

# CROSSROAD

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**ASSATA  
SHAKUR  
IS  
WELCOME HERE!**



Republic of New Afrika

**Open Letter From Assata Shakur • Hands Off Cuba! • The Black Radical Congress • How To Leave An Abusive Relationship • in response 2 a brother's question about what he should do when his best friend beats up his woman • CRSN news, notes & updates**



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## **AN OPEN LETTER TO NEW JERSEY GOVERNOR WHITMAN KEEP YOUR HANDS OFF ASSATA!**

Governor Whitman:

Your grandstanding actions in seeking Assata Shakur's return by placing a \$50,000 bounty on her head is an insult to all Black women and men who have devoted their lives to the freedom of Black people. In seeking her apprehension by methods that include "kidnapping," you have engaged in the kind of debased moralism that the former slave masters in this country resorted to when seeking the return of runaway Africans to slavery.

Your provocative and vindictive behavior is an insult to all Black women and men who have devoted their lives to struggling for the freedom of Black people. Is it by such means that you hope to gain national prominence or to retain your current position?

Assata, in leaving the dungeons of New Jersey where your predecessors had hoped to bury her for the remainder of her life, followed in the footsteps of Harriet Tubman, who instructed: "There was one of two things I had a right to, liberty, or death; if I could not have one, I would have the other; for no man should take me alive; I should fight for my liberty as long as my strength lasted ..." The stellar example of Assata's commitment to the liberty of African American people places her in the company of not only Harriet Tubman, but also, Paul Robeson, Fannie Lou Hamer, and Malcolm X.

We will never forget nor forgive the inhuman and barbaric conditions that Assata and her co-defendant Sundiata Acoli were subjected to following their arrests after a shoot-out on the New Jersey Turnpike, May 2, 1973. New Jersey State Police, having murdered Zayd Shakur, delighted in torturing Assata and Sundiata. While shack-

led and chained to a bed, arms paralyzed and bullet wounds in her chest, Assata was further forced to undergo the jabs of shotgun butts by New Jersey State Troopers shouting Nazi slogans and threats to kill her. In the history of New Jersey, no woman pretrial detainee or prisoner has ever been treated as she was, continuously confined in a men's prison, under twenty-four hour surveillance of her most intimate functions, without intellectual sustenance, adequate medical attention, and exercise, and without the company of other women for all the years she was in their custody.

Moreover, while Assata and Sundiata were sentenced to life in prison for the death of State Trooper Werner Foerster after detentions and trials riddled with egregious human rights violations and constitutional errors (e.g. massive negative publicity and exclusion of African people from the jury), not one State Trooper, to our knowledge, was ever punished for the murder of Zayd and the torture of Assata and Sundiata. Twenty-five years later, Sundiata, now 60 years old, remains in prison, and if your Parole Board has its way will be there into the next century.

Assata's strength and defiance in the face of her brutalization and torture by New Jersey State Troopers and her escape from the dungeon in which New Jersey imprisoned her are a source of continuing inspiration to us and to all who sincerely cherish and fight for freedom and justice.

**Assata is Our Sister and We stand in absolute solidarity with her right to live free of bondage in Cuba. We applaud and thank His Excellency President Fidel Castro and the people of Cuba for their solidarity with the struggles of African people in Africa and the United States and for providing a safe haven for Assata from the viciousness and brutality of United States racism.**

In closing, we suggest that you focus your attention on the real problems confronting the people of New Jersey. The people of New Jersey and your political aspirations, would be better served by your attention to *reducing* poverty, unemployment, underemployment, the incidence of AIDS, police brutality and corruption. They would also be better served by your attention to **improving** housing, public education and health care.

**KEEP YOUR HANDS OFF ASSATA SHAKUR!!!**

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## **Open Letter from Assata Shakur**

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 "the 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 Black 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 Zayd Malik Shakur, who was my closest friend and comrade, and charged in the death of trooper Foerster. 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 Police called a press conference to announce that they 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 distorted 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 **Rap Pages**, May 1998).

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 the 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.

### *Distortions & Lies In the NBC Series*

In an NBC interview Gov. Whitman was quoted as saying that "this has nothing to do with race, this had everything to do with crime." Either Gov. Whitman is completely unfamiliar with the facts in my case, or her sensitivity to racism and to the plight of black people and other people of color in the United States is at a sub-zero level. In 1973 the trial in Middlesex County had to be stopped because of the overwhelming racism expressed in the jury room. The court was finally forced to rule that the entire jury panel had been contaminated by racist comments like "If she's black, she's guilty." In an obvious effort to prevent us from being tried by "a jury of our peers", the New Jersey courts ordered that a jury be selected from Morris County, New Jersey where only 2.2 percent of the population was black and 97.5 percent of potential jurors were white. In a study done in Morris County, one of the wealthiest counties in the country, 92 percent of the registered voters said that they were familiar with the case through the news media, and 72 percent believed we were guilty based on pretrial publicity. During the jury selection process in Morris County, white supremacists from the National Social White People's Party, wearing Swastikas, demonstrated carrying signs reading "SUPPORT WHITE POLICE." The trial was later moved back to Middlesex County where 70 percent thought i was guilty based on pretrial publicity. i was tried by an all-white jury, where the presumption of innocence was not the criteria for jury selection. Potential jurors were merely asked if they could "put their prejudices aside", and "render a fair verdict." The basic reality in the United States is that being black is a crime and black people are always "suspects" and an accusation is usually a conviction. Most white people still think that being a "black militant" or a "black revolutionary" is tantamount to being guilty of some kind of crime. The current situation in New Jersey's prisons, underlines the racism that dominates the politics of the state of New Jersey in particu-

lar, and in the U.S. as a whole. Although the population of New Jersey is approximately 78 percent white, more than 75 percent of New Jersey's prison population is made up of blacks and Latinos. 80 percent of the women in Jersey prisons are people of color. That may not seem like racism to Gov. Whitman, but it reeks of racism to us.

The NBC story implied that Governor Christie Whitman raised the reward for my capture based on my interview with NBC. The fact of the matter is that she has been campaigning since she was elected into office to double the reward for my capture. In 1994, she appointed Col. Carl Williams who immediately vowed to make my capture a priority. In 1995, Gov. Whitman sought to match a \$25,000 departmental appropriation sponsored by an "unidentified legislator." i watched a tape of Gov. Whitman's "testimony" in her interview with NBC. She gave a very dramatic, exaggerated version of what happened, but there is no evidence whatsoever to support her claim that Trooper Foerster had "four bullets in him at least, and then they got up and with his own gun, fired two bullets into his head." She claimed that she was writing Janet Reno for federal assistance in my capture, based on what she saw in the NBC interview. If this is the kind of "information" that is being passed on to Janet Reno and the Pope, it is clear that the facts have been totally distorted. Whitman also claimed that my return to prison should be a condition for "normalizing relations with Cuba". How did i get so important that my life can determine the foreign relations between two governments? Anybody who knows anything about New Jersey politics can be certain that her motives are purely political. She, like Torrecelli and several other opportunistic politicians in New Jersey came to power, as part-time lobbyists for the Batistia faction - soliciting votes from right wing Cubans. They want to use my case as a barrier to normalizing relations with Cuba, and as a pretext for maintaining the immoral blockade against the Cuban people.

In what can only be called deliberate deception and slander NBC aired a photograph of a woman with a gun in her hand implying that the woman in the photograph was me. i was not, in fact, the woman in the photograph. The photograph was taken from a highly publicized case where i was accused of bank robbery. Not only did i voluntarily insist on partici-

pating in a lineup, during which witnesses selected another woman, but during the trial, several witnesses, including the manager of the bank, testified that the woman in that photograph was not me. i was acquitted of that bank robbery. NBC aired that photograph on at least 5 different occasions, representing the woman in the photograph as me. How is it possible that the New Jersey State Police, who claim to have a detective working full time on my case, Governor of New Jersey Christine Whitman, who claimed she reviewed all the "evidence," and NBC, which has an extensive research department, did not know that the photograph was false? It was a vile, fraudulent attempt to make me look guilty. NBC deliberately misrepresented the truth. Even after many people had called in, and there was a massive fax and e-mail campaign protesting NBC's mutilation of the facts, Ralph Penza and NBC continued to broadcast that photograph, representing it as me. Not once have the New Jersey State Police, Governor Christine Whitman, or NBC come forth and stated that i was not the woman in the photograph, or that I had been acquitted of that charge.

Another major lie and distortion was that we had left trooper Werner Foerster on the roadside to die. The truth is that there was a major cover-up as to what happened on May 2, 1973. Trooper Harper, the same man who shot me with my arms raised in the air, testified that he returned to the State Police Headquarters which was less than 200 yards away, "to seek aid." However, tape recordings and police reports made on May 2, 1973 prove that not only did Trooper Harper give several conflicting statements about what happened on the turnpike, but he never once mentioned the name of Werner Foerster, or the fact that the incident took place right in front of the Trooper Headquarters. In an effort to hide his tracks and cover his guilt he said nothing whatsoever about Foerster to his superiors or to his fellow officers.

In a clear attempt to discredit me, Col. Carl Williams of the New Jersey State Police was allowed to give blow by blow distortions of my interview. In my interview i stated that on the night of May 2, 1973 i was shot with my arms in the air, then shot again in the back. Williams stated "that is absolutely false. Our records show that she reached in her pocketbook, pulled out a nine millimeter weapon and started firing." However, the claim that i reached into my

pocketbook and pulled out a gun, while inside the car was even contested by trooper Harper. Although on three official reports, and when he testified before the grand jury he stated that he saw me take a gun out of my pocketbook, he finally admitted under cross-examination that he never saw me with my hands in a pocketbook, never saw me with a weapon inside the car, and that he did not see me shoot him.

The truth is that i was examined by 3 medical specialists:

- (1) A Neurologist who testified that i was paralyzed immediately after being shot.
- (2) A Surgeon who testified that "It was absolutely anatomically necessary that both arms be in the air for Mrs. Chesimard to receive the wounds." The same surgeon also testified that the claim by Trooper Harper that i had been crouching in a firing position when i was shot was "totally anatomically impossible."
- (3) A Pathologist who testified that "There is no conceivable way that it [the bullet] could have traveled over to hit the clavicle if her arm was down." He said, "It was impossible to have that trajectory".

The prosecutors presented no medical testimony whatsoever to refute the above medical evidence.

No evidence whatsoever was ever presented that i had a 9-millimeter weapon, in fact New Jersey State Police testified that the 9-millimeter weapon belonged to Zayd Malik Shakur based on a holster fitting the weapon that they say was recovered from his body.

There were no fingerprints, or any other evidence whatsoever that linked me to any guns or ammunition.

The results of the Neutron Activation test to determine whether or not i had fired a weapon were negative.

Although Col. Williams refers to us as the "criminal element", neither Zayd, Sundiata Acoli nor i were criminals, we were political activists. i was a college student until the police kicked down my door in an effort to force me to "cooperate" with them, and Sundiata Acoli was a computer expert who had worked for NASA, before he joined the Black Panther Party and was targeted by COINTELPRO.

In an obvious maneuver to provoke sympathy for the police, the NBC series juxtaposed my interview with the weeping widow of Werner Foerster.

While i can sympathize with her grief, i believe that her appearance was deliberately included to appeal to people's emotions, to blur the facts, to make me look like a villain, and to create the kind of lynch mob mentality that has historically been associated with white women portrayed as victims of black people. In essence the supposed interview with me became a forum for the New State Police, Foerster's widow, and the obviously hostile commentary of Ralph Penza. The two initial programs together lasted 3.5 minutes: me - 59 seconds, the widow - 50 seconds, the state police - 38 seconds, and Penza - 68 seconds. Not once in the interview was i ever asked about Zayd, Sundiata or their families. As the interview went on, it was painfully evident that Ralph Penza would never see me as a human being. Although i tried to talk about racism and about the victims of government and police repression, it was clear that he was totally uninterested.

i have stated publicly on various occasions that i was ashamed of participating in my trial in New Jersey trial because it was so racist, but i did testify. Even though i was extremely limited by the judge, as to what i could testify about, i testified as clearly as i could about what happened that night. After being almost fatally wounded i managed to climb in the back seat of the car to get away from the shooting. Sundiata drove the car five miles down the road into a grassy area because he was afraid that the police would see the car parked on the side of the road and just start shooting into it again. Yes, it was five miles down the highway where i was captured, dragged out of the car, stomped and then left on the ground. Although i drifted in and out of consciousness i remember clearly that both while i was lying on the ground, and while i was in the ambulance, i kept hearing the State troopers ask "is she dead yet?" Because of my condition i have no independent recollection of how long i was on the ground, or how long it was before the ambulance was allowed to leave for the hospital, but in the trial transcript trooper Harper stated that it was while he was being questioned, some time after 2:00 am that a detective told him that i had just been brought into the hospital. i was the only live "suspect" in custody, and prior to that time Harper, had never told anyone that a woman had shot him.

As i watched Governor Whitman's interview the one thing that struck me was her "outrage" at my joy about being a grandmother, and my "quite nice life", as she put it, here in Cuba. While i love the Cuban people and the solidarity they have shown me, the pain of being torn away from everybody i love has been intense. i have never had the opportunity to see or hold my grandchild. If Gov. Whitman thinks that my life has been so nice, that 50 years of dealing with racism, poverty, persecution, brutality, prison, underground, exile and blatant lies has been so nice, then i'd be more than happy to let her walk in my shoes for a while so she can get a taste of how it feels. i am a proud black woman, and i'm not about to get on the television and cry for Ralph Penza or any other journalist, but the way i have suffered in my lifetime, and the way my people have suffered, only god can bear witness to.

Col. Williams of the New Jersey State Police stated "we would do everything we could go get her off the island of Cuba and if that includes kidnaping, We would do it." i guess the theory is that if they could kidnap millions of Africans from Africa 400 years ago, they should be able to kidnap one African woman today. It is nothing but an attempt to bring about the re-incarnation of the Fugitive Slave Act. All i represent is just another slave that they want to bring back to the plantation. Well, i might be a slave, but i will go to my grave a rebellious slave. i am and i feel like a maroon woman. i will never voluntarily accept the condition of slavery, whether it's de-facto or ipso facto, official, or unofficial. In another recent interview, Williams talked about asking the federal government to add to the \$50,000 reward for my capture. He also talked about seeking "outside money, or something like that, a benefactor, whatever." Now who is he looking to "contribute" to that "cause"? The Ku Klux Klan, the Neo Nazi Parties, the white militia organizations? But the plot gets even thicker. He says that the money might lure bounty hunters: "there are individuals out there, i guess they call themselves 'soldiers of fortune' who might be interested in doing something, in turning her over to us". Well, in the old days they used to call them slave-catchers, trackers, or patter-rollers, now they are called mercenaries. Neither the governor nor the state police say one word about "justice." They have no moral authority to do

so. The level of their moral and ethical bankruptcy is evident in their eagerness to not only break the law and hire hoodlums, all in the name of "law and order." But you know what gets to me, what makes me truly indignant? With the schools in Paterson, N.J. falling down, with areas of Newark looking like a disaster area, with the crack epidemic, with the wide-spread poverty and unemployment in New Jersey, these depraved, decadent, would-be slave-masters want federal funds to help put this "nigger wench" back in her place. They call me the "most wanted woman" in Amerika. i find that ironic. i've never felt very "wanted" before. When it came to jobs, i was never the "most wanted." When it came to economic opportunities or decent housing, i was never "the most wanted." It seems like the only time Black people are on the "most wanted" list is when they want to put us in prison.

But at this moment, i am not so concerned about myself. Everybody has to die sometime, and all i want is to go with dignity. i am more concerned about the growing poverty, the growing despair that is rife in Amerika. i am more concerned about our younger generations, who represent our future. i am more concerned that one-third of young black men are either in prison or under the jurisdiction of the criminal "in-justice" system. i am more concerned about the rise of the prison-industrial complex that is turning our people into slaves again. i am more concerned about the repression, the police brutality, violence, the rising wave of racism that makes up the political landscape of the U.S. today. Our young people deserve a future, and i consider it the mandate of my ancestors to be part of the struggle to insure that they have one. They have the right to live free from political repression. The U.S. is becoming more and more of a police state and that fact compels us to fight against political repression. i urge you all, every single person who reads this statement, to fight to free all political prisoners. As the concentration camps in the U.S. turn into death camps, i urge you to fight to abolish the death penalty. i make a special, urgent appeal to you to fight to save the life of Mumia Abu-Jamal, the only political prisoner who is currently on death row.

It has been a long time since i have lived inside the United States. But during my lifetime i have seen every prominent black leader, politician or activist come under attack by the establishment media. When African-Americans appear on news programs they are usually talking about sports, entertainment or they are in handcuffs. When We have a protest they ridicule it, minimize it, or cut the numbers of the people who attended in half. The news is big business and it is owned and operated by affluent white men. Unfortunately, they shape the way that many people see the world, and even the way people

see themselves. Too often black journalists, and other journalists of color mimic their white counterparts. They often gear their reports to reflect the foreign policies and the domestic policies of the same people who are oppressing their people. In the establishment media, the bombing and of murder of thousands of innocent women and children in Libya or Iraq or Panama is seen as "patriotic," while those who fight for freedom, no matter where they are, are seen as "radicals," "extremists," or "terrorists."

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 Greet-  
ings 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**



**Sundiata Acoli**



**Zayd Malik Shakur**

**Hands Off Cuba!**

*This is an excerpt from a speech by Fidel Castro, delivered to the closing session of the first World Solidarity With Cuba Conference in Havana on November 25, 1994.*

**Principles of the Cuban revolution**

What revolution was more noble? What revolution was more generous? What revolution showed most respect for people? And I'm not only talking about a victorious revolution in power, but since the time of our own war, of our own revolutionary struggle, which established inviolable principles. What made us revolutionaries was rejection of injustice, the rejection of crime and the rejection of torture. During the 25 months that our intense war lasted, in which we captured thousands of prisoners, there was not one case of physical violence to obtain information, not even in the midst of the war; there was not one case of killing a prisoner. What we would do with prisoners is set them free. We would keep their weapons, which was all we were interested in, and we treated these arms suppliers with all the consideration they deserved.

At first they had been led to believe that we would kill them all, and in fact they would resist up to the bitter end. But when they discovered during the course of the war the true behavior of the Rebel Army, they would give up their weapons with less of a struggle when they were surrounded, when they knew they had lost. Some of those soldiers surrendered three times, because they were switched from one front to the other and they were used to surrendering, they had experience.

But the most important thing is that the Cuban revolution has maintained the principles of never resorting to torture, of never stooping to crime, without exception to this day, no matter what they say, no matter what they write. We know that a lot of this slander has been written by people in the CIA's pay.

Are there many other examples like it in history? In the world's history there have been many revolutions and in general they were rough, very rough: England's civil wars, the French revolution, the Russian revolution, the Spanish Civil War and the Mexican Revolution. We know quite a bit about revolutions and many books have been written about them and about counterrevolutions. Well, one does

not even speak of counterrevolutions. Revolutions tend to be generous and counterrevolutions are unfailingly merciless. Just ask the members of the Paris Commune.

In the case of Cuba there has not been one exception. In the whole history of the revolution, there has not been one single case of torture—and I mean that literally—not one political murder, not one disappearance. In our country we do not have the so-called death squads that sprout like mushrooms in this hemisphere's countries. [Audience names several countries] You speak for us! We prefer not to mention names, but everything has happened in our hemisphere.

Why is there no mention made of the United States, where people have been brutally murdered for defending civil rights, men like Martin Luther King and many others. A country where as a rule only Blacks and Hispanics are given the death sentence?

Our country does not have the phenomena we see in others, such as children murdered on the streets allegedly to avoid the spectacle of begging and apparently to fight crime. The revolution eradicated begging, the revolution eliminated gambling, the revolution eliminated drugs, the revolution did away with prostitution.

Yes, unfortunately there can be some cases or tendencies that encourage some jineteras [1], due to economic difficulties and the opening to numerous outside contacts. We do not deny this, and from time to time some may turn up on Fifth Avenue. But one should not confuse decent people with jineteras. Such cases exist but we fight against it. We do not tolerate prostitution; we do not legalize prostitution.

There may be some children, encouraged by their parents, who approach tourists and ask them for gum or something else. These are phenomena that we experience due to the special situation that we are living in, at a time of great economic difficulties as the blockade has been strengthened. But these things were not known during the normal times of the revolution.

You won't see people sleeping in doorways covered with news papers, regardless of our present poverty. There is not a single human being abandoned or without social security, regardless of our present great poverty. The vices we see every day in capitalist societies do not exist in our country. This is an

achievement of the revolution.

There is not one child without a school or a teacher; there is not one single citizen who does not receive medical care, starting before birth. Here we start medical care for our citizens when they are still in their mothers' wombs, right from the first weeks after conception.

We are the country in the world with the most doctors per capita, regardless of the special period, and I'm not only referring to the Third World, but to the whole world! More than the Scandinavians, more than the Canadians and all those who are at the top rankings in public health. By reducing infant mortality from 60 to 10 per 1,000 live births and with other pediatric programs, the revolution has saved the lives of more than 300,000 children.[2]

We have the most teachers per capita in the world, regardless of the hardships we suffer. We have the most art teachers per capita in the world. We are the country with the most physical education and sports teachers per capita.

That is the country that is being blockaded; that is the country that they are trying to bring to its knees through hunger and disease.

Some demand that, in order for them to lift the blockade, we must surrender, we must renounce our political principles, we must renounce socialism and our democratic forms.

Furthermore, quite a confusing document was issued at the Rio conference,[3] despite the noble efforts against it by countries like Brazil, Mexico and others. It was supported by some countries that were very, very hand-in-glove with the United States; I don't want to mention any names. It is a document with a certain degree of confusion that leaves room for erroneous interpretations and some interpret it as supporting the U.S. position of conditioning the blockade's suspension on Cuba making political changes.

Political changes? Is there a country that has made more political changes than we have? What is a revolution, if it's not the most profound and extraordinary of political changes? We made this revolution over 35 years ago, and during those 35 years we have been carrying out political changes, not in search of a formal, alienating democracy that divides people, but rather a democracy that really unites peoples and gives viability to what is most important and essen-

tial, which is public participation in fundamental issues. Furthermore, we recently made modifications to the Constitution, based on the principle that the people nominate and the people elect.

I'm not criticizing anybody, but nearly all over the world, including Africa, they are introducing Western political systems, together with neoliberalism and neocolonialism and all those other things. People who have never heard of Voltaire, Danton, Jean Jacques Rousseau,[4] nor the philosophers of U.S. independence—and remember that Bolivar [5] in our own hemisphere was very much against the mechanical copying of the European and U.S. systems, which have brought catastrophe, division, subordination and neo-colonialism to our countries. We can see societies splitting into thousands of pieces; societies that should be united in their efforts to develop have ended up not only with a multiparty system but with hundreds and even thousands of parties.

### **Cuba's democracy**

We have worked to develop our own system, which we did not copy from anyone. We established the principle that those who nominate in the first instance are the residents. One may or may not agree, but it is as respectable as the Greek democracy that people talk so much about, and without slaves or serfs. Because Greek democracy consisted of just a few that would meet in the plaza—and they had to be few because in those days they did not have microphones—and they would get together to have an election right there. Neither the slaves nor the serfs participated; nor do they today.

When you analyze the electoral results in the United States you discover that they have just elected a new Congress, where undoubtedly there are worrying tendencies toward conservatism and the extreme right; but those are internal matters in the United States. The truth of the matter is, I can assure you, I promise you, we have not made it a condition that the United States renounce its system in order to normalize relations. Just imagine if we told them that they had to have at least 80 percent of the electorate voting. Thirty-eight percent decided to vote and the rest said, "I'm going to the beach," or "I'm going to the movies," or "I'm going home to rest." This is what happened to the "champions" of freedom, human rights and civil rights. It is very much the same in

many countries of Latin America. Many people don't even vote. The slaves and the servants say: "What am I going to vote for, if my situation is going to be just the same?"

However, 95 percent of Cuban citizens vote in our elections and nobody forces them to vote. Even those who are not with the revolution go and vote, although they may turn in a blank ballot, so as not to vote for this one or for the other, or they vote for one or they vote for the other.

In our nation, I repeat once again, the local residents nominate the candidates and the people elect them. In this way, the possibilities of any citizen being elected are infinitely greater than in any other country.

One good example: I was talking with a Mexican delegation and they said to me: "The youngest of our deputies was here." "How old is he?" They told me: "Twenty-five years old." I was really astounded; but then I suddenly remembered that we have a number of deputies under the age of 20, because the students, from secondary school onwards, take part in the process of selecting candidates, as do all the mass organizations.

The campesinos take part in the process of selecting candidates; the women's organization takes part in the process of selecting candidates; the trade unions take part in the process of selecting candidates; the Committees for the Defense of the revolution take part in the process of selecting candidates. And there are numerous students who are deputies to the National Assembly, and women, campesinos, workers and intellectuals, from all sectors. It is not the party that puts up the candidates. The party does not put up the candidates nor does it elect them. It oversees the elections to make sure that all of the principles and the rules are observed; but it does not take part in any of these electoral processes. That is the situation in our country.

In one of the most recent modifications made in the electoral process, a candidate has to win more than 50 percent of the valid votes to become a deputy.

[Ricardo] Alarcon [6] was explaining some of these things, when he recalled, with a magazine that he had in his hand—he has the advantage of speaking English and he reads a U.S. magazine now and again—how one man had spent \$25 million in a

campaign to become a member of the U.S. Congress.[7] What kind of democracy is that? How many people have \$25 million to spend on a campaign? And in Cuba candidates don't even need to spend \$25, although any citizen might have to pay the bus fare to go and vote on the day of the elections.

What kind of democracy is it that requires one to be a millionaire to be able to have all the resources with which to speak and persuade the people to vote for you? And then the candidate does not remember those who voted for him until the next elections four or five years later; he does not think about them ever again; he forgets them.

In our country, people can be removed from their posts and the same applies to a municipal delegate as well as the highest official. Anyone can be elected, but they can also be dismissed from those posts. That is our system, which we don't expect all the other countries to apply. It would be absurd to try to make it a model, but it is the system that we have adopted. Nobody imposed it on us; no U.S. governor or supervisor came here to establish an electoral code as they did before.

We drew up the Constitution ourselves, we drew up the electoral code ourselves, we have planned the system ourselves and we have developed it ourselves, which is what you have been defending: the right of a country to establish the regulations, the economic, political and social system that it considers to be appropriate. Anything else in the world is impossible, anything else is absurd, any other aim is insane, and these lunatics go around trying to get everyone to do exactly the same as them, and we don't like their way of doing things.

### **Cuba's sovereignty cannot be compromised**

That is why for us the question of ending the blockade in exchange for political concessions, concessions that correspond to the sovereignty of our country, is unacceptable. It is absolutely unacceptable, it is outrageous, it is exasperating, and really, we would rather perish than give up our sovereignty...

### **Notes**

1 Jinetera(o)s refers to women and men who engage in prostitution, usually in tourist areas.

2 The infant mortality rate refers to the number of infants per 1,000 live births who die before the age of one. Cuba reduced its infant mortality rate from 60 before the revolution to 9.4

today. Since 1973 its infant mortality rate has been the lowest in Latin America and is among the lowest in the world.

**3** The United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED), also called the World Earth Summit, took place in 1992 in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. 9

**4** French philosophers and writers Voltaire (1694-1778) and Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1712-78) epitomized Europe's Age of Enlightenment. Voltaire attacked injustice and intolerance; Rousseau held that people are essentially good but are corrupted by society, necessitating a "social contract." Georges-Jacques Danton (1759-94) was a leader of the French revolution of 1789.

**5** Known as "*the Liberator*", Simon Bolivar (1783-1830) was a South American revolutionary who led the fight to end Spanish colonialism, beginning in 1819, and was made president of Greater Colombia (now Colombia, Panama, Venezuela and Ecuador). He also helped liberate from Spain both Peru (1824) and Bolivia (1825), which was named in his honor. He is widely seen as a symbol of Latin American unity.

**6** Ricardo Alarcon is president of Cuba's National Assembly and its former Foreign Minister and ambassador to the United Nations.

**7** Michael Huffington, a right-wing businessman, unsuccessfully ran for the U.S. Senate from California in 1994, spending nearly \$25 million in the attempt.

Reprinted from **Cuba At the Crossroads** (Ocean Press, 1996).



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## **The Struggle Continues:**

### **Setting A Black Liberation Agenda**

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Black people face a deep crisis. Finding a way out of this mess requires new thinking, new vision, and a new spirit of resistance. We need a new movement of Black radicalism.

We know that America's capitalist economy has completely failed us. Every day more of us are unemployed and imprisoned, homeless and hungry. Police brutality, violence and the international drug trade threaten our children with the greatest dangers since slavery. The politicians build more prisons but cut budgets for public schools, day care and health care. They slash welfare yet hire more cops. The government says working people must pay more taxes and receive fewer services, while the rich and the corporations grow fat. Black people and other oppressed people have the power to change the way things are today. But first we must unite against the real enemy.

Now is the time for a revival of the militant spirit of resistance that our people have always possessed, from the Abolitionist Movement to outlaw slavery to the Civil Rights Movement of the 1950s, from Black Power to the anti-apartheid campaign of the 1980s. Now is the time to rebuild a strong uncompromising movement for human rights, full employment and self-determination. Now is the time for a new Black radicalism.

If you believe in the politics of Black liberation, join us in Chicago in 1998 at the Black Radical Congress. If you hate what capitalism has done to our community - widespread joblessness, drugs, violence and poverty - come to the Congress. If you are fed up with the corruption of the two party system and want to develop a plan for real political change, come to the Congress. If you want to struggle against class exploitation, racism, sexism and homophobia, come to the Congress. The Black Radical Congress is for everyone ready to fight back: trade unionists and workers, youth and students, women, welfare recipients, lesbians and gays, public housing tenants and the homeless, the elderly and people on fixed incomes, veterans, cultural workers and immigrants. **You!**

Sisters and Brothers, we stand at the edge of a new century. The moment for a new militancy and a new commitment to the liberation of all Black people, at home and abroad, has arrived. Let us build a national campaign toward the Black Radical Congress, setting in motion a renewed struggle to reclaim our historic role as the real voice of democracy in this country. Spread the word: "Without struggle, there is no progress!" Now's the time! **(312) 706-7074; <http://www.blackradicalcongress.com>; P.O. Box 5766, Chicago, IL 60680-5766**

## **How to Leave an Abusive Relationship**

***Keep in mind that in most cases where women are critically hurt or killed, it is usually when they are trying to leave.***

### *Getting Ready to Leave*

1. Keep any evidence of physical abuse, such as pictures, etc., in a safe place that is accessible for you.
2. Know where you can go to get help; tell someone you trust what is happening to you.
3. If you are injured, go to a doctor or an emergency room and report what happened to you. Ask that they document your visit.
4. Plan with your children and identify a safe place for them (for example, a room within your home that has a lock or a friend's house where they can go for help). Reassure them that their job is to stay safe, not to protect you.
5. Contact your local battered women's shelter and find out about laws and other resources available to you before you have to use them during a crisis.
6. Keep a journal of all violent incidences involving your abuser -- those aimed at yourself and those aimed at others.
7. Acquire job skills as you can, such as learning to type or taking courses at a community college.

### *General Guidelines for Leaving an Abusive Relationship*

1. You may request a police stand-by or escort while you leave.
2. If you need to sneak away, be prepared:
  - Make a plan for how and where you will escape, and include a plan for a quick escape
  - Put aside emergency money as you can
  - Hide an extra set of car keys
  - and Pack an extra set of clothes for yourself and your children and store them at a trusted friend or neighbor's house. Try to avoid using next-door neighbors, close family members and mutual friends, if at all possible.
3. Take with you a list of important phone numbers of friends, relatives, doctors, schools, etc., as well as other important items, including:
  - Driver's license;
  - Regularly needed medication;
  - Checkbooks and information about bank accounts and other assets;

- List of credit cards held by yourself or jointly, or the credit cards themselves if you have access to them; and

- Pay stubs.

If time is available, also take:

- Copy of marriage license, birth certificates, will and other legal documents
- Verification of social security numbers
- Citizenship documents (passport, green card, etc.)
- Titles, deeds and other property information
- Welfare identification
- Medical records
- Children's school records and immunization records
- Insurance information
- and valued pictures, jewelry, or personal possessions.

4. Create a false trail. Call motels, real estate agencies, schools in a town at least six hours away from where you actually are located. Ask questions that require a call back to your current house in order to leave numbers on record with your abuser.

### *After Leaving the Abusive Relationship*

1. If getting a restraining order and your abuser is leaving:

- Change residence locks and phone number as soon as possible;
- Change your work hours and the route you take to work;
- Change regular route you use to take your children to school;
- Keep your copy of the restraining order in a safe place;

- Inform friends, neighbors and employers that you have a restraining order in effect; and
- Always call the police to enforce the order even for the slightest violation.

2. If you leave:

- Consider renting a post office box for your mail or using the address of a friend;
- Be aware that addresses are on restraining orders and police reports and can be accessed by your abuser;
- Be careful to whom you give your new address and phone number; and
- Change your work hours if possible.

3. Alert school authorities of the situation, and the fact that a restraining order is in place.

4. Consider changing your children's schools.

5. After you leave, reschedule any appointments that your abuser was aware of before you left.

6. Shop at different stores and frequent different social spots than you previously frequented so your abuser will be less likely to find you.
7. Alert neighbors of your situation, and request that they call the police if they feel you may be in danger.
8. Talk to trusted people about the violence.
9. Replace doors with solid-core wood, steel or metal doors. Install security systems, if possible.
10. Install a lighting system that lights up when a person is coming close to the house (motion sensitive lights).
11. Tell your co-workers about the situation; ask their assistance in screening all calls you receive during office hours.
12. Explicitly inform your children's caretakers about who is allowed to pick up the children and that your partner is not allowed to do so.
13. Call your telephone company about "Caller ID." Ask that your phone be blocked, so that if you make a phone call, neither your partner nor anyone else will be able to get your new, unlisted phone number.

the poem at right is by asha bande. it's taken from her **absence in the palms of my hands**, which was published in 1996 for Harlem River Press by Writers & Readers Publishing, Inc.  
P.O. Box 461, Village Station  
New York, NY 10014  
*"A new young , important voice here. She calls us home to ourselves. She womanist. She poet. She truth-teller. She singer. Listen. Listen"*  
-- **Sonia Sanchez**

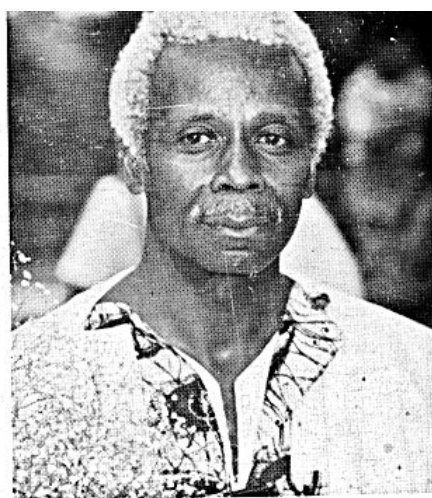
**in response 2 a brother's question  
about what he should do when his  
best friend beats up his woman**

snatch him up by the back of his neck run him into his own fist  
twice  
tell him who the real enemy is show him  
make him swallow his own teeth do not help when they scratch the inside  
of his throat tell him it was his fault u did this  
make his eyes swell up & pus so he looks like a freak make him go to  
work like that & have to come with excuses to his co-workers & friends  
tell him the whiteman made u do it tell him you're sorry tell him u  
love him tell him u didn't mean to then kick his ass again  
Question him on why he's such a coward  
Interrogate his ass  
Make him beg for forgiveness Watch him crawl  
Put The Word Out In The Streets....  
THERE'S AN ENEMY IN OUR PRESENCE THERE'S AN  
ENEMY IN OUR PRESENCE IT DOES NOT THINK IT ONLY  
ATTACKS IT MAKES WEAK-ASS EXCUSES IT TAKES NO  
RESPONSIBILITY IT PICKS ON PEOPLE SMALLER THAN  
ITSELF IT READS SHARAZAD ALI  
IT WORSHIPS MILES DAVIS IT DESTROYS BLKLIFE  
IT LIES IT LIES  
and if he finally understands  
then go to him  
find out where it started  
search for burn marks beneath his flesh  
peel back his pain  
be a brother a real good brother  
whisper haki madhubuti sonia sanchez in his ear  
sing sweet honey songs  
let him cry  
let him sleep in your arms  
stand alone if u have to  
this is the right thing to do  
let others babble hate while u break centuries of vicious cycles  
face the contradictions the bellies sliced open & jaws wired shut  
the assholes torn &  
the bloodied vaginas  
this is what it looks like do not turn away now  
babies beat out of wombs spines curved uneven legs that no longer walk  
dead eyes that cannot see tomorrow livers imprinted with callused feet--  
face the contradiction that looks like u that smells like u  
that tastes like u  
& push out the violence be unafraid to be a man  
who confronts men about women  
be unafraid to be a man who confronts big small mean common nasty  
everyday men  
about women  
be unafraid to be a man  
who confronts  
himself.

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### News, Notes & Updates

*Jericho '98* kicked off with a march & rally in Washington, D.C. on March 27. All participants were pleased with the turnout, and it was a beautiful day. We had a great time as we soaked up the sun and ran into old friends. Programatically, however, we failed to take advantage of the gathering to advance the objectives of the campaign. While we listened to speeches, took pictures, carried around posters of those PP's we felt should have been included on the "official" list, "mobilized" for our own upcoming events (e.g., the Million Youth March(s), a teach-in, the July 25 mobilization for Puerto Rico, etc.), or ogled the few celebrities who were in attendance, we forgot that there are all kinds of programs & duties which need to be undertaken to make the *Jericho* campaign a success. George Jackson told us almost thirty years ago: "The effectiveness of rallies and mass demonstrations has not come to an end. **THEIR PURPOSE HAS DIACRITICALLY ALTERED**, but the general tactic remains sound. Today, the rally affords us the opportunity to effect intensive organization of the projects and programs that will form the infrastructure... If the mass rallies close, as they have in the past, with a few speeches and a pamphlet, we can expect no more results than in the past: two hours later the people will be amerikkans again... But going among 'the people' at each gathering with clipboards and pens, and painfully ascertaining what each can contribute to clear-cut, carefully defined political projects, is the distinction between organization and the sterile, stilted attempts" which have heretofore characterized an essentially bourgeois nationalist movement. [From *Blood In My Eye*, p. 76-77, Black Classic Press; as quoted in "Combat Colonial Violence: Heighten the National Democratic Revolution", **Notes From a New Afrikan P.O.W. Journal, Book Five** (May, 1980)]. With this in mind, please see the next page for a sample of a form which could be used in the future. We invite our readers to fill it out and return it to us, or adapt it to use in your own efforts. • A celebration of the thirtieth anniversary of the founding of the *Provisional Government of the Republic of New Afrika* was also held in D.C. on the weekend of the *Jericho* March & Rally. **New Afrikan Nation Day '98** began with a well-deserved tribute to brother **imari obadele**, a principle architect of the modern day **New Afrikan Independence Movement**. Imari is also one of the only original signers of the Declaration of Independence who still actively struggles to **Free The Land!** The rest of the program for this historic occasion was relatively lackluster, mostly taken up with workshops, which



imari obadele

night but accomplished little • The second edition of *Schooling the Generations in the Politics of Prison* is a richly complex volume by prisoners and activists of African descent in the United States about the prison system and efforts to organize a prison movement around it. As the word, "generations" in the title suggests, one of its target audiences is Black youth. It appeals to the hip-hop and college generation as well as to an academic and international readership. Send \$20 per copy; make check or money order payable to the **Afrikan/Black Prison Education Fund**. Send order to: *Mother Kali's Books*, 720 E. 13th Street, Eugene OR 97401; phone: (541) 343-4864. The editor, **Chinosole**, is an activist and scholar who holds a doctorate in comparative literature and publishes criticism on Black women's narratives and slave narratives. She teaches at San Francisco State University • The **Outdoor Leadership Skills Project** is a small but dedicated group of individuals committed to the study, teaching, practice and development of our skills through a series of semi-wilderness training courses. Our courses are designed to foster and enhance growth and development in the areas of self-reliance, stress management, and sound judgment as well as individual and group leadership, decision making and responsibility. For more info contact Bro. Gimbu Kali, OLSP, 700 E Oakwood Blvd, Chicago, IL 60653; 773-268-7500 ext. 129 M-F. • We were saddened by the death of **Merle Africa**, and join the MOVE Organization in mourning



Merle Austin Africa  
#00-6306

were generally centered around the ministries of the Provisional Government, but it's hard for these to have any meaning when many of the ministries barely function. The meeting ended with a **People's Center Council** meeting, which ran late into the

our sister. Merle & eight of her brothers & sisters have spent the last twenty years in Pennsylvania prisons, captives in the state's war against the MOVE Organization. The MOVE Nine were convicted of the killing of a policeman who was actually killed by the friendly fire of his own comrade soldier-cops as they shot into the MOVE residence.

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\_\_\_\_\_

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