

Free Dessie Woods



On the night of June 17, 1975, in a deserted area of rural Georgia, a Black woman and mother of two children, Dessie Woods, successfully fought a would-be white rapist for his own gun and courageously shot him. For this bold and clear-headed act of self-defense Dessie Woods must serve a total of 22 years in prison.

Dessie Woods and her friend, Cheryl Todd, with no money, were forced to hitchhike back to Atlanta from Reidsville prison where they had gone to visit Todd's brother. The women accepted a ride from Ronnie Horne, a North American (white) insurance salesman, who won their confidence by posing as a friendly cop. They were unaware of the fact that he was known in the area to be a white man who "raped Black women with impunity."

After several hours of harassment, Horne drove the women to a deserted area, pulled a gun on them and attempted to rape them.

Dessie Woods, in a quick, conscious decision to fight for Cheryl's life and her own, struggled with Horne for his own gun and, shooting him twice, killed the known white rapist. Dessie then calmly took the money from the dead man's wallet so she could pay for their transportation home to Atlanta.

On February 12, 1976, Dessie Woods was convicted of manslaughter and armed robbery. Cheryl Todd was convicted of theft and given a 5-year sentence with 3½ years on probation. For more than 2 years now Dessie Woods has been in the Georgia Women's Institute of Corrections in Hardwick, Georgia, where she is periodically drugged, beaten and thrown nude into an isolation cell.

RAPE AND COLONIAL VIOLENCE

The issue in the case of Dessie Woods goes beyond the right of all women to defend ourselves against rape and violence. The primary issue is the right of all Black people to defend themselves against colonial violence.

As Omowale Kefing of the National Committee to Defend Dessie Woods has explained; "...the issue here is much greater than the right of women to self-defense. Women themselves are courageously exercising that right, which is actually one the state is incapable of giving. Women like Joan Little, Yvonne Wanrow, Inez Garcia, and Dessie Woods have declared for the world to see that women do have that right, a right which is theirs by virtue of their human existence. The issue here, as we see it in the Committee, is the illegitimacy of the state apparatus which tried Dessie Woods AFTER she exercised her human right to self-defense."

When Africans were forcibly transported from their homeland to be made into slaves on the North American continent, they never ceased to be African people. Today, Black people, along with Puerto Rican, Native American and Chicano/Mexicano peoples are colonized within the borders of the U.S.

African people in the U.S. have always waged tireless resistance to their forced colonization. The U.S. state uses violence and terror to try to maintain this condition. As the U.S. did in Vietnam, the state uses sexual violence against colonized women here in this country as a real weapon against the peoples as a whole. Other forms of colonial violence include lynching, beating, branding, and castration.

While the attack on Dessie Woods occurred in traditional Southern plantation territory, colonial violence is not limited to the South. Here in New York, Black people, even children such as 10-year-old Clifford Glover, are frequently gunned down in the streets of their communities by North American policemen. At Bedford Hills women's prison the Black and Latin women fiercely resist this same kind of terror and harassment which takes the form of male guards in the housing units, forced behavior modification, and genocidal lack of medical care. At Napanoch prison, Black and Latin men are fighting guards who are members of the U.S. state-supported Ku Klux Klan which is organizing in prisons around the country.

Another example is Governor Carey's extradition of Joan Little to North Carolina. The situation of Joan Little today clearly illustrates what happens when we fail to recognize and defend Black women as part of a colonized people. Support from the North American women's movement was based almost solely on her right as a woman to self-defense. But as a colonized woman she should never have been in a North American prison at all for any "crime".

To correct the error made in the case of Joan Little, the National Committee to Defend Dessie Woods is building the campaign to free Dessie Woods and support her right to self-defense clearly pointing to colonialism and U.S. imperialism as the main enemy of African people.

We in the New York Committee to Defend Dessie Woods are part of the growing nation-wide struggle to free Dessie Woods. We ask you to join us in our efforts to get out the word, raise much-needed funds, get petitions signed, write letters, and march militantly on July 4th in Plains, Georgia to:

FREE DESSIE WOODS!
FREE ALL POLITICAL PRISONERS!
SMASH COLONIAL VIOLENCE!

New York Committee to Defend Dessie Woods
P.O. Box 216
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FREE DESSIE WOODS



On February 2, 1976, Dessie Woods, a poor Black woman, was rail-roaded into prison in Georgia for successfully defending herself and a friend against a rape attack by Ronnie Horne, a white insurance salesman. Dessie Woods shot and killed Ronnie Horne with his own gun after he attempted to rape her and threatened to kill her when she fought against his rape attack. From the State's point of view, this righteous act of self-defense was intolerable because Dessie fought back against a traditional tactic used to maintain the subjugation of Black people: rape of Black women by white men.

For resisting this form of colonial violence, Dessie is now serving 22 years in the Georgia Women's Institute of Corrections, where she has been the victim of nude solitary confinement, forced druggings, and brutal beatings.

WHAT YOU CAN DO:

1. Write a check or money order as soon as possible and send it to the National Committee to Defend Dessie Woods, P.O. Box 92084, Morris Brown Station, Atlanta, Georgia 30314.
2. Send letters or telegrams today to Georgia Governor George Busbee, State Capitol Building, Atlanta Georgia, and President Jimmy Carter, White House, Washington, D.C., demanding the immediate release of Dessie Woods.
3. Send a letter or telegram to the Warden, Georgia Women's Institute of Corrections, Hardwick, Georgia, 31034, demanding that he take full responsibility for the safety of Dessie Woods.
4. Write Dessie Woods at Georgia Women's Institute of Corrections, Hardwick Georgia 31034, telling her of your support, which will also put prison officials on notice that thousands of people throughout the world are aware of her plight. **Prison No. A-78927**
5. Inform local media of the Dessie Woods case.
6. Buy *Free Dessie Woods* posters (\$1.00 each) and T-shirts (3.50 each) from the National Committee to help raise money.
7. Send stamps and money orders to Dessie Woods.
8. Form a local Committee to Defend Dessie Woods where you are.
9. Hold forums, meetings, etc., to tell others of Dessie Woods' case and invite a representative from the National Committee to come and speak to your group.

Write for petitions, other materials and information to the National Committee to Defend Dessie Woods, or to the Dessie Woods Support Coalition, Box 921, San Francisco, California 94101.

Together we can free Dessie Woods and strike a giant blow for humanity.