

ASSATA BULLETIN

FEBRUARY 21, 1977

ALL-WHITE JURY SELECTED

On February 14 a jury of ten white women and five white men was seated in New Brunswick for Assata's trial. This was the end result of nearly a month of the Judge's and prosecution's efforts to exclude all potential Black jurors and to make sure she didn't get a fair-minded jury, let alone a jury of her peers.

The majority of the jurors are under thirty. While this is reason to hope that they will be open, we can't forget that the jurors come from communities which have been saturated with negative images of Assata and where there is a high presumption of her guilt.

ASSATA DENIED THE RIGHT TO MAKE OPENING STATEMENT

In another attempt to deny Assata a proper defense, Judge Appleby ruled that Assata could not read her opening statement to the jury. When Lewis Myers, one of her lawyers, attempted to read it for her, the Judge threatened to remove him from the case. Clearly, the Judge doesn't want the jurors to find out who Assata really is, in contrast to the way she is portrayed by the prosecution and the media. [Copies of Assata's statement are available from the Defense Committee at the address listed below.]

In his opening remarks, prosecutor Barone read the charges against Assata, yet failed to make any connection between Assata - who he simply stated was guilty - and the killing of Trooper Foerster with his own gun. It looks more and more as if the only so-called evidence connecting Assata to any crime on the New Jersey Turnpike is that given by trooper Harper, who admits he ran away from the scene. In Assata's words, the prosecutor's case is "an outline for a book that he is writing; a book based, not on evidence, but based upon speculation and innuendo."

For the defense, Lewis Myers stressed the fact to the jurors that Assata has never been convicted of any crime, and is innocent. He simply asked them, to live up to their oaths as jurors, to be fair, and to judge Assata on the facts of the case.

THE WEEK IN COURT

Following the opening statements on February 14th, the prosecution opened its case with a series of state police and on passer-by, none of whom saw or connected Assata to anything that occurred.

On the first day, Judge Appleby ordered the removal of a copy of "Roots" from the defense table. When lawyer Bill Kunstler asked one of the prosecution witnesses something about Assata Shakur, prosecutor Barone objected. He demanded that the Judge force the defense to use Assata's slave name, Joanne Chesimard. Appleby did so. The defense, refusing to use Assata's slave name, simply chose to refer to her as "the defendant." This moment in the courtroom was a test of both Assata and her legal team to resist yet another racist denial of Assata's identity and her African roots.

SUPPORTERS HARRASSED IN COURT

Court officials have been doing everything they can to make it difficult to go to Court to show support for Assata. On the day of the opening statements (Feb. 14) visitors were only allowed to enter or leave the courtroom when the Judge was not on the bench, and even then only 5 or 6 were allowed in at a time. They were searched, ID'ed, and had their belongings confiscated while they were in the courtroom. The Judge was not interested in hearing the lawyers' objections to this sham of a public trial. At best, only 14 of the 42 available seats in the courtroom are open to members of the public. Since the 14th, conditions have eased a little, but nothing basic has changed.

On Friday, February 18th, a 10-judge Federal District Court in Philadelphia heard arguments on holding court on Fridays. The courtroom was packed with several hundred supporters, many of them Muslims who were there to defend Assata's right to her Sabbath. Supporting briefs were filed by representatives of the Islamic community, the National Lawyers Guild, the Civil Liberties Union, and the Rutgers Legal Clinic. The judges have not ruled yet, and until they do there will be no court on Fridays.

PRESS COVERAGE AS BIASED AS EVER

As Assata anticipated in her opening statement, coverage of the trial in the press has continued to be one-sided and sensationalist. She wrote, "When it comes to the media, I have come to believe none of what I hear and only half of what I see." So far, media coverage has highlighted small bits of out-of-context testimony and reported it as though the state were building a strong case against Assata. They continually downplay the fact that nothing so far has connected her to any of the charges she faces.

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With the final selection of a jury, the National Jury Project ended its efforts to ensure Assata an unbiased jury. All of us working in support of Assata want to thank everyone connected with the National Jury Project for their invaluable contribution to the selection of the best jury possible in the circumstances.

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WE NEED MONEY!!! Defending Assata is costing a great deal of money. If you haven't made your contribution yet, please send as much as you can right now. If you have already given, we need your help again. Please make checks payable to the Assata Shakur Defense Committee, or if you want them to be tax-exempt, to Nat'l Conf. of Black Lawyers/Assata, 126 W. 119th, NYC 10027.

FUTURE EVENTS IN SUPPORT OF ASSATA

- FEB. 21 - 9 AM NEW BRUNSWICK COUNTY COURTHOUSE
Picket line in solidarity with Assata
- FEB 25 - 8 PM WOMENBOOKS, at 92nd & AMSTERDAM AVENUE
Poets: June Jordan, Jayne Cortez, Margie Seeman;
Speaker on the case
- FEB 28 - 8 PM RUTGERS UNIVERSITY - NEW BRUNSWICK CAMPUS
Amiri Baraka and Theatre Group
- MAR 2 - NEW BRUNSWICK COUNTY COURTHOUSE
Demonstration of Black Solidarity with Assata
- MAR 2 - 3 PM LEHMAN COLLEGE
Benefit for Assata
- MAR 6 - 3 to 7 PM THEATRE ARTS CENTER 110th & LEXINGTON AVE
Latin Women's Collective Cultural Event
- MAR 10 - 12 NOON CITY COLLEGE
Forum

For more information about the case - requests for literature - future events - requests for speakers - or if you can work on any aspect of support for Assata (fund-raising, paper-work, etc.) contact:

ASSATA SHAKUR DEFENSE COMMITTEE, 339 Lafayette St., NYC 10012 (212) 673-4177

ASSATA SHAKUR DEFENSE COMMITTEE
339 LAFAYETTE STREET
NEW YORK, NEW YORK 10012

to:

FIRST CLASS MAIL

TO MY PEOPLE

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 Shakur (slave name jo anne chesimard), and I am a revolutionary. A Black revolutionary. By that I mean that I am a field nigger who is determined to be free by any means necessary. 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, I have been hunted like a dog, and 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 TVs 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 and Ma Barker. 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 the 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 250 unarmed Black men, women and children, and 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 28 brother inmates and the 9 hostages murdered at Attica. They call us murderers, but we did not murder and wound over 30 unarmed Black students at Jackson State or Southern State either.

They call us murderers, but we did not murder Martin Luther King, Emmett Till, Medgar Evers, Malcolm X, George Jackson, Nat Turner, James Chaney and countless other Black freedom fighters. We did not bomb (4) Black little girls in a Sunday School. We did not murder, by shooting in the back, 16-year old Rita Lloyd, 11-year old Rickie Bodden or 10-year old Clifford Glover.

They call us murderers, but we do not control and enforce a system of racism and oppression that systematically murders Black and Third World people. Although Black people supposedly comprise about 15% of the total amerikkkan population, at least 60% of murder victims are Black. For every pig that is killed in the so-called line of duty there are at least 50 Black people murdered by police.

Black life expectancy is much lower than white and they do their best to kill us before we are born. We are burned alive in firetrap tenements. Our brothers and sisters O.D. 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 the gall to call us murderers.

They call us kidnappers, yet Brother Clark Squire (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 \$100,000 ransom in the New York Panther 21 conspiracy case. He was acquitted on May 13, 1971 along with all the others of all the 156 counts of conspiracy by a jury that took less than two hours to deliberate. Brother Squire was innocent. Yet he was kidnapped from his community and family. Over two years of his life were stolen, but they call us kidnappers. They call us kidnappers, but we did not kidnap the thousands of Brothers and Sisters held captive in amerikkka's concentration camps. 90% 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 us 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 us who rip off billions of dollars every year through tax evasions, illegal price fixing, embezzlement, consumer frauds, 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 us who are robbing Africa, Asia and Latin America of their natural resources and freedom while the people 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 Squire, or any other Black person on trial in amerikkka. 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 squashed the movement, destroyed our forces, and put down the Black Revolution. The pigs also try to give the impression that 5 or 10 Guerrillas are responsible for every revolutionary action carried out in amerikkka. 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 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 Henry Fields

Woodie Changa Olugbala Green

Fred Hampton

Ill' Bobby Rutton

George Jackson

Jonathan Jackson

James McClain

Harold Russell

Zayd Malik Shakur

Anthony Nixon Olugbala White

We must fight on.

Assata Shakur

July 6, 1973

Middlesex County Workhouse