

Free Geronimo Pratt!

For the past 8 years, Elmer Geronimo Pratt has been incarcerated in California state prisons, almost all of that time spent in isolation. A cruel and inhumane situation under any circumstances, the imprisonment of Geronimo Pratt is a particularly sinister violation of human rights -- for Geronimo has committed no crime and is only in prison because he is an outspoken fighter for the liberation of Black people. For over ten years, Geronimo, as a former leader of the Black Panther Party in Los Angeles and a champion of the human rights of political prisoners and Prisoners of War like himself, has been the target of illegal FBI and local police counter-insurgency activities.

What are the true facts of this case? In December 1969 the L.A. police staged a military assault on the Black Panther Party office, similar to the raid a few days earlier in Chicago in which Fred Hampton and Mark Clark were killed. Unlike the Chicago raid, the Black Panther Party members inside the L.A. office were able to defend themselves and successfully hold off the police until community residents were able to force the police to stop shooting. Geronimo was brought to trial as a result of the shoot-out, but the government was unable to convict him of any serious charges, getting only a "compromise" conviction on a weapons charge.

A year earlier FBI director Hoover had issued orders to prevent the growth of Black nationalist organizations and discredit Black movement leaders as a major thrust of its counter-intelligence program, COINTELPRO. The Black Panther Party was a major target of COINTELPRO activities. By 1969, fourteen Black Panther Party leaders had been killed and hundreds of members imprisoned. Before and after the L.A. shoot-out Geronimo was subjected to intense police harassment, including attempts on his life, and when he was released on bail following his conviction Geronimo went underground in order to continue the struggle. He was captured in September 1970 and brought to L.A. Only then was he charged with murdering a white woman during a robbery, a crime which had occurred two years earlier. Despite an overwhelming lack of evidence linking Geronimo in anyway

to the crime and despite testimony that he was actually 350 miles away at the time it occurred, Geronimo was convicted and sentenced to life in prison. Since then he has continued to be a target of COINTELPRO -- kept in isolation, portrayed as a "dangerous criminal" and harassed by a series of unsubstantiated charges.

One way in which COINTELPRO has worked is to keep the facts of this case and many other like it from public view. Only Geronimo's relentless struggle, his support committee and the work of the National Task Force for COINTELPRO Litigation and Research has begun to expose the extent of illegal counter-insurgency activities carried on by the U.S. government against the Black Movement. In Geronimo's case this has meant waging a three-pronged campaign to expose the particular COINTELPRO strategy against him. One is a suit pursuant to the Freedom of Information Act to force the FBI to reveal documents which would prove that Geronimo was in Oakland at the time of the murder; secondly is suit against the Dept. of Corrections for their illegal confinement of Geronimo in isolation and the abuse of his basic constitutional rights, including a very real ongoing threat to his life; and thirdly is a federal civil rights suit to expose the conspiracy on the part of the FBI, L.A. police and prison authorities to destroy Geronimo because of his political beliefs and activities.

We urge you to support the struggle to free Geronimo Pratt. We too have felt the impact of COINTELPRO and have been targets of illegal activities. As activists in the anti-war movement and the movement in support of the Black liberation struggle the FBI broke into our homes, tampered with our mail, wire-tapped our phones and harassed our family and friends. In our case it was all done in the name of the "hunt for the Weather Underground". But, in reality it was a covert campaign designed to disrupt our political activities and prevent the growth of solidarity with the struggles of Third World peoples. We have instituted a \$100 million dollar law suit against the FBI, Justice Dept., Richard Nixon and others. But our suit can only reveal a small part of the overall picture. Geronimo's suits, and those of other P.O.W.s like Assata Shakur (Joanne Chesimard) and the RNA 11 strike at the heart of the government's counter-intelligence strategy. YOUR SUPPORT IS NEEDED RIGHT NOW.

Send further contributions to: The Nat. Task Force for COINTELPRO Litigation and Research, Box 65, Bronx, NY 10473.

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