

Support Grows for Late Rap Artists Godmother

Written by Robert ID1671

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The struggle of late hip-hop rap icon Tupac Shakurs godmother, Assata Shakur, has been getting bigger since the bounty on her was raised to One Million dollars for her kidnapping and return to the US.

Many prominent and influential politicians, hip-hop and rap artists and community groups have stepped forward to show support for Assata and her struggle.

With all the attempts to further the kidnapping of Tupac's godmother and political activist Assata Shakur, the 'Hands Off Assata Campaign' has been growing as a grassroots movement. Look on web sites you visit for the banner or button to direct you to where more information on this campaign can be found. (There is one on the bottom of our home page). Knowledge is power and a very insightful and knowledgeable article gives a great update on what is going on with the campaign and some history of Assatas' struggle.

Michael H. Cottman of Blackamericaweb.com has written an article around Assata and her struggle. Knowledge is power and this very insightful and knowledgeable article gives a great update on what is going on with the campaign and some history of Assatas' struggle. Here is Michael H. Cottman's article and please visit their site, click the source tab below.

A passionate grassroots movement in support of former Black Liberation Army member Assata Shakur is growing more vocal as supporters in New York, Chicago and Philadelphia are offering testimonials to Shakur's life through rallies, films, poetry readings and online editorials.

Shakur, a former member of the Black Panther Party, was convicted of fatally shooting a New Jersey state trooper 32 years ago. In 1979, Shakur, who is formally known as Joanne Chesimard, escaped from a women's prison in Hunterdon County after she was convicted of the 1973 slaying of Trooper Werner Foerster. She made her way to Cuba and was granted political asylum.

New Jersey officials have failed to persuade Cuba to extradite the 57-year-old Shakur. Two months ago, the federal government raised the bounty on Shakur from \$150,000 to \$1 million –

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a move Shakur's supporters said is designed to carry out her murder.

The campaign, called Hands Off Assata, is based in New York, but appears to be generating more of a national presence.

In Chicago, for example, Cuban filmmaker Gloria Rolando will screen "Eyes of the Rainbow," her 1997 documentary about Shakur's life, on July 19. A panel of attorneys, civil rights activists and historians plan to speak to the community following the film. In New York, rallies are planned for next month to honor Shakur and rapper/ actor Mos Def -- perhaps the most high-profile of Shakur's supporters -- continues to speak out on her behalf.

"Eyes of the Rainbow" was also screened in Philadelphia last month, and in New York, Houston and Los Angeles, black activists are sponsoring community meetings to offer their support for Shakur and to explain the circumstances surrounding her case.

"I think our movement is growing," New York City Councilman Charles Barron told BlackAmericaWeb.com Tuesday. "I do see more people lending their support. There is a changing tide, but we still have work to do."

In May, Barron held a press conference on the steps of New York City Hall where he declared Shakur's innocence. Two New York City Council members -- Larry Seabrook (D-Bronx) and James Sanders (D-Queens) -- joined Barron at his press conference, as did Mos Def and rapper Talib Kweli, Def's partner in the group Black Star. Members of the Malcolm X Grass Roots Movement and the December 12 Movement also attended the event.

Barron said Tuesday he still believes Shakur is innocent and that her life is now in danger. He is calling on law enforcement officials to rescind the bounty and said more public rallies in support of Shakur are being planned.

"I don't believe she killed the cop," Barron said. "She was convicted by a kangaroo court on trumped-up charges."

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Authorities also added Shakur to the FBI's domestic terrorist list, where Osama Bin Laden's name also appears.

"She is now 120 pounds of money," State Police Superintendent Rick Fuentes told the New Jersey Star-Ledger. "It is going to exert pressures that weren't in place nationally and internationally before. And we're going to follow up to make sure everybody is aware of this both inside and outside of Cuba."

"We owe it to the family [of the slain trooper]," Fuentes said. "We owe it to the New Jersey State Police, and we owe it to every citizen in the state of New Jersey to bring her back, and we will."

Barron said some New York residents are now walking up to him on the street asking questions about Shakur and motorists are "tooting their horns" and yelling to him that he's taking the right position.

"But of course," he added, "I'm getting the usual hate mail, too."

A website (www.handsoffassata.org) in support of Shakur says the New York-based Hands Off Assata Coalition is made up of activists, artists, scholars, students, parents, attorneys and elected leaders.

Supporters are asking black Americans to sign a "solidarity petition" and mail it to congressional leaders and to President George W. Bush.

"Our efforts to defend Assata is an example of the continued embodiment of sacrifice and camaraderie that has allowed for the Black Liberation Movement and Cuban Revolution to

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remain beacons for the poor and oppressed, and for freedom fighters all over the world," the website says. "Our work continues!"

On May 2, 1973, Trooper Foerster responded as backup when another trooper had stopped Shakur and two companions for a faulty tail light on the New Jersey Turnpike. Shots were fired and Foerster was hit. As he lay on the ground, authorities said, Shakur shot him.

"Chesimard then took the weapon away from Foerster and shot him in the neck and head," Fuentes told the Star-Ledger. "This isn't the result of a toe-to-toe exchange. This is an execution, and there's a clear distinction."

But her supporters call her a freedom fighter.

"For more than three decades the FBI has attempted to demonize Assata Shakur," reads a statement on the website, afroclubweb.com. "She is a mother and grandmother, author and artist. She is politically astute and intellectually sharp. She is warm, humble and spiritual."

In 1998, Shakur was interviewed by a New York television reporter in Havana in which she denied killing Foerster and said she lived in fear of the New Jersey State Police. New Jersey officials said Shakur was lying.

Actor Mos Def, perhaps the most well-known supporter of Shakur, has posted an editorial on the website www.seeingblack.com.

"My first memory of Assata Shakur was the "Wanted" posters all over my Brooklyn neighborhood," he wrote. "They said her name was Joanne Chesimard, that she was a killer, an escaped convict, and armed and dangerous. They made her sound like a super-villain, like something out of a comic book. But even then, as a child, I couldn't believe what I was being told."

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"For many of us in the black community," the actor says, "she was and remains, to use her own words, an "escaped slave," a heroine, not unlike Harriet Tubman."