

# IT IS OUR DUTY TO FIGHT!

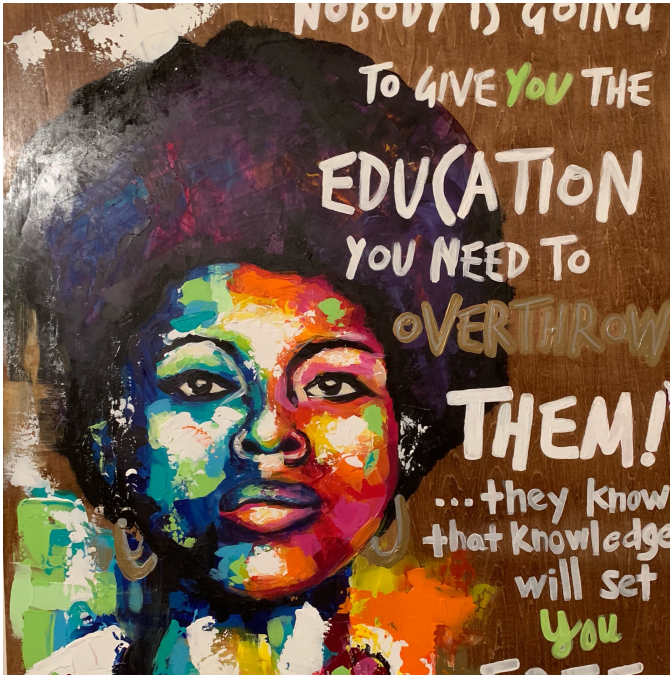
Writings, Statements and interviews with  
Assata Shakur



- ASSATA SHAKUR

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# To My People

July 6, 1973. Middlesex County Workhouse.

Black brothers, Black sisters, I want you to know that I love you and I hope that somewhere in your heart you have love for me. My name is Assata Shakir (slave name JoAnne Chesimard), and I am a revolutionary. A Black Revolutionary. By what I mean that I am a field nigger who is determined to be free by any means necessary. By that I mean that I can never be free unless all of my people are free along with me. By that I mean that I have declared war on all forces that have raped our women, castrated our men and kept our babies empty bellied.

I have declared war on the rich who prosper on our poverty. The politicians who lie to us with smiling faces and all the mindless heartless robots who protect them and their property.

I am a Black revolutionary, and as such I am the victim of all the wrath, hatred, and slander that amerikkka is capable of. Like all other Black revolutionaries, amerikkka is trying to lynch me.

I am a Black revolutionary woman and because of this I have been charged with and accused of every alleged crime in which a woman was believed to have participated. The alleged crimes in which only men were supposedly involved, I have been accused of planning. They have plastered pictures alleged to be me in post offices, airports, hotels, police cars, subways, banks, televisions and newspapers. They have offered over Fifty Thousand Dollars (\$50,000) in rewards for my capture and they have issued orders to shoot on sight and shoot to kill.

I am a black revolutionary and, by definition, that makes me part of the Black Liberation Army. The pigs have used their newspapers and TV's to paint the Black Liberation Army as vicious, brutal, mad dog criminals. They have called us gangsters and gun molls and have compared us to such characters as John Dillinger [sic] and Ma Barker [sic]. It should be clear, it must be clear to anyone who can think,

see or hear, that we are the victims. The victims and not the criminals.

It should also be clear to us by now who the real criminals are. Nixon and his crime partners have murdered hundreds of Third World brothers and sisters in Vietnam, Cambodia, Mozambique, Angola, and South Africa. As was proved by Watergate, the top law enforcement officials in this country are a lying bunch of criminals. The president, two attorney generals, the head of the fbi, the head of the cia, and half the white house staff have been implicated in the Watergate crimes.

They call us murderers, but we did not murder over two hundred fifty unarmed Black men, women, and children, or wound thousands of others in the riots they provoked during the sixties. The rulers of this country have always considered their property more important than our lives. They call us murderers, but we were not responsible for the twenty-eight brother inmates and nine hostages murdered at attica. They call us murderers, but we did not murder and wound over thirty unarmed Black students at Jackson State—or Southern State, either.

They call us murderers, but we did not murder Martin Luther King, Jr., Emmett Till, Medgar Evers, Malcolm X, George Jackson, Nat Turner, James Chaney, and countless others. We did not murder, by shooting in the back, sixteen-year-old Rita Lloyd, eleven-year-old Rickie Bodden, or ten-year-old Clifford Glover. They call us murderers, but we do not control or enforce a system of racism and oppression that systematically murders Black and Third World people.

Although Black people supposedly comprise about fifteen percent of the total amerikkkan population, at least sixty percent of murder victims are Black. For every pig that is killed in the so-called line of duty, there are at least fifty Black people murdered by the police.

Black life expectancy is much lower than white and they do their best to kill us before we are even born. We are burned alive in fire-

trap tenements. Our brothers and sisters OD daily from heroin and methadone. Our babies die from lead poisoning. Millions of Black people have died as a result of indecent medical care. This is murder. But they have got the gall to call us murderers.

They call us kidnapers, yet Brother Clark Squires (who is accused, along with me, of murdering a new jersey state trooper) was kidnapped on April 2, 1969, from our Black community and held on one million dollars' ransom in the New York Panther 21 conspiracy case. He was acquitted on May 13, 1971, along with all the others, of 156 counts of conspiracy by a jury that took less than two hours to deliberate. Brother Squires was innocent. Yet he was kidnapped from his community and family. Over two years of his life was stolen, but they call us kidnapers. We did not kidnap the thousands of Brothers and Sisters held captive in amerika's concentration camps. Ninety percent of the prison population in this country are Black and Third World people who can afford neither bail nor lawyers.

They call us thieves and bandits. They say we steal. But it was not we who stole millions of Black people from the continent of Africa. We were robbed of our language, of our Gods, of our culture, of our human dignity, of our labor, and of our lives. They call us thieves, yet it is not we who rip off billions of dollars every year through tax evasions, illegal price fixing, embezzlement, consumer fraud, bribes, kickbacks, and swindles. They call us bandits, yet every time most Black people pick up our paychecks we are being robbed. Every time we walk into a store in our neighborhood we are being held up. And every time we pay our rent the landlord sticks a gun into our ribs.

They call us thieves, but we did not rob and murder millions of Indians by ripping off their homeland, then call ourselves pioneers. They call us bandits, but it is not we who are robbing Africa, Asia, and Latin America of their natural resources and freedom while the people who live there are sick and starving. The rulers of this country and their flunkies have committed some of the most brutal, vicious crimes in history. They are the bandits. They are the

murderers. And they should be treated as such. These maniacs are not fit to judge me, Clark, or any other Black person on trial in amerika. Black people should and, inevitably, must determine our destinies.

Every revolution in history has been accomplished by actions, although words are necessary. We must create shields that protect us and spears that penetrate our enemies. Black people must learn how to struggle by struggling. We must learn by our mistakes.

I want to apologize to you, my Black brothers and sisters, for being on the new jersey turnpike. I should have known better. The turnpike is a checkpoint where Black people are stopped, searched, harassed, and assaulted. Revolutionaries must never be in too much of a hurry or make careless decisions. He who runs when the sun is sleeping will stumble many times.

Every time a Black Freedom Fighter is murdered or captured, the pigs try to create the impression that they have quashed the movement, destroyed our forces, and put down the Black Revolution. The pigs also try to give the impression that five or ten guerrillas are responsible for every revolutionary action carried out in amerika. That is nonsense. That is absurd. Black revolutionaries do not drop from the moon. We are created by our conditions. Shaped by our oppression. We are being manufactured in droves in the ghetto streets, places like attica, san quentin, bedford hills, leavenworth, and sing sing. They are turning out thousands of us. Many jobless Black veterans and welfare mothers are joining our ranks. Brothers and sisters from all walks of life, who are tired of suffering passively, make up the BLA.

There is, and always will be, until every Black man, woman, and child is free, a Black Liberation Army. The main function of the Black Liberation Army at this time is to create good examples, to struggle for Black freedom, and to prepare for the future. We must defend ourselves and let no one disrespect us. We must gain our liberation by any means necessary.

It is our duty to fight for our freedom.  
It is our duty to win.  
We must love each other and support each other.  
We have nothing to lose but our chains

**IN THE SPIRIT OF:**

RONALD CARTER  
WILLIAM CHRISTMAS  
MARK CLARK  
MARK ESSEX  
FRANK HEAVY FIELDS  
WOODY CHANGA OLUGBALA GREEN  
FRED HAMPTON  
LIL' BOBBY HUTTON  
GEORGE JACKSON  
JONATHAN JACKSON  
JAMES McCLAIN  
HAROLD RUSSELL  
ZAYD MALIK SHAKUR  
ANTHONY KIMU OLUGBALA WHITE

WE MUST FIGHT ON!!!



# Opening Statement by Assata Shakur

(Joanne Chesimard)

1/7/76

JUDGE THOMPSON, BROTHERS AND SISTERS, MEN AND WOMEN OF THE JURY:

I have decided to act as co-counsel, and to make this opening statement, not because I have any illusions about my legal abilities, but rather because there are things that I must say to you. I have spent many days and nights behind bars thinking about this trial, this outrage. And in my own mind only someone who has been so intimately a victim of this madness and I have, can do justice to what I have to say. And if you think that I am nervous, your senses do not deceive you. It is only because I know that this moment can never be lived again, and that so much depends on it. I have to read this statement to you because I am afraid that I will forget half of what I have to say. Please try to bear with me.

This will not be a conventional opening statement. First of all, because I am not a lawyer, and what has happened to me, and what has happened to Ronald Myers does not exist in a vacuum. There are a long series of events and attitudes that led up to us being here.

When we were sitting in the courtroom, during the jury selection process, I listened to Judge Thompson tell you about the amerikan system justice. He talked about presumption of innocence; he talked about equality and justice. His words were like a beautiful dream in a beautiful world. But I have been awaiting trial for two and one half years. And justice, in my eyesight, has not been the amerikan dream: it has been the amerikan nightmare. There was a time when I wanted to believe that there was justice in this country. But reality crashed through and shattered all my daydreams. While awaiting trial I have earned a PhD in justice, or rather, the lack of it.

I sat next to a prenant woman who was doing 90 days for taking a box of pampers, and watched on TV the pardoning of a president



who had stolen millions of dollars, and who had been responsible for the deaths of thousands of human beings. For What? For peace with honor? Nixon was pardoned without ever being formally accused of a crime. He was pardoned without ever standing trial or being found guilty of a crime or spending one night in jail. Who else could commit some of the most horrendous, destructive crimes in history and get paid 200,000 tax dollars a year? Is there really such a thing as equality under the law? Ford stated that he pardoned Nixon because Nixon's family had suffered enough. Well, what about thousands of families whose sons gave their lives in Viet Nam? What about the families who have sons and daughters in prison? Who cannot even afford bail or lawyers for their children? And what about the millions of people who have been sentenced at birth to poverty, to live like animals and work like dogs? Where is justice for them?

*What kind of justice is this?*

*Where the poor go to prison and the rich go free?*

*Where witnesses are rented, bought or bribed?*

*Where evidence is made or manufactured?*

*Where people are tried, not because of any criminal  
actions but because of their political beliefs?*

*Where was the justice for the men at Attica?*

*Where was the justice for Medgar Evers, Fred Hampton,  
Clifford Glover?*

*Where was justice for the Rosenbergs?*

*And where is the justice for the Native Americans  
who we so presumptuously call Indians?*

I am not on trial here because I am a criminal, or because I have committed a crime. I have never been convicted of a crime in my life. Ronald Myers is not on trial because he is a criminal or because he has committed a crime. He was 19 years old when he turned himself in, after seeing his pictures in the newspaper. He thought that the police would immediately see their mistake. I met Ronald Myers for the first time about 8 months ago in the lawyers conference room. It was a stiff and strange meeting, something I hope I'll never have to go through again. I was shocked to see how

young he was. And no matter what the outcome of this trial is, I will always feel a bitterness about what has happened to Ronald Myers and what has happened to me.

## WHY WE ARE ON TRIAL

I do not think that its just an accident that we are on trial here. This case is just another example of what has been going on in this country. Throughout amerika's history people have been imprisoned because of their political beliefs and charged with criminal acts in order to justify that imprisonment. Those who dared to speak out against the injustices in this country, both Black and white, have paid dearly for their courage, sometimes with their lives. Marcus Garvey, Stokely Carmichael, Angela Davis, the Rosenbergs, Lolita Lebron were all charged with crimes because of their political beliefs. Martin Luther King went to jail countless times for leading non-violent demonstrations. Why, are you probably asking yourselves, would this government want to put me or Ronald Myers in jail? In my mind the answer is very simple. For the same reason that this government has put everyone in jail who spoke up for freedom: who says give me liberty or give me death.

During the void dire process, we asked you about the word "militant." There was a reason for that. In the late sixties and the early seventies this country was in upheaval. There was a strong people's movement against the wars, against racism, in the colleges, on the streets and in the Black and Puerto Rican communities. This government, local police agencies, the F.B.I. and the C.I.A. launched an all-out war against the people they considered militants. We are only finding out now, because of investigations into the F.B.I. and C.I.A. how extensive and how criminal their methods were and still are. In the same way that witches were burned in Salem, this government went on a witch-hunt, for people they considered "militant." Countless numbers of people were either killed or imprisoned. The Kerrigan's, the Chicago 7, the Panther 21, Bobby Seale and thousands of anti-war demonstrators were all victims of this witch hunt justice. Maybe some of you are saying to yourselves, no government would do that. Well, you only have to check out for

yourselves the history of this country and to look around and see what is going on today. All you have to do is ask yourselves who controls the government and who are the victims of that control?

## THE BLACK LIBERATION ARMY

Since you have been in this courtroom you have heard the name Black Liberation Army mentioned over and over. Those of you in the jury have been questioned as to what you have read or seen on television and what your opinions were about the B.L.A. Most of you have stated that you thought that the Black Liberation Army was a militant organization. You have said that what you have read or heard has come from the establishmentarian media. The major TV and radio networks, the Times, the Post, and the Daily News. I have read the same articles you have read. I have seen the same news programs that you have seen. When it comes to the media, I have learned to believe none of what I head and half of what I see. But I can tell you, if I were just Jane Doe citizen, if I did not know better, I would've read those articles and come to the conclusion that JoAnne Chesimard, Ronald Myers, and all other people called militants were a bunch of white-hating, cop-hating, gun-toting, crazed, fanatical maniacs, fighting for some abstract, misguided cause.

But one percent of the people in this country control 70% of the wealth. And it is that One Percent, the heads of large corporations, who control the policies of the news media. And determines what you and I hear on the radio, read in the newspapers, see on television. It is more important for us to think about where the media gets its information. From the police department or from the prosecutor. No major newspaper or television station has ever asked my lawyers or myself one question concerning anything. People are tried and convicted in the papers and on television before they ever see a courtroom. A person who is accused of stealing a car becomes an international car theft ring. A man is accused of participating in a drunken brawl and the headlines read "crazed maniac goes berserk."

During the 70's, the media created a front page headline, guaranteed to sell newspapers: the Black Liberation Army. According to them, the B.L.A. was everywhere. Almost every other thing that happened was attributed to the Black Liberation Army. Headlines that are sensational sell newspapers. The media shapes public opinion and the results of that are often tragic.

Before you were sworn as jurors you were asked your knowledge of the B.L.A. Most of you stated that you had no knowledge of what the Black Liberation Army was or what it stands for. However, most of you did say that you believed the Black Liberation Army was a "militant" organization. I would like to talk to you about that for a moment. The Black Liberation Army is not an organization. It goes beyond that. It is a concept, a people's movement, an idea. Many different people have said and done many different things in the name of the Black Liberation Army.

## REPRESSION BREEDS RESISTANCE

The idea of a Black Liberation Army emerged from conditions in Black communities. Conditions of poverty, indecent housing, massive unemployment, poor medical care and inferior education. The idea came about because Black People are not free or equal in this country. Because 90% of the men and women in this country's prisons are Black and Third World. Because 10 year old children are shot down in our streets. Because dope has saturated our communities preying on the disillusionment and frustration of our children. The concept of the B.L.A. is part of that resistance movement. The Black Liberation Army stands for freedom and justice for all people.

While big corporation make huge tax-free profits, taxes for the everyday working people skyrocket. While politicians take free trips around the world, those same politicians increase their salaries, millions of people are being laid off. This city is on the brink of bankruptcy and yet hundreds of thousands of dollars are being spent on this trial. I do not understand a government so willing to spend millions of dollars on arms, to explore outer space, even he planet

Jupiter, and at the same time close down day care centers and fire stations.

I have read the Declaration of Independence and I have great admiration for this statement:

*We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights, that among these are life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness. That to secure these rights, Governments are instituted among men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed. That whenever any form of government becomes destructive of these ends, it is the Right of the People to alter or abolish it and to institute New Government, laying its foundations on such principles and organizing its powers in such form as to them shall seem most likely to effect their safety and happiness.*

These words are especially meaningful in the year of this country's bi-centennial. I would like to help make this a better world for my daughter and for all the children of this world: for all the men and women of this world.

But you understand that the B.L.A. is not on trial here. I am on trial here. Ronald Myers is on trial here. And the charge is kidnapping and armed robbery, where the so-called victim is a drug-pusher, a seller of heroin, a man called James Freeman.

## THE VICTIMS OF HEROIN

We live in New York, and it is impossible not to see the horror, the degradation and the pain associated with heroin addiction. Most of you have seen the staggering numbers of young lives sucked into oblivion into walking deaths by the use of drugs. Many of you have seen helpless mothers watch their children turn into nodding skeletons, whom they can no longer trust. And seen the dreams, the potential of a whole generation of youngsters drain away, down into the bottomless pit of a needle. And these victims also have their

victims, the countless number of people who have been mugged, burglarized and robbed, but drug-made vampires, who care nothing about anything but their poison.

We will show you that James Freeman is a liar. We will show you that the other prosecution witnesses are all friends, relatives, lovers or employees of James Freeman, and that they are liars. You will see for yourselves that they have conspired and that they have been coached.

Men and women of the jury, human lives are serious matters. I have already told you that I have no faith in this system of justice and believe me, I don't. I have seen too much. If there was such a thing as justice, I wouldn't be here talking to you now. You have been chosen to be the representatives of justice. You and you alone. You have said that you have no prejudices or preconceptions. You have said that you could try this case on the basis of the evidence. What I am saying now is not evidence. What the prosecutor says is not evidence. You may or you may not agree with my political beliefs. They are not on trial here. I have only brought them up to help you understand the political and emotional context in which this case comes before you.

Although the court considers us peers, many of you have had different backgrounds and different learning and life experiences. It is important to me that you understand some of these differences. I only ask of you that you listen carefully. I only ask that you listen not only to what these witnesses say, but to how they say it.

Our lives are no more precious or no less precious than yours. We ask only that you be as open and as fair as you would want us to be, were we sitting in the jury box determining your guilt or innocence. Our lives and the lives that surround us depend on your fairness.

Thank you.

# To the Sisters and Brothers Who Have Supported Me

From Assata Bulletin May, 2, 1977

I first want to thank you for all the support that you have given me and secondly to say right on to the stand that you have taken against the government's persecution program against Black revolutionaries. By supporting me and other revolutionaries you have taken a stand against racism, against sexism, against oppression, against imperialism and against the genocidal war being waged against Third World people. By supporting me you are supporting Black people's right to national self determination and the struggle to acquire that right.

**FREE ASSATA SHAKUR**

*joanne Chesimard*

"Do not think that it's just an accident that we are on trial here. This case is just another example of what has been going on in this country. Throughout America's history people have been imprisoned because of their political beliefs and charged with criminal acts, in order to justify that imprisonment. Those who dared to speak out against the injustices in this country, both Black and White, have paid dearly for their courage, sometimes with their lives. Mumukshu Bhawan, Stokely Carmichael, Angela Davis, the Rosenbergs and Lolita Lebron were all charged with crimes because of their political beliefs. Martin Luther King was sent to jail countless times for leading nonviolent demonstrations."

**BE THERE**

When you are probably asking yourselves, would this government want to put me in jail? In my mind the answer is that is very simple, for the same reason that this government has put Assata in jail who spoke up for freedom; who spoke up for justice.

"Give me liberty or give me death" - Assata

Assata Shakur Defense Committee  
National Coalition to Defend Assata

**January 17, 1977**  
MIDDLESEX COUNTY COURTHOUSE  
New Brunswick, N.J.

Trial Date  
Place

For information contact:  
(212) 673-4177

Office of Chief Clerk, County of Middlesex, New Brunswick, N.J. 08901. A subpoena must be served on the defendant. The grand jury will convene at 10:00 a.m. on the date specified in this summons. The grand jury will convene at the County Courthouse, New Brunswick, N.J. If you are unable to appear, you should contact the County Clerk's Office at (212) 673-4177. The grand jury will convene on the date specified in this summons. The grand jury will convene at the County Courthouse, New Brunswick, N.J. If you are unable to appear, you should contact the County Clerk's Office at (212) 673-4177.

From the beginning, we knew it was highly unlikely, if not impossible for me to get a fair trial in middlesex county, n.j.

One - - because the constant co-optation by ruling classes of the masses of working peoples, coupled with their complete control of technology and information, makes the so-called democratic process null and void and thus created the hysterical, slanderous and racist press coverage that surrounded this case.

Two - - because of the press coverage, over 70 percent of the people in racist middlesex county were already convinced of my guilt.

Three - - because the judge was racist and blatantly prejudiced in favor of the prosecution.

Fourthly - - and most importantly, because there is no such thing as justice in amerika, especially for Black and poor people. History clearly shows that in the course of the development of modern western society, the code of law is the code of the dominant and most powerful class, made into laws for everyone. Law is never impartial, never divorced from the economical relationships that brought it about.

So, this is not the time to feel depressed or defeated. This is not the time to forget about struggling, or to forget about all the Sisters and Brothers who have been railroaded into these dungeons. Rather, it is the time to feel outraged, to feel determined, to fight against this government tooth and



nailed, not for what it is doing to me, but for what it is doing to us all.

This railroading and legal lynching of me is but one drop of blood in the ocean of Blood and suffering that the American government is responsible for. As I am writing this now someone else is being railroaded or shot in the back. We, the people, have lost this one battle, but we will and we must win the war; the war for liberation, for justice and for freedom.

## WHY IS ASSATA ON TRIAL ?

The following article appeared in "CONTRAST", Ontario, Canada's Black Community newspaper and was written by Edwin B. Hogan.

"What is left?  
After the bars and gates and the  
degradation  
What is left?" --Assata Shakur

free JOANNE CHESIMARD!!!

Although the chance of spectators disrupting a trial, or the defendant escaping from the courtroom, are one in a million, extraordinary security measures at "public trials" have become a familiar scene dotting the American landscape. Each judge who is appointed an opportunity to preside over a "political trial" endeavors to surpass his predecessors with even more elaborate security procedures. And each makes a bigger mockery of American justice.

No longer is it uncommon to view a political trial through a thick, bullet-proof glass shield, while being viewed over closed-circuit television, after passing through exotic metal detector devices where the public and press are formally fingerprinted and photographed for future reference. Nor is it out of the ordinary for the defendant to arrive amidst an entourage of sirens wailing, a kaleidoscope of flashing red and white lights, motorcycle escorts, and a procession of police vehicles. The tragically is a media event which is usually complete when a petite, diminutive woman with handcuffs, leg irons, and chains, emerges from her towering, rifle-toting escorts, as the subject for such electrifying security and precaution.

And if the state has its way, the scenario will be repeated again in New Brunswick, New Jersey, beginning January 17, 1977, if we do not come out and show that we love our Freedom Fighter, Assata Shakur. (Joanne Chesimard). After three years of forced participation in this bizarre script, Assata has become a veritable veteran. Her tiny wrists and ankles are accustomed to shackles which she wears with the same unshakable dignity as she wears her gold earrings and proud Afro hairdo.

So it is not Assata who has become dehumanized and defile by her unceasing persecution, but those who have subjected her to it as a reaction to her political beliefs and principles, along with the public which allows it, are reduced and exposed for their wretched barbarism and viciousness. While Assata emerges regal and saintly, her tormentors take on grotesque dimensions frightening to the mind.

On May 2nd 1973, Zayd Malik Shakur, (James Costan), Sundiata Anell (Clark Squire), and Assata, were stopped on the New Jersey Turnpike by State Troopers Werner Forrester and James Harper for having a broken tail light on their car. None followed, only the survivors really know, but Zayd Shakur and Trooper Forrester were killed, Trooper Harper was wounded, and Assata suffered near fatal gunshot wounds from a .357 magnum pistol. Sundiata fled the scene, only to be captured in a field 2 miles away, some 40-hours later.

During the subsequent three years have followed, Assata has fought for her life and freedom in an incredible series of trials. In October of 1973, Assata and Sundiata began jury selection in New Brunswick, New Jersey. The panel was so prejudiced and tainted that the judge finally granted a defense motion to change the site for jury selection. The trial was postponed for a few weeks, and Assata was spirited over to New York to face an assortment of other charges.

Her defense team, geared for one trial, was ill-prepared to cope with another, but over defense protestations, the trial proceeded, to a mistrial, when the jury could not reach a decision. So she was retried within a month, which resulted in a finding of "Not Guilty."

Assata was quickly returned to New Jersey, where jury selection was to begin, but when it was disclosed that she was pregnant, her case was severed from Sundiata's over both of their protests, and separately, Sundiata was found guilty in a show trial held in one of the richest and whitest counties in the United States. He received a sentence of life, plus 30 years, in Trenton State Prison.

In May of 1974, while six months pregnant, Assata was brought back to New York to face charges of attempting to murder two New York police officers. She was acquitted of those charges in August by a jury, but not by the eleven male guards who unceremoniously beat her a month later, exactly ten-days after she'd given birth to a daughter, Fatuma ("Hope for the future"), for refusing to submit to an examination by a prison doctor, not her choosing.

The war for our children and for the future of the world. I have no faith, nor have I ever had faith in this government or in this system of injustice. Black people must learn to no longer have a psychological dependence on racist reactionary "legalities." It is the people who will set us free.

In struggle  
Assata

# TAPE FROM ASSATA

Uhuru sisters and brothers. The first thing that I want to say is that I love you. And the second thing that I want to say is that We can win. We will win our liberation. And in order to win our liberation We have got to think positively. We have got to believe that We can win. And if We don't believe that We can win We are whipped before We start.

We've got to realize what dangers exist. We've got to look ] at those dangers realistically. We can't afford to have a sub jective, distorted, irrational fear. We've got to look at the obstacles to our liberation coolly and clearly and develop ways to get rid of those obstacles. Right now, it's the most important thing in the world for us, right now, for us to struggle,' for us to fight for our liberation and for our nation.

We've got to look at our reality in amerika right now. The lines are being drawn. The direction that this government is moving is becoming quite clear. The right wing, the conservative fascist army, is multiplying like crazy. We're being moved on, sisters and brothers, from all sides. Ronald Reagan and Jimmy Carter are struggling to determine who is going to be the next Hitler. Amerika is becoming more and more fascist. This period is similar to Germany in the 1930's. In the eyes of this govern ment, We are expendable. We are unnecessary. We are expendable. We are excess labour. They've got machines to replace us. They don't need us anymore. We are a thorn in their side. We are no longer profitable to the amerikan U.S. big business economy.

Neither Jimmy Carter or Ronald Reagan give a damn about Black people. And if anybody anywhere has any illusions that Jimmy Carter or Ronald Reagan care one bit about Black people, -2- ' you've got to be crazy. You've got to be insane. And neither Jimmy Carter or Ronald Reagan are fit to rule anything. Jimmy Carter couldn't even run a peanut farm. And anybody who has seen one of

Ronald Reagan's movies knows that he couldn't even act. That's why he can't even act like he gives a damn about Black people today.

Our lives,, brothers and sisters, are in danger. Look at the history of this country, and you will see that the U.S. govern ment is capable of. anything. You saw how they wiped out the Indians. You saw how they wiped out the Mohicans. Do you think they would hesitate for one moment to do the same thing to us?

Sisters and brothers, We are being attacked from all sides. Our children, our babies are strung out on drugs. .Nine, ten, eleven year old children are sticking needles into their arms. Our daughters, the mothers of our future, eleven and twelve year old girls are out on the streets selling their bodies for nickljes and dimes. Our children don't have a future in amerika. There is nothing for our children to look forward to. You bring a child into this world and there is nothing out there for them. Our children aren't being educated in the schools. The schools are warehouses. The schools are producing a whole generation of illerates, where high school children can't read and write In New York City one half of the students in public schools drop out before they get to high school. What kind of school system is that? There are no jobs for our youth. No jobs for our people. And since there are no jobs, our people are forced to survive the best way Me. know how. So the prisojKsit there, like monsters waiting to gobble up bur children.

Our situation is crucial. It's critical. The Ku Klux Klan is out in the open. They are going around burning crosses, burning down houses, beating Black people, murdering Black people. And this ain't something you read about in the news, this is real. This is going on right now.

December 1978. Manual Whitfield, a Black minister from Alabama, was dragged into the woods and beaten by the Klan because he had the nerve to saythat Tommy Lee Hines did not get a fair trial.

January 1979. A Black, family's home was burned in New York.

October 1979. Darrow Wiliams, a young and promising Black athlete, was shot and paralyzed in Boston, by a white sniper.

November 1979, in Greensboro North Carolina five people were murdered in cold blood by the Ku Klux Klan, while the police disappeared into thin air.

January 1980. Jimmy Lee Campbell was murdered for sport by two white men. They killed Jimmy Lee Campbell because they had failed to bag an animal for their hunting trip. So they found a young nigger animal and they killed him.

April 1979, in Wrightsville, Georgia, a nine year old Black sister was shot by the Klan after a rally protesting discrimination in housing and jobs.

April 1980. SoUth Carolina. A Black man was castrated and lynched by the Klan and crosses were burned at the homes of two Black families.

April 1980. Four Black women were shot by a gang of white youths. The gang was later acquitted by an all-white jury.

May 1980. Four Black churches are fire-bombed in New York City.

October 1980. An article appears in Newsweek Magazine entitled the Ku Klux Klan goes military. The article shows pictures of the Ku Klux Klan in army fatigues, carrying M-16 rifles, training for what they call "the race war".

October 1980. Atlanta imposes a curfew on its youth because 16 Black children have disappeared, and ten or them have been found murdered.

Our situation, sisters and brothers, is critical. Harry Covington, a Nazi, ran for attorney general in the Republican primary and.won 43% of the vote. Tom Metzger, the Grand Dragon of the Ku Klux Klan in California, won the democratic nomination in the most

populous district in the U.S. And the New York State Court of Appeals decided that it was perfectly all right for the Ku Klux Klan to work as prison guards. This is the situation that jVe're dealing with, sisters and brothers, right how, right here, in 1980.

In Illinois, the state of Illinois is attempting to murder 17 Black and Hispanic brothers. 17 of our blood, 17 of our flesh. July 17, 1978, there was a rebellion at Pontiac Prison. The brothers rebelled against the Ku Klux Klan activities within the prison, against brutality leveled against Black and Latin prisoners, against poor medical care, filthy and inadequate food, against overcrowding, against the lack of human rights, civil rights, or any other kind of rights. In the process of that rebellion prison property was destroyed, and three guards were killed. The state of Illinois had no evidence to charge anyone with the deaths of those guards. For nine months after the rebellion, the prison officials, and the F.B.I, isolated, bru talized, and tortured those prisoners. Until after nine months jwe '\* of being beaten and tortured, after nine months of being ^access to lawyers and all basic necessities and rights, a few weak prisoners were threatened and coerced into saying whatever the administration wanted them to say. At this point the state indicted 31 Black and Latin brothers. 17 were to be tried for murder and 14- to be tried on lesser charges. The state of Illinois would do everything possible to ensure that those brothers do not receive a fair trial. The state or Illinois is attempting to railroad those brothers into the electric chair. And brothers and sisters, ]fie cannot let that happen. We have got to come out en masse to support the Pontiac Brothers.

The death penalty in this country is used and has always been, used to commit genocide against Black people. And always the death rows in amerika have been filled with a disproportionate number of Black and Third World people. And just to show you how worthless this government considers Black lives, the state of Georgia has a sister on death row for peeking in a window. Now I know that doesn't sound like it makes much sense, but the system of justice in amerika doesn't make any sense.

The sister's name is Emma Ruth Cunningham. And the state of Georgia alleges that her husband robbed a white man, Afid, during the course of that robbery, killed him. When Emma Ruth Cunningham went to see about her husband, she was arrested and charged with murder. And because they had absolutely no evidence to substantiate this charge, the prosecutor told the sister that unless she signed a statement saying that she had peeked into a window before the robbery, and received some of the robbery money, that they would take her children away from the home of her parents. At no time did the prosecution ever allege that she was in the house during the robbery or in any way directly connected with the robbery or murder. The state of Georgia knows that this sister did not kill anybody. The only thing that the sister is even accused of is peeking in a window. Yet this sister was convicted of something called "vicarious liability" and sentenced to death.

We cannot permit the depraved and arbitrary murders of our people by the United States government. The prisons and the death penalty are used to enslave and murder our sisters and our brothers. And often those targeted are the strongest, most intelligent, most respected members of our community. The most politically and culturally aware sisters and brothers are often singled out because the government hopes that by isolating and destroying them it can also isolate and destroy our resistance movement.

The prisons of America are concentration camps which are gradually being turned into extermination camps. We have got to build a strong movement to defend our brothers and sisters on death row. We've got to build a strong movement to defend the Pontiac Brothers, and a strong movement to defend political prisoners and Prisoners' of War. Black revolutionary leaders, like Sundiata Acoli, Richard Dhoruba Moore, and Geronimo Pratt are behind bars for no other reason than because they are committed to the liberation of African people here in the United States and all over the world.

Our situation right now is critical. . We can't run from it or hide from it.. We're going to have to deal. We're going to have to get down to the nitty gritty. We've got to determine who we are. Are we house

niggers who are going to walk peace fully to the gas chambers, or are We field niggers who are going to fight until We are free.

We didn't come here no house niggers. We didn't come here from Afrika no cops. We didn't come here from Afrika no fools. We didn't come here no Uncle Toms, hemmin' and hawin', shuckin' and jivin', scratchin' our heads and kissing the feet of our masters. We didn't come here like that. We came here proud, strong, beautiful Afrikans.. We came here \\*ith a culture, with pride. We came here knowing who We were. We came here an intelligent, sensuous people, who fought and struggled on every level from the moment that We were brought here in chains. We have got to realize who yfe are, and Vie have got to realize that We have a tradition to carry on.

Sisters and brothers, our backs are up against the wall. This is the reality of our situation today. We are being attacked from every direction. The government has declared war on us, big business has declared war on us, the Ku Klux Klan has declared war on us, the police have declared war on us. I cannot walk down our own streets unmolested. Sisters and brothers, this is one of the most crucial periods in our history. This period may well determine whether or not We survive as a people.

You take any creature, any living being on this earth, and you back it into a corner, and that creature, that being is going to come out fighting. That's the law of nature, that's the law of survival. Sisters and brothers, our backs are up against the wall, and We have got to come out fighting. We've got to come out fighting with knowledge, with a plan, with a strategy for winning. We can't fight like Vie fought in the past. We c^a't rely on one -8- or two tactics. We have got to use every tactic imaginable. We can't afford to base our liberation struggle on the whims of white people. We can't afford to let our enemies set up the rules of the game. They have the guns and we turn the cheeks. We don't have any more cheeks to turn.

Our backs are up against the wall, and more than any time in our history, more than any time of our history of being captives in amerika, We need an army. We need an army to defend ourselves,

and we need an army to fight for our liberation. It is the duty of all Black people to defend ourselves. It is our duty to defend our homes, to defend our children, to defend our community against racist attack. And if we neglect that duty, we are damning our children to a life of oppression and misery.

History has shown us that we will never win our liberation through legislation, through the judicial system, or through integrating with white people. And it's equally clear that we cannot win our liberation through the ballot, through voting for the lesser of two evils. We need a cohesive, solid plan to win our liberation. We need a nation.

Sisters and brothers, nobody on the face of this earth has more of a right to a nation than we do. We are not citizens of America. We are victims of America. And we have a right to determine our own destiny. And anyone who says that we don't is either the worst kind of racist dog or the worst kind of Uncle Tom.

When Black people, New Afrikans, get serious about our liberation there is nothing that can stop us. One thing that Black people can do is fight. And we can fight because we grow up fighting; from the time that we are babies, we have to fight to survive. -9- And when we stop fighting each other, when we stop fighting as individuals, and fight as a united Black nation, then we can't lose. We'll give America the blues. We can make them suffer so bad they'll be glad to give us our nation.

At this time, I'd like to say a few words especially to my sisters. Sisters, Black people will never be free unless Black women participate in every aspect of our struggle, on every level of our struggle. I think that Black women, more than anybody on the face of this earth, recognize the urgency of our situation. Because it is we who come face to face daily with the institution of our oppression. And because it is we who have borne the major responsibility of raising our children. And it is we who have to deal with the welfare system that do not care about our welfare or the welfare of our children. And it is we who have to deal with the racist doctors and racist clinics. And it is we who have to deal with the school system



that do not educate our children. It is ye who have to deal with the racist teachers who teach our children to hate themselves. It is We who have seen the terrible effects of racism on our children, We who have watched our young grow too old too soon. We who have watched our children come home angry" and frustrated and see them grow more bitter and more disillusioned with the passing of each day. And We have seen the sick franked looks on the faces of our \" children when they come to fully realize what it means to be Black in amerika.

And we know what deprivation is. How many times have we had to say no to our children. How many times have We run out of pamper money, rent money, food money. And how many times have our children gone to school in hand-me-downs, with holes in their shoes.

We know what a hell-hole amerika is. We are afraid to let our children go out to play. We are afraid to walk the streets at night. We, sisters, We have buried our young, the babies that JWe brought into this world with such great hope for. We have seen their bodies, bloated and ashen from drugs, scarred and deformed by bullet holes.

We know what oppression is. We have been abused in every way imaginable. We have been abused economically, politically, We have been abused physically, and We have been abused sexually.

And sisters,/We have a long and glorious history of struggle on this planet. Afrikan women were strong and courageous warriors long before we came to this country in chains. And here in america, our sisters have always been on the front lines. Sister Harriet Tubman led the underground railroad. And sisters like Rosa Parks, Fanny Lou Hammer, Sandra Pratt, and Queen Mother Moore have carried it on. Sisters, #e have been the backbone of our family. Me have been the backbone of our community. And We will be the backbone of our nation.

We have got to build strong family units based on love and struggle. We don't have no time to play around. A revolutionary woman can't have no reactionary man. If he's not about liberation, if he's not

about struggle, if he ain't about building a strong Black family, if he ain't about .building a strong Black nation, then he ain't about nothing.

We know how to struggle and fenagle to survive. We know what it means, sisters, to struggle tooth and nail. Us know xvhat.it -11- means to struggle with love. We know what unity is. We know what sisterhood is. We have always been kind to each other, brought each other hot soup and biscuits. We have always helped each other, through the hard times.

Sisters, we must celebrate Afrikan womanhood. We don't want to be like Miss Ann. She can keep her false eyelashes, and her false distorted image of womanhood. She can keep her mink stoles and her french provincial furniture. We will define for ourselves what womanhood is, and will create our own styles and our own ways of dress. We can't have &&t white man in France telling C^ Afrikan women what to look like. We will create our own New Afrikan way of living. We will create our own way of being and living, our own New Afrikan culture, taking the best of the old and mixing it with the new.

Sisters, we have got to take control of our lives and our future. And we have got to come together and organize wherever we are. And we hav3 got to organize ourselves into a strong body of Afrikan women. Sisters, we've got to take responsibility for educating our children. We can't leave the job of teaching our young, our future, in the hands of teachers who don't care about our children, in the hands of teachers who don't understand the history, the culture, and the language of our children. We have got to teach our children ourselves.

And in order to do that, yie have got to start teaching ourselves. We have got to build survival collectives, and We have got to open up liberation schools. We've got to open up our own childcare centers. We've got to pool our resources to survive. We've got to use the resources in our community. Sisters, We've got to take control of our lives, and we've got an enormous job ahead of us. We've got to

rebuild our community. We've got to build an underground railroad. And we've got to build a nation.

I just want to take a minute out to express my love for all of you who risk your lives daily struggling out here on the front lines. And I'd like to express my gratitude and my love for the many sisters and brothers who have opened their doors and their hearts to me. The sisters and brothers who risk their lives daily to feed and house me, and to help me build our underground railroad.

Sisters and Brothers, we're going to win. Free the Land. Free Geronimo Pratt, Sundiata Acoli. Dhoruba Moore, Dessie Woods Free All Political Prisoners. Free the Puerto Rican Prisoners of War. Uhuru, Sisters and Brothers.



# Message on the Fifth Anniversary of the Marion Lockdown (1988)

Greetings, Sisters and Brothers. My name is Assata Shakir and I would like to take this opportunity to express my love and solidarity with my sisters and brothers behind bars. As a former political prisoner I know that this is a sad occasion and an angry occasion. But it is also an occasion to build unity and solidarity. On this fifth anniversary of the lockdown at Marion it becomes even clearer that the lockdown at Marion is just a microcosm of the lockdown of the society as a whole as it relates to poor and oppressed people in the United States. We know that Marion represents repression in its most vicious and naked form but we've got to ask ourselves why does Marion exist? America is becoming a nation of prisons. The prison population is growing at an alarming rate. Since 1970 the entire prison population has increased approximately 150%.

From what I read the number of women in prison has doubled since I escaped in 1979. These are shocking figures. More and more the prisons are used to warehouse and contain those who have no power, no money and no college degrees. More and more the prisons are used to extract slave labor from the same men and women who could not find jobs on the streets. More and more the prisons are used as tools of repression to squash resistance, to maintain the status quo of a government based on racism, exploitation and imperialism.

We must be clear that the United States is the number one violator of human rights, at home and abroad. Police brutality, racist violence and torture are part of the everyday experiences of black people and other people of color. Billy clubs, bullets, long prison sentences and counterintelligence programs like the COINTELPRO program are used against those who would speak up for freedom and justice.

As black people as people of color, we are arrested by racist police, tried and sentenced by racist judges and then caged by racist prison guards under the most miserable and violent conditions.

We are not free and therefore our struggle is a struggle for liberation and self-determination. We are not free and therefore our struggle is to overturn the racist violent system that is exploiting and oppressing us. And this is where the role of Marion comes in.

The sole purpose of Marion is to dehumanize, to destroy, to break down the wills of anyone inside the prison system who would stand up for human dignity, to brutality and isolation, to institutionalized degradation and mental torture. The goal of Marion is to break the spirit and to break the will of all those who would stand up. That is why so many political prisoners and prisoners of war have been sent there.

As the government is building more and more prisons it is also building more maximum security control units like Marion on the state level, and maximum control units like the Lexington Unit for women and the planned prison at Mariana, Florida on the federal level. The sole purpose of these so-called “special units” is to break down the resistance, the political beliefs and the spirit of political prisoners and prisoners of war.

We would be most naive if we accept the U.S. government's denial, that there are “no political prisoners or prisoners of war in the U.S.” Our struggle is a political struggle and we are imprisoned because of our political beliefs and acts of resistance. We must totally reject the government's attempts to criminalize our movements by calling us terrorists and criminals.

Our political prisoners and prisoners of war are not criminals. They are committed activists and revolutionaries and they deserve our support. The South African government calls Mandela a criminal. The French colonialists called Ho Chi Minh a criminal. The Portuguese colonialists called Augustino Neto a criminal, just as the Batista regime called Fidel Castro a criminal.

Our political prisoners and prisoners of war need and deserve our support and respect. They have been shining examples of strength, resistance and have shown an undying commitment to the struggle for freedom and an undying love for oppressed people all over the world.

Some of our political prisoners have had to stand up courageously for many many years: Geronimo Pratt, 19 years. Doruba Moore, Doruba Bin Wahad, 17 years. Sundiata Acoli, 15 years. The New York Three, comprising of Albert Nuh Washington, Jalil Muntaquin, Herman Bell, all have been in prison for 17 years. Leonard Peltier, more than 12 years. Other freedom fighters like Sekou Odinga and Bashir Hameed were brutally beaten and severely tortured and then imprisoned for long years. I would also like to take this opportunity to express my deepest solidarity with the 15 Puerto Rican political prisoners awaiting trial in Hartford, Connecticut.

We have got to defend our sisters and brothers. We have got to stand before the world and let them know that we support our political prisoners and freedom fighters. It is our responsibility as a community to organize against prison control units wherever they crop up. We must give our support to all political prisoners and prisoners of war.

I would like to take this opportunity to support and to salute: Ruchell Magee, Doruba Bin Wahad, Herman Bell, Jalil Muntaquin, Albert Nuh Washington, Sundiata Acoli, Geronimo Pratt, David Rice, Mutulu Shaker, Bashir Hamed, Abdul Masjid, Kazi Toure, Sekou Odinga, Chewy Ferguson, Johnny Imani Harris, Leonard Peltier, Standing Deer, David So Happy, Eddie Hatcher, Timothy Jacobs, Rita Silk Nani, Edwin Cortes, Elizam Escobar, Ricardo Jimenez, Oscar Lopez Rivera, Adolfo Mapos, Lucia Pagan, Alberto Rodriguez, Alicia Rodriguez, Luis Rosa, Alejandrina Torres, Carlos Alberto Torres, Maria Haydee Torres, Carmen Valentin, Filiberto Oued Rios, Dora Garcia, Jaime Delgado, Julio Del Gadilo, The MOVE prisoners, the Vigin Island Five, Linda Evans, Timothy Blunt, Marilyn Buck, David Gilbert, Alan Berkman, Judith Clark,

Kathy Boudin, Laura Whitehorn, Susan Rosenberg, Silvia Balding, Richard DeTarelio, James Garret, Carol Manning, Thomas Manning, Raymond Levasseur, Patricia Levasseur, John Karl-Lamaan, Maria Kurzi-Lamaan, Richard Williams, the Plowshares Prisoners, the Silo Disarmament Activists, the Irish Political Prisoners and many many others.

Free all political prisoners

Free all prisoners of war.

We must be free.

We will be free.

Love, peace and VENCEREMOS!

# An Open Letter From Assata

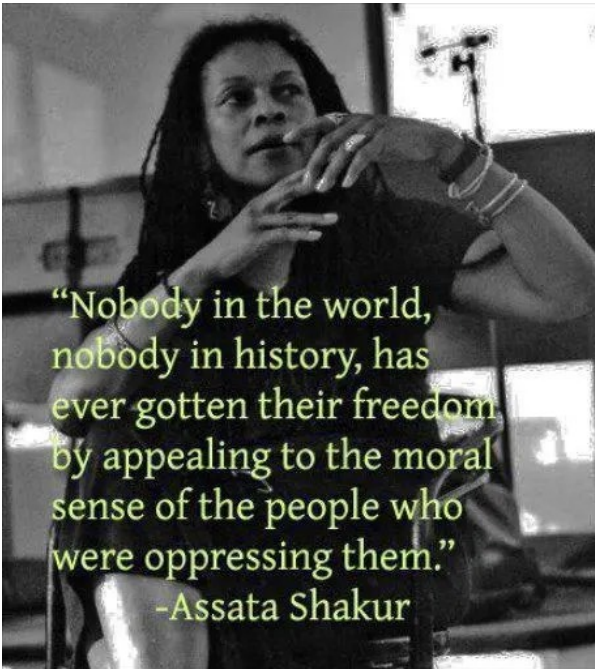
Message from 1998-9.

Posted in 2013 on from <https://revolutionaryfrontlines.wordpress.com/2013/05/03/an-open-letter-from-assata/>

My name is Assata Shakur, and I am a 20th century escaped slave. Because of government persecution, I was left with no other choice than to flee from the political repression, racism and violence that dominate the US government's policy towards people of color. I am an ex-political prisoner, and I have been living in exile in Cuba since 1984.

I have been a political activist most of my life, and although the U.S.

government has done everything in its power to criminalize me, I am not a criminal, nor have I ever been one. In the 1960s, I participated in various struggles: the black liberation movement, the student rights movement, and the movement to end the war in Vietnam. I joined the Black Panther Party. By 1969 the Black Panther Party had become the number



one organization targeted by the FBI's COINTELPRO program.



Because the Black Panther Party demanded the total liberation of black people, J. Edgar Hoover called it “greatest threat to the internal security of the country” and vowed to destroy it and its leaders and activists.

In 1978, my case was one of many cases brought before the United Nations Organization in a petition filed by the National Conference of a Lawyers, the National Alliance Against Racist and Political Repression, and the United Church of Christ Commission for Racial Justice, exposing the existence of political prisoners in the United States, their political persecution, and the cruel and inhuman treatment they receive in US prisons. According to the report:

*‘The FBI and the New York Police Department in particular, charged and accused Assata Shakur of participating in attacks on law enforcement personnel and widely circulated such charges and accusations among police agencies and units. The FBI and the NYPD further charged her as being a leader of the Black Liberation Army which the government and its respective agencies described as an organization engaged in the shooting of police officers. This description of the Black Liberation Army and the accusation of Assata Shakur’s relationship to it was widely circulated by government agents among police agencies and units. As a result of these activities by the government, Ms. Shakur became a hunted person; posters in police precincts and banks described her as being involved in serious criminal activities; she was highlighted on the FBI’s most wanted list; and to police at all levels she became a ‘shoot-to-kill’ target.’*

I was falsely accused in six different “criminal cases” and in all six of these cases I was eventually acquitted or the charges were dismissed. The fact that I was acquitted or that the charges were dismissed, did not mean that I received justice in the courts, that was certainly not the case. It only meant that the “evidence” presented against me was so flimsy and false that my innocence became evident. This political persecution was part and parcel of the

government's policy of eliminating political opponents by charging them with crimes and arresting them with no regard to the factual basis of such charges.

On May 2, 1973 I, along with Zayd Malik Shakur and Sundiata Acoli were stopped on the New Jersey Turnpike, supposedly for a "faulty tail light." Sundiata Acoli got out of the car to determine why we were stopped. Zayd and I remained in the car. State trooper Harper then came to the car, opened the door and began to question us. Because we were black, and riding in a car with Vermont license plates, he claimed he became "suspicious." He then drew his gun, pointed it at us, and told us to put our hands up in the air, in front of us, where he could see them. I complied and in a split second, there was a sound that came

from outside the car, there was a sudden movement, and I was shot once with my arms held up in the air, and then once again from the back. Zayd Malik Shakur was later killed, trooper Werner Foerster was killed, and even though trooper Harper admitted that he shot and killed Zayd Malik Shakur, under the New Jersey felony murder law, I was charged with killing both Zayd Malik Shakur, who



was my closest friend and comrade, and charged in the death of trooper Forester. Never in my life have I felt such grief. Zayd had vowed to protect me, and to help me to get to a safe place, and it was

clear that he had lost his life, trying to protect both me and Sundiata. Although he was also unarmed, and the gun that killed trooper Foerster was found under Zayd's leg, Sundiata Acoli, who was captured later, was also charged with both deaths. Neither Sundiata Acoli nor I ever received a fair trial We were both convicted in the news media way before our trials. No news media was ever permitted to interview us, although the New Jersey police and the FBI fed stories to the press on a daily basis. In 1977, I was convicted by an all- white jury and sentenced to life plus 33 years in prison. In 1979, fearing that I would be murdered in prison, and knowing that I would never receive any justice, I was liberated from prison, aided by committed comrades who understood the depths of the injustices in my case, and who were also extremely fearful for my life.

The U.S. Senate's 1976 Church Commission report on intelligence operations inside the USA, revealed that "The FBI has attempted covertly to influence the public's perception of persons and organizations by disseminating derogatory information to the press, either anonymously or through "friendly" news contacts." This same policy is evidently still very much in effect today.

On December 24, 1997, The New Jersey State called a press conference to announce that New Jersey State Police had written a letter to Pope John Paul II asking him to intervene on their behalf and to aid in having me extradited back to New Jersey prisons. The New Jersey State Police refused to make their letter public. Knowing that they had probably totally distort the facts, and attempted to get the Pope to do the devils work in the name of religion, I decided to write the Pope to inform him about the reality of "justice" for black people in the State of New Jersey and in the United States. (See attached Letter to the Pope).

In January of 1998, during the pope's visit to Cuba, I agreed to do an interview with NBC journalist Ralph Penza around my letter to the Pope, about my experiences in New Jersey court system, and about the changes I saw in the United States and it's treatment of Black people in the last 25 years. I agreed to do this interview because I saw this secret letter to the Pope as a vicious, vulgar, publicity maneuver on the part of the New Jersey State Police, and as a

cynical attempt to manipulate Pope John Paul II. I have lived in Cuba for many years, and was completely out of touch with the sensationalist, dishonest, nature of the establishment media today. It is worse today than it was 30 years ago. After years of being victimized by the “establishment” media it was naive of me to hope that I might finally get the opportunity to tell “my side of the story.” Instead of an interview with me, what took place was a “staged media event” in three parts, full of distortions, inaccuracies and outright lies. NBC purposely misrepresented the facts. Not only did NBC spend thousands of dollars promoting this “exclusive interview series” on NBC, they also spent a great deal of money advertising this “exclusive interview” on black radio stations and also placed notices in local newspapers.

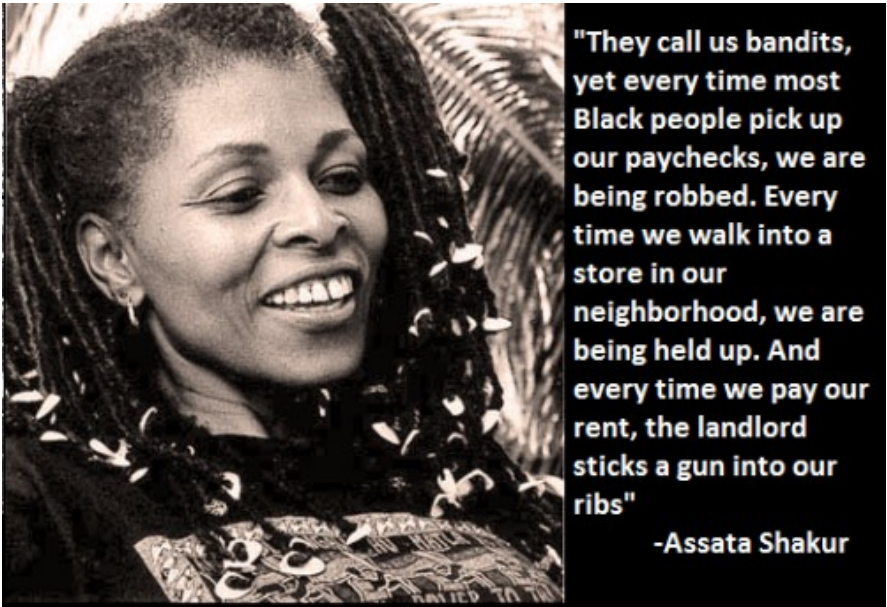
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Like most poor and oppressed people in the United States, I do not have a voice. Black people, poor people in the U.S. have no real freedom of speech, no real freedom of expression and very little freedom of the press. The black press and the progressive media has historically played an essential role in the struggle for social justice. We need to continue and to expand that tradition. We need to create media outlets that help to educate our people and our children, and not annihilate their minds. I am only one woman. I own no TV stations, or Radio Stations or Newspapers. But I feel that people need to be educated as to what is going on, and to understand the connection between the news media and the instruments of repression in Amerika. All I have is my voice, my spirit and the will to tell the truth. But I sincerely ask, those of you in the Black media, those of you in the progressive media, those of you who believe in truth freedom, To publish this statement and to let people know what is happening. We have no voice, so you must be the voice of the voiceless.

Free all Political Prisoners, I send you Love and Revolutionary Greetings From Cuba, One of the Largest, Most Resistant and Most Courageous Palenques (Maroon Camps) That has ever existed on the Face of this Planet.

Assata Shakur Havana, Cuba

*“I am a Black revolutionary woman, and because of this i have been charged with and accused of every alleged crime in which a woman was believed to have participated. The alleged crimes in which only men were supposedly involved, i have been accused of planning. They have plastered pictures alleged to be me in post offices,*



*airports, hotels, police cars, subways, banks, television, and newspapers. They have offered ... rewards for my capture and they have issued orders to shoot on sight and shoot to kill.” — Assata Shakur*

*“People get used to anything. The less you think about your oppression, the more your tolerance for it grows. After a while, people just think oppression is the normal state of things. But to become free, you have to be acutely aware of being a slave.”  
— Assata Shakur, Assata: An Autobiography*

# MESSAGE OF CONDOLENCES ON THE TRANSITION OF OUR REVOLUTIONARY SISTA, COMRADE & FRIEND

## SAFIYA BUKHARI



HAVANA CUBA -August 29, 2003

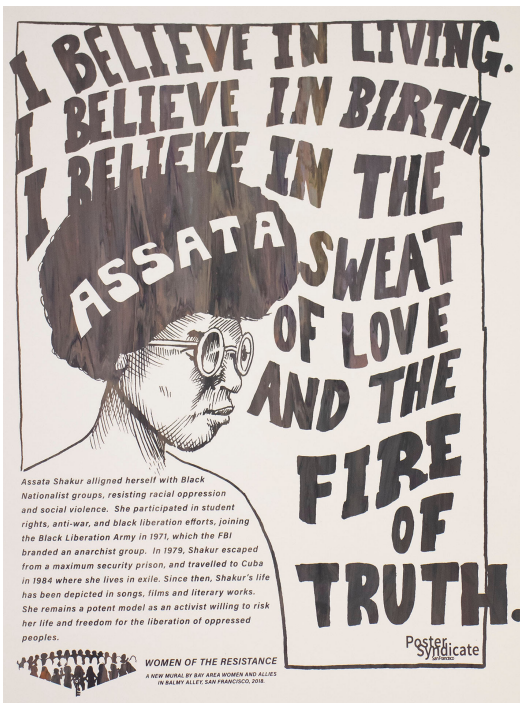
It is with much sadness that i say my last goodbye to Safiya Bukhari. She was my sister, my comrade and my friend. We met nearly thirty-five years ago, when we were both members of the Black Panther Party in Harlem. Even then, i was impressed by her sincerity, her commitment and her burning energy. She was a descendent of slaves and she inherited the legacy of neo-slavery. She believed that

struggle was the only way that African people in America could rid ourselves of oppression.

As a Black woman struggling in America she experienced the most vicious forms of racism, sexism, cruelty and indifference. As a political activist she was targeted, persecuted, hounded and harassed. Because of her political activities she became a political prisoner and spent many years in prison. But she continued to believe in freedom, and she continued to fight for it. In spite of her personal suffering, in spite of chronic, life-threatening illnesses, she continued to struggle. She gave the best that she had to give to our people. She devoted her life, her love and her best energies to fighting for the liberation of oppressed people. She struggled selflessly, she could be trusted, she was consistent, and she could always be counted to do what needed to be done.

She was a soldier, a warrior-woman who did everything she could to free her people and to free political prisoners. Her absence will be felt. She will be sincerely missed. I have faith that the Ancestors will welcome her, cherish her, and treat her with more love and more kindness that she ever received here on this earth. I pray that her sisters and brothers, who continue to walk on this planet, will honor her memory by continuing her work, by continuing her struggle, and refusing to quit until all oppressed people and all Political Prisoners are free.

Assata Shakur





**"It is our duty to fight for our freedom. It is our duty to win. We must love each other and support each other. We have nothing to lose but our chains."** -Assata Shakur

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