

Dr. Mutulu Shakur is a lifelong organizer, revolutionary health worker, and freedom fighter in the New Afrikan Independence Movement. He was a political prisoner for 36 years, recently released from captivity. Even during his captivity as a political prisoner in the federal system, Dr. Shakur remained an active voice and worker in the Black Freedom Struggle.

Early Life

Mutulu Shakur was born Jeral Wayne Williams on August 8, 1950, in Baltimore, Maryland. At age seven his family, including his mother and sister, moved to Jamaica, Queens, New York City. He often served as an advocate for his household at an early age since his mother was disabled with blindness. The situation of negotiating the social service system challenged young Williams to develop his activist skills. Through this experience young Jeral learned that the system did not operate in the interests of his community and the necessity of grassroots Black people to control their own affairs.

Teen-Aged Revolutionary

Jeral Williams decided to become an activist in the Black Power movement at the age of 16. He encountered Revolutionary Action Movement (RAM) leader and Malcolm X associate Herman Ferguson. Jeral would start working with Ferguson in RAM activities. With Ferguson, he would join newly founded Provisional Government of the Republic of New Africa (PGRNA), which endorsed the founding of an independent New Afrikan (Black) Republic and the establishment of an independent Black government in the southern U.S. He began to work with the security of the PGRNA. The PGRNA security and the Detroit police had a major gun battle at the Black Nationalist second annual national gathering in Detroit in March 1969. The Detroit police retaliated to one of its officers being fatally shot by invading the gathering. With tear gas in the air and bullets flying, young Jeral would place his body over Ferguson and his companion (later wife) Iyaluua to protect them from gunfire.

While working with the PGRNA, Dr. Shakur worked very closely with the Jamaica-Queens branch of the Black Panther Party, led by his classmate Anthony Laborde (fka Abdul Majid). Shakur was responsible for political education for the Jamaica-Queen branch, while never formally joining the BPP. His close association with Harlem BPP members Zayd and Lumumba Shakur and their father Aba, influenced him to take their last name "Shakur." As many PGRNA members, he abandoned his birth (or slave) name and his elder Sonny Carson named him "Mutulu," (from the KwaZulu language of southern Africa) which means "someone who helps you get to where you are going." Mutulu worked with Carson, his "street father," to bring unity among New York Street organizations (so-called gangs).

Health Care Activist and Institution Builder

Mutulu Shakur was a key leader in the development of people's medicine, particularly through acupuncture. The Puerto Rican nationalist Young Lords Party led a community takeover

of Bronx, New York's Lincoln Hospital in 1970. The takeover led to the establishment of the Lincoln Detox program by the Young Lords, the Black Panther Party, and the PGRNA. Lincoln Detox was innovative in utilizing acupuncture to assist the withdrawal from heroin addiction. The program believed that understanding of the conditions that led to addiction to narcotics was essential to successful withdrawal and recovery. Patients in the program were required to do political education. Shakur served as a political education teacher and counselor for patients withdrawing from heroin addiction. Shakur and other Lincoln Detox staff advocated detoxification through acupuncture and political education as opposed to methadone, which had its own addictive qualities. This advocacy conflicted with the mainstream medical hierarchy, including the American Medical Association.

Witnessing the efficacy of acupuncture, Shakur worked to become a Doctor of Acupuncture in 1976. Dr. Shakur also served as the Assistant Director of Lincoln Detox until 1978. During this time, Lincoln Detox received recognition from the national and international health care associations as the National Institute of Drug Abuse, National Acupuncture Research Society, and the World Academic Society of Acupuncture.

Dr. Shakur co-founded (with Dr. Richard Delaney) the Black Acupuncture Advisory Association of North America (BAAANA) and the Harlem Institute of Acupuncture after the close of Lincoln Detox in 1978. The BAAANA clinic located in Harlem treated thousands of indigent and elderly patients who generally have no access to treatment of this type. BAAANA also served as a vehicle for training doctors of acupuncture and alternative health care.

By the late 1970's Dr. Shakur's work in acupuncture and drug detoxification was both nationally and internationally known and he was invited to address members of the medical community around the world. Dr. Shakur lectured on his work at many medical conferences and was invited to the People's Republic of China. In addition, in his work for the Commission for Racial Justice for the National Council of Churches, he developed their anti-drug program.

Human Rights Activist

Shakur focused much of his political activism on the support and freedom of Political Prisoners and Prisoners of War (P.O.W). Political Prisoners are activists incarcerated due to their political beliefs or activities. Prisoners of War were those engaged in armed struggle or self-defense captured by the state. He was an organizer in the defense of his mentor Herman Ferguson, who faced conspiracy charges due to his affiliation with RAM. Shakur founded the National Committee to Free Political Prisoners, to do organizing to support Political Prisoners and P.O.W.s. Along with Afeni Shakur and Yaasmyn Fula, he founded the National Task Force for Cointelpro Litigation and Research to investigate the FBI and other government agencies role in infiltrating the Black Power movement, manufacturing evidence against activists, engaging in divide and conquer tactics, and other forms of counter-insurgency war against the freedom struggle. Shakur engaged in work to support the legal defense of countless Political Prisoners, including Imari Obadele and the RNA 11, Rev. Ben Chavis and the Wilmington 10,

Reverend Charles Koen, Geronimo (Pratt) jiJaga, Assata Shakur and Sundiata Acoli and other members of the Black Liberation Army (BLA).

Dr. Shakur is also a Pan-Afrikanist and Internationalist. He describes his ideological stand as a “revolutionary nationalist anti-imperialist.” As a New Afrikan nationalist, he supported the fight against exploitation globally, particularly in Zimbabwe and South Africa versus settler colonialism. He also worked to build solidarity relationships with Puerto Rican nationalists and white anti-imperialists.

Captivity

The BLA claimed responsibility for the expropriation of an armored truck in Nyack, New York in October 1981. Months later, Dr. Shakur and 10 others were indicted by a federal grand jury under federal conspiracy laws called “Racketeer Influenced and Corrupt Organization” Act (RICO). RICO was originally developed to aid the government in its prosecution of organized crime. Shakur was charged with conspiracy and participation in a revolutionary, clandestine organization that expropriated money from several banks and armored vehicles, between December 1976 to October 1981. The prosecution claimed the funds supported community-based institutions, political organizing and mobilizations, families of Political Prisoners, solidarity with African liberation movements, and building of a network to oppose white supremacist and right-wing paramilitary activity. Dr. Shakur was also charged with participation in the 1979 prison escape of Assata Shakur. Dr. Shakur eluded a national manhunt for five years, but was arrested in Los Angeles, California in February 1986. He was convicted of the RICO conspiracy and sentenced to 60 years.

Dr. Shakur continued his revolutionary work while in prison. He worked to bring about peace between various factions of prisoners in the facilities he was held. Violence between prisoners decreased in most of these prisons during his captivity. He encouraged education through teaching history and culture behind the walls to help the transformation of fellow prisoners from criminal mentalities to social and political consciousness.

Dr. Shakur has also been acknowledged by Hip Hop artists, partially due to his relationship to Tupac Shakur, who he raised during and after his marriage to the Rap artist’s mother, former Black Panther Afeni Shakur. Shakur initiated and produced a Hip Hop project with artists on both sides of the prison walls titled *Dare to Struggle*, which was dedicated to his son Tupac and released in 2006.

He advocated for a Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) process in the U.S., like post-apartheid South Africa, in the U.S. particularly for Cointelpro-era Political Prisoners and exiles. He argued countries around the globe utilized a TRC process as an alternative dispute mechanism to resolve matters of historic political repression and injustice.

Dr. Shakur was targeted for political repression even after his imprisonment. He was placed in segregation from other prisoners for trumped up “infractions” like organizing a fundraiser for children of incarcerated parents, the *Dare to Struggle* project, and speaking to a college audience over the phone on the topic of truth and reconciliation. The federal parole commission denied his scheduled release in 2016, criminalizing the above “violations” and his speech even signing correspondence with phrases like “Straight Ahead” and “Stiff Resistance.”

Dr. Shakur was diagnosed with bone marrow cancer in 2019. An international campaign was organized to appeal for a compassionate release for him. He was released from captivity in December 2022 and lives in California with his loving family, comrades, and community. His life of resistance must be honored and celebrated. This evening the Malcolm X Grassroots Movement shows our appreciation for his leadership, example, and sacrifices.