

My name is Sekou Mgbogi Abdullah Odinga. I am a Muslim and a POW. I was born in Queens, N.Y., on June 17, 1944. I was raised in a family of nine—Father, Mother, three brothers, and three sisters. I was kicked out of school in the tenth grade for defending myself against an attack by a teacher.

At age 16 I was busted for robbery



SEKOU MGOBOGI ABDULLAH ODINGA

New Afrikan Prisoner of War

and sentenced to three years as a "Youthful Offender." I spent 32 months at Great Meadows Correctional Institution (Comstock) in upstate New York, where I finished my high school education. In 1961–63 Comstock was very racist. No Blacks worked in any capacity at the prison. One of the sergeants working at Comstock was the head of the KKK. My first political education came at Comstock. In 1963, I was caught in a serious race riot at Comstock. The teachings of Malcolm X, who was then with the Nation of Islam, became

a big influence on me at that time. After my release, I became involved in Black political activity in New York, especially revolutionary, nationalist politics.

In 1964, I also became involved in the Cultural Nationalist movement. By 1965, I had joined the organization of African American Unity, founded by El-Hajj Malik El-Shabazz (Malcolm X). I began to move with and among many young African Nationalists. My political consciousness was growing daily. I was reading and listening to many Afrikan Nationalists from Africa

and the U.S. and became convinced that only after a successful armed struggle would New Afrikans gain freedom and self-de-

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termination. I also became convinced that integration would never solve the problems faced by New Afrikans.

After Malcolm's death, the OAAU never seemed to me to be going in the direction I desired. By late '65 or early '66 I hooked up with other young Revolutionary Nationalists to organize ourselves for the purpose of implementing what we felt was Malcolm's program. We organized the Grassroot Advisory Council, in South Jamaica, New York. We were all very young and inexperienced and got caught up in a local anti-poverty program.

By 1967 I was thoroughly disillusioned with that, when I heard about the Black Panther Party (BPP) in Oakland, California. Myself, along with some of my closest comrades, decided this was the type of organization we wanted to be a part of. We decided that some of us would go to California, investigate, and join the BPP if it was what it claimed to be.

By the spring of 1968, we heard that representatives from the BPP were coming to New York and there was a possibility of organizing a chapter. I attended the meeting and decided to join and help build the BPP in New York. I became the section

leader of the Bronx section, sharing an office with the Harlem section.

On January 17, 1969, the day Bunchy Carter and John Huggins were murdered in Los Angeles, I went underground. I was told that Joan Bird, a sister in the party, had been busted and severely brutalized by the police and that the police were looking for me in connection with a police shooting.

On April 22, 1969, I awoke at 5:30 AM to the sound of wood splitting around my door. When I investigated, I found that my house was completely surrounded with pigs on my roof, fire escape, in the halls, on the street, etc. I was fortunate enough to evade them and go deeper into hiding. In 1970, I was asked to go to Algeria to help set up the International section of the BPP. After the split in the Party, caused by the COINTELPRO program, I decided to come back to the U.S. to continue the struggle.

I continued to work until my capture in October of 1981. I was charged with six counts of attempted murder of police, for shooting over my shoulder while being chased and shot at by police. I was also charged with nine predicate acts of a RICO indictment. I was convicted of the attempted murders and given twenty-five years-to-life for it. I was convicted of two counts of the RICO indictment (the liberation of Assata Shakur and expropriation of an armored truck) and

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Can't Jail the Spirit

given twenty years and \$25,000 fine for each RICO charge. All sentences run consecutively.

I am a conscious citizen of the Republic of New Afrika. I believe in Land and Independence for New Afrikan people/nation as my political goal. I support certain Black nationalist philosophies and ideas but I don't consider Black nationalism my political ideology or philosophy. As a Muslim my political ideology is Al-Islam. Some people think of Islam simply as a religion, the same way they think of Christianity. That is go to church or Mosque once or twice a week, make your daily prayers and keep your religion separate from your political struggles. This is not the Islam I

practice. Al-Islam is a comprehensive (complete) religious, political and social way of life. I believe that Al-Islam as taught by the Kuran and the sunnakk of the Prophet Muhammad (a.s.) is the best organized system to free New Afrikan people and build the New Afrikan nation.

Address:

**Sekou Odinga
05228-054
U.S. Penitentiary
P.O. Box 1000
Marion IL 62959**

