

Current Political Prisoners of Black Liberation Movements



*This edition is dedicated to the memory of
former Black Panther*

Romaine “Chip” Fitzgerald (1949-2021)

“Upon my release, I will welcome the warmth and laughter of my grandchildren. I look forward to their hugs and smiles...I will be outside in nature's healing environment as it soothes and comforts my body allowing my age filled bones to heal and rejuvenate in ways lost for most of my life. At the end of the evening I will look forward to a soft bed and sinking my head into fluffy pillows as I curl up in soft covers and dream sweet dreams knowing I will awake to a new day of freedom...” –Chip Fitzgerald

*I have been locked by the lawless.
Handcuffed by the haters.
Gagged by the greedy.
And, if i know anything at all,
It's that a wall is just a wall
and nothing more at all.
It can be broken down.*

-Assata Shakur

What is a political prisoner?

We recognize that all incarceration is somehow political, but we choose to focus our limited time, energy, and resources on political prisoners, who are individuals incarcerated specifically for actions taken as a part of or in solidarity with left leaning political movements. This means folk involved in liberation and freedom struggle movements such as black liberation, indigenous resistance, earth and animal liberation, and anarchist struggles to name a few.

When writing political prisoners, don't talk about anything illegal that anyone has done or been accused of. Cops read these letters, and you don't want to say anything that could get yourself or the person you're writing any unnecessary negative attention. (These are things that shouldn't be written or talked about anywhere else either, for that matter.)

Prison guidelines dictate that you must use white paper with black ink (whether pen or copier) only.

Unfortunately, prisons insist on using state names, so remember to use that and each person's "identification" number on the envelope.

The fight for Black/New African liberation has existed since the inception of slavery in the so called united states. In this present moment, as the struggle continues and we see the largest mobilization for Black Liberation and Black Lives in decades, let's not forget the people who are the direct forebears of this struggle, and who have kept the flame alive even as they are locked up.

The individuals described in this pamphlet are currently incarcerated for their (alleged) participation in some of the main groups fighting for this liberation from the 1960s through 1980s:

Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) was founded in 1960 as a direct outgrowth of the 1960 sit-in movement. "Despite deliberately designating itself a nonviolent organization, SNCC would eventually find itself at the nexus of its nonviolent idealism and armed self-defense, and indeed many in the group were skeptical of nonviolence from the very beginning."
—Charles E. Cobb, Jr; *This Nonviolent Stuff Will Get You Killed*

The Black Panther Party (BPP) was formed in 1966 with a Ten-Point Platform and Program. "The Panthers called for an end to police brutality, exemption from military service, quality education, decent housing, peace, bread and justice." – Paniel E. Joseph, *The Black Panthers: Portraits from an Unfinished Revolution*

The Black Liberation Army (BLA) was an "anti-capitalist, anti-imperialist, anti-racist and anti-sexist organization", whose "primary objective [was] to fight for the independence and self-determination of Afrikan people in the united states."

The formation of the FBI's Counterintelligence Program (COINTELPRO) was a "covert action program" started in 1967 to "disrupt and neutralize" Black liberation organizations.

"The government employed COINTELPRO (FBI, CIA, and local police departments) as a means to destroy the above ground political apparatus that fielded the Black underground." –Jalil Muntaqim

As a result and in addition to COINTELPRO, participants from these movements were ambushed and killed, and several others taken captive, tortured, and held prisoner by the state. All of the folks in this pamphlet are still inside, decades after their convictions, having over-served their sentences. They are repeatedly denied parole for their political convictions, suffering from medical neglect, and growing old behind bars.

Write these people letters. Share their names and their stories with your friends and comrades. Demand that they and all other u.s.-held political prisoners be released.

Free Them All!

Russell Maroon Shoatz (b. August 23, 1943) is a dedicated community activist and founding member of the Philadelphia based organization Black Unity Council, which eventually merged with the Black Panther Party (1969). In 1970, along with 5 others, Maroon was accused of attacking a police station, which resulted in an officer being killed. This attack was said to have been carried out in response to the rampant police brutality in the Black community. For 18 months Maroon functioned underground as a soldier in the Black Liberation Army. In 1972 he was captured. Twice he escaped—once in 1977 and again 1980, but both times he was recaptured and today he is held in Pennsylvania where he is serving multiple life sentences.

"It's ironic that since Ferguson there is still a segment of this new Movement that continues to nostalgically utilize tactics and methods from the past, in the teeth of facts that point to the reality that those tactics did not and could not prove as effective...For one, the old charismatic leadership style has lost most of its relevancy, simply because modern communication in so many hands effects a form of mass democracy. Meaning: information, ideas, proposals, and plans can rapidly be shared – then just as quickly modified, agreed upon, adopted, and acted on – something the charismatic leaders of the past excelled at, and used to more rapidly organize people to achieve results than the slower-to-communicate masses at the time. Not anymore."

Smart Communications/PA DOC
Russell Maroon Shoatz #AF3855
SCI Dallas
Post Office Box 33028
St Petersburg, Florida 33733

More information: russellmaroonshoats.wordpress.com

Kamau Sadiki (b. February 19, 1952) is a veteran of the Black Panther Party, which he joined when he was 17, and the Black Liberation Army. In 1973 he was a co-defendant with Assata Shakur in a trial regarding a bank robbery in the Bronx (they were both found not guilty). The two have a daughter together.

In 2003, he was convicted of a 30-year old murder case of a Fulton County police officer found shot to death in his car outside a service station, despite no new hard evidence presented. On November 10, 2003, Judge Stephanie Manis sentenced Kamau to life imprisonment for murder and ten years to run consecutively for armed robbery after a Fulton County Superior Court jury found him guilty for the murder of Atlanta Police Officer James Green on November 3, 1971. At the time of the murder, nineteen year old Kamau Sadiki was a member of the Black Liberation Army (BLA). Witnesses failed to identify Mr. Sadiki from a photographic line-up. There was no physical evidence that implicated Mr. Sadiki. In 1971, the Atlanta police department closed the case as unsolved. Mr. Sadiki is now serving his sentence in Augusta State Medical Prison in Augusta, Georgia.

UPDATE: Kamau has been moved to a regional hospital in Augusta, GA and unable to get mail at this time. Please keep him in your thoughts.

Kamau Sadiki* #0001150688
Augusta State Medical Prison
3001 Gordon Highway
Grovetown, Georgia 30813
*Address envelope to Freddie Hilton

More information: www.freekamau.com

In 1987 **Dr. Mutulu Shakur** (b. August 8, 1950) was sentenced to 60 years for his role in the Black Liberation movement. In March 1982, he and 10 others were indicted by a federal grand jury under a set of U.S. conspiracy laws called Racketeer Influenced and Corrupt Organization (RICO) laws. These conspiracy laws were ostensibly developed to aid the government in its prosecution of organized crime figures; however, they have been used with varying degrees of success against revolutionary organizations. Dr. Shakur was charged with conspiracy and participation in the BLA. Eight incidents of expropriations from banks were alleged to have occurred between December 1976 to October 1981. In addition, he was charged with participation in the 1979 prison escape of Assata Shakur, who is now in exile in Cuba. After five years underground, he was arrested February 12, 1986.

While he was on the street, Dr. Shakur challenged the use of methadone as a tool of recovery for addicts. He believed in natural remedies instead and, based on those beliefs, founded the Black Acupuncture Advisory Association of North America. Many people credit Shakur with saving their lives. While in prison, he has struggled to create peace between rival gangs. Recently, Mutulu was diagnosed with cancer and is undergoing treatment in prison.

Dr. Mutulu Shakur #83205-012
FMC Lexington
Post Office Box 14500
Lexington, Kentucky 40512

More information: mutulushakur.com

Joe-Joe Bowen (b. January 15, 1948) is a native of Philadelphia. Joe-Joe was a young member of the “30th and Norris” street gang before his incarceration politicized him. Bowen became a Black Liberation Army combatant, defiant to authorities at every turn. In 1981, Bowen led a six-day standoff with authorities when he and six other captives took 39 hostages at Graterford Prison as a freedom attempt and protest of the prison conditions. Much of his time in prison has been spent in and out of control units, solitary confinement, and other means of isolating Joe-Joe from the general prison population. These include three trips to Marion Penitentiary, where he met Sundiata Acoli and other BLA members. He is legendary to many prisoners as a revolutionary.

“I used to teach the brothers how to turn their rage into energy and understand their situations,” Bowen told the Philadelphia Inquirer in 1981. “I don’t threaten anybody. I don’t talk to pigs. I don’t drink anything I can’t see through and I don’t eat anything off a tray. When the time comes, I’ll be ready.” – Joe-Joe

Smart Communications/PA DOC
Joseph Bowen #AM4272SCI
FCI Fayette Post Office Box 33028
St Petersburg, Florida 33733

Kojo Bomani Sababu (b. May 27, 1953) is a New Afrikan Prisoner of War, currently serving a 55 year sentence for actions with the Black Liberation Army and attempted prison escape with Puerto Rican Independista Oscar López Rivera. Kojo was captured on December 19, 1975 along with anarchist Ojore Lutalo during a bank expropriation. He was also charged with the murder of a drug dealer in his neighborhood. He was convicted of seditious conspiracy in 1981 and sentenced to 55 years in prison. In 1988, Kojo was convicted of conspiracy to escape along with Jaime Delgado (a veteran independence leader), Dora Garcia (a prominent community activist), and Oscar Lopez Rivera (Puerto Rican Independista) from the federal prison at Leavenworth, where he was held. He is now scheduled to be released to state prison upon the expiration of his federal sentence to serve possibly an additional 15 years for this conviction.

“Now the torch bearers who articulated the logic of struggle against the oppressor nation have either been confined in prison cells for a long time or have a comfortable job. This is no indictment against the movement itself, because just as rapidly as it declined, it can experience a great resurgence given the right opportunities. However we must make great strides, reorganizing ourselves to embrace the difficulties we face. I have no solutions but I will say this: There are some great political minds contained in America’s prisons, which are growing old as their era of life departs, this resource needs to be tapped before it expires. Do not abandon the political prisoners and POWs, they are still insightful with their knowledge and experience.”

Kojo Sababu* #39384-066
USP Canaan
Smart Communications
Post Office Box 30
Pinellas Park, Florida 33781
*Address envelope to Grailing Brown

Imam Jamil Al-Amin (b. October 4, 1943) is a long time community leader and organizer, falsely imprisoned for killing a sheriff's deputy in Georgia. Formally known as H. Rap Brown, he was the fifth chairman of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) in the 1960s, and subsequently he served as the Minister of Justice for the Black Panther Party. He was convicted in 2002 and after some time in Georgia state prison, he was moved away from his family into federal custody at the notorious Florence Supermax in Colorado. Due to a concerted and strong effort on the part of his supporters, Imam Jamil was transferred to the medical facility at Butner after having been diagnosed with bone cancer.

Family and supporters are currently pushing for an appeal to his trial.

The Imam does not have the best eyesight at this time as he is being neglected medical treatment for his cataracts. So please write large if you are going to write him.

Jamil Abdullah Al-Amin #99974-555
USP Tucson
Post Office Box 24550
Tucson, Arizona 85734

For more information: whathappened2rap.com

Veronza Bowers, Jr. (b. February 4, 1946) In 1973, Veronza was convicted in the murder of a U.S. Park Ranger on the word of two government informers, both of whom received reduced sentences for other crimes by the Federal prosecutor's office. There were no eye-witnesses and no evidence independent of these informants to link him to the crime. At his trial, Veronza offered alibi testimony which was not credited by the jury. Nor was testimony of two relatives of the informants who insisted that they were lying. The informants had all charges against them in this case dropped and one was given \$10,000 by the government according to the prosecutor's post-sentencing report. Veronza has consistently proclaimed his innocence of the crime he never committed — even at the expense of having his appeals for parole denied — for which an admission of guilt and contrition is virtually required — he insists on maintaining his innocence.

In the more than four decades of his confinement, Veronza has become a "model" prisoner. He is an author, musician, a student of Asian healing arts and has a strong interest in Buddhist meditation, as well as "hands-on" healing techniques which he practiced at the various facilities in which he has been incarcerated.

Veronza Bowers, Jr.
#35316-136
FCI-2, P.O. Box 1500
Butner, NC 27509

More information: veronza.org

Mumia Abu-Jamal (b. April 24, 1954) is an award-winning journalist and was one of the founders of the Black Panther Party chapter in Philadelphia, PA. He has struggled for justice and human rights for people of color since he was at least 14 years old; the age when he joined the Party. In December of 1982, Mumia, who moonlighted by driving a taxi, happened upon police who were beating his brother. During the melee, a police officer was shot and killed. Despite the fact that many people saw someone else shoot and then runaway from the scene, Mumia, in what could only be called a kangaroo court, was convicted and sentenced to death. During the summer of 1995, a death warrant was signed by Governor Tom Ridge, which sparked one of the most effective organizing efforts in defense of a political prisoner ever. Since that time, Mumia has had his death sentence overturned, but still has a life sentence with no opportunity for parole. Mumia suffers from cirrhosis of the liver, caused because of the refusal of the DOC to treat him years ago for hepatitis C in a timely manner. Mumia and his supporters continue to appeal his case, most recently shut down by the Pennsylvania Supreme Court.

*“America is on fire. And the world has caught the blaze.”
(June 7, 2020)*

Smart Communications/PA DOC
Mumia Abu-Jamal #AM8335
SCI Mahanoy
Post Office Box 33028
St Petersburg, Florida 33733

More information: mobilization4mumia.com
prisonradio.org/mumia-info

Muhammad Burton (b. December 15, 1946) is an innocent man who has diligently attempted to prove his innocence to the courts for 47 years. He is one of the Philly 5 a group of men accused of an alleged attack on a police unit that left one officer killed. The case stems from a highly racially charged period in Philadelphia history while the infamous Frank Rizzo served as Police Commissioner.

Upon being sentenced to prison in 1972, Muhammad was automatically a target for the prison guards due to the racially charged atmosphere and the nature of the conviction. Muhammad became an organizer in prison and a teacher advocating for racial justice and religious freedom. Of the almost fifty years he has been in prison, thirty three of them have been in a maximum security facility. Eleven of those years have been spent in solitary confinement.

Smart Communications/PA DOC
Muhammad Burton* AF3896
SCI Somerset
Post Office Box 33028
St Petersburg, Florida 33733
*Address envelope to Fred Burton.

Cinque Magee (b. March 17, 1939) is commonly regarded as the longest held political prisoner in the so called u.s., he has been imprisoned since 1963. He was politicized in prison and participated in the August 7, 1970 Marin County Courthouse Rebellion— the attempted liberation of political prisoner George Jackson and the Soledad Brothers by Jackson's younger brother Jonathan. Magee was seriously injured in the incident and subsequently pleaded guilty to aggravated kidnapping. Magee later attempted unsuccessfully to withdraw his plea, and was sentenced in 1975 to life in prison. He has lost numerous bids for parole. He has also worked tirelessly as a jailhouse lawyer, working on his own case and helping many other prisoners win their freedom.

“My fight is to expose the entire system, judicial and prison system, a system of slavery. This will cause benefit not just to myself but to all those who at this time are being criminally oppressed or enslaved by this system.”

Cinque Magee* #A92051

T 115

California Medical Facility

Post Office Box 2000

Vacaville, California 95696

*Address envelope to Ruchelle Magee

More information:

prisonersolidarity.com/prisoner/ruchell-cinque-magee

Ed Poindexter (b. November 1, 1944) is one of the Nebraska 2, charged and convicted of the 1970 murder of an Omaha, Nebraska cop. The cop died when a suitcase containing dynamite exploded in a North Omaha home. Another cop was also injured in the explosion. Poindexter was a member of the Black Panther Party, and his case was, and continues to be, controversial. The Omaha Police withheld exculpatory evidence at trial. The two men had been targeted by the FBI's COINTELPRO (Counter Intelligence Program), which operated against and infiltrated anti-war and Civil Rights groups, including the Omaha Black Panthers. The US section of Amnesty International recognizes Poindexter as a political prisoner. The state's parole board has recommended the men for release, but political leaders have not acted on these recommendations.

Ed has diabetes. He underwent triple bypass heart surgery in 2016. After several falls, he chooses to use a wheelchair. He has a cataract that makes it impossible for him to read.

If you would like to write him a letter, it must be typed with 18 point or larger font. Put a large note on the envelope so that he knows that you are aware of his eye issues and have included a letter in a type that he can read. The Nebraska Department of Corrections does not plan to allow him to have surgery because "he has one good eye."

Ed Poindexter #27767

Nebraska State Penitentiary

Post Office Box 22500

Lincoln, Nebraska 68542

More information

prisonersolidarity.com/prisoner/edward-poindexter

Ronald Reed (b. August 31, 1950) is a former member of the Black United Front and was convicted of the 1970 shooting of a St. Paul, Minnesota police officer. Twenty-five years after the killing, Reed was arrested and convicted of first-degree murder and conspiracy to commit first degree-murder. He is serving Life in prison.

Ronald is a former 60s civil rights activist. In 1969, he was also among the students at St. Paul Central High School who demanded black history courses and organized actions against racist teachers. He was also instrumental in helping to integrate college campuses in Minnesota. During this period, Ronald began to look toward revolutionary theory and began to engage in political street theater with other young black revolutionaries in the city of St. Paul.

Ron is seeking help with his appeals. He welcomes help from any outside organizations or individuals.

Ronald Reed #219531
Minnesota Correctional Facility-Lino Lakes
7525 Fourth Avenue
Lino Lakes, Minnesota 55014

More information: bit.do/RonaldReed

Sundiata Acoli (b. January 14, 1939) is a veteran of both the Black Panther Party (BPP) and the BLA. In 1969 he and 13 others were arrested in the Panther 21 conspiracy case. He was held in jail without bail and on trial for two years before being acquitted, along with all other defendants, by a jury deliberating less than two hours.

Sundiata was also in the car with Assata Shakur and Zayd Shakur when they were ambushed by New Jersey state troopers on May 2, 1973. Zayd was murdered and Assata was taken hostage; Sundiata managed to escape (a state trooper also died in the gunfight). Sundiata was eventually captured and sentenced to 30 years, first becoming eligible for parole in 1992. He is consistently denied parole on political grounds, since we refuses renounce the Black Liberation movement or his service to it.

“When i was arrested, police immediately cut my pants off me so that I only wore shorts. Whooping and hollering, a gang of New Jersey state troopers dragged me through the woods, through water puddles, and hit me over the head with the barrel of their shotgun. They only cooled out somewhat when they noticed that all the commotion had caused a crowd to gather at the edge of the road, observing their actions.”

Sundiata Acoli #39794-066
FCI Cumberland
Post Office Box 1000
Cumberland, Maryland 21501
(Address envelope to Clark Squire)

More information: sundiataacoli.org