

## Who is Sundiata Acoli?

Sundiata Acoli is a New Afrikan prisoner of war and former member of the Black Liberation Army and Black Panther Party. He is currently serving a life sentence with 30 additional years to run consecutively.

Sundiata Acoli grew up in the tiny rural town of Vernon, Texas during the '30s and '40s. As a child, he worked in the fields. In 1956 he graduated from a Texas college with a degree in mathematics. He became a computer programmer for NASA, in its earliest days in California. He then moved to New York City, where he worked in the computer field for the next 13 years. He was propelled into political activism by the murder of three civil rights workers — Goodman, Chaney, and Schwerner—in Mississippi. In the summer of 1964, Sundiata read a newspaper article which suggested that the murder of the three students might frighten off volunteers in the campaign against Jim Crow in Mississippi. Sundiata immediately called up to volunteer, bought himself a plane ticket and left for Mississippi. That fall, he returned to his New York computer job—but his life now



belonged to the liberation struggle.

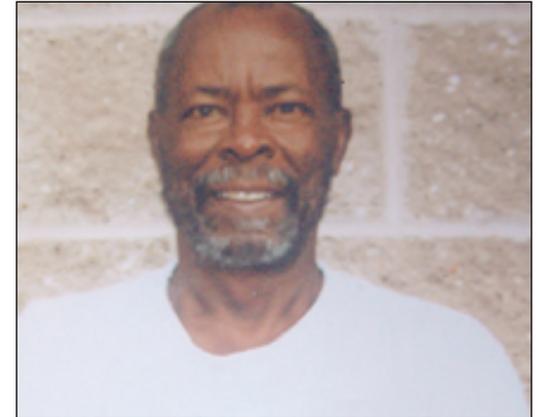
In the Fall of 1968, Sundiata joined the Black Panther Party, where he served as the Financial Officer. Within months of joining the BPP, on April 2, 1969, Sundiata was arrested to stand trial in the Panther 21 case. He, along with twenty other members of the Panther Party were accused of plotting to blow up several department stores and the New York Botanical Gardens. 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.

After the Panther 21 were released, the FBI and police's murderous harassment and disruption continued: "Most of us returned to the community and to the BPP but by then COINTELPRO had taken its toll. The BPP was rife with dissension, both internal and external. The internal strife, division, intrigue, and paranoia had become so ingrained that eventually most members drifted or were driven, away. Some continued the struggle on other fronts and some basically cooled out altogether."

Sundiata associated himself with those, like Assata Shakur, who believed that organizing small, armed, underground "strike teams" was the best way to continue resistance. They formed the clandestine organization known as the Black Liberation Army (BLA).

In May 1973, while driving the New Jersey Turnpike, he and his comrades were ambushed by N.J. state troopers. One companion, Zayd Shakur, was killed, another companion, Assata Shakur, was wounded and captured. One state trooper was killed and another wounded, and Sundiata was captured days later.

Sundiata was denied medical care, newspapers and kept in isolation from



**Sundiata Acoli**

everyone but his lawyer. Bright lights were kept turned on in his cell 24 hours per day; his food was restricted. State troopers paraded in front of his cell—harassing and threatening him.

Sundiata's trial was a farce wrapped in manufactured hysteria. At the end, the judge stated that Sundiata was an avowed revolutionary and sentenced him to life in prison—and then to 30 more years to be served consecutively. No credible evidence ever linked Sundiata to the killing of the state trooper.

Soon after Sundiata's arrival in the antiquated Trenton State Prison, the warden there created a new Management Control Unit (MCU) for Sundiata and 50 other "politically oriented" prisoners. His isolation cell was smaller than the SPCA's recommended space for caging a German shepherd. Sundiata developed tuberculosis. After five years, Sundiata was transferred to the federal penitentiary at Marion, a special facility for punishing and isolating political prisoners.

Sundiata and the other prisoners at Marion were locked down for 22-23 hours per day. Sometimes they were shackled spread-eagled on their bunks. Drinking water at Marion came from a federal toxic

waste dump. Prisoners developed skin rashes and tumors.

On November 2, 1979, Sundiata's comrade and co-defendant Assata Shakur was liberated from the Women's Prison in Clinton, New Jersey by a multinational underground unit. Assata made her way to exile in Cuba.

In the fall of 1992, Sundiata became eligible for parole. He was not permitted to attend his own parole hearing and was only allowed to participate via telephone from USP Leavenworth. Despite an excellent prison work, academic and disciplinary record, despite numerous job offers in the computer profession, and despite thousands of letters on his behalf, Sundiata was denied parole. Instead, at the conclusion of a 20 minute telephone hearing, he was given a 20-year hit, the longest hit in New Jersey history, which dictates that he must do at least 12 more years before coming up for parole again.

The Parole Board's stated reason for the 20-year hit was Sundiata's membership in the Black Panther Party and the Black Liberation Army prior to his arrest, the receipt of hundreds of "Free Sundiata" form letters that characterized him as a New Afrikan Prisoner of War, and the feeling that the punitive aspects of his sentence had not been satisfied and that rehabilitation was not sufficiently achieved. The real reason for the 20-year hit is to attempt to force Sundiata to renounce his political beliefs and to proclaim to the world that he was wrong to struggle for the liberation of his people.

On July 14th 2010, Sundiata was again denied parole and given a 10 year hit by a three member panel.

## Free Sundiata Acoli

Write Sundiata Acoli:

Sundiata Acoli #39794-066  
(C. Squire)  
P.O. Box 1000  
Otisville, NY 10963-1000  
FCI Otisville

Local groups working with Sundiata:

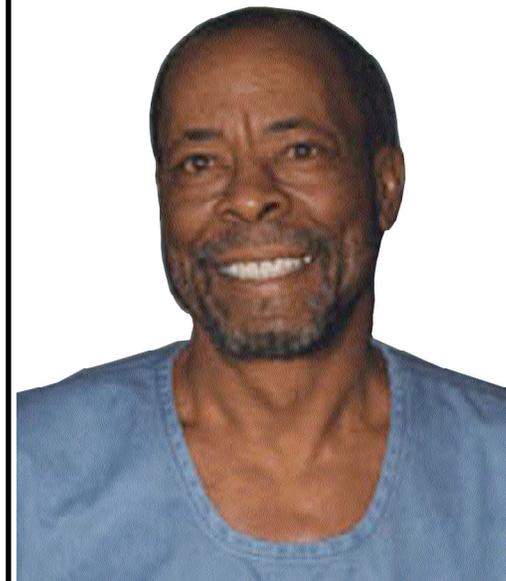
Jericho Amnesty Coalition

PO Box 34186  
Los Angeles, CA 90034

Anarchist Black Cross Federation (ABCF)

PO Box 11223  
Whittier, CA 90603  
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# Sundiata Acoli



**Black Panther  
Political Prisoner  
Serving A Life  
Sentence**

