

ASSATA BULLETIN

MARCH 7, 1977

Free Assata Shakur
(Joanne Chesimard)



DEMONSTRATION OF BLACK SOLIDARITY WITH ASSATA

On Wednesday, March 2, New Brunswick saw the strongest, most spirited and militant showing of support for Assata to date. Over 150 Black and Latin people gathered in front of the Courthouse bringing a clear message of solidarity with Assata's struggle for liberation. Both Judge Appleby and the court officers were visibly shaken by their presence: their response was to put on extra "security", to invoke fire regulations, to keep people from congregating in the hallways, and to harass them far beyond anything they had done to white supporters. In the courtroom itself during the day, supporters refused to stand when the judge entered--as Assata has refused all along--and several were thrown out for the duration of the trial. A Muslim was ordered to remove his kufi, the Islamic headcovering, and when he refused, was ordered out of the court. When seven court officers moved to eject him, several other spectators came to his defense, and all were thrown out. Assata herself protested the racism of the judge and court officers and eventually walked out of the courtroom. The judge told her lawyers that "There are ways of dealing with a defendant who doesn't know how to behave in a courtroom."

CAMPUS SUPPORT FOR ASSATA GROWS

Two days earlier, on Monday, Feb. 28, a night of solidarity with Assata was held at Rutgers University. Some 200 people heard Phil Shinnick, Cheryl Clark, Bill Kunstler, Lennox Hinds, Lew Myers, and Amiri Baraka (LeRoi Jones). The evening was highlighted by Lennox Hinds' making public the investigation by the New Jersey Bar Association (see below) and by Amiri Baraka's powerful statement of support for Assata. Baraka, in poetry and speech, dramatically placed Assata in the context of all freedom fighters who have struggled for Black liberation throughout the history of this country. The state, he said, could not buy off Assata so they have thrown the full weight of their repressive apparatus at her in an attempt to silence her. He stressed that to defend Assata is to counter the attacks by the ruling classes on those who recognize the necessity of revolutionary change.

Other events this week included an evening of poetry and rap featuring Jayne Cortez, June Jordan, Denise Levetov, Margie Samuels and Bibi Angola at Womanbooks in New York City, and a forum at City College with Muntu Matsimela from the National Coalition to Defend Assata Shakur, Yuri Kochiyama from the National Committee to Defend Political Prisoners, and Lenora Mosston, lecturer at CCNY and a lawyer who has helped in Assata's legal defense.

ATTEMPT TO SILENCE BLACK LAWYERS

In yet another attack on the Black people who challenge the racist nature of the judicial system, the Middlesex County Ethics Committee of the New Jersey Bar Association has launched an investigation of Lennox Hinds, the national director of the National Conference of Black Lawyers. Hinds is charged with having termed Assata's trial before Judge Appleby a "travesty" and a "legalized lynching" and with stating that Appleby "does not have the judicial temperament or the racial sensitivity to sit as an impartial judge." This move by the Ethics Committee is the classic first step in an attempt to disbar any lawyer who speaks out against abuses of the judicial system. In this case, it is an attempt to censor a Black spokesperson who has been vocal in the defense of Black activists throughout the country. Lennox Hinds is not one of Assata's lawyers in her New Brunswick case and under the First Amendment is, of course, guaranteed the right of free speech. In court, when chief counsel for Assata, Bill Kunstler, questioned Judge Appleby's responsibility for the Ethics Committee's investigation and their threat to his freedom of speech, the judge said he knew nothing about it but that if the Bar Association was taking steps against

Hinds, it was "the greatest thing I've heard in a long time." The judge had already characterized Mr. Hinds as "Charlie McCarthy" to Bill Kunstler's "Edgar Bergen." When Lew Myers protested this as another example of Appleby's racism, the judge responded that it could not be racist because Charlie McCarthy was a white dummy.

On Friday, March 4, a coalition of legal groups, lawyers, and defense committees formed to defend Lennox Hinds from the threat of New Jersey bar sanctions. These groups included the National Conference of Black Lawyers, Harlem Lawyers Association, National Lawyers Guild, Center for Constitutional Rights, the Macon B. Allen Black Bar Association, the Association of Black Law Students, National Alliance against Racist and Political Repression, American Civil Liberties Union, Emergency Civil Liberties Committee, Patrice Lumumba Coalition, the New Brunswick Defense Committee for Assata Shakur, Garden State Bar Association, the Association of Legal Aid Attorneys, and the Assata Shakur Defense Committee of New York City.

Amongst the statements of support made at a press conference following the meeting was one by Angela Davis in which she said that this attack on Lennox Hinds was one part of the new wave of repression on all political, and particularly Black, activists.

As a result of this meeting, the various groups called for regular legal monitoring of Judge Appleby's courtroom and the racist abuses in the conduct of Assata's trial.

LEGAL UPDATE

During the week a prosecution expert witness, Herbert Midkiff, testified that tests designed to establish whether a person has recently fired a gun from metallic residues left on the hands, had shown that Assata had not fired a weapon. Later, during arguments by the defense to obtain Assata's FBI files (which were denied), one of the prosecutors stated that "the burden of proof in this case is on the defense to prove Joanne Chesimard's innocence."

UPCOMING EVENTS

- MAR. 9 - 3PM LEHMAN COLLEGE, CARMEN HALL, NEW YORK CITY
forum and film in support of Assata
- MAR. 9 - 9 AM DEMONSTRATION AT COURTHOUSE, NEW BRUNSWICK
sponsored by Rutgers Committee for Democratic Rights
- MAR. 19 - 9 AM DEMONSTRATION AT COURTHOUSE, NEW BRUNSWICK
sponsored by the Assata Shakur Defense Committee, NYC
- MAR. 23 - 9 AM DEMONSTRATION AT COURTHOUSE, NEW BRUNSWICK

MONEY---WE NEED MONEY!!!---for tax deductible contributions make checks payable to St. Marks Church/Assata Shakur and send to Assata Shakur Defense Committee, 339 Lafayette St., NYC, NY 10012.

COME TO COURT!!!---MIDDLESEX COUNTY COURTHOUSE, NEW BRUNSWICK (TALLEST BUILDING IN NEW BRUNSWICK)--MONDAY THROUGH THURSDAY AND SATURDAY--SUBURBAN BUS LINES LEAVE PORT AUTHORITY, NYC, EVERY 1/2 HOUR--BRING I.D.

For more information, including copies of Assata's Opening Statement to the Jury, please contact us at 339 Lafayette St., NYC, NY 10012, (212) 673-4177.

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

to:

FIRST CLASS MAIL