

Who are the Queens Two?

Abdul Majid (Anthony Laborde) and Bashir Hameed (James York) are political prisoners known to many as the Queens Two. They were, like many of the Black liberation political prisoners, members of the Black Panther Party for Self-Defense, a political organization active in the '60s and '70s.

Like many other Black organizations during the time, the Black Panthers were engaged in struggle for the political empowerment of the African-American community. However, the Black Panthers differed from other groups through their programs that focused on community control of education and the police, adequate health care, ending the genocidal proliferation of drugs and police brutality. The group laid out their positions on these and other issues through what was known as their "ten-point program."

COINTELPRO and the Queens Two

The U.S. government's response to these programs was one of brutal repression, criminalization, political frame-ups and assassinations. In 1967, the FBI expanded its repression against the Black Panthers by targeting the organization through their blatantly racist and covert program, known by the acronym COINTELPRO. This program extended to other policing agencies including local and state law enforcement agencies.

By 1968 the Panther Party and its leadership had become the major FBI target. Eighty percent of the government's COINTELPRO efforts directed at the Black liberation movement were aimed at the Black Panthers Party. This counterintelligence program was, according to government documents, designed to "neutralize" the Black liberation movement by any means necessary. Other documents stated, "The Negro youth and moderates must be made to understand that if they succumb to revolutionary teaching, they will be dead revolutionaries."

Majid and Hameed both joined the Panther Party in 1968. Majid had been politically active prior, working with the Grass Roots Advisory Council. When he began working with the New York chapter of the Black Panthers, he became involved in most of the community-based programs, including the free health clinic, free breakfast for children program, efforts to decentralize the schools and the police department and the defense of political prisoners.

Bashir joined the Black Panthers while residing in Oakland. The years prior to joining he had spent time in the South where he observed the effects of the Jim Crow system and how that affected the Black community. This seriously altered his views concerning society. It was this experience that led him to joining the Panthers. He soon returned home to New Jersey, where he rose through the ranks becoming the Deputy Chairman of the New Jersey chapter.

Both men saw the impact of the FBI's COINTELPRO campaign on the Black Panther Party. Both witnessed their comrades "neutralized" through political assassination, imprisonment and blatant frame-ups. FBI documents have revealed that they also became the target of the COINTELPRO operation.

After the Party was destroyed, the men continued their political activity. Majid worked as a paralegal at Bronx Legal Services. Hameed, after spending time in prison for political activity, worked as a union and community organizer in the South.

St. Albans, Queens - April 16, 1981

On April 16, 1981, two New York officers were shot during a traffic stop in St. Albans, Queens. According to reports, the officers pulled over a van that was wanted in connection with several burglaries. Before the officers were able to exit their vehicles, two occupants from the van exited and opened fire killing one officer, John Scarangella and injuring another.

A few days after the shooting, police began circulating a folder of "suspects" which consisted exclusively of former members of the Black Panther Party and their associates. Bashir and Abdul were identified in the media as chief suspects and targets of a "shoot to kill" manhunt. Both men fled the state, remembering the frame-ups from their days in the Black Panthers.

Hameed was arrested in August 17, 1981 in Sumter, South Carolina. Majid was captured in January 1982 in Philadelphia, PA. Both men were extradited to stand trial for the murder and attempted murder of the two officers.

Abdul Majid was also charged with an October 1981 Brink's armored-car robbery in Nyack, New York. Several members of the Black Liberation Army had also been charged with the incident, including Kuwasi Balagoon, Samuel Brown and Sekou Odinga. In 1986, Mutulu Shakur was also captured and charged for the incident.

Members of the May 19 Communist Organization were also arrested, including David Gilbert, Judith Clark, Marilyn Buck and Kathy Boudin.

Charges against Abdul Majid were eventually dropped after witnesses in a line-up were unable to identify him. Both Hameed and Majid were also suspects in the liberation of Assata Shakur, but no charges were ever brought forward.

However, for over a five-year period, the two men were tried three times for the St. Albans incident before being found guilty by a "jury of their peers." The main witness was a man who was hypnotized by the police, but that fact was allowed into evidence.

The first trial resulted in Abdul and Bashir being convicted of attempted murder, but deadlocked on the murder charge. The jury in the

second trial was deadlocked at 8-4 for acquittal when the Judge declared a mistrial. The third trial was presided over by Judge Gallagher (son and brother of a cop). Throughout the trial, cops harassed Abdul and Bashir's family members and supporters. A racially stacked jury in the third trial returned a guilty verdict and sentenced Abdul and Bashir to 33 and 1/3 years to life.

Since their convictions, Hameed and Majid have continued to appeal their case. They have argued that Blacks were systematically excluded from the jury during the third and final trial. As an attempt to excuse this blatant act of racism, the DA argued that blacks were excluded because "These cop-killing revolutionaries had gotten away in two previous trials and this was probably our last chance to get them. We couldn't take the chance of those religious people serving as jurors in this trial." Predictably, the courts denied their appeal.

Abdul Majid has continued to be harassed, seriously assaulted twice, and denied proper medical treatment as a result of the assaults. He has been refused certain programs offered to general population because of his political background.

Bashir, a devout Muslim continued to apply his religious and political principals to struggle against injustice and racism behind the walls. As a result of his activities, Bashir gained the widespread respect of prisoners.

In 1987, he was transferred after being targeted as an alleged organizer of a strike. He spent three years in solitary confinement, not as a result of disciplinary infraction, but solely due to his political and religious beliefs.

Throughout 2007 - 2008, Bashir became seriously ill and was delayed adequate medical treatment. As a result his health continued to fail. On August 30, 2008, Bashir Hameed passed away.

Every liberation movement honors their political prisoners, their freedom fighters, because they make sacrifices for the people most of us never will. When Nelson Mandela was still a political prisoner, there was not any ANC demand that was not tied to the freedom of South African political prisoners. We knew of Mandela because his people would not let the world forget him or the other freedom fighters. Yet Black political prisoners in the U.S. are generally unknown and unsupported. Only we can change this.

Write to the Queens Two:
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Groups working on the Queens Two case:

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Queens Two

**Bashir Hameed
&
Abdul Majid**



**BLACK PANTHER AND
BLACK LIBERATION ARMY
PRISONERS OF WAR**

SERVING LIFE

