

friends of assata shakur & sundiata acoli BULLETIN

The Friends of Assata Shakur (Joanne Chesimard) and Sundiata Acoli (Clark Squire) are putting out this news bulletin to help people stay up to date on the news of these trials and those of other political prisoners. We hope that by doing this we will help to further break down the isolation the government has tried to create around these revolutionaries, and thereby serve the growing movement of support for these people.

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sundiata acoli sentenced "THIS COUNTRY WON'T LAST THAT LONG"

On Monday, March 11, Sundiata Acoli (Clark Squire) was convicted of killing a New Jersey state trooper. He was the first member of the Black Liberation Army in the New York area to be found guilty of killing a cop. On Friday, March 15, a judge told Sundiata that a life sentence would not be long enough to punish him, and the judge sentenced Sundiata to life plus 2¹/₂-30 years.

More than sixty people attended the sentencing in New Brunswick, filling every available seat in the small courtroom. About a dozen people were left outside in the hall when the doors were locked.

Sundiata was convicted of murder in connection with a shootout on the New Jersey Turnpike last May, in which Black Liberation Army leader Zayd Malik Shakur and a state trooper were killed. In the same incident, Assata Shakur (Joanne Chesimard) was badly wounded, and she and Sundiata were arrested and charged with murder.

Most of the witnesses against Sundiata were policemen, and all of the evidence was circumstantial. Sundiata's lawyers repeatedly objected that the "evidence" had nothing to do with Sundiata. But after three days of deliberation, the jury returned a guilty verdict on murder and six lesser charges. When the verdict was announced, the one Black woman on the jury broke down and cried.

SUNDIATA'S STATEMENT

At the sentencing hearing March 15th, Sundiata was permitted to make a statement. Rather than address the judge, Sundiata turned and faced his supporters in court, and spoke to us for twenty minutes. Here are some excerpts from his speech:

"There's a media game where the media constantly ask the question, 'Does the Black Liberation Army exist?' Yes, the BLA does exist, but the question people should be asking is, 'Why does the Black Liberation Army exist?'"



"This country is based on the genocide committed against Native Americans, and on the kidnap and enslavement of Black Africans. It was racist from its very conception, and it's still murdering and kidnapping and enslaving. This country is permeated with racism, and every white person benefits from it, whether they know it or not. The BLA exists to end racism.

"The BLA also exists to end exploitation. In this country, money and property are more important than people.

"Why should people pay rent in a 200 year old building that's been paid for twenty times over?

"Why should people have to pay to stay healthy?

"The whole idea of 'owning land' is crazy. Do these people also want to 'own' the sky, the water, the moon?

"Why should people be rewarded more or less for their work depending on what kind of work they do? All work that is beneficial is equally beneficial.

"Why should people have to pay to be educated?

"The BLA also exists to end repression. The police are the main source of control, allowing society to continue its racism and exploitation of people. And the courts in this society are for the protection of the white and the rich.

"Rich white people stole whole railroads and never went to jail.

"Landlords steal whole buildings and kill entire families, and they never go to jail.

"Supermarkets stick guns in the ribs of entire communities every time they raise their prices, but poor fathers go to jail for trying to provide food for their families.

"Mafia businessmen and police are flooding Black communities with dope. Even the governor pushes dope--methadone. Who's going to bust him?

"Who's going to bring them all to court? Only the people, only revolutionaries.

"The media always play up the idea of the BLA shooting police. But in fact, police are murdering Black people, and even their own newspapers and statistics admit it.

"The New York Times says that in New York, 4 out of 5 people killed by the police are non-white.

In Chicago, the figure is 6 out of 7, and 21 percent of the victims are under 18 years old. It's the same in every major city. So it's the police who murder Black people. The police are a new style lynch mob.

"As Malcolm X said, 'This country is very good at making the victim look like the criminal and the criminal look like the victim.' If the police shoot at you, you have a right to shoot back. If the police don't want to get shot, let them stop killing Black and third world people.

"Zayd Malik Shakur was a leader of the Black Liberation Army. He was one of the most beautiful, sincere and courageous brothers I've ever known. He was the complete revolutionary. Zayd's spirit lives on. His name lives on in my name and Sister Assata's name. And many more Black children will be born and will take his name, and will plant seeds in the world-wide revolution that is taking place right now.

"The Black Liberation Army will lick its wounds and regroup. The Symbionese Liberation Army is active on the West Coast, and the Weathermen are resurfacing. They are all sharpening their knives, preparing for revolution.

"Now, judge, come on with that time, and run them back to back. I know I won't ever be paroled, but I also know this country won't last as long as all that time."

As Sundiata sat down, his supporters in court applauded and shouted "Long live Sundiata, long live the BLA."

Finally, the judge announced the sentence. He said the mandatory life sentence for murder would not be enough for Sundiata, because it would allow him to be paroled in 14 years. "For an avowed revolutionary who advocates continued violence against police officers, the only proper place is prison," he said. The judge stated there was no question of rehabilitation involved, only the "protection of society." And he sentenced Sundiata Acoll to life plus 24 to 30 years, making him eligible for parole in 1996, if the prisons last that long.

Sundiata can be contacted at this address: Clark Squire #54859, Drawer N, Trenton, N.J. 08625.

ATTICA DEMONSTRATION

THURSDAY, APRIL 25th 6:00 PM WALDORF ASTORIA PARK AVENUE & 50TH ST.

On Thursday, April 25th, Nelson Rockefeller is scheduled to receive the Four Freedoms Foundation Award at a \$100-a-plate dinner at the Waldorf Astoria. A demonstration has been called to expose Rockefeller and to support the 62 Attica Brothers indicted as a result of the rebellion in 1971. The theme of the demonstration is "ATTICA IS ALL OF US". Everyone is urged to come.

TRIAL NEWS

SHASHA MALIK

On Thursday, March 21, Shasha Malik (Henry Brown) was acquitted of the charge of murdering two policemen in the East Village in 1972. The prosecution tried to prove that Shasha was guilty by proving that anybody else who could have been connected with the crime (that is, other people being held and being accused of being in the BLA) was in a different part of the country and therefore by process of elimination it must have been Shasha. Shasha's defense was based on the fact that he was on a bus going to Cleveland, corroborated by a defense witness from the bus company.

The jury returned a verdict of not guilty. Shasha is a long time activist who had worked for Youth in Action in Bedford-Stuyvesant and at the Kosciusko Youth Center. While imprisoned at the Brooklyn House of Detention, he escaped, and the entire police department of this city went on a search mission for a week until he was found. The state is determined to convict him again although he already has a 25 year sentence from a shoot-out conviction in St. Louis. Their next attempt will be on a bank robbery charge. The motions for this trial will begin May 6th at 9AM at the Federal Court in Brooklyn. We urge people to be there.

Here are some comments we would like to offer about this victory:

1. For the past several years the state has tried to build up a climate of fear and panic about the idea of armed black people. There has been a systematic media campaign to convince people that Shasha and other black leaders are 'criminals' and should be locked up forever. This acquittal shows that their propaganda has not been completely effective for the jury did not convict.

2. This should not be interpreted as a victory due to the efforts of the people. This acquittal happened in spite of an almost constantly empty courtroom and no demonstrations by people who claim to support the liberation struggle.

3. We should not rely on the weaknesses of the state's case to win acquittals for our sisters and brothers in jail. We must actively insure consistent support for these leaders. We must never sit by and let another racist jury and empty courtroom convict these revolutionaries, as so plainly happened in the case of Dharuba Richard Moore.

ROBERT HAYES

On Thursday, March 28th, Robert Hayes was found guilty of murder and robbery in Bronx State Supreme Court by a jury of ten white people and just two Blacks. Sentencing is scheduled for May 10th. Robert faces imprisonment of 15 years to life. During the trial, Hayes took the stand in his own defense and denied any involvement in the incident in which a transit patrolman was killed. Avon White, who had testified against Assata Shakur and Fred (Jamal) Hilton during the bank robbery trial in December (which resulted in an acquittal), testified against Hayes. This trial stands as an example of how the state can railroad revolutionaries when the public fails to show concern and support. Robert's trial was not attended by supporters and so the judge and prosecutor were left free to be as outrageous as they pleased.

CAROL CROOKS

Carol Crooks is serving a 0-15 year sentence at Bedford Hills. She has a long history of resisting injustices within the prison system. On February 3, 1974, Crooksie requested medical attention, a basic right. A sequence of events followed which culminated in a prison guard riot. Crooksie wound up with severe injuries and with charges of assault on four female guards. Her first hearing is scheduled for Monday, April 22nd at White Plains County Court, Part II, at 9:30 am. The Carol Crooks Defense Committee is organizing car pools. For further information about Crooksie and her defense committee, call 675-5000. (This is an answering service--leave your name and number and someone will call back.)

BOB COLLIER

Bob Collier is scheduled for an appearance at 100 Centre Street, Part 42, on Tuesday, April 23rd. He is charged with conspiracy to possess weapons and explosive devices. Bob spent seven years in prison as one of the Black militants framed for the famous "conspiracy to bomb the statue of liberty." He was also one of the defendants in the N.Y. Panther 21 conspiracy case. Since then, Bob has been an active community worker in the Lower East Side.

PHYLLIS (SIMBA) POLLARD AND MELVIN KEARNEY

There will be a hearing on a motion to suppress evidence in the case of Phyllis (Simba) Pollard and Melvin Kearney on May 1st at Foley Square Federal Courthouse (Judge Motley's courtroom). Trial is then expected to begin on May 20th. Phyllis and Melvin are charged with conspiracy and bank robbery. Phyllis, who is now out on bail, recently gave birth to a son. The baby's father was Twymon Meyers, murdered last November by New York and federal pigs in an ambush in the Bronx the same day that Phyllis was arrested.

NEW YORK FIVE

The trial of the New York Five---Herman Bell, Anthony Bottoms, Gabriel and Francisco Torres, and Albert Washington---continues at 100 Centre Street, pt. 38, 13th floor. They are charged with the murder of two cops on May 21, 1971 (the anniversary of Malcolm X's birthday.) These two Puerto Rican and three black brothers have all been active in revolutionary organizations.

The actual trial began on March 11th after lengthy pre-trial motions. For the past two weeks, the defense has been challenging specific witnesses who, the state claims, had identified the Five. Since the police are known to use coercion and other forms of arm-twisting to pressure witnesses in their identification of "suspects", the defense is now trying to determine whether the witnesses had been tainted by the prosecution during the identification procedure. The trial is in full swing now, and everyone is urged to attend.

There has been much discussion on the left about support for armed struggle. Furthermore, there has been a general lack of support for the BLA, SLA and political prisoners. The following is an open letter to the left from Francisco Torres, one of the New York Five, about this issue:

Them so-called revolutionaries, they're always telling us (Black and other minorities) to wait for the proper time to strike at the enemy. Ah, but we have waited---centuries. Always at the cost of our blood! They perhaps call me an ultra-leftist, extremist, anarchist and other labels which they are quick to give out when one doesn't agree with their methods. Labels and titles, let them give out. It's of no concern to me. My people are dying!! Yes, they are. But you will say, "Where there is struggle, there is sacrifice." How true. But there must be struggle, resistance!! Not wait and sacrifice. Wait while my people die??!!

Today Amerikka is overripe for its overthrow. Who must we wait for? The people? The people are ready. But you, the so-called revolutionary vanguard are not. You are failing to mobilize the people, because your petty squabbles amongst each other has made you isolate yourselves from each other. Or simply because you may fear the ultimate sacrifice--death. So you vacillate, wait. More brothers and sisters are dying today than yesterday. More of us are being incarcerated today than yesterday....Say, where is the vanguard and who are you backing?

You perhaps say I'm desperate. Well, the truth is, I can't wait too many more years, while our blood is still being spilt. There must be resistance on our part. Even if we at this time are not mobilized and organized enough to effectively overthrow Fascism/Capitalism, we can strike back and be a hinderance to them. So you will say, "But it will bring repression down on us." I ask, "When we didn't strike back, didn't we feel and get repressed?" We get repression 24 hours a day, it's being waged on us.

Take the Palestinian people. Does Egypt's Sadat understand their plight? No, he does not. If he did, he would've kept fighting Israel until the Palestinian peoples had their land back. But it didn't matter to Sadat, he could play and lay. After all, Egyptians don't continue to die and suffer from hunger, Palestinians do. So it is the same with us. You can play and lay. What's the game? Politics? While we are being murdered and incarcerated.

Well, me and some of my brothers and sisters won't wait. We are, and will be, the fleas that bite the dog.

Cisco
of the BLA