say is we need to get more people back to work. And so and so the lessons I don't think are that hard to learn; what is hard is to unlearn the conditioning that we've undergone in this white supremacist, capitalist, all the "ists" and "ism" systems, right.

And so, in terms of land, you know, just one other thing in terms of land, I should say, um, there are a lot of urban farms that have popped up. And I'm really happy that people who, even four or five years ago who said what, you want me to do slave work? Like whoa, if you work in this country, you're doing slave work, cause slave people did everything. First and foremost, North, South, and East. And actually West, too, actually West, too. So. So first of all, so let's put that part aside. If you drive a car, you're doing slave work, because guess what, Black people drove white folks places, right? They had horses, but anyway, alright, sorry for that tangent.

But so. So once we get past that part, we can talk about how we could say two things. One, when we are actively involved in producing our own food, even if it's just a small portion of it, our relationship to the land changes, our relationship to ourselves change, and our relationship to the natural environment— more largely, thinking more largely because you have to think about water, you have to think about pests, you have to think about all these things, it changes. And one of the beautiful changes that happens is people start to have more confidence in their ability to be self-reliant. You know, again, even if it's just I'm growing some herbs in my windowsill. Now I'm not having to pay somebody else exorbitant prices for those same herbs. And the other thing that happens is when people at a lot of these farms, and I think this is a beautiful strategy, are created and abandoned last. And as soon as the capitalists see that the land is being put to good use for the people who they seek to control, they swoop in and try to take it. And they have the backing of expensive lawyers, cities, all types of things. And that teaches people who just started developing their own confidence in their self-sufficiency and self-reliance, that oh, these people who said that the problem is me because I don't work hard enough, now I'm working hard and I'm feeding myself and they're still telling me I'm a problem. Right? And so if land didn't matter, those types of things wouldn't happen. And we could just grow food and be merry and nobody would care. And so I think that there's a lot of power and thinking, not just thinking, but gaining access to and producing upon land, at least in those ways.

Augustus Wood:

No, definitely. I like I like that you run into the issue of the narrative. And how there's always this constant effort to say that the struggle for Black liberation is more so a self-inflicted problem, that there's something wrong with us is the narrative that comes out of the upper classes and from the white supremacists—that regardless of whatever solution or intervention that we develop in terms of self-sufficiency...and this is again, this is like you say you brought up Fannie Lou Hamer, you bring up that that golden age of Black intellectual tradition from the mid-1960s to around 1988, when all of these books, we're doing intersectional work without calling it intersectionality, they were actually looking at liberation in the material realities of Black people trying to develop visions of struggle. One of the things they often sought to do was to change the narrative that there is a structural component

that's in dialectical relationship to how we struggle, and we build resistance. And I think that that's one of the biggest cornerstones and what's cool about your book *Free the Land*, is that you pay very close attention to the development of the solution. And how people really came to be that if the only means to our liberation is to free the land, literally, that we're going to have to have these resources to be able, like I said, it's the connective tissue, we need resources, to develop our self-sufficiency and agency for... to live our lives the way we should want to live them like any sovereign people should, right? And so when you look back on the things that you went into, and again, he went into a lot of hip hop, particularly in that early 90s period, that was producing some of the really great criticisms of not just capital, but the American culture in general, which, of course, as we've seen, those spoiler alert, it has mutated to the stuff that it is today to where you're going to find some really conscious, critical hip hop, not the conscious commercial hip hop, that still is on that foolishness, you have to dig so deep that because it's getting buried. So in terms of your research for *Free the Land*, how did you approach your methodology in crafting your narrative? Because as you mentioned, you want you always, and those of us who are scholars, activists, organizers, we always want to seek to change the narrative away from the dominant, oppressive one. So how did you take that into account when you chose your methodology for your research? How did you go about that?

Edward Onaci:

Yes, so I began with, I guess, the well-worn phrase at this point, the personal is political, and really thinking about what that means not in a hyper-individualistic way, which, which is what I think many of us want to just automatically jump to like all right, I'll recycle right, that's what people say now. Instead, thinking about what does it mean, as an individual person, to try to participate in a revolutionary movement? And so that really is at the heart of it. And you know, as I talk about in the book, there's this concept "lifestyle politics," which I borrowed, and I like, I guess I kind of evolved from another scholar. But that's one way that I think about it and the way that I actually learned about how it operated in the New Afrikan independence movement was I, I've got to talk about all the sources on the the archives I've visited, all the documents I've looked at, and some of that's important, right, one of them being Safiya Bukhari's I guess mini-autobiography, which talks about why she became a Black Panther and why she got into the Black Liberation Army, and those types of things. But, but what really helped me get at it was talking to people, right, doing the interviews, getting to know folks like Marilyn Preston Killingham, who told me when she was a girl, her goal in life was to get married and have children and then when she started... but she always was rebellious. And part of her rebellious spirit was, well, I don't want to just do that. That's not my only goal. My goal is also to be a business leader, right? And, you know, going from that to being a mentor to students in the revolutionary action movement, and becoming a lifelong, conscious citizen of the Republic of New Afrika, and so, you know, how do you get at that? You got to talk to people because even those who did write down their life stories such as Imari Obadele, Herman Ferguson, and now Tamu Kanyama, you know, who write down portions of their life story, talking to folks just gets so much more you know, you can ask the questions you can, you can for lack of a better word you can feel and sense what you can't just read on paper. And the good thing about talking to people is you don't just ask a question or read, read read, you ask a question, they talk and then they ask a question back. And they push back in a challenge. And they they change their mind and rephrase it or contradict it or whatever it is. And so um really that that's at the heart of the research, I did the traditional historical method of visiting the archives, I looked at the

documents, I looked at newspapers, you know, I looked at New Afrikan Independence Movement resources. Many, right, the best ones I got actually weren't in archives, they were in people's personal collections. That's important to say, yeah, um, but, and I also looked at things like FBI documents—as heavily redacted as they are—as untrustworthy as they can be, police and FBI files, they at least help corroborate and sometimes you can get documents that they stole from people that they don't even have, right. Um, you know, at the heart of everything is I really wanted to understand the lived experience of being a revolutionary activist. And at the end of the day, I had these mixed methods. The final thing that I didn't say was, I became a participant observer, and many New Afrikan and specifically PGRNA events such as New Afrikan Nation Day and just going to the other functions that they had that were open to the public.

Augustus Wood:

Yeah, I mean, what's fascinating to me about your method is typically, even when you look at radical Black scholarship, there's not as much, I mean, again, I'm being more general, this isn't I'm not trying to totalize everything. But typically, there is a focus on the Black working classes and their experiences as being oppressed and, you know, in the spaces, and you may have some activism here or there. But what you do that's so different is exactly what you said in that, what is the day-to-day life of somebody who's involved in a movement? Like, I think that's one of the most extraordinary things that you never see, on a grand scale, maybe a one or two other books, most of them coming out from the 70s, or 80s, but nothing recent. So what you're doing is so important, because one of the things we emphasize on "Off the Shelf" is that the biggest omission to the current protest moment is people do not conceptualize, nor have been taught, nor have had the experience of a day-to-day life of being in a movement for a liberational purpose. Like, it just doesn't exist. And so by you crafting that and showing the difficulties, the struggles... like this isn't something you just get, it's not the "I Have a Dream" and you get a civil rights bill in '64 that they'd like to put out on Lifetime or A&E or whatever. This is like a real depiction of wins and losses, struggle, struggle, ideological issues, internal, external mobilize, all encompassing in what it takes to fight for liberation. And I think that that's what's so critical now, is that we need an honest depiction of what happens in struggle, and to take honest strategies, genuine tactics, and critique them for both good and bad, to look at what can apply today. And I think your book lays out a lot of really cool examples of that, that, again, other scholars like myself, will be doing when I'm writing my works as well. So your methodology influences me, as it influences others who were trying to do this work as well. And the last thing I want to get into is exactly what you said a second ago about you becoming a participant as a scholar, but also as an organizer as well. So can you talk more about your experiences in that? And how both inform the other, like how did you get into that dialectic mindset and action-wise, when you were doing this work?

Edward Onaci:

Yeah, you know, I think it's important to just be honest, you know I became a historian and was eventually drawn to this work because I was trying to figure out how to be an activist. You know, that's really it. Sometimes people get surprised when I say that, but no, that was my mindset. I was listening to things like OK, well I can't just do nothing...what can I do? And so that part of that that intellectual

journey was also me trying out different student groups, getting with, you know, we talked about Urbana-Champaign a little bit before this started... meeting some of the local activists and getting to know them and trying to participate in some of what they were doing. Joining not-for-profits and volunteering, and always coming back to the realization that, you know, not and this is not to belittle anyone, or to disrespect or disregard what they're doing, because all of these folks are doing very important work. But all of it is very limited in that it doesn't ask people to question the very, at the most basic level, what are we doing here, why, and what does it actually mean to be a citizen? Which I ask, which I'll ask anybody, ask, you know, I'm in the classroom and I ask my students, I was like yo, when did you decide what's it mean to be a citizen? When did you decide to be one? And they're like, what, I was born one! And I said, that's not my question. When did you decide, when did you give your consent to be governed? With all the rights and responsibilities? And that's not something that I think we're supposed to think about.

Augustus Wood:

No, you're so right.

Edward Onaci:

So because this movement has that as one of the foundational premises I was drawn to it. And again, just to be honest, so yeah, I'm, I'm an organizing member of Malcom X Grassroots Movement, I had no clue at first that it was a part of the legacy of the New Afrikan Independence Movement. I heard about it when I was listening to Jared Ball, it was called Vox Union back then, like 2005–2006. And it was Black August, my first time learning about Black August Resistance. And one of the segments on the show talked about MXGM's Black August Hip Hop concerts. I was like, what? Revolutionaries, hip hop? I got to be a part of this, what is this? Prisoners, you know? So um, you know, so the participation part is probably more complex than it might appear on the surface, because I was drawn to the research as an intellectual and as someone who's trying to be an activist, but still, you know, trying to raise questions, trying to figure out what all was going on, trying to maintain a little bit of objective distance, all those things that I think that responsible people should strive to do as much as possible. At the same time, I'm really drawn to this grassroots organizing that's happening, where they're talking about a lot of the same things I didn't know that they were saying *Free the Land* in New Afrikan right at first, but they were talking about land, they're talking about political prisoners and copwatch, you know, stuff I learned about Champaign-Urbana, and I realized after I decided I wanted to figure out what MXGM was that the two are intertwined, that's because I interviewed Chokwe Lumumba, who then told me about it. I was like, ohhhh, I did not know. That is how I got involved. The participant observation was distinct. The participant observation for the research was me participating in provisional government functions, and sometimes official, sometimes people within the PG, so kind of unofficial, and getting to know basically the elders, and getting to understand the culture that people were keeping alive that had originated in that 1968 founding moment.

Now, you know, just where everything is, I think...how do I... think that there's a lot more overlap than maybe I want to admit to, I guess, I don't know. Um, but for me that was it. I was honest with the

elders like, look, this is for research, but I'm also just interested in learning because you know, I'm trying to be out here doing stuff and even if it's not within the PG, then you know, what can we and my peers learn from you all that we can then take and be effective? Right? And so yes, big old mishmash, a confusing mess of stuff. So hopefully, hopefully I got to your question. I think I kind of took it a little different direction for a second.

Augustus Wood:

No, no, definitely. This is the that's that's what matters, though. Again, because a lot of what you, for the bulk of the work you're doing in terms of the work on the ground, and the work in terms of doing the research, the writing, etc., my argument is that you can't separate the two. That both are going to inform one another. And they're both going to be critical pieces, to developing a vision for Black liberation. And we must always remember that, and that's why I appreciate the way you put that there. And so really, the last big question I have for you is with your book *Free the Land*, where does an argument of New Afrikan Independence or the New Afrikan People's Movement, where does that fit currently now, in this protest moment. You know, of course, as people know, by now, a lot of what's been happening now has been turned on a complete 180. A lot of the, because of again, you want to listen to some of my past shows of "Off the Shelf," and we talked about this, but the state now is reacting in a very oppressive manner, pushing more money towards policing, trying to manipulate the numbers to show that crime, quote, unquote, is on the rise. And when all this talk about what I call depowering, the police state, when that, when that's going on, is people are questioning the role of police or the function, or the very existence of it. Now the state is reacting in this way. A lot of the protest moment has moved from the streets to the nonprofits only. So again, where does the *Free the Land* work as an intellectual source and also an organizing tool? Where does it fit in the moment we are now? And how can we best use it moving forward? You know, yeah, you know, yeah,

Edward Onaci:

That's a big question.

Augustus Wood:

Well, you know, you know, yeah... [LAUGHS]

Edward Onaci:

I guess I'll start with what you mentioned earlier about, you know, oftentimes, we're not taught about the day-to-day in the life of revolutionary activists. And, again, as someone who is trying to figure out that was a question that I wanted to ask, and it's something that I think that we all can ask as people get into protests, as they get into supporting organizations, whether they be grassroots or not for profit, they also need to think about the real, very real stakes of participation. Which is not just, you know, you get involved, you have a good time, you know, you have that moment you run from the

police for a second, then you and your friends can talk about it later. A little bit of trauma, but also a lot of excitement. Hey, you know, instead, no, they're coming for you. They're coming for you. I mean, it's just that's just what it is. But for the reasons that you said they, one of the things that we can learn from studying this history, is that whether they be Martin Luther King, Jr., in his "I have a..."—only the second half of "I Have a"—they never talk about the first half of "I Have a Dream." But the second half of the "I Have a Dream" speech version of Martin Luther King, or whether it be Malcolm X, whether it be Fannie Lou Hamer, whoever else it is whether it be Safiya Bukhari and the Black Liberation Army, all of them had the same fate, which is that the state came for them. They tried to buy them at certain points. They tried to turn them into snitches at certain points. They tried to kill them. And they did kill some of them, and they imprisoned the rest of them. Right? At varying moments. And so, you know, we have to first understand that this is dangerous work, is dangerous work. And anyone who doesn't feel a little bit of fear of just like, ooh, you're being adventurous, maybe, maybe you should really rethink your commitments.

Augustus Wood:

But that's Free the Land.

Edward Onaci:

At the same time, though, we shouldn't be paralyzed by it. Right? We shouldn't, we should understand we should do enough research and surround ourselves with enough reliable elders, to know when we're being bought, because it's not always going to be clear. And I think especially for more inexperienced people who haven't had the opportunity, right, I'm privileged, I'm able to do this research and devote my life to it, right? So for those who aren't, surround yourself with people who can help you see what is coming down the pipe because they'll tell you 10 steps out, this is what's about to happen. But you have to be willing to ask and you have to be willing to listen. Right and myself included, right? I'm not saying this is somebody who has it all figured out. I'm always I'm still learning from experience from the elders. And so even if you are operating within a not-for-profit, right, I've done that and I will probably do it again. Just understand that you're there for particular reasons. So and if and if the money if you're trying to, you said disempower the police, or is that what you—

Augustus Wood:

Depower, depower the police state.

Edward Onaci:

Depower the police state.

Augustus Wood:

That was my big criticism when the whole defund the police thing started and I would call them in and say, you want to talk more about the power analysis, because again, New Jersey, they defunded their entire police and created a whole new police force at the county level. That's why I'm saying depower the police state. You have to encompass the whole apparatus and ask those difficult questions.

Edward Onaci:

As those types of things are happening, as it looks like you're starting to have some wins, one of the things that I can learn, cause they faced a lot of repression, ok now we know some of the tricks. Now we can start to plan for some potential outcomes and how to always be ready with the next thing instead of all right, they took us by surprise, they don't change they don't change anything. They change some of the specific tools. They might change the shoelaces on the shoe. But they're doing all the same things ultimately, and once we realize that and we keep in mind that we're not going to be rewarded for this work, ever. If we're doing it right, we're not going to be rewarded. One we understand that I think we can get past some of what paralyzes, causes conflict, and entices some people to leave and do the easier things instead of really trying to understand clearly what the goals are and how any decision we make either takes us toward the goal or takes us away from the goal, and it's really that simple. I'm typically not a black and white type person, cause I'm like ahh, there's so much nuance, but when it comes to these types of things, we're either working towards the goal or working against the goal. It's just what it is.

Augustus Wood:

And that really kind of sums up what "Off the Shelf" is about—is that we want to always work towards the goal. When we're talking to scholars, like scholar-organizers like you, we want to make sure that it's clear that people can critique what's happening to understand what the goal should be in terms of building your vision for liberation... that has to be at the heart of it. And I think you do a great job of that not only in the book but also as somebody who works alongside you and you do the same thing your work.

So this has been a very important discussion, and really kind of a precursor because the real richness of the history that informs a lot of this discussion we're having is in *Free the Land*. That book is going to be a very important tool that we use over the next 10 to 15 years and then hopefully it remains important—for lack of a term, relic—that is often, as the struggle continues, for 30, 40, 50, 60 years, and becomes that framework. Like OK, this is what they were doing then, we gotta be able to use these things then and now. So that informs a lot of this discussion. So I want to thank you again, good brother, for coming on the show and just laying it down and just like really connecting this understanding of the intellectual rigor with the experiences of organizing, being a participant in movement action, and why those things are so important to do together. And also the element of land and why that must be a central focus of resource reallocation in our struggle for liberation.

Edward Onaci:

Thank you, thanks so much for doing this show, for doing all of the work you do. I look forward to continuing to have these conversations and to developing work around what we learned as we grow and evolve.

Augustus Wood:

Exactly. And so again, listeners, we were just joined by Associate Professor Edward Onaci and his book *Free the Land* is out. It is a tool that we must use for developing our resources for political education. Hopefully we're going to be able to have him back on for a future episode as well of "Off the Shelf." But again, you've been listening to "Off the Shelf: Revolutionary Readings in Times of Crisis," sponsored by the Humanities Research Institute at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. I'm your host, Gus Wood and see you all later. Always, power to the people, and as we often say, Free the Land. By any means necessary.