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Neutralize and destroy: The continuing vendetta against the Panthers

*Part 2**A series by Larry Pinkney and Gerald Sanders*

Nothing had adequately prepared the Black Panther Party for the sustained, nationwide, amoral, brutal onslaught unleashed against it by the U.S. government and police. Despite the physical decimation of the Black Panther Party, these attacks upon Black Panther veterans and against the true legacy of the Black Panther Party continue in concert with corrupt and racist media.

No boundaries, no decency, no limits

To really comprehend the extent to which the vendetta against Black Panther Party veterans continues today, it is important to realize that there are absolutely no boundaries, no decency and no limits to what tactics the U.S. government and its surrogates have used and continue to use to crush – i.e. neutralize – Black political dissent in America.

“For trying to better our conditions, Black organizations and their members are investigated, harassed, illegally railroaded to jail and many times beaten or killed” [see The Black Panther newspaper Intercommunal News Service, Oct. 21, 1972, page 6].

As politically active members of the Black Panther Party, young Black men and women were “instilled with discipline and determination” and “trained to think critically;” a fact which did not and has not escaped the insidious notice of the U. S. government [see http://www.itsabouttimebpp.com/Our_Stories/Chapter5/From_Larry_to_Brother_Billy_X.html].

The racist, self-fulfilling fear on the part of U.S. authorities that Black Panther Party veterans will serve to pass on “discipline,” “determination” and the art of “critical think(ing)” to yet another generation of young Black women and men is utterly terrifying to the white American establishment of today.

There can be no illusions as to the depths to which the U.S. government and its surrogates have stooped and will continue to stoop in an effort to crush dissent and the legitimate political and economic aspirations of Black people collectively.

Be clear about this: The vendetta against former members of the Black Panther Party is by no means limited to men. The Black Panther Party included many brilliant, determined, courageous, creative and utterly committed women. The fact is that the Black Panther Party could never have been viable without their integral and significant work, guidance and leadership.

From Kathleen Cleaver to Assata Shakur, from Erica Huggins to Barbara Easley Cox, from Tarika Lewis to Safiya Bu to Elaine Brown, from Afeni Shakur (mother of the late rapper Tupac Shakur), the many “sisters” of the Black Panther Party nationwide have incurred the spiteful ire of the U.S. government and its surrogates for their service to Black people.

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Assata Shakur

Former members of the Black Panther Party are today still held in U.S. prisons or are under continuing judicial or police assault or are in forced exile outside of the United States. Of those in exile, perhaps the most well known is sister Assata Shakur [see "Assata: An Autobiography"].

After having been critically wounded by New Jersey State Troopers and subsequently tortured in prison, former New York Black Panther Assata Shakur fled into exile in Cuba, where she was granted political asylum and remains to this day.

She poignantly stated re the media's depiction of the Black Panther Party that "The press always reported that the police had 'uncovered' a large arsenal of weapons. Later, when the 'arsenal' turned out to be a few legally registered rifles and shotguns, the press never printed a word" [see "We Want Freedom: A Life in the Black Panther Party" by Mumia Abu-Jamal, page 152]. The insidious complicity of the media with regard to disinformation, misinformation or no information was and remains self-evident.

Since April of 1995, when white supremacists committed the home grown Oklahoma City terrorist bombing, killing 168 people and wounding and maiming numerous others, white supremacist home-grown terrorist organizations continue to run rampant in America and are coddled by a cynically racist U.S. government and judicial system.

In stark contrast, on May 2, 2005, the U.S. "Justice" Department, flaunting both international law and Cuban law, announced the posting of an outrageous \$1 million bounty on the head of Assata Shakur, who is living legally in Cuba [see 'The Fugitive, Why has the FBI placed a million-dollar bounty on Assata Shakur?', by Kathleen Cleaver, http://www.itsabouttimebpp.com/Political_Prisoners/The_Fugitive_by_Sis_Kathleen_Cleaver.html].

The bounty on Assata Shakur is reminiscent of the bounties on the heads of uncooperative escaped Black slaves. It is obvious that the U.S. government intends to re-shackle or murder Assata Shakur as part of the continuing vendetta against the Panthers.

Missing the forest for the trees

What is often missed is the denial factor: The sustained viciousness of the U.S. government towards Black people in general and former members of the Black Panther Party in particular may sometimes seem unfathomable.

The insidious callousness of the counterintelligence program known as Cointelpro, directed in large measure against the Black Panther Party, almost baffles the mind. "The response of J. Edgar Hoover's Federal Bureau of Investigation, a 'hard hitting' national counterintelligence program (Cointelpro), was of surpassing ruthlessness in its contempt for law and the civil rights of citizens" [see "H. Rap Brown/Jamil Al-Amin" by Ekwueme Michael Thelwell, *The Nation*, March 18, 2002, page 29].

In coming segments pertaining to this continuing vendetta, we shall delineate a number of cases including those of Mumia Abu-Jamal, The Angola 3, Kamau Sadiki, Marshall "Eddie" Conway and others. The vendetta continues, but the resistance intensifies.

Larry Pinkney is a veteran of the Black Panther Party, the former Minister of Interior of the Republic of New Africa, a former political prisoner and the only American to have successfully self-authored his civil/political rights case to the United Nations under the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. Email him at Leconsult@aol.com. Gerald Sanders is also a Black Panther Party veteran, a member of the Labor Action Committee and a leader of the largest demonstration thus far, in Oakland, in support of Mumia Abu-Jamal. Email him at gsanders@jps.net. Read Part 1 of this series at <http://www.sfbayview.com/040506/neutralize040506.shtml>.