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Congress asks for Assata's Extradition - September 14, 1998

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In a display of ignorance and prejudice, Congress voted (no dissenting votes) for a resolution to ask Cuba for Assata's extradition. The [full text of the resolution](#) is available below, as is that of a [response from the Center for Constitutional Right](#), which points out that this resolution is in fact illegal under current treaty and law. You can cut and paste from several responses available below and email it or print it out and fax it to your elected representatives. For email, see the handy [Congressional email service where you can look up members by zip code](#) as well as look up by name.

The Congressional Black Caucus was asleep at the switch on this one, with 23 members voting against Assata and 13 not voting, which is hardly different. Maxinne Waters voted against, but then said she did not know who Joanne Chesimard (Assata's pre-Panther name) was. [There is an excellent open letter to Rep. Maxine Waters from one of Sundiata Acoli's attorney's, Joan P. Gibbs.](#) In addition, Black Autonomy, Afrikan Frontline Network, International Concerned Family and Friends of Mumia Abu-Jamal, DC Chapter, REAL JUSTICE!, M'Backe House of Hope, Black Information Television, DE, Million Man March LOC, DE have called for a [day of demonstration Oct 5](#) targetting the CBC on Capitol Hill and at the offices of CBC members in their districts. A [petition](#) is being circulated for presentation to the CBC.

[February, 1998](#)

[Assata's letter to the Pope:
January, 1998](#)

[NJ State Police ask Pope
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[Bibliography on Assata
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Text of the Congressional Resolution

Archive-Name: gov/us/fed/congress/record/1998/sep/14/1998CRH7653
[Congressional Record: September 14, 1998 (House)]
{time} 1330

CALLING ON GOVERNMENT OF CUBA TO EXTRADITE JOANNE CHESIMARD TO UNITED STATES

Mr. BEREUTER. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and agree to the concurrent resolution (H. Con. Res. 254) calling on the Government of Cuba to return to the United States convicted felon Joanne Chesimard and all other individuals who have fled the United States to avoid prosecution or confinement for criminal offenses and who are currently living freely in Cuba, as amended.

The Clerk read as follows:

H. Con. Res. 254

Whereas on May 2, 1973, Joanne Chesimard and 2 friends were stopped in their vehicle by New Jersey State Troopers James Harper and Werner Foerster on the New Jersey Turnpike;

Whereas while being questioned, Ms. Chesimard and the driver opened fire with automatic pistols striking Trooper Werner Foerster twice in the chest and Trooper James Harper in the left shoulder;

Whereas the suspects then turned Trooper Foerster's own weapon on him firing an additional two bullets into his head execution style;

Whereas this heinous and premeditated act resulted in the tragic death of New Jersey State Trooper Werner Foerster;

Whereas Trooper Foerster left behind a wife, Rose Foerster, and family;

Whereas in 1977, after a 6 week trial, a jury found Ms. Chesimard guilty of first-degree murder for the slaying of Trooper Foerster, a respected New Jersey State Trooper;

Whereas as a result of this conviction Ms. Chesimard was sentenced to life in a New Jersey State prison;

Whereas in 1979, Ms. Chesimard broke free from a maximum security cell at the Reformatory for Women in Clinton, New Jersey, with the help of 4 men who took a guard and prison van driver hostage;

Whereas after escaping prison, Ms. Chesimard fled to Cuba for political asylum;

Whereas the Federal Bureau of Investigation lists 77 felony fugitives known to have been granted safe haven by the Cuban Government, including Robert Vesco, Frank Terpil, and Victor Gerena, wanted for, or convicted of, violent crimes, including murder, robbery, kidnapping, air piracy, and terrorism;

Whereas these individuals have been indicted or convicted of criminal offenses in the United States and have not paid their debt to society;

Whereas people in New Jersey were shocked and outraged to see television interviews showing Ms. Chesimard living freely in Cuba, portraying herself as the victim and denying any crimes against Trooper Foerster;

Whereas the Governor of New Jersey, Christine Whitman, has requested Federal assistance from Attorney General Janet Reno for the return of Ms. Chesimard; and

Whereas Members of Congress have petitioned Secretary of State Madeleine Albright requesting that the Department of State do everything in its power to have Joanne Chesimard, and all other individuals who have fled the United States to avoid prosecution or confinement for criminal offenses and who are currently living freely in Cuba, returned to the United States in order for them to face prosecution or confinement in the United States: Now, therefore, be it

Resolved by the House of Representatives (the Senate concurring), That it is the sense of Congress that--

(1) the Government of Cuba should extradite to the United States convicted murderer Joanne Chesimard in order for her to complete her life sentence for the murder of New Jersey State Trooper Werner Foerster;

(2) the Government of Cuba should extradite to the United States all other individuals who have fled the United States to avoid prosecution or confinement for criminal offenses and who are currently living freely in Cuba in order for them to face prosecution or confinement in the United States; and

(3) the extradition from Cuba to the United States of all individuals who have fled the United States to avoid prosecution or confinement for criminal offenses and who are currently living in Cuba should be a top priority for the United States Government.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. Petri). Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from Nebraska (Mr. Bereuter) and the gentleman from California (Mr. Lantos), each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Nebraska (Mr. Bereuter).

Mr. BEREUTER. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

I strongly support this resolution which calls on the Cuban regime to return Joanne Chesimard to the United States. It is shameful and unacceptable that Fidel Castro continues to harbor murderers and other hardened criminals like Ms. Chesimard. The victims of her crime, New Jersey State trooper Werner Foerster and his widow Rose and their family, have been denied justice by Fidel Castro.

In approving this resolution, the committee made an amendment which underscores that ``the Federal Bureau of Investigation lists 90 felony fugitives known to have been granted safe haven by the Cuban government.'' These include Robert Vesco, Victor Gerena, who is on the FBI's top 10 most wanted listed, and Frank Terpil, a rogue CIA agent wanted for selling explosives to Libyan dictator Mu'ammur Qadhafi.

I commend the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. Franks) for sponsoring this resolution. Our colleague on the committee, the gentlewoman from Florida (Ms. Ros-Lehtinen) is a cosponsor, as is the gentleman from Florida (Mr. Diaz-Balart); in addition, the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. Menendez) who is also a member of our committee. They have been steadfast advocates for the Foerster family, and I thank them for their efforts.

I would additionally like to thank New Jersey Governor Christine Todd-Whitman for exercising personal leadership in pressing for the passage of this resolution calling on the Cuban government to see that justice is done for the Foerster family. This terrible tragedy dragged on far too long, due exclusively to Fidel Castro's intransigence. Accordingly, I urge my colleagues to join me in supporting H. Con. Res. 250.

Madam Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. LANTOS. Madam Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume, and I rise in strong support of H. Con. Res. 254, calling on the government of Cuba to return to the United States convicted felon Joanne Chesimard and all other individuals who fled the United States to avoid prosecution or confinement for criminal offenses and who are currently living freely in Cuba.

Providing a safe haven for fugitives from prosecution in the United States is one of the many concerns that we had with the government of Cuba. The case of Joanne Chesimard is particularly egregious and we are right to call this body's attention to it. Chesimard was sentenced to life for the murder of a New Jersey State trooper. She escaped from prison, fled to Cuba where she is currently living.

I strongly urge the adoption of this resolution, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. BEREUTER. Madam Speaker, I yield such time as he may consume to the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. Smith), who has been very much involved in this issue as well.

Mr. SMITH of New Jersey. Madam Speaker, I thank the gentleman for yielding me the time.

I am very proud to be one of the cosponsors of H. Con. Res. 254, which condemns the government of Cuba for harboring Joanne Chesimard and other fugitives who have committed brutal crimes in the United States. I want to thank my good friend and colleague, the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. Franks) for introducing this important resolution and working for its passage.

As most of us here know, Joanne Chesimard was convicted in 1977 of first degree murder and sentenced to life in prison for her brutal execution style murder of trooper Foerster. She escaped from jail in 1979 and subsequently fled to Cuba where she was given political asylum. This escaped murderer now lives a very comfortable life in Cuba and has launched a public relations campaign in which she attempts to portray herself as an innocent victim rather than a cold-blooded murderer.

The protection Chesimard and others enjoy in Cuba is yet another example of the lawlessness of the Castro dictatorship. The only truly satisfactory solution is democracy and self-determination for the people of Cuba. In the meantime, however, I believe it is shameful that the Clinton administration has made deal after deal with the Castro government, giving concession after concession, while Chesimard and other felons are living the high life in Havana.

I would like to thank members of the Committee on International Relations. They backed some amendments that I had offered during markup which changed some of the wording. The bottom line is we need to make

sure that we bring these murderers and felons, and there are many of them, to justice. For the family, the Foerster family, that lost its loved one, we will not rest until she is behind bars where she belongs for the rest of her life.

I want to thank, again, my good friend, the gentleman from Jersey (Mr. Franks) for offering this. I hope that it will get the full support of the body.

Mr. FRANKS of New Jersey. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to urge my colleagues to support the passage of H. Con. Res. 254, a resolution which I introduced on March 30.

It calls upon Fidel Castro, the dictator of the imprisoned island of Cuba, to return to the United States all the fugitives from American justice that he is harboring in his country.

Under Castro, Cuba has become a haven for terrorists, murderers, rapists, kidnappers and drug dealers who have sought refuge in Cuba in order to avoid prosecution and imprisonment in the United States. According to the FBI, there are now 77 American fugitives living in Cuba.

Let me tell you about one of them.

Earlier this year, I was shocked to turn on the local television news and see Joanne Chesimard, a cold-blooded cop killer, living freely in Cuba.

Twenty-five years ago, Joanne Chesimard gunned down two state troopers on the New Jersey Turnpike. After firing at Trooper Werner Foerster and hitting him twice in the chest, Chesimard grabbed the trooper's gun and fired two more bullets execution-style into his head.

Six years later--after serving just two years of a life sentence for first-degree murder--a group of revolutionaries assisted her in a daring and successful escape. She has been given a new, comfortable life in Cuba--thanks to Fidel Castro.

It's a tragic irony that while some of America's most vicious killers live comfortable lives in Cuba, many of Cuba's own natives languish in prisons merely for speaking out against the communist dictatorship.

This resolution sends a strong message to Castro: Return Joanne Chesimard and all the other felons you are harboring. They must be returned to the United States so that they can be sent to prison in order to serve out their full sentences and repay their debt to society.

Mrs. ROUKEMA. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in strong support of H. Con. Res. 254.

Twenty-five years ago, in 1973, Joanne Chesimard ruthlessly gunned down two New Jersey State Troopers on the New Jersey Turnpike.

She approached one of the wounded Troopers, who laid bleeding and dying, grabbed his own gun and fired two shots, point-blank, execution style in the back of his head.

Chesimard was captured and convicted of this brutal murder and sent to prison.

She broke out of prison and now lives freely in Cuba just 90 miles off the U.S. coast.

She is not alone, many other convicted felons live in Cuba. This Resolution calls for justice to be served. It demands that Castro extradite Chesimard and other criminals so they can face justice in the U.S.

Justice must be served. It is cruel and morally wrong for Cuba to allow a safe harbor for these criminals while Cuba has sent its own religious leaders to suffer in prison.

I stand united with the families of the slain, the New Jersey State Police, and all citizens of New Jersey in demanding Cuba return Joanne

Chesimard.

I strongly urge my Colleagues to support this resolution.

Mr. PAPPAS. Mr. Speaker, on May 2, 1973 a terrible tragedy occurred in the State of New Jersey when Joanne Chesimard killed New Jersey State Trooper Werner Foerster leaving behind his wife and family. Ms. Chesimard was sentenced to life in prison for this heinous crime in our state and rightly so. But she escaped and fled to Cuba where she has the high life. She sips pina coladas, walks on the white sandy beaches, and swims in the crystal clear water. This is a grave injustice.

This is wrong and our government must do everything in its power to bring her back to serve out her sentence. Instead, the Clinton administration talks of easing the embargo knowing that Cuba is harboring violent criminals.

Fugitives such as Chesimard are cowards and for Cuba to invite them in and treat them like royalty is clearly wrong. I urge Secretary Albright and Attorney General Reno to do all they can to bring these criminals back to the U.S. to face justice.

I co-sponsored this legislation because I want our government to use all means possible to pressure Cuba to return Ms. Chesimard and every other criminal which Cuba harbors. We must fight for justice.

I commend Congressman Franks and Governor Whitman for being such strong advocates of this cause and I welcome the passage of this legislation.

Mr. GILMAN. Mr. Speaker, it is the time to send a unequivocal signal to Fidel Castro that the United States Congress finds his regime's harboring of terrorists, murderers and other hardened criminals wanted in the United States shameful and unacceptable.

H. Con. Res. 254 draws attention to the cold-blooded murder twenty-five years ago of a New Jersey State Trooper, Werner Foerster. Joanne Chesimard was convicted of this heinous murder but, in 1979, escaped to Cuba.

Joanne Chesimard now lives under Fidel Castro's protection in Cuba. Back in New Jersey, Trooper Foerster's widow and family are denied the justice of seeing the woman who took him from them pay for her crime.

This is not an isolated case. Our Federal Bureau of Investigation lists 90 felony fugitives known to have been granted safe haven by the Cuban government.

This resolution has broad bipartisan support. The gentleman from New Jersey, Mr. Franks sponsored this resolution with our colleague on the Committee, the gentlelady from Florida, Ms. Ros-Lehtinen and the gentleman from Florida, Mr. Diaz-Balart. the gentleman from New Jersey, Mr. Menendez, who is also a member of our Committee, has for years supported the Foerster family's efforts to bring Joanne Chesimard back to the United States to serve her sentence.

I would like to recognize New Jersey Governor Christine Todd-Whitman who wrote to me to ask that we pass this resolution.

Just today, we have had another sobering reminder of Fidel Castro's undiminished efforts to attack American interests. the FBI announced in Miami that ten people have been charged with spying for the Cuban government by trying to penetrate our Miami-based U.S. Southern Command, MacDill Air Force Base in Tampa, and the Boca Chica Naval Air Station in Key West.

The FBI reports that Castro's spies also sought to infiltrate Cuban-American groups and manipulate other political groups and the U.S. media.

Accordingly, I urge my colleagues to join me in supporting H. Con. Res. 254.

Mr. LANTOS. Madam Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. BEREUTER. Madam Speaker, I urge unanimous support for this resolution, and I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mrs. Morella). The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from Nebraska (Mr. Bereuter) that the House suspend the rules and agree to the concurrent resolution, H. Con. Res. 254, as amended.

The question was taken.

Mr. BEREUTER. Madam Speaker, on that I demand the yeas and nays.

The yeas and nays were ordered.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 5 of rule I and the Chair's prior announcement, further proceedings on this motion will be postponed.

From referrals:

H. Con. Res. 254. Concurrent resolution calling on the Government of Cuba to extradite to the United States convicted felon Joanne Chesimard and all other individuals who have fled the United States to avoid prosecution or confinement for criminal offenses and who are currently living freely in Cuba, to the Committee on Foreign Relations.

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Response from the Center for Constitutional Rights

Michael Ratner
CENTER FOR CONSTITUTIONAL RIGHTS
666 BROADWAY
New York, N.Y. 10012
(212) 614-6430
(212) 614-6499 (fax)

Re: Assata Shakur (Joanne Chesimard)

Dear Members of the House of Representatives:

On September 14, 1998 the House of Representatives passed H. Con. Res. 254, calling on the government of Cuba to extradite Assata Shakur (Joanne Chesimard). That resolution was not only incredibly hypocritical, but illegal and unwarranted as well. As I will explain in this letter there is no basis for that resolution.

First, even apart from Assata Shakur's innocence and the unfairness of her trial, it is politically hypocritical for the United States to insist on her extradition. If there is a place where terrorists can call home, it is the United States. It gives refuge to criminals who have attacked and murdered scores if not hundreds of Cubans. Most notorious of these is Orlando Bosch, living in Miami, who was convicted of blowing up a Cubana airliner killing 76 people, including a young Cuban fencing team. And what of the agents of the CIA who planned and paid for numerous sabotage and terrorist attacks in Cuba.

But the U.S. is not only a home for Cuban terrorists. Living among us is Emmanuel Constant, the former head of the Haitian paramilitary organization FRAPH; its members tortured and murdered hundreds in the aftermath of the 1991 coup in Haiti. During the coup Constant was on the CIA payroll. After the coup the U.S. labeled FRAPH "terrorist" and Secretary of State Warren Christopher said his presence here "would seriously undermine U.S. foreign policy interests... and cast doubt upon the seriousness of our resolve to combat human rights violations. He said Constant "was instrumental in sustaining the repression that prevailed in Haiti...." Yet the State Department refused a Haitian extradition request and stopped his deportation back to Haiti. Constant walks the streets of New York intimidating and frightening Haitians.

And what of the Salvadoran General Jose Guillermo Garcia and the head of El Salvador's national guard, Vides Cassanonva, who according to the United Nations covered up and protected the murderers of the three nuns and lay worker in El Salvador. They obtained political asylum and are living well in Palm Coast, Florida. The U.S. has laid out a welcome mat for other terrorists including General Hector Gramajo, accused of killing as many as 10,000 Guatemalan Indians, General Prosper Avril, a former dictator of Haiti and responsible for the torture of opposition leaders and Sintong Panjaitan, an Indonesian general, responsible for the 1991 Santa Cruz massacre in East Timor that killed hundreds.

But, these are only a few terrorists who the U.S. has welcomed; scores more are probably unknown to the public, hidden in the U.S. after carrying out its bidding overseas. Second, under the extradition treaty with Cuba, it has the absolute and unfettered right not to extradite Assata Shakur. Assuming the treaty is still valid, it contains a clear exception to extradition for crimes that are of a "political character." Article VI of the treaty states:

A fugitive criminal shall not be surrendered if the offense in respect of which his surrender is demanded be of a political character, or if it is proved that the requisition for his surrender has, in fact, been made with a view to try or punish him for an offense of a political character. Interestingly, after the revolution it was the United States that first invoked this "political offense" exception to shield two escaped murderers who had been convicted of killing a prominent member of the Cuban Communist Party. *Ramos v. Diaz*, 179 F. Supp. 458 (1959). Cuba has made the decision that Assata Shakur's case fits the "political exception" of the treaty. On April 2, Cuba forcefully turned down any request for Assata's extradition. A spokesman for the Foreign Ministry, Alejandro Gonzalez, said Assata was "a civil rights activist." He stated that she would not be extradited as the "government of Cuba has sufficient reasons to disagree with the charges against her and fears that she might be the target of unfair treatment." This decision by the Cuban government cannot be questioned or overruled by the United States. Article VI of the treaty is clear on this: If any question shall arise as to whether a case comes within the provisions of this article, the decision of the authorities of the government on which the demand for the surrender is made, or which may have granted the extradition shall be final. As the treaty states: the Cuban decision is final. The current demand by the House of Representatives flies in the face of the treaty and violates U.S. treaty obligations and U.S. law.

Third, I believe, as do many others, that Assata Shakur is innocent. The evidence at trial showed that she was illegally stopped by racist New Jersey State police, shot in the back with her hands in the air and tried by a jury inflamed by politicians and a press bent on her conviction. The New Jersey State

Police have a long history of discriminatory and racist conduct that unfortunately is still continuing. No matter what position you take as to Assata Shakur's innocence or guilt, her trial was clearly, like that of Sam Shepard's, a miscarriage of justice.

The vote on the resolution represents political grandstanding of the worst sort. But for the United States and the House of Representatives hypocrisy, inconsistency and illegality are a matter of a course when dealing with Assata Shakur and Cuba.

Sincerely yours,

Michael Ratner

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Letter to Maxine Waters from Sundiata attorney Joan P. Gibbs

September 22, 1998

The Honorable Maxine Waters
United States House of Representatives
Washington, D.C.

Dear Representative Waters:

I write to express my outrage over your and other members of the Congressional Black Caucus recent vote in support of House Con. Res. 254 expressing the sense of Congress that, inter alia, "the Government of Cuba should extradite to the United States convicted murderer Joanne Chesimard in order for her to complete her life sentence for the murder of New Jersey State Trooper Werner Foerster. . ." Rumor has it that at the time of the vote you, and presumably your staff, did not know that Assata Shakur's birth name was Joanne Chesimard. If that is true, it speaks volumes about your and your staff's knowledge of the history and struggles of people of African descent in the United States.

Because of her commitment to the liberation of African people in the United States, her defiance in the face of her brutalization and torture by New Jersey State troopers and lastly her heroic liberation from prison, Assata Shakur is a heroine to thousands, if not millions, of people of African descent in the United States and to even greater number of people around a world. Earlier this year, for example, following New Jersey Governor Christine Whitman's offering of first a \$50,000 bounty for her capture and return to New Jersey, an "open letter" signed by hundreds of organizations and individuals in and outside the United States was send to Governor Whitman. Copies of this letter and Assata's "Statement to the United Nations Commission on Human Rights" is being send by regular mail to you for your and your staff, as well as other Caucus' supporters of Resolution 254, education as to who she

is and what she means to freedom loving peoples.

Over the last few days, the media has been filled with pictures of you and the President at the recent Congressional Black Caucus dinner. In introducing the President, you were quoted as stating that African Americans supported the President "because African Americans are uniquely qualified to know unfairness when we see it." That is certainly true.

One of the most blatant and unlawful examples of "unfairness" in recent history is the FBI, along with other law enforcement agencies, infamous "counterintelligence program" against so-called "Black Nationalist-Hate Groups." "The purpose," of this particular counterintelligence program, according to an August 25, 1967 memoranda, was "to expose, disrupt, misdirect, or otherwise neutralize the activities of Black nationalist hate-type organizations and groupings, their leadership, spokesmen, membership and supporters. . ."

As a result of COINTELPRO, hundreds of African Americans, including perhaps yourself and other members of the Caucus, were targeted for surveillance, harassment, jailed and/or outright murdered. See, for example, Lennox Hinds, *Illusions of Justice: Human Rights Violations in the United States* (Iowa: School of Social Work, University of Iowa 1978); Kenneth O'Reilly, *Racial Matters: Secret Files on Black America 1960-1972* (New York : Free Press 1989); Kenneth O'Reilly, *Black Americans: The FBI Files* (New York: Carroll & Graf Publishers, Inc. 1994). Falsely accusing Black activists of crimes they did not commit was one of the FBI and local law enforcement officers favorite tactics. For example, I am sure you are aware of the case of Geronimo Pratt, a former leader of the Los Angeles Chapter of the Black Panther Party, who spent over twenty years in prison for a murder that the FBI knew he could not have committed because he was hundreds of miles away at the time. Similarly, Assata, at the time of her arrest, was "wanted" on federal and state charges in New York, all of which juries subsequently found her not guilty of or were dismissed.

Though Congress condemned the FBI for its violations of the constitutional rights of Black activists as well as other activists through its various counterintelligence programs, it did not offer any remedial relief or compensation to the thousands of activists who suffered as a consequence of such violations. Today, indeed, there are dozens of Black political prisoners and prisoners of war languishing in federal and state prisons throughout the United States as a direct or indirect result of the FBI's counterintelligence programs. Sundiata Acoli, Assata's co- defendant, has been incarcerated since 1973. When he became eligible for parole in 1994, the New Jersey State Parole Board denied him release and assigned him a new parole eligibility date of June 4, 2006 because of, inter alia, his former membership in the Black Panther Party and his support of the Black Liberation Army. Sundiata, who I

am one of the attorney for, is now 61 years old and if New Jersey has its way will remain in prison for the remainder of his natural life because of his political beliefs and associations in contradiction to his purported rights to freedom of speech and association under the First Amendment.

The Congressional Black Caucus on several occasions has been asked to hold hearings on the COINTELPRO program, generally, and its effects on the arrest and trials of these prisoners, in particular, but has yet to hold such hearings. In the interest of "fairness", I urge that the Caucus immediately request that hearings on COINTELPRO be held by the House and/or the Senate or hold them itself. Certainly, the situation of Black/New African political prisoners and prisoners of war, some of whom have been in prison for over twenty years, raises issues of "fairness" too, issues of far more relevance and importance to people of African descent in the United States than the President's current crisis and affairs.

In closing, I urge you to reconsider your vote in support of Resolution 254 and to work for its repeal and an end to inhumane boycott of Cuba. Cuba, under the leadership of His Excellency Fidel Castro, was one of, if not, the staunchest supporters of the people of Southern Africa (e.g. South Africa and Angola) in their long struggles for their independence. It's granting of asylum to Assata was an act of tremendous solidarity with the liberation struggle of African people in the United States. Instead of denouncing Cuba for its friendship with our struggles, the Caucus should be defending it.

I look forward to your reply.

Thank you,

Joan P. Gibbs

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Analysis of the Congressional Black Caucus' role

CBC members voting YEA (against Assata)---(23)

Bishop; Carson; Clay; Clyburn; Conyers; Cummings; Davis (IL); Dixon; Fattah; Ford; Hilliard; Jackson (IL); Jackson-Lee (TX); Lee; McKinney; Meek (FL); Millender-McDonald; Payne; Scott; Stokes; Thompson; Waters; Wynn

CBC members voting NAY (for Assata)---(0)

CBC members NOT VOTING---(13)

Brown (FL); Clayton; Green; Hastings (FL); Jefferson; Kilpatrick; Lewis (GA); Meeks (NY); Owens; Rangel; Rush; Towns; Watt (NC)

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Emailing Congress, including Rep. Maxine Waters

To express your feelings on this Congressional resolution, you can cut and paste any text you want or better yet, write your own letter (gets more attention) and email it to your rep. There's a handy service on the House site, <http://www.house.gov/writerep> which enables you to look up your rep and send him or her an email.

Rep. Waters can be contacted via the internet by going to her website located at: <http://www.house.gov/waters/>, and clicking on her "Guestbook" link where a message can be sent. Rep. Waters' website also includes a link with email, URL and postal addresses for all of the **[Congressional Black Caucus](#)**.

A list of email addresses for the US Congress, state by state, can be found at: <http://www.webslingerz.com/jhoffman/state>. This list can be useful for other crucial votes and bills coming up in Congress.

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Oct 5 Assata Demo Day: Bro. Damon McGhee, Black Autonomy International

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FROM: Marpessa Kupendua, INTERNET:nattyreb@ix.netcom.com
DATE: 9/29/98 2:27 PM
Re: !*HANDS OFF ASSATA! - PROTEST 10/5 AT NOON

*****

DAY OF OUTRAGE FOR SIS. ASSATA SHAKUR !

*****

WHEN: OCTOBER 5, 1998

WHERE: CAPITOL HILL, WASHINGTON, D.C.
Independence Avenue between 1st St. SW and 1st St. SE
(This is a three block area which runs on the south side of the Capitol,
in front of the Rayburn, Longworth and Cannon Office buildings.)
Near the Capitol South Metro station.

WHEN: HIGH NOON!

NOTE: Most of the CBC and the civil rights all-stars will be right
around the corner from us on Monday at a demo in front of the Supreme
Court sponsored by the NAACP calling for more black clerks.

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Comrades, Sistas and Brothas,

By now you are aware of the recent action taken by the congress of the united states entitled HR 254 in which the amerikkkan government openly called for cuba to extradite our beloved Sis. Assata Shakur and the political revolutionaries in exile in cuba. We must unequivocally declare, "HELL, NO!!!!

BLACK AUTONOMY, INTERNATIONAL IS CALLING FOR A MASS DEMONSTRATION ON WASHINGTON D.C. AND DECLARING MONDAY OCTOBER 5TH, 1998 AS "A DAY OF OUTRAGE" ON CAPITOL HILL, THE VERY SITE OF THIS FASCIST CRIME AGAINST OUR PEOPLE.

ALL SISTAS AND BROTHAS, POLITICAL ORGANIZATIONS, AND ACTIVISTS WE NEED YOU TO COLLECTIVELY PARTICIPATE AND LET OUR VOICES AND OUR FEET BE HEARD IN PRINCIPLED UNITY!!! THIS WILL BE A PROTEST DEMONSTRATION AGAINST THE GOVERNMENT AND ITS LACKEYS, I.E. THE CONGRESS AND THE CONGRESSIONAL BLACK CAUCUS!!!!

For those sistas and brothas who are in close proximity to DC, WE NEED YOU TO BE THERE NOT IN SPIRITUAL SOLIDARITY, BUT IN MIND AND BODY!!! WE MUST ACT NOW. IF WE FAIL TO ACT NOW OUR ENEMIES

WILL SEE THIS AS AN OPPORTUNITY TO MOVE ON SIS. ASSATA THINKING THAT WE WILL NOT RESPOND ANYWAY!! WE MUST RESPOND NOW!! THE STRATEGY IS SIMPLE, SIMULTANEOUS DEMOS!!!

For those who cannot reach Washington DC, simultaneous demonstrations in the front of the home district offices of these negro lackeys is the most necessary alternative. Wherever offices of Black congresspersons are there needs to be a protest. Conyers in Michigan, McKinney in Georgia, Waters in California, Rangel in New York, Ford in Tennessee, Jesse Jr. in the Chi, and Bobby Rush in the Chi. BOBBY RUSH SHOULD

EXPERIENCE A SERIOUS PROTEST BEING A PANTHER AND KNOWING SIS ASSATA. DON'T LET THESE TRAITORS OFF THE HOOK. THE WHOLE DAMN CAUCUS MUST BE DEMONSTRATED AGAINST FOR THIS SELL-OUT. WE MUST SPEAK WITH A LOUD, PRINCIPALLY UNIFIED VOICE ON MONDAY, OCTOBER 5TH TO LET THIS GOVERNMENT KNOW THAT WE WANT THEM TO KEEP THEIR HANDS OFF OF SIS ASSATA AND ALL OF OUR SISTAS AND BROTHAS. This collective effort will offer a resounding shout with a national impact.

LET OUR ANGER BE SOLIDIFIED WITH A CORE SET OF DEMANDS TO THE CBC.
I. WE DEMAND THAT THE GOVERNMENT KEEP IT HANDS OFF OF SIS ASSATA AND ALL REVOLUTIONARY SISTAS AND BROTHAS IN EXILE.

II. WE DEMAND THAT THE CBC ACTIVELY AND PUBLICLY MOVE TO RECALL THAT RESOLUTION, HR 254 AND KILL IT IMMEDIATELY.

III. WE DEMAND THAT THE CBC EXPOSE FASCIST AMERICIAN GOVERNMENTAL TERRORISM BY OPENING UP CONGRESSIONAL HEARINGS ON THE COUNTER-INTELLIGENCE PROGRAM (COINTELPRO) OF THE FBI AND OTHER SIMILAR NEFARIOUS ACTIVITIES BY OTHER US INTELLIGENCE AGENCIES AGAINST BLACK REVOLUTIONARY ORGANIZATIONS SUCH AS

THE BPP, BLA, ETC AND INDIVIDUALS SUCH AS SIS ASSATA, BRO. SUNDIATA, MARSHAL EDDIE CONWAY. BRO. HERMAN BELL, BRO. MUMIA, ETC. THE COINTELPRO HEARINGS MUST BE STARTED IMMEDIATELY!!!!!!!!!!!!!!

IV. WE MUST ALSO DEMAND THAT THE GOVERNMENT KEEP ITS HANDS OFF OF CUBA PERIOD!!!!

PLEASE support this effort by faxing and widely circulating this call as this is short notice because this Resolution DEMANDS an URGENT response. We especially need you to PLEASE contact sistas and brothas in D.C. and surrounding areas to inform them of this demonstration as well as put this information out in your local and alternative media! PLEASE ADD THIS CALL TO YOUR WEBSITES ASAP.

WE NEED TO HUSTLE TO MAKE MONDAY OCT 5TH A REALITY. WE HAVE GOT TO DEMONSTRATE AND COUNTER-ATTACK THIS GOVERNMENTAL TERRORISM.

CONTACT: BRO. DAMON MCGHEE, BLACK AUTONOMY INTERNATIONAL (770) 972-5002. OR AT THE E-MAIL ADDRESS blanarcho@hotmail.com. IF I AM OUT, PLEASE LEAVE A MESSAGE AND I WILL RETURN YOUR CALL. WE WILL BE PUTTING MORE INFO OUT ON THIS AS THE DAYS PROGRESS, PLEASE CONTACT US WITH SPECIFIC QUESTIONS OR E-MAIL SIS. MARPESSA AT nattyreb@ix.netcom.com.

INDIVIDUAL/ORGANIZATIONAL ENDORSEMENTS (as of 9/30/98)

Black Autonomy International
Afrikan Frontline Network
International Concerned Family and Friends of
Mumia Abu-Jamal, DC Chapter
REAL JUSTICE!
M'Backe House of Hope
Black Information Television, DE
Million Man March LOC, DE
(Contact Sis. Marpessa to add your name here)

REMINDER: Please keep sending in signatures for the [letter to the CBC on HR 254](#) that was sent out yesterday, e-mail nattyreb@ix.netcom.com if you need an additional copy [or check the link]. The site at <http://afrikan.net> also has more info on this whole situation and the URGENT NEED for MAXIMUM INVOLVEMENT from as many freedom-loving people as possible!

WE MUST BUILD A STRONG, PRINCIPALLLY UNIFIED, UNITED FRONT AROUND OUR SISTA ASSATA SHAKUR, OUR SISTAS AND BROTHAS IN EXILE, AND CUBAN SISTAS AND BROTHAS! LET US UNITE PRINCIPALLY!!! COME TO DC ON MONDAY, OCTOBER 5TH AND DENOUNCE HR 254!!

[Return to Assata Index](#)

Petition to the Congressional Black Caucus

FROM: Marpessa Kupendua, INTERNET:nattyreb@ix.netcom.com
 DATE: 9/28/98 8:00 PM
 Re: !*Call for Signatures for Letter to CBC Re: HR254

PLEASE DISTRIBUTE WIDELY

=====

Thanks to the excellent writing of Sis. JoNina Abron and Atty. Joan Gibbs, members of the Harambee Collective in solidarity with this letter-writing protest campaign are submitting the following letter for signatures for all of those who wish to make it plain to the members of the Congressional Black Caucus that we vehemently oppose their action/inaction in this latest attempt by the U.S. Government to forceably extradite Sis. Assata Shakur and other political exiles to the U.S., trampling on the rights of Cuba to grant political asylum to whoever they see fit.

Please format your signatures as follows:

Name - Title/Affiliation - City/State

Please send your signatures to nattyreb@ix.netcom.com

and a final version of the letter with signatures will be sent out the first week of October by e-mail, fax and postal mail to the CBC.

We are also encouraging folks to print out the letter and collect signatures off-line beyond that time frame so that this will be an ongoing and as broad-based a campaign as possible. Please put these letters on your literature tables, at your places of worship, sororities/fraternities, social hang-outs, apartment buildings, etc., and mail them in to the CBC at the address below. Please post this letter to your web sites, send to the editor of your local newspapers, call-in to talk radio, and include information on Assata in any educational forums, conferences, or events that are upcoming. We hope that this can be a continual protest as well as an education for all those who may otherwise be unaware of the severity of this situation and would like to get this as widely distributed as possible.

Also, please feel free to amend this letter or compose your own personal letter to send to congresspersons who cooperated with this dangerous piece of legislation.

=====

October, 1998

The Honorable Maxine Waters
 Chairperson
 Congressional Black Caucus
 United States House of Representatives
 330 Cannon House Office Building
 Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Ms. Waters:

As Black activists and community organizers, we are outraged at the Congressional Black Caucus for its support of H.R. 254, passed in the House on September 14, 1998, expressing the sense of Congress that, inter alia, "the Government of Cuba should

extradite to the United States convicted murderer Joanne Chesimard in order for her to complete her life sentence for the murder of New Jersey State Trooper Werner Foerster. . ." By advocating the return of Black political refugee Assata Shakur (Joanne Chesimard) from Cuba to the United States--the primary intent of H.R. 254--the CBC has taken an unconscionable action against Black political dissent in America.

For over 30 years, Ms. Shakur has been one of those dissenters, and that is why today she lives in forced exile in Cuba. Because of her commitment to the liberation of African people in the United States, her defiance in the face of her brutalization and torture by New Jersey State troopers, and lastly her heroic liberation from prison,

Assata Shakur is a heroine to thousands, if not millions, of people of African descent in the United States and to an even greater number of people around the world. Earlier this year, for an example, following New Jersey Governor Christine Whitman's offering of first a \$50,000 bounty for Ms. Shakur's capture and return to New Jersey, an "open letter" signed by hundreds of organizations and individuals in and outside the United States was sent to Governor Whitman.

Ms. Shakur was a primary target of a campaign of which CBC members are well aware--the infamous FBI counterintelligence Program launched against the Black Liberation Movement in 1967. COINTELPRO was one of the most violent and criminal efforts in American history to destroy the right of Black people in this country to organize against racism, poverty, police brutality and other issues that plague our communities to this day. In the words of the Church Committee's 1976 report to the U.S. Senate:

"...Many of the techniques used [in COINTELPRO] would be intolerable in a democratic society....The American people need to be assured that never again will an agency of the government be permitted to conduct a secret war against those citizens it considers threats to the established order." Ms. Shakur belonged to the Black Panther Party, whose destruction, according to the Church Committee, was the primary objective of COINTELPRO.

As a result of COINTELPRO, hundreds of African Americans, including perhaps yourself and other members of the Caucus, were targeted for surveillance, harassment, jailed and/or outright murdered. (See, for example, Lennox Hinds, "Illusions of Justice: Human Rights Violations in the United States," Iowa: School of Social Work, University of Iowa, 1978; Kenneth O'Reilly, "Racial Matters: The FBI's Secret File on Black America, 1960-1972," New York: Free Press, 1989; Kenneth O'Reilly, "Black Americans: The FBI Files," New York: Carroll & Graf Publishers, Inc. 1994).

Falsely accusing Black activists of crimes they did not commit was one of the FBI's favorite tactics. For example, we are sure you are aware of the case of Geronimo Pratt, a former leader of the Los Angeles Chapter of the Black Panther Party, who spent twenty-seven years in prison for a murder that the FBI knew he could not have committed because he was hundreds of miles away at the time.

Similarly, at the time of her arrest on the New Jersey turnpike in May, 1973, Ms. Shakur was "wanted" on federal and state charges for her alleged involvement in nearly every violent crime in New York that involved a Black woman. The FBI opened its "CHESROB" file after the capture of Ms. Shakur. Subsequently, Ms. Shakur was indicted on charges of robbery, armed robbery, kidnapping, attempted murder and murder, all of which were dismissed or juries found her not guilty. In March, 1977, she received a life sentence for the New Jersey shootings--a crime for which she steadfastly maintains her innocence.

Consequently, Ms. Shakur escaped from New Jersey's Clinton Correctional Institute in November, 1979, and was eventually granted political asylum by the government of Cuba.

Dear President Castro,

I am writing to clarify my position on a resolution recently passed by the United States House of Representatives on September 14, 1998.

I, and some of the Members of the Congressional Black Caucus, mistakenly voted for House Concurrent Resolution 254 which called on the Government of Cuba to extradite to the United States Joanne Chesimard and all other individuals who have fled the United States from political persecution and received political asylum in Cuba. Joanne Chesimard was the birth name of a political activist known to most Members of the Congressional Black Caucus as Assata Shakur.

For the record, I am opposed to the resolution.

By way of explanation, the Republican leadership quietly slipped this bill onto the accelerated suspension calendar last week as one of thirteen (13) bills that had been announced that same day. The suspension calendar is supposed to be reserved for non-controversial legislation like naming federal buildings and post offices. But, the Republican leadership chose to push this provision in an apparent effort to look tough on Cuba for The November elections.

As evidence of their deceptive intent, the resolution did not mention Assata Shakur, but chose to only call her Joanne Chesimard.

Unfortunately, none of our offices were alerted to the fact that this legislation was coming up for a vote by any of the numerous advocacy groups that monitor related issues.

Once I discovered the nature of this deception, I prepared a statement of opposition, which I delivered on the floor the next day. I unequivocally stated that a mistake was made and I would have voted against the legislation.

Allow me to explain why I am opposed to this measure.

I support the right of all nations to grant political asylum to individuals fleeing political persecution. The United States grants political asylum to individuals from all over the world who successfully prove they are fleeing political persecution. Other sovereign nations have the same right, including the sovereign nation of Cuba.

Although there are Members of Congress that may disagree with particular decisions made by other sovereign governments regarding political asylum, it is the inviolate right of legitimate governments to grant asylum pursuant to the principles of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. I will fight to maintain the ability of political refugees to find asylum in United States and respect the right of other governments to be able to grant political asylum. Just as we maintain the right to grant political asylum for individuals from Cuba, we must respect the right of the government of Cuba to grant political asylum for individuals from the U.S. fleeing political persecution.

I believe that the current thirty-seven year embargo on Cuba is a relic of a Cold War past, now over, and is primarily hurting the poor and working people of Cuba. I was encouraged by the words of the Pope in his visit to Cuba this year, and look forward to a new era of US-Cuban relations. Part of these efforts include work to allow humanitarian and medical aid for Cuba.

The second reason I oppose this measure is because I respect the right of Assata Shakur to seek political asylum. Assata Shakur has maintained that she was persecuted as a result of her political beliefs and political affiliations. As a result, she left the United States and sought political asylum in Cuba, where she still resides.

In a sad and shameful chapter of our history, during the 1960s and 1970s, many civil rights, Black Power and other politically active groups were secretly targeted by the FBI for prosecution based on their political beliefs. The groups and individuals targeted included Rev. Martin Luther King Jr., Cesar Chavez, officials of the American Friends Service Committee, National Council of Churches and other civil rights, religious and peace movement leaders.

However, the most vicious and reprehensible acts were taken against the leaders and organizations associated with the Black Power or Black Liberation Movement. Assata Shakur, was a member of the Black Panther Party, one of the leading groups associated with the Black Liberation Movement. The Black Panther Party was the primary target of U.S. domestic government political harrassment and persecution during this era.

This illegal, clandestine political persecution was wrong in 1973, and remains wrong today.

I hope that my position is clear. I hope to see a new era of U.S.-Cuban relations in the future.

Sincerely,

[signature]

Maxine Waters, Chair
Congressional Black Caucus

[attachment to the letter]

PERSONAL EXPLANATION (House of Representatives - September 15,1998)

Page: H7785

Ms. WATERS. Mr. Speaker, I inadvertently voted 'yea' on rollcall vote No. 428. If I had been aware of this, I would have changed my vote to 'nay' instead of 'yea.'

[end]

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Statement from Sundiata Acoli to Oct 5 Demonstration

From: JGibbs3926@aol.com

Date: Sat, 3 Oct 1998 10:58:41 EDT

Statement of Sundiata Acoli to Demonstrations Against House Resolution 254

Greetings! Thank you all for coming to the Nation's capitol to demonstrate your opposition to, anger and disgust at Res. 254 called for the extradition of Assata Shakur from Cuba. The resolution states "Assata and the driver [i.e. me] opened fire with automatic pistols, striking Trooper Werner Foerster twice in the chest and Trooper James Harper in the left shoulder...then turned Trooper Foerster's own weapon on him firing an additional two bullets into his head execution style..."

Those are very emotional words, but to any humane person all such deaths are tragic. Zayd Shakur the other passenger and our companion also died from trooper gunfire during the same incident. His death is equally tragic but these tragedies are compounded by Gov. Whitman's attempt to use Assata and the

trooper's death to whip up hysterics solely to revive her faded-out political career. And its particularly tragic that many Congressional Black Caucus (CBC) members meekly went along with Whitman's charade. Some didn't and I commend all those who did not.

Those CBC members who did vote for the resolution acted as though they have forgotten the real history of African people in this country or the real way African motorists and other people of color are treated on the New Jersey Turnpike even today. It was worst in 1973 when Assata, Zayd and I were stopped there.

In the same manner, New Jersey State Troopers recently opened fire without provocation, on three basketball try-out students, two Blacks and one Puerto Ricans, in a van: Trooper Harper opened fire on Assata sitting in the car with her hands in the air. Trooper Foerster opened fire on me and shot me in the hand as I struggled to prevent him from killing me. It does not take a rocket scientists to figure that since he fired one bullet into my hand, and his weapon which was recovered at the scene was found to have been fired only twice, that it's mathematically impossible for two bullets from his own weapon to be found in his head. They did find two bullets in his head, though, and both were revolver bullets. The only two revolvers on the scene belong to Troopers Foerster and Harper. The other three weapons recovered at the scene and attributed to me and my passengers were each semi-automatic pistols.

The continuing tragedy is the twenty five years of lies, hysterical and cover-up to hide what really happened on the turnpike in May 1973. But truth crushed to earth will rise again. Assata, Zayd and I were only three of many Black Panther Party (BPP) members and other political activists of the 1960s, 1970s and beyond who were targeted by COINTELPRO, then branded as criminals so that we could be hunted down, shot and killed like animals; or if we survived, imprisoned for life. But that is a price many of us willing paid during that era to struggle for our people's freedom. Its because of the struggle and sacrifices of people like Assata that many CBC members and other middle-class blacks are where they are today.

Instead of voting for a resolution demanding Assata's extradition, the CBC should be sponsoring a resolution demanding that the charges against Assata be dropped and calling for a congressional investigation, not only into the 1973 turnpike incident, but also into an investigation of COINTELPRO's dirty hands in setting up so many political activists of that era: many who are still in prison today and must be freed if we ever to bring a principled closure to the 1960s. Anything less is a sell-out.

And last, Assata has given and gives so much to us. It was recently brought to my attention how little we give back to Assata. So I want your participation in an upcoming national fundraiser to give something back to Assata. The details of this fundraiser will be provided you. The gist of it involves a national fundraiser to provide Assata's daughter and her family with funds to travel frequently to see Assata and to maintain frequent telephone contact with her when away. I know its a gift that's dear to her heart and I urge you to give the max so that Assata can see/talk with her children and her grandchild as often as possible. It will make her very happy.

I thank you.

Hands Off Assata!

Free Mumia and All Political Prisoners and Prisoners of War!

Sundiata Acoli

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**REPORT ON 10/5/98 DAY OF OUTRAGE
FOR ASSATA SHAKUR!**

=====
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE - 10/15/98
=====

STEERING COMMITTEE, AD HOC COALITION TO KEEP
ASSATA FREE -- REPORT ON 10/5/98 DAY OF OUTRAGE
FOR ASSATA SHAKUR!

HANDS OFF ASSATA! HANDS OFF CUBA!
ALL POWER 2 DA PEOPLE!

BACKGROUND

On Sept. 14, 1998, the U.S. House of Representatives (with the Senate concurring) passed House Concurrent Resolution 254, which states:

1. The Government of Cuba should return to the United States convicted murderer Joanne Chesimard in order for her to complete her life sentence for the murder of New Jersey State Trooper Werner Foerster;
2. The Government of Cuba should return to the United States all other individuals who have fled the United States to avoid prosecution or confinement for criminal offenses and who are currently living freely in Cuba in order for them to face prosecution or confinement in the United States; and
3. The return from Cuba to the United States of all individuals who have fled the United States to avoid prosecution or confinement for criminal offenses and who are currently living in Cuba should be a top priority for the United States Government.

Twenty-three of the thirty-six members of the Congressional Black Caucus voted for the resolution. Thirteen did not vote. The resolution is non-binding, meaning that it does not have the force of law. Nevertheless, attorneys for the National Council of Black Lawyers said that this "sense of Congress" could be used as a basis for any attack on our beloved Sister Assata and is a sizeable threat to her continued "freedom."

From the Organizer, DAMON MCGEE of BLACK AUTONOMY

INTERNATIONAL:

"I first received word concerning H CON RES 254 from Sis Thandisizwe Chimurenga of Crossroads Support Network, and more information from Bro. Kedar of Crossroads (my cousin and father of Assata's grandchild). What I read of H CON RES 254 at the AfroCuba Web Site literally alarmed me.

"I felt that there should have been an immediate response to this congressional resolution, in terms of demonstrations and protests as soon as they were handed down. The life and example of Sis. Assata Shakur, a BPP member/organizer, a facilitator of the Underground and BLA, affectionately and rightly called the Heart and Soul of the Black Liberation Army, her sacrifice and the sacrifice of all PP'S and POW'S and Exile's, I'm sure, motivates us all and sustains us to continue to fight for their freedom and the ultimate freedom of all of our people.

"I decided right then to call for a demonstration on behalf of Sis. Assata against this congressional fascist onslaught. I called it A DAY OF OUTRAGE FOR SIS ASSATA SHAKUR because I was outraged that the Congress i. e. the white government would move on Sis. Assata so boldly and the CBC would fully assist the Congress in this imperialist move so nakedly. TOTAL SELLOUT!!!!"

Indeed, it is our young people who are suffering tremendously under the overt war against Black youth in this country. Damon was joined by activists and concerned community people around the country who organized the Oct. 5 demonstration against H CON RES 254 on Capitol Hill in Washington.

The October 5 Day of Outrage for Assata Shakur was endorsed by:

Black Autonomy International
 UNIA-ACL Div.330 Wash. D.C.
 Million Man March/Million Woman March Alumni Foundation of Wash. D.C.
 ICFMAJ/DC Chapter
 New Afrikan Liberation Front
 Afrikan Frontline Network
 REAL JUSTICE!
 M'Backe House of Hope
 Million Man March Local Organizing Committee, DE, Inc.

PREPARATION FOR THE DEMONSTRATION

Out of town organizers arrived in DC Sunday afternoon and began leafletting and postering local hot spots including the campus of Howard University, their student center and radio station, alerting the students that were there of the traitorous actions of the CBC in their collusion with the extradition attempts of the US Congress specifically to Sis. Assata Shakur and to other US exiles living in Cuba in general. The point was made that Cuba's sovereignty was not the business of the US to be interfering with and that we would expose the CBC and Congress for acting as Gov. Christine Whitman's lackeys and henchpersons in unanimously upholding H. Con Res. 254. Students were appalled to learn that this action had been secretly and quietly carried out without any publicity surrounding it, that none of the media-picked "black leaders" publicly condemned it, nor had they received any word at all on campus of the activity we had planned for the next day.

At 10:00 a.m. Monday Coalition organizers were out leafletting and educating at a protest called by the NAACP outside the US Supreme Court where approximately 200 people from around the country gathered to protest the lack of black clerks there. Again, many attendees were shocked to learn of H. Con Res. 254, which had not been articulated to them by the organizers of this demonstration, and many became enraged at the fact that this information had not been shared with them by their own organization. Several young people pledged to join the noontime demonstration for Assata, while others were reluctantly forced to return to their waiting buses and return to their home states.

THE PRESS CONFERENCE

Some confusion ensued over where the press conference was to take place, and organizers ended up holding their press conference quite a distance from where we (and perhaps others) thought we would be at noontime. The press conference was covered by the Final Call and other alternative press, including a radio interview hurriedly and graciously facilitated by strong, determined and committed Sis. Elisheba Ali with Bro. Bey. Press conference participants included Demo organizer Damon McGee of Black Autonomy International, former PP Komboa Ervin of Black Autonomy International, former PP Herman Ferguson of the New Afrikan Liberation Front, Sis. Marpessa of Afrikan Frontline Network, and Sis. Mary Killington of the PG-RNA who read a solidarity statement from Bro. Imari Obadele. The righteous information put out at the press conference included the following demands:

1. REPEAL House CON RES 254.
2. CONVENE hearings immediately into the COINTELPRO war on political dissent, particularly its war on the Black Panther Party and other Black revolutionary organizations, specifically to make restitution to all COINTELPRO targeted victims of the Federal Bureau of Investigations as is public record within the findings of the Church Committee hearings.
3. PARDON AND/OR GRANT AN EXECUTIVE CLEMENCY TO ASSATA SHAKUR and all COINTELPRO-targeted victims forced into political exile during the war on Black revolutionaries.
4. GRANT A GENERAL AND UNCONDITIONAL AMNESTY to all political prisoners and prisoners of war.

Although press releases had been sent out to all major news organizations by hardworking press coordinators in D.C. and elsewhere, and in fact many were present to cover the Clinton "Sexgate" distraction, mainstream news organs refused to turn their cameras our way, which was not unexpected.

THE DEMONSTRATION

As soon as we set up our picket line we were immediately beset by police with paddy wagons and police cars with angry police menacing demonstrators, but all were handled deftly by NCBL attorneys Gilda Ali, Maynard Curry and Ron Issacs. In light of the many students present, organizers grudgingly agreed to procure the permit demanded in order to prevent mass arrests before the demonstration even had a chance to begin as we were told by police that our demonstration was "illegal". A grave error was made, however, when organizers allowed the demonstration leader, Damon McGee, to be taken to procure this permit, missing the entire early portion of the demonstration and causing great concern regarding his safety after his prolonged absence.

Approximately 50 persons demonstrated at the peak of this activity including students, adults and elders from Virginia, Washington, Philadelphia, NJ, NY, Delaware, Tennessee and Georgia (two in wheelchairs) who chanted down the CBC and Congress for their actions. We were constantly given a variety of orders from the police with every step that we took, such as having too many people picketing, too many people picketing in one place, too many people not walking in a straight line, and other ridiculous infringements of our First Amendment rights. Confusion continued to abound for approximately the first half hour of our

demonstration as we were moved from place to place so rapidly that half of our comrades were on one block while the other half were on another block. This can never be allowed to occur again; we were fragmented by the police and others when we should have stayed together.

Nonetheless, this high spirited demonstration was in full swing at approximately 12:15 despite *all* obstacles placed in our path. Chants were righteously put forth through a karaoke machine and Neal of the Anarchist Black Cross worked hard all day offering "Hands Off Assata" T-shirts and informational booklets to the dozens of passersby. Alternative news organizations videotaped and photographed the demonstration to document the entire day and ensure further that any actions taken against us would be on tape, and we were much appreciative of their presence.

We then moved to the Sam Rayburn Office building where a DC organizer had learned the CBC was "meeting" (later discovered to have been inside emotionally pleading for the political life of their great horny hope, Bill Clinton). A security guard inside the building told us that we would not confront the CBC as these cowards would probably use an underground tunnel and not exit the front of the building as so many other officials had during the demonstration into their waiting limousines and taxicabs. A young man-child of the sun shouted with great distinction: "CBC don't speak for me, they don't want Assata free!". Passing cars honked in solidarity. We leafletted everyone who exited and entered the building and ended the protest by calling out the names of each CBC member and exposing their collusion until approximately 2:30 p.m.

We received much support from Sis. JoNina Abron, Sis. Joan Gibbs, and many too numerous to name here who, although unable to attend, worked feverishly at our side helping defend our Sista and doing all that they could to make this demonstration the success that it was.

Let it further be known that we each represented close to 100 people who signed a protest letter to Maxine Waters with every CBC member carbon copied. We demanded that each member of the CBC publicly denounce this Resolution at a nationwide press conference in order to hold any credibility amongst the keepers of the revolutionary flame that propelled them into office in the first place.

CONCERNS RAISED AND ADDRESSED:

The Steering Committee was cautioned by organizers not directly working with the Ad Hoc Coalition who left frantic telephone messages the morning of the demonstration that we were to keep the focus on Assata and not on Maxine Waters, since Waters had entered a statement on the record that she mistakenly voted "yes" on H Con Res 254 when she meant to vote "no", had written a letter to Fidel Castro, and had pledged to support a call for COINTELPRO hearings on a radio program on WBAI.

In building this demonstration the focus had always been and was not going to fail to focus on Sis. Assata -- yet still some demonstrators brought signs with slogans like "I Support Assata Shakur - Maxine Waters." These signs were not used during the demonstration for some very specific reasons.

1. Organizers felt strongly that Maxine Waters would not have attempted to distance herself from this Resolution had she not been e-mailed, faxed and mailed letters protesting this, that writing a letter to Fidel Castro was a desperate attempt to save face as Castro had already stated that he would not extradite Sis. Assata to the US during the Pope's visit to Cuba in January, and that he was not the one posing a threat to her in the first place. Her letter would have been taken more sincerely had it been written to her colleagues in Congress and that she and other CBC members who claim to have made a mistake or had reasons to not be present for this vote needed to hold a nationwide press conference denouncing the Resolution.

2. Maxine Waters had cursed and threatened young organizer Damon McGee with "personally destroying him" in a 30-minute telephone harangue at his home and his job if "you people demonstrate on me", that she would "make certain that we paid for taking any such action" and cursed him as an MF, SOB, "doing the work of the white man" and that it would be "you (Damon) and me (herself)" if he dared to continue with this "bullshit". Elder Herman Ferguson of the NALF also publicly acknowledged being cursed out by Maxine Waters, but her cursing our young Bro. included threatening him as Damon related "that if the demonstration were to occur she would come after me and crush me. She declared it a personal vendetta." Maxine Waters' campaign of telephone harassment extended even beyond this young bro. and Elder Bro. Herman Ferguson, but even included a phone call to a lawyer at her home (whose home number is private and not listed), and demanded through her aide that AFN distribute her letter to Castro to everyone on the internet *immediately* upon fax receipt.

Based on all of the above, organizers felt that it was more

necessary than ever to expose this arrogance and campaign of threats and attempted intimidation in the event that any harm did befall our young brother, Damon, and to show the true nature of this woman who days before claimed to be in solidarity with Assata's continued safe asylum on WBAI radio. She bragged to former PP and veteran organizer Herman Ferguson during one of her obscenity-laden phone calls that she had "cussed out four of five people today" and was apparently quite emboldened by her status as CBC chair to disrespect and threaten anyone she so chose to.

That notwithstanding, the focus of the day was **not** on Maxine Waters at all, but on the US Congress and particularly the CBC, of which Maxine Waters is the Chair. We reject the notion that 36 people could not recognize the significance of this bill and could come up with so many excuses for their voting yes or not bothering to vote at all on that day. We believe that it was politically expedient for them to not fight this bill and to blame human rights/political activists for not "bringing it to their attention" was farcical and insulting as their aides and themselves were aware of this bill since it was first introduced by Cong. Barney Franks on 3/30/98, and if there were genuine regret on their parts for somehow "missing" this vote, instead of blaming it on "Republican" bogeymen that they should have quickly and very publicly denounced the Resolution and demanded that it be rescinded, in defense not only of Sis. Assata but of the black activists on whose shoulders their weak-knees all stand.

3. Representatives of the CBC and some organizers had pointed out that this Resolution had "no teeth" and in and of itself was only an "opinion", however NCBL legal experts informed us that this "sense of Congress" could be used as a basis for **any** attack on our beloved Sister and was very definitely a sizeable threat to her continued "freedom." This resolution sets a dangerous precedent and we cannot be lulled into any sort of complacency regarding the goals set forth very clearly within it.

From Komboa Ervin, Black Autonomy International: "There has been very little class analysis of the Black community itself put forward by contemporary nationalist and radical movements since the destruction of the Black Panther Party, (and now we even see attacks on the idea of unity with any other folks except Blacks, even with known political sellouts and cops). In my humble opinion, this is why so much class peace, ideological (religious and conspiracy style) mystification, and Black radicals are now defending people like Maxine Waters on "race unity" and other specious grounds, or taking no action at all to defend a real revolutionary like Assata Shakur when an alleged "friend of Cuba" like Maxine Waters is involved, and deadly legislation is

passed. I don't think the issue is to 'keep Maxine and the CBC informed so they can do the right thing' like some folks have said. They will never do the right thing without mass pressure, including demonstrations.

"I also want to make clear to everyone however, that these demonstrations were not merely about the interests of the Cuban state, as some have tried to characterize our resistance to H. Con. R. 254, even as much as we are gratified over their admirable support of this sister whom they granted asylum. No, the real issue is her right to escape the clutches of the US government after an unjust conviction and destruction of the Black Liberation movement of the 1960's and 70's. This distinction must be made clear. We do not uncritically support any government, because governments act in their own national interests, even if that is in conflict with the rights of an individual.

"Vis a vis any confrontation with imperialism as (part of the international class war), we support Cuba and Assata. But we support Assata and all political exiles even over the national interests of their host asylum countries. I hope that no one in Cuba is fooled by Maxine Waters, or any phony radicals who would sacrifice (and never lift a finger to support) Assata Shakur. I also hope that Cuba will resist this treachery by the CBC and other so-called "progressive Black politicians". The point here I am making is our Black liberation struggle cannot be bound by the dictates of Cuba, Tanzania, Azania or any political party/leader governing such a country, though we may unite in international solidarity. We cannot ever be uncritical of any leader of a nation-state, whether socialist or capitalist, for to do that is to surrender to herd thinking and becoming international intellectual groupies. That is what I consider the Western Left to be at this time.

"I am making these comments to criticize the elements of the so-called American Left which have made comments criticizing the 10/5 demos on grounds that they 'hurt Cuba', 'hurt Assata's case' and slandered a 'friend of Cuba'. This is nonsense of the worst sort and must be exposed and rejected.

"A final word: I think that the 10/5 demos, which were small events and were in some cases disorganized, were still extremely important in showing the CBC that they are being watched and being challenged. It is thus a form of political accountability in support of Assata Shakur. They also raised the issue publicly for the first time, and they separate our true friends and revolutionary internationalists from poseurs, political groupies, and Left wing cultists. Where were they when we needed them to help defend

Assata? Defending Maxine instead...in one form or another.
ONLY THE TRUTH IS REVOLUTIONARY."

4. Youngblood comrade organizer Mustafa Qadir wrote that:
 "We suffered from the physical non-support of so-called revolutionaries and Afrikan organizations at these emergency demos for Assata Shakur. i think We should stress the importance of creating ALLIANCE with one another, especially around someone We all seem to admire. Assata deserves the full support of all Afrikan organizations and this may be a good time to stress that. We got all these negroes screaming black this black that, but when it comes down to supporting and acting on behalf of Afrikan people, those negroes are nowhere to be found. Where were all the college students, frats, sororities, Afrikan and New Afrikan organizations based right in DC?

"For future demos/rallys/events maybe We can form some type of Afrikan Alliance Collective, a group of Afrikans who have communication access to Afrikan organizations. With this type of collective, We can begin to confirm which Afrikan organizations will be able to give time, energy, funds, and people to certain events or around certain issues affecting Our struggle for liberation."

5. Although we chanted "Keep Assata Free" during our demo, after a lengthy discussion following the demo organizers determined that Assata and other political exiles should not be considered "free" at all, in fact, they are still imprisoned in their countries of asylum, kept away from their loved ones and birthplace with the constant threat of US retaliation more present now than ever, making them Political Prisoners in Exile as they are still imprisoned.

6. A follow-up activity was proposed to be held at the UN on Black Solidarity Day (11/2/98) and supporters are strongly encouraged to continue to hold events to give those opposed to the planned kidnapping of Assata Shakur a permanent voice in all alternative gatherings.

SUMMATION

Our work was fruitful and these emergency demos, no matter what their physical number, were successful. They happened first and foremost despite and in spite of external pressure. We tread over hot coals, fought off snakes, pushed away scorpions and spiders, and still put fear in the white government and its negro lackeys.

This movement must catch fire and Assata must be part of **every** campaign going on around human rights/political prisoners, we encourage everyone to take a leading role in pushing forward on our Sista's behalf, forcing the issue of H Con Res 254 and freedom and amnesty for our political prisoners **BACK TO THE TABLE** and exposing the wickedness of those who purport to be working on our collective behalf. We must be so consistent and visible on this matter that the veil of silence, secrecy and betrayal be lifted for the whole world to see. We will not quietly let them sign a death warrant for our Sista, we will not go away, we will not stop fighting for real freedom for our Sista, for if she is not safe, then none of us are safe. Let it be known that this demonstration was conceived by **one young brother** who said, "HELL NO," he would not accept this, and that for this young man to be threatened to be "destroyed" by the CBC Chairperson **is** an outrage that will **not** go unnoticed or be hushed up.

This demonstration was a beginning that put such fear and alarm in the enemy around the issues of PP'S, POW'S, and EXILES that ridiculous lies and outrageous attacks were beset upon the organizers of this demonstration since DAY ONE. Committee members believe that it also was successful in that folks joined us in simultaneous demonstrations in Chicago, Michigan, New York, and in other areas. We should build this coalition and force this government to fulfill our demands for **concrete** follow-through on the Church Committee hearings with total and unconditional amnesty for all PP's, POW's, and Exiles. We want Sis. Assata and all of our freedom fighters home with us. The true success of this effort is whether or not we continue.... and we must. We love our Sista Assata and will continue to let the world know!

KEEP THE PRESSURE ON!

HANDS OFF ASSATA!

HANDS OFF CUBA!

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(END)

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