

U.N. HUMAN RIGHTS CAMPAIGN -- NOVEMBER 5, 1979

STATEMENT FROM ASSATA SHAKUR

UHURU SISTERS AND BROTHERS, REVOLUTIONARY GREETINGS,

November 1979 and crosses burn the face of Amerika. November 1979 and hundreds of Klu Klux Klan march all over the country carrying clubs and chains and machine guns. 1979 - and Black families are fire bombed. 1979 - and over 40% of Black youth are unemployed. 1979 and a white policeman shoots a handcuffed Black man in the head and is acquitted. 1979 - and 5 policemen shoot a Puerto Rican man armed only with a pair of scissors 24 times. 1979 - and Philadelphia, the 4th largest city in the country is sued by the Justice Department for systematically condoning and encouraging wide spread police brutality, especially against Blacks and Puerto Ricans.

We are on the threshold of the 80's entering into a new decade and we have got to take a look and see what Amerika has in store for us. This country is on the decline. The sun is setting on the Amerikan Empire because of Liberation movements around the world. The softness of cheap labor and stolen raw materials are rapidly drying up. Amerika is a vampire, experiencing a blood shortage for the first time. The national trade deficit is about 30 billion dollars a year. The Joint Economics Committee of Congress announced in August that the standard of living of the average Amerikan would be drastically reduced in the 1980's. Blacks and Hispanics, the report said, would be hit the hardest. Now what, I ask you, can be harder than drastic. Unemployment, according to the report, would remain at 7% or higher. The Committee came to the conclusion that the labor force had to be dramatically reduced in order to minimize the problem. What does that mean - reduce the labor force dramatically? What does that mean? - In a country that has had a history of using racism to perpetuate capitalism and oppression, who is going to be the scapegoat? In a country that has historically used Blacks, Hispanics, Orientals, and Native Americans as scapegoats, what do Black and Third World people have to look forward to in the 80's? And what does all this have to do with political prisoners and the Prison Movement?

Every Black leader in this country with the potential of being a Black Messiah has gone to prison, even Black leaders without the potential of being the Black Messiah has gone to prison. Marcus Garvey, Martin Luther King, Malcolm X and countless others who spoke out for Human Rights went to Prison. What does that tell us? Out of the 400,000 people in united states prisons, 300,000 are Black. 275,000 prison cells are being built or are in the planning stages and every state in this country is trying to implement or reinstate the death penalty. WHAT DOES THAT MEAN?

I've been in prison 6½ years and I can feel what's coming in the air. Prisons are becoming more brutal and repressive. Behavior Modification Programs are booming. People are receiving longer sentences with fewer chances of being paroled. 13-year old children are being sentenced to life in prison. The government has stepped up its musical jail policy by shipping prisoners all over the country away from their lawyers, from their families, and from their community. Sundiata Acoli has been transferred 3 times in the last 2 months.

He's been transferred -- 1st they transferred him from Trenton State Prison in New Jersey, and from Trenton he went to Lewisburg, Pennsylvania and from Lewisburg he went to Leavenworth, Kansas and from Leavenworth he was just shipped to Marion, Illinois and all this is under the Interstate Compact Agreement. Now Sundiata has never been convicted of a federal crime but Lewisburg, and Leavenworth and Marion are Federal prisons. Under the Interstate Compact Agreement, it is possible for any prisoner to be transferred anywhere in the united states and that prisoner has no say so in the matter, his lawyer doesn't have any say so in the matter, his family doesn't have any say so in the matter -- but what will happen as more and more prisoners are transferred from prison to prison to prison--soon their families won't be able to keep contact with them; they won't know where they are and that will make them easier and easier to kill and to brutalize.

Under the same Interstate Compact Agreement, I was shipped to Maximum Security Unit in Alderson, West Virginia and I stayed there until that unit was closed and then I was shipped back to Clinton Institution for Women. Here at Clinton, 2 women have died in the last 2 months under suspicious circumstances. The prisons of Amerika are rapidly becoming replicas of Nazi or South Afrikan koncentration kamps; and with the reinstatement of the death penalty, prisons will shortly become extermination kamps. I know I'm not painting a pretty picture, but this is not a pretty world and we can't make it pretty by sticking our head in the sand. Amerika has been committing genocide against poor Black and Third World People for hundreds of years and in recent years, racism and repression, in this country, has been accelerated and if we don't wake up to what's going on, we might find ourselves victims to a second Holocaust.

We already know what we're fighting against, now we've got to determine and decide among ourselves, what we are fighting for. How can 25 or 30 million Black people in Amerika win our liberation, how can we win? Marcus Garvey --he had a dream and his dream was that we go back to Afrika. Martin Luther King had his dream and his dream was that we intergrate into Amerikan society and I don't think that dream was a reality. Amerikan society has told us time and time again that they don't want us. And now looking at Amerikan society, looking at its capitalist, racist system, I don't want to intergrate into Amerika. Amerika is a dying country anyway. Malcolm X had his dream, and his dream was LAND. NATIONHOOD. And his dream has become my dream. When I would hear the words NATIONHOOD and LAND and I would listen to Malcolm's speeches before -- I'd say, "yeah" to myself, but where? And then they would talk about 5 states down South, but that - it didn't seem real -- I'd say, 'well shoot, we go move down there and they'll drop a bomb on us' -- BUT, they're dropping bombs and killing us right now and there's another side to that -- once a people start struggling for land, start struggling for sovereignty--start struggling for nationhood--then the whole world can become part of that fight and can take up--and say look what you're doing, you're killing those people, you're making genocide--those people want a homeland.

Amerika doesn't have any wind internationally, talking about we don't have a right to have our homeland. They oppressed us for 5--400 years. They haven't let us live in Amerika. They haven't let us be citizens. They haven't let us have justice, equality. And we can

prove it. So if they don't want to let us be free as Amerikans-- then we'll be free as Afrikans. New Afrikans. In Vietnam, there was something like 19 million Vietnamese in South Vietnam. And they kicked Amerika's ass -- the Viet Cong WON! There are 25 million or 30 million Black people in Amerika. Are you saying thay we can't win? I think we can. We are 26million -- 30 million people. We're the second largest agregation of Blacks within the world. A nation that borders on the face of this globe. If we were a nation -- we'd be the 26th largest nation and there would be 145 nations in the world that would be smaller than Black Amerika. Of the 56 nations in Afrika, only 2 would be bigger than Black Amerika -- Egypt and Nigeria. We have the technology to start a nation and if we don't have it right now, we can soon begin to get that technology once we understand what our purpose is, our goal and our direction. There are 7,000 Black physicians in Amerika, 4,000 lawyers, about 4,000 Black people -- in law schools, 3,000 dentists, 10's of thousands of academians and 100's of thousands of public school teachers. We have the natural resources to build a nation. I have come through the struggle, and I've been in the struggle for a little while, and I'm tired of everybody else's dream -- I want my own and nobody's going to tell me which way I have to go to be a free Black woman on this earth. We've got to stop having a minority mentality. White people might be the majority in Amerika, but we're the majority in the world. And when people start talking about well this isn't possible and that it's impossible for us to have a Black nation -- well, in that case -- was Israel impossible? Was South Vietnam impossible -- South Korea -- these nations came about as a result of a split and if it's possible in Israel, it's possible here. And if the Palestine Liberation Organization can go up before the U.N. and talk about their right to land -- than the Black Liberation Organization can go before the U.N. too. We can not afford to depend on the White Left.

The White Left comprises a tiny portion of white Amerika and they're so factionalized to the point where they're just-almost totally ineffective. There's an old joke about you put two people on the White Lelt in a room and you sit'em in front of a clock and they'll get into an argument about what time it is. That seems like a joke to alot of people, but it's true. They are so factionalized 'til they argue about everything. And they're arrogance and white supremacist arrogance leads them to believe that THEY are the only ones in the world that have that right answer. THEY are the only ones that can lead the poor and oppressed people to liberation and that's just not true. We couldn't depend on the White Left in the 30's, we couldn't depend on the White Left in the 50's, what in the world would make us think that we can depend on the White Left now? I'm not saying that we shouldn't work with White people on whatever level that we want to that suits our interest -- but we can't just keep our heads in the sand and we can't build our movement depending on the White Left.

We've got to build our own movement and our struggle has got to be able to stand if the White Left pulls out and the White Liberals pull out and whatever -- if we have to stand on our own two feet, by ourselves -- that's how we've got to build our foundation, that's how we've got to build our movement.

We've got to build a strong Human Rights Movement. We've got to build a strong Prison Movement. We've got to build a strong Black Liberation Movement and we've got to struggle for liberation.

Free all political prisoners. Free Leonard Peltier, Sundiata Acoli, Ruchee Magee, Ben Chavis, George Merritt, Gary Tyler, Geronimo Pratt, Dessie Woods, the RNA-11, and the BLA-25. We must be free.

Assata Shakur
Political Prisoner
Clinton, New Jersey

Assata was liberated from Clinton Institution for Women this past Friday, November 2, 1979, just 3 days before this rally! Power to the People , to those who struggle for it!