

Cop-killer Joanne Chesimard Still on the Run

By Curtis Kincaid

Joanne Deborah Chesimard, also known as Assata Shakur or Joanne Deborah Byron, born in New York City, New York, belonged to the Black Panthers and Black Liberation Army. Chesimard has been convicted of first degree murder, assault and battery of a police officer, and armed robbery. She is currently on the run and believed to be taking asylum in Cuba under Castro's protection.¹



Joanne Chesimard (AKA Assata Shakur)

The Black Panthers Party was established in Oakland, California in 1966 by Huey Newton and Bobby Seale to protect minorities in ghettos from police brutality. However, it soon became a revolutionary group promoting Marxist ideals by utilizing ultra-violence and terrorism tactics. The Black Panthers had many "wants" which they outlined in their "ten point plan". These included many Marxist social reformations such as free healthcare for all blacks and employment for all (ensured by the government). Number 9 of the ten step plan called for the release of all black persons held in prisons on any level (federal, state, county, city).²

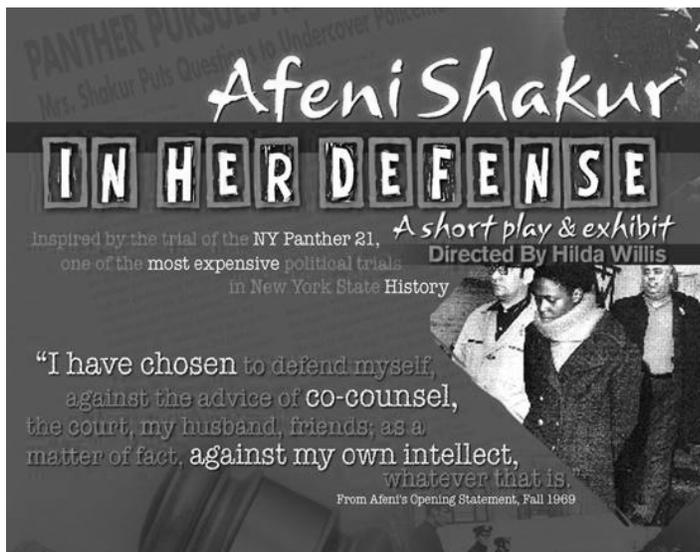
The Black Panthers are a homegrown terrorist organization with their primary target being Police Officers (referred to as "Gestapo pigs" by the Black Panthers). Wearing all black garb and carrying weapons out in public, which was legal at the time in California, the Panthers attempted to intimidate police officers and civilians alike.

In 1956 the FBI established a special group called COINTELPRO or Counter Intelligence Program designed to explore domestic communist and socialist political organizations which could lead to homegrown terrorist operations. In 1971 the group was exposed by a group of left-wing extremists who burglarized FBI offices and leaked confidential documents to the press.

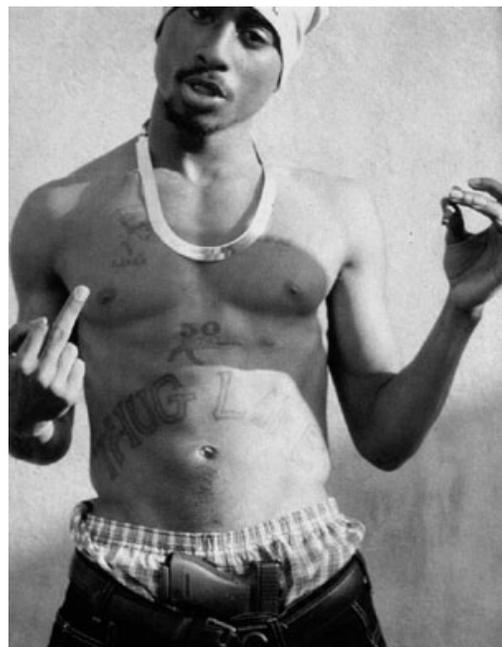
COINTELPRO spent a considerable amount of time bringing Black Panther terrorist members to justice. An example of this was the charging of the “New York Panther 21”.

Afeni Shakur, mother of Tupac Shakur, was another member of the Black Panthers and also one of the “New York Panther 21”. However; she was acquitted of all charges after she stood trial, representing herself, in court. In 1971, all of those tried were acquitted in a New York court system after a speedy (and questionable) verdict was delivered by the jury. Afeni Shakur, only 24 years old at the time, faced 156 charges and over 200 years in prison if found guilty.

Marking the 40th anniversary of the acquittal of the 21, a play and exhibit honoring Afeni Shakur’s evasion of the Justice system opened Friday, May 13 of this year at the Tupac Amaru Shakur Center for the Arts. This along with the Tupac Amaru Shakur Foundation was founded in honor of her son by Afeni Shakur to “create and preserve an institution for hip-hop and urban culture”.³ This being the same “culture” promoted by Tupac Shakur in his more than 1000 songs glorifying drugs, cop killing, and “thug life”. Is this the man who’s “creative talent...inspire[s] others around the world”?



“In Her Defense”: Play about Afeni Shakur



Tupac Shakur

The Black Liberation Army was the follow up to the Black Panthers absorbing many of its former members. The BLA was a domestic terrorist group which committed bombings, robberies, and prison breaks throughout the 1970's.

Joanne Chesimard was responsible for countless crimes including robberies and murders across the United States. She stood trial multiple times concentrating on crimes committed around the years 1971 to 1973. These included a trial for an attempted robbery at Statler Hilton Hotel, a bank robbery in Queens, a bank robbery in Bronx, a kidnapping, and the attempted murder of two policemen. The most famous trial was that which convicted Chesimard and

sentenced her to life in prison concerned the murder of New Jersey State Police officer Werner Foerster.

On May 2, 1973 Chesimard along with two others were stopped on the New Jersey Turnpike in Middlesex County for a traffic violation by two New Jersey State Police officers. Chesimard was already wanted for several felonies and in turn opened fire on the officers. Zayd Shakur, one of the accomplices of Chesimard was killed in the shootout. Chesimard, after an attempted escape, and the other accomplice, Sundiata Acoli, were apprehended and taken to prison.

One officer was wounded in the shootout and the other, Werner Foerster, was killed execution style at point blank range with his own handgun by Chesimard. Chesimard shot Foerster twice in the head. Foerster was 34 years old.



New Jersey State Police Officer Werner Foerster

On November 2, 1979, Chesimard escaped from prison with the help of three members of the Black Liberation Army. These three who assisted with the escape were Mutulu Shakur, Silvia Baraldini, and Marilyn Buck. The three entered the Clinton Correctional Facility for Women in New Jersey as “visitors” of Chesimard. They were carrying handguns. After taking the prison guards hostage they escaped via prison van to parked cars in which they escaped.

Chesimard fled to Cuba seeking asylum under Castro. Listed by the FBI as a “Domestic Terrorist” a reward of \$1,000,000 has been offered for information leading to her arrest.

Sundiata Acoli (born as Clark Squire), one of the three part of Werner Foersters murder, joined the Black Panther Party’s Harlem chapter in the fall of 1968 and was appointed Finance Officer. Acoli was one of the “Panther 21” who was tried and acquitted. However after being captured after an attempted escape from the New Jersey Turnpike incident, Acoli was convicted murder and sentence to life plus 30 years in prison.



Sundiata Acoli

Acoli worked closely with Chesimard while they both were a part of the Black Liberation Army. In an interview conducted with Acoli while in prison, he refers to Chesimard as a “giant of our struggle” of whom he has “undying love and respect for”.⁴

Acoli spent 6 years in Trenton State Prison, New Jersey until he was transferred into the federal prison system in 1979. He was then transferred to a US Penitentiary in Marion, Illinois, then to USP Leavenworth, Kansas, then USP Allenwood, PA and then to Federal Correctional Institute in Otisville, New York where he remains today. In 1992 Acoli was eligible for parole, but was denied it. He applied for parole again in 2004, but was again denied. And most recently in February of 2010 Acoli had another parole hearing, but was denied.

In that same interview mentioned earlier, Acoli closes by calling for a plan of “mass liberation and true liberation, which in the end can be nothing other than total revolution”. In a letter to Washington Heights High School students in 2000, Acoli closes by telling the students “The entire system must be destroyed. It has failed humanity miserably. And even now it’s rushing headlong down the path of world destruction. The greatest fight that young people can take today is the fight to save yourself, your people, other oppressed people and the World itself. You do that by fighting to destroy this racist, capitalist system.”

¹ Wanted by the FBI

<http://www.fbi.gov/wanted/dt/joanne-deborah-chesimard>

² “The Ten Point Plan”

<http://blackpanther.org/TenPoint.htm>

³ Tupac Amaru Shakur Foundation

<http://www.tasf.org/about.asp>

⁴ Interview with Sundiata Acoli

<http://www.sundiataacoli.org/interview-wsundiata-acoli-ltr-to-washington-hts-hs-students-223>