

America's Political Prisoners

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Political prisoners are those currently in prison because of their race, religion, political convictions, or care for others. Removed from community because they seek justice for their people, some are branded with inappropriately long sentences and are often in solitary confinement to destroy their beliefs.

Some are falsely charged or unjustly convicted. Others are guilty of their innocence and of caring for others. Their imprisonment reveals points where the people's conscience and necessity are greater than society's injustice can sustain. Political prisoners (the status is not officially recognized under North American law) provide a country with its first defense against extremes of injustice, war crimes, crimes against humanity, economic crimes, and genocide. Often these men and women are simply the most articulate and innocent of those society assigns to pay for its faults.

[Albert Woodfox](#): *Amnesty International* has launched a campaign to keep Louisiana Attorney General James D. Caldwell from appealing the court's decision which once again overturned Woodfox's conviction finding his trial flawed by racial discrimination. Woodfox, one the "Angola 3" was initially targeted in prison for Black Panther Party organizing to the benefit of both black and white prisoners. Louisiana has previously appealed rather than honour court decisions in Woodfox's favor. While *Amnesty* asks Woodfox be retried or freed, since he was unjustly convicted, having served forty years in solitary confinement, a retrial would only prolong an absolute injustice. Albert Woodfox should be freed immediately. [Previous](#).

Partial sources online: "State of Louisiana Must Not Appeal Federal Ruling Overturning Conviction in Angola 3 Case," Feb. 27, 2013, *Amnesty International*.

[Lynne Stewart](#): the petition for compassionate liberation of Lynne Stewart is available through *Justice for Lynne Stewart* [access:< <http://lynnestewart.org/> >]. Denied treatment for 18 months she is currently under prison medical care for terminal cancer. Her sentencing to ten years for an infraction of legal protocol by a judge informed of her medical condition, was a death sentence pandering to the propaganda efforts of the government's "war on terror"; its effect highlights a flaw in American justice previously noted in the Salem Witch Trials and Senator Joseph McCarthy's hunt for Communists.

[Bradley Manning](#): the *Freedom of the Press Foundation* has published the initial court statement of Pfc. Bradley Manning whom military prosecutors are trying to incarcerate for life. Manning released to *Wikileaks* the video of a U.S. military action firing on *Reuters* cameramen and good Samaritans caring for the wounded. The prosecution contends that his releases to *Wikipedia* aided the enemy. The cogency of Manning's statement, despite methods of detention in solitary confinement known to destroy identity and valid sense of law and justice, could be the voice of any American without privilege

when faced with the inhumanity of war crimes. Pfc. Manning would have been in violation of the laws of war and Geneva Conventions if he had not released evidence of the atrocity to the people, since the war crime was considered standard operational procedure within the military.

Partial sources online: "A Salute to Bradley Manning, Whistleblower, As We Hear His Words For The First Time," Daniel Ellsberg, Mar 12, 2013, *Boing Boing*; "Rule 301," *Manual for Courts-Martial United States (2012 edition)*; "General Article, Clause 3," current UCMJ; "Charging War Crimes: A Primer for the Practitioner," Major Martin N. White, Feb. 2006, *The Army Lawyer*; *Law of War Handbook, 2005, International and Operational Law Department, the Judge Advocate General's Legal Center and School*.

[Imam Jamil al-Amin](#): known to the Civil Rights Movement as 'Rap' Brown, the Imam is serving a life-without-parole sentence in a maximum security prison. A Cointelpro target, he was unjustly convicted of a murder that another man later confessed to. Taken out of community for his religious and political thinking, placing al-Amin in a supermax prison facility shows the intention to psychologically destroy a Muslim Imam and community leader. He should be freed immediately.

Slaves are trained and freedom for the slave is never "free"." The state cannot give freedom, and the state cannot take it away. Freedom from man's oppression is a gift from Allah (swt); you are born with this and then one day someone tries to deny it. Yet, the extent to which you Resist is the extent to which you are Free... - Imam Jamil al-Amin, from "Liberating the Soul."

[Sundiata Acoli](#): the 76 year old [political prisoner](#) was denied parole again, and is not eligible for another parole hearing until 2021. Initially he became eligible for parole in 1992. The decades of extra time may rise from his refusal to change his political thinking. He hasn't renounced his history with the Black Panther Party and Black Liberation Army, or given up his constant concern for community. His bio states that in the summer of 1964 he worked voter registration in Mississippi. Schwerner, Goodman and Chaney worked voter registration in Mississippi until June 1964 when the police murdered them. In the late Sixties Acoli worked the Harlem community with the Black Panthers. In 1973 his freedom ended when the car he was riding in was pulled over on the Jersey Turnpike for a broken tail light and a shootout followed.

The driver and a policeman were killed. Another policeman and Acoli were wounded. Court evidence suggests another passenger, Assata Shakur, was shot three times from behind with her hands in the air. Shakur survived and escaped from prison, and eventually found sanctuary in Cuba. Forty years later in a February 2013 article in *BayView* Acoli defines political prisoners as people who fight injustice in society and calls for mass decarceration of prisons in a country where he finds mass incarceration the problem. His continuing imprisonment is cruel, vindictive, racist, oppressive and a political use of the correctional system.

Partial sources online: "Sundiata Acoli," current, *SundiataAcoli.org*; "Sundiata Acoli, political prisoner for 39 years, wins appeal and is up for parole again," April 29, 2012, *Prison Radio*; "Political prisoners, mass incarceration and what's possible for social movements," Sundiata Acoli, Feb.7, 2013, *BayView*; "Sundiata Acoli Given an 8 Year Parole Hit," Sundiata Acoli, Nov. 21, 2012, *SundiataAcoli.org*; "New Jersey and the Nazis," Hans Wolff, August,

1998, *AfroCubaWeb*.

[Some other North American political prisoners](#)

-John Bart Gerald, March 23, 2013.

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