For Mutulu Shakur, the Revolution Isn’t Over

by Terry Bisson and Sally O’Brien

On Feb. 12, Lincoln’s birthday, Black revolutionary Mutulu Shakur was captured in Los Angeles, Calif., after being on the FBI’s “Ten Most Wanted” list for four years.

The 36-year-old New York doctor of acupuncture is said to be the “mastermind” of the 1981 attempted Brinks’ robbery by the Black Liberation Army in Nuremberg, N.Y., in which two police officers and a Brinks’ guard were killed. Shakur also is charged with fleeing Assata Shakur (Joanne Chesimard) from prison in 1979.

His arrest brings to 35 the number of people arrested and charged in connection with the Brinks’ holdup attempt. An alleged associate, Nehanda Abiodun, is still free, as is Assata Shakur.

On the day of Mutulu Shakur’s capture, the FBI held simultaneous press conferences in Los Angeles and Washington, D.C., touting the “close cooperation between federal and local law enforcement personnel” and praising their “application of state-of-the-art technology in making an arrest.”

FBI Director William Webster said: “Today we have a message to those who would violate our laws. Cowardly acts of violence are not for the coordinated efforts of this country’s law enforcement professionals.”

FBI files describe Shakur as “known for his links to revolutionary movements”—an allegation Shakur himself does not deny. An activist in the Black Liberation Movement since the age of 13, Shakur was one of the founding members of the Provisional Government of the Republic of New Africa, formed to organize the drive for an independent Black nation in five states in the South.

He was a co-founder of the National Task Force for Caintro Litigation and Research, and a founder and Director of the Black Acupuncture Advisory Association of North America (BAAAN), a community clinic on West 139th Street in Harlem. One of the first Black acupuncturists, Shakur studied the Oriental science in China and Quebec. At the invitation of the Zimbabwean African National Union, he traveled to that country as part of a team of international observers of the elections that resulted in the nation’s independence.

On March 5, he was brought to New York in chains. The corporate media had much to say about his capture. In a recent, wide-ranging, exclusive interview conducted at the Metropolitan Correctional Center in Manhattan, Shakur speaks for himself in his own words:

NOTE: To help in understanding the significance of people and events referred to throughout the text, footnotes are provided and correspond with a glossary.

My name is Mutulu Shakur. I was picked up in California about 7 weeks ago by members of the New York Police Department and the FBI, a special unit called the Joint Terrorist Task Force.

Some of the specifics of my capture I’m going to hold for later, but right now it’s important to understand that the JTF, or any other counterintelligence operation, is working with a budget that is 100 or more than the African liberation movement’s budget or any oppressed people’s budget to push forward their ideology, to defend that ideology and to defend themselves and their families and comrades from being oppressed.

There’s nothing magic about the FBI or the JTF. They’re so effective because, generally, people struggle for liberation because they love people and it’s that love which allows people who are traitors to the race, traitors to humanity, to get close to people who are sincere about liberation.

When you’re in the street and you’re underground and you say, “How’re you doing, brother?” or “How’re you doing, woman?” you have to do it in a way that allows you to feel that whatever you’re doing is in their interest, you know? And when you say that to a person and that person becomes the JTF, it’s that little love that makes them more effective, more than the money they put into capturing you.

The underground railroad that was created by Henrietta Tubman and Harriet Tubman and other Harriet Tubmans and Henry B. Washington and other Henry B. Washingtons and all those people who love people and who love our people and who love us.

And I want to make it clear that I am not talking about the question of whether the JTF is justified or not. I’m talking about the question of whether the JTF is effective, whether the JTF is doing what it should be doing or what it should not be doing.

I mean, if I am a prisoner of war, I am not a prisoner of war because I have been captured by the JTF. I am a prisoner of war because I have been captured by the American government.

The American government is responsible for the oppression that has been waged on the people, on the work that I have been involved in, in general, and my particular relationship to that work. So therefore the policies of the case must come out.

Legally, if the U.S. government intends to continue the...
Ocean Hill-Brownsville. That taught me how police power is used to resolve civil contradictions in a colonized society.

So we're prepared to pick 12 and put the story before the 12 and let a thousand flowers bloom.

I want to discuss the prisoner-of-war situation. It is of particular importance to the New African independence movement and to every brother and sister—from the Black Flag 41 to the Deacons for the Defense 42 to the Revolutionary Africa Movement (RAM) 43 to the Front of Islam to the Simbas 44 to the Black Guard 45 to the New African Security Force 46 to the many secret and open organizations that have functioned inside America to protect Black people from abuse and to give them some security to exercise their political discontent in this country—who has been beaten, killed or maimed. These comradesthroughout the United States. I have been involved. And last year I was a member of the African National Congress (ANC) and the African United Democratic Organization (AUFO). In the Geneva Convention at the United Nations in Geneva, we will present a technical, legal case for me and the Brink's thing. First of all, we should not assume who killed who or who was there; all of that is the government's analysis, okay? That I am the mastermind, that's propaganda. That's so much more people are sold, it makes the case of me more important. It gives the Task Force more money to operate this year; their budget goes up. That's all economics.

I have been working and living in New York for the last 2 years. I have treated, I dare say, 5,000 to 10,000 people for methadone and drug withdrawal. I have worked in the black community in a part of the country that is almost completely without methadone surgery being waged against Black people. I think I have taught more people acupuncture who are not M.D.'s than almost anybody in the country. That's not a bragging thing; it is just to say I've been working my ass off (excuse the expression, Ma). I think that I have always—always—followed the struggle. Wherever the struggle is, I will go there. I have no life other than the struggle; it was through the struggle that I developed acupuncture. My patients covered a vast range of people.

I've worked in Queens to develop an educational structure. I've worked in the urban renewal program in South Jamaica when they were putting up York College. I've worked on the National Task Force for Contingency Litigation and Research to expose government misconduct against the white left and covert operations against the Black Liberation Movement. I have worked consistently with ZANU in Zimbabwe. That's not "I, I", but it's true; that's what I've done. I've been in Cairo, I'll, and Wilmington, N.C. It's because it's what I am about. If they can isolate me from the community, then they can isolate the community from me. I don't need to prove myself to the community.

The community must look at itself and see who patrols its streets. It must look at who has jobs and who has the best jobs. It should look at how there are liquor stores only on one corner in the community. And it's not happenstance, you know? Winnie Mandela used to talk about how everywhere she went there was a beer hall in South Africa when people didn't have homes or jobs. The beer hall allows for people to become intoxicated, to forget their problems. And then after you lose your job, you're arrested and put in jail, so that the weight of the oppressive system is constantly on your mind.

So the community must look at whether I am the enemy. Have I contributed to oppression? Have I contributed to bad education? Have I contributed to bad housing? They called BAAANA a terrorist operation, and in the '70s Lincoln Detox had the same status. So it's not me, and that's what we have to get away from. The community has to decide who their enemy is.

You ask about the police killed in Brinks. In terms of bodies, the New African Independence Movement and the Black Liberation Movement, we have bodies laying all across this country.

Sandra Pratt, Zayd Malik. I mean he was just protecting a woman who was innocent, you know what I'm saying? You could talk about Kimu, Woody Green, Changia, Timothy Adams. We could talk about how they were not tried and he was the Terroist of the '70s and he was shot in the Bronx 45 times, the same way they shot Zapata. My brother, Lumumba, was just killed in New Orleans a week before the election. How was he killed? All the students have got to be answered. You not just as to who shot who, but under what system and with what political motivation. I'm talking about Clifford Glover. I'm talking about Mrs. Bumpere, we die by white guns and with white people trigger. And if it's not whites as a race, it's this government as a country.

That doesn't even scratch the mental illness that it's caused. How many brothers and sisters who just refuse to get up every day because they tried to do it through the party that is supposed to do welfare rights organization, they tried to get a education? They've been beaten in jail and it just killed their spirits. Colonial war and mental disorder have an effect on our community. It has an effect on me.

When they talk about burnout, they talk about these big executives. But those of us who have been fighting oppression consistently, we have to be of the highest moral standing. Sure we must be; that's the best of us. But the ones of that...
Black Liberation Army. So when they came looking for me, I knew why I had to move on. Because if you don’t, if you allow them to catch you, that’s a 50-50 chance or a 75-25 chance, according to how you deal.

They were looking for Assatta. All praise is due to those who liberated her because she was a person who should have been free and I wholeheartedly support the liberation of any brother or sister who’s been fighting for our struggle. So does that make you a conspirator, or does that mean you believe in your struggle?

I’m not really worried about the government trying to criminalize me. I’m not too bad or, wrong, but I’m not a criminal. It’s the conspiracy part that concerns me. Some of these people they’re accusing me of conspiring with I’ve known since I was a child. So because you know somebody and love somebody and understand their oppression and if you could do something to help them, that makes you a target for a RICO conspiracy. That’s no different than South Africa, where three or four people cannot stand in the same place. It’s not because they’re standing there, it’s what they think—that’s the conspiracy. And what they will do about their liberation—that’s the conspiracy. You have no right to think about your oppression and you

**'They were looking for Assatta. All praise is due to those who liberated her because she was a person who should have been free and I wholeheartedly support the liberation of any brother or sister who’s been fighting for our struggle. So does that make you a conspirator, or does that mean you believe in your struggle?'**

even your life. I’m here under the theory of Edwin Meese that says if the cops bust you, you’re guilty. I haven’t been convicted of a crime. I’m here, and I have to see you in this fashion, under double, double, double, and double scales. But that’s unique about me. When we stopped traveling and they put me straight in the hole without any discussion and kept me in the black box for 14 hours, I expected that I am a prisoner of war. But the nation, the people from all nations, have got to recognize that the power of the government should be questioned. It took the Jewish people at Auschwitz a long time to realize it was time to defend. It shouldn’t take us that long. Right now, black people, they still going, that is not going to be a Black Holocaust. If we’re gonna get it on, we’re gonna get it on in the beginning. Still resistance in the beginning makes for victorious resistance in the end. And that’s what we prescribe. That’s how we’re going to deal with it.

We’re exceptionalists. We’re just clearer about our objective. We understand the system; we’ve researched it. I was an investigator for the National Committee for the Defense of Political Prisoners on murders of brothers and sisters accused of being in the
This case itself will be a historical case. We have said that we are going to court so that the case for national liberation becomes a part of the history for our children and a basis for petitioning the establishment of our nation and for an adjudication of myself and the other comrades not as criminals but as political brothers and sisters who are involved in a national liberation struggle.

GLOSSARY

(1) JOHN TERRORIST TASK FORCE is a combined force of federal investigation and enforcement personnel.

(2) DELANEY—Harriet Delaney, Black nationalist, abolitionist, educator, physician, and a leading advocate for the emancipation of Black people in the United States.

(3) GARNETT—Henry Garnett, abolitionist who worked with Harriet Delaney.

(4) SMITH—Mary Jackson, New York abolitionist of the 1840s.

(5) RICO—the Racketeer Influenced and Corrupt Organizations Act passed in 1970 initially to prosecute organized crime but broadened in 1986 to include all terrorist groups and subversive political organizations.

(6) ASATRRA SHAKA—Sis Moeketsi ASCII, a member of the Black Liberation Army and a federal fugitive. On May 2, 1972, he was arraigned in New York City Criminal Court on charges of murder, possession of a firearm, and conspiracy.

(7) ZAYD MAAT SHAKUR—The one police officer who declared that the police attack was unjust.


(9) BATTLE TO PROTECT THE MOSQUE—In 1973, New York City police clashed with a Black Muslim mosque.

(10) HENRIETTA EVANS—Black nationalist who led the rebellion in Cleveland in which several police officers were killed.

(11) ZAYD MALIK—The one police officer who declared that the police attack was unjust.

(13) BYERLY—A WAGI BALAGOON—Black nationalist who was killed in the state's trial.

(14) MIKUL, WOODY, GREEN, CHANG—All members of the New Afrikan Nation, killed in separate attacks on New Afrikan police in the 1970s.

(15) TIMOTHY ADAMS—BLA member shot in 1973 during a police attack on the New Afrikan Nation.

(16) NAT TURNER—In 1831 led the first successful slave revolt in Virginia.

(17) DENMARK VEST—In 1832 the nationalista tried to gain a revolution.

(18) JOHN TERRORIST TASK FORCE is a combined force of federal investigation and enforcement personnel.

(19) GARNETT—Henry Garnett, abolitionist who worked with Harriet Delaney.

(20) SMITH—Mary Jackson, New York abolitionist of the 1840s.

(21) RICO—the Racketeer Influenced and Corrupt Organizations Act passed in 1970 initially to prosecute organized crime but broadened in 1986 to include all terrorist groups and subversive political organizations.

(22) ASATRRA SHAKA—Sis Moeketsi ASCII, a member of the Black Liberation Army and a federal fugitive. On May 2, 1972, he was arraigned in New York City Criminal Court on charges of murder, possession of a firearm, and conspiracy.

(23) ZAYD MAAT SHAKUR—The one police officer who declared that the police attack was unjust.


(25) BATTLE TO PROTECT THE MOSQUE—In 1973, New York City police clashed with a Black Muslim mosque.

(26) HENRIETTA EVANS—Black nationalist who led the rebellion in Cleveland in which several police officers were killed.

(27) ZAYD MALIK—The one police officer who declared that the police attack was unjust.

(28) MIKUL, WOODY, GREEN, CHANG—All members of the New Afrikan Nation, killed in separate attacks on New Afrikan police in the 1970s.

(29) TIMOTHY ADAMS—BLA member shot in 1973 during a police attack on the New Afrikan Nation.

(30) NAT TURNER—In 1831 led the first successful slave revolt in Virginia.

(31) DENMARK VEST—In 1832 the nationalista tried to gain a revolution.