

NEW YORK THREE FREEDOM CAMPAIGN

West Coast Committee
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ABOUT THE NEW YORK THREE

The New York Three -- Albert Nuh Washington, Anthony Jalil Bottom, and Herman Bell -- are Black political prisoners who have been locked away for nearly 20 years as a result of the U.S. government's covert military operation to destroy the Black Panther Party for Self-Defense and members of the Black Liberation Movement. This clandestine war waged in African-American communities across this country was a critical part of the now widely publicized counterintelligence program -- COINTELPRO.

COINTELPRO was and is an organized, documented effort on the part of the government to control and limit dissent in the United States. Under this program, the government mounted a concerted, protracted attack to criminalize the Black Liberation Movement (BLM) in general and the Black Panther Party (BPP) in particular. This was accomplished by utilizing the communications media (newspapers, television, radio, etc.). The government further carried out a program of misinformation to distort the objectives of Black political organizations. The criminal justice system then became a major weapon used against the BLM and the BPP. The grand jury, criminal investigations, use of paid informants, and the manufacturing of evidence were all utilized to remove Black political activists from the streets of their communities.

COINTELPRO called for "imaginative and hard-hitting counter-intelligence measures aimed at crippling the BPP." The FBI secretly decreed that "the [Black] youths and moderates must be made to understand that if they succumb to revolutionary teaching, they will be dead revolutionaries." Dozens of Panthers were killed by police or COINTELPRO methods. Many more were imprisoned on trumped-up charges. It is within this context that we must view what happened to the NY3, Dhoruba bin Wahad, geronimo ji Jaga (Pratt), and over 150 other political activists. Many of the political activists like the NY3 have been imprisoned for almost 20 years. A confidential FBI directive urged that Black militants be "arrested on every possible charge until they could no longer make bail." Deception, slander, and bogus criminal indictments proliferated under the FBI's dictum that "the purpose of counterintelligence action is to disrupt the BPP, and it is immaterial whether the facts exist to substantiate the charge."

In the last 15 years, we have been able to unearth countless documents through Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) requests that have allowed us to see exactly what happened in the trial of the NY3. We have learned the horrifying reality of the FBI's intention to destroy Black leadership in this country "by any means necessary." After losing with a hung jury in the first attempt to convict the NY3, the government resorted to the

terrorist tactics it condemns around the world: Herman Bell's friend and co-worker, Ruben Scott, was tortured with electric cattleprods to his testicles and beaten unconscious until he agreed to be used as a witness against the NY3, thus ensuring a conviction the second time around. Even after suffering this torture, Ruben Scott made a futile attempt to inform the only public official he had access to who he thought could be impartial -- the trial judge, Greenfield -- that if he took the stand he would be lying, for fear of his life. However, the trial judge immediately communicated Scott's wavering stance to the prosecuting attorney, who then took Ruben back to his torturers to ensure that he would give the testimony the prosecution wanted at trial. Ruben was never allowed to communicate to defense counsel his unwillingness to lie on the stand, and 38 days elapsed before the trial judge informed defense counsel that Scott had even spoken to him.

The trial judge, immediately prior to charging the jury, prodded the prosecution into asking for a charge on conspiracy by saying, "Don't you mean that you want a conspiracy charge too?" At which time the prosecution said, "Oh yeah, I want to charge conspiracy too." Even though the NY3 were not charged in the indictment with conspiracy, Judge Greenfield proceeded to charge the jury utilizing a conspiracy charge as if they were -- using the language of conspiracy. The evidence was and is not present to support an aiding and abetting charge against Nuh or any one of the other defendants, and it is definitely not present to support a conspiracy charge.

We can go on and on listing the errors committed in the trial to illegally convict the NY3, and describing how the American judicial system was used in the FBI's covert war against the BPP and Black political activists. We can go on and on listing the government's organized efforts to prevent the Black community from organizing to defend itself against racist violence and oppression, in the form of denial of decent housing, adequate food and clothing, quality education and medical services. But it is enough to ask you to look to the realities of the conditions of Black people to understand why the New York Three, the Queens Two, Herman Ferguson, and other U.S. political prisoners are still incarcerated today.

The government, through COINTELPRO, has systematically eliminated or removed the vast majority of the Black leadership in this country since the onset of the Civil Rights Movement. The New York Three are a part of this leadership. We have a constitutional right to challenge the government's documented illegal practices; what's more, we have a moral obligation to fight for the freedom of our brothers and sisters who have been stolen from our midst.

The New York Three are political prisoners every bit as much as Nelson Mandela. For years we supported the release of Nelson Mandela, and in 1990 the people of the world have freed him. Let us work now to free the political prisoners in our own country.
FREE THE NEW YORK THREE!