

## National Conference of Black Lawyers Political Prisoner Calendar

November 2011

**Ed Poindexter** was born **November 1, 1944** in Omaha, Nebraska. Mr. Poindexter, like many political prisoners, was involved in the civil rights movement prior to joining the Black Panther Party. In April 1971, Poindexter and his co-defendant, Mondo We Langa, were tried and convicted of murder for the August 17, 1970 death of an Omaha police officer.

The trial and convictions were reportedly based on fabricated testimony and the withholding of exculpatory evidence. There was no physical evidence linking Poindexter and We Langa to the crime. Their convictions appear to be based almost solely on the testimony of a witness who stated Poindexter and We Langa planted the bomb that killed the officer and wounded another officer. The witness recanted this testimony averring that the testimony was coerced by threats of harm from law enforcement. Additionally, exculpatory evidence was purportedly withheld by Omaha police in collusion with the FBI.

The Nebraska Parole Board has repeatedly voted unanimously to commute Poindexter and We Langa's sentences to time served. This recommendation has been consistently denied by the Nebraska Board of Pardon and Parole leading supporters to believe that until the Board membership is changed, there will be no commutation. Ed Poindexter is 67 years old and has spent 40 years in prison. If the membership of the Nebraska Board of Pardon and Parole is not reconfigured, this sentence has been converted to life without the possibility of parole, continuing the travesty of justice in this case.

**Assata Shakur** was freed from a New Jersey State prison on **November 2, 1979**. Black Liberation Army (BLA) members Sekou Odinga and Dr. Mutulu Shakur, along with anti-imperialist and Weather Underground members, Silvia Baraldini and the late Marilyn Buck, were charged and convicted of assisting in her escape. Law enforcement agencies conducted a massive search for Ms. Shakur throughout New Jersey and New York, targeting black communities and intimidating some of its members. In contrast, there were demonstrations in support of Assata, some with more than 5,000 people. Some people carried signs reading "Assata Shakur is welcome here."

Five years after Ms. Shakur's liberation from the New Jersey state prison, the Cuban government granted her political asylum. She now resides in Havana, Cuba. There have been calls for her extradition to the US, led by the New Jersey government. Indeed, a million dollar bounty has been promised for the capture and return of Assata Shakur. Individuals and organizations in support of Assata have engaged in a number of organizing efforts to protect her. One such group was Hands off Assata. President Fidel Castro in 2005, during a television address, called Shakur a victim of racial persecution. He said, "They wanted to portray her as a terrorist, something that was an injustice, a brutality, an infamous lie."

The National Conference of Black Lawyers continues its call for the release of political prisoners, including the demand to remove the bounty for the capture and return of Assata Shakur to New Jersey.