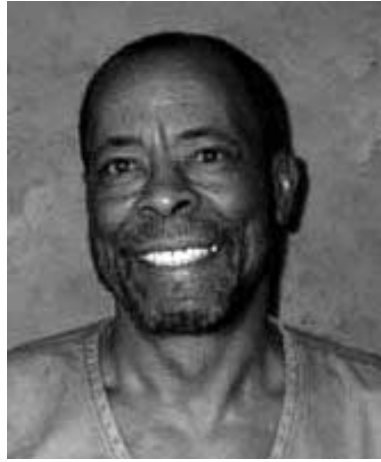


## Political Prisoner

# Sundiata Acoli

### Charges

After 25 years behind bars, Sundiata Acoli is one of the longest-serving political prisoners in the United States. Sundiata was first imprisoned in 1969 when he was arrested as part of the New York Panther 21, an attempt by Federal and state authorities to break the Black Panther Party with wide array of conspiracy charges. Sundiata spent two years in jail awaiting trial. The Panther 21 trial lasted eight months, one of the longest trials in New York history, and ended with a full acquittal by the jury after only 56 minutes of deliberation.



After the Panther 21 acquittal, Sundiata and many other Black Panther members became targets of the COINTELPRO program. On May 2, 1973, a car carrying Sundiata and two other black liberation movement members was ambushed by state troopers in New Jersey. In the ensuing firefight, which resulted in the death of State Trooper Werner Foerester, Black Liberation Army member Zayd Malik Shakur was killed and Assata Shakur wounded. Sundiata escaped unharmed and was arrested a few days later. Sundiata's trial for the murder of Trooper Foerester was conducted in a climate of anti-Panther hysteria. Despite the fact there was no evidence, either physical or witness testimony, that he had been involved in the shooting, Sundiata was convicted and sentenced to life plus 30 years.

Sundiata has twice been denied bail because of his political affiliations. His next parole hearing will be in 2014, when he is 77 years old.

### Bio

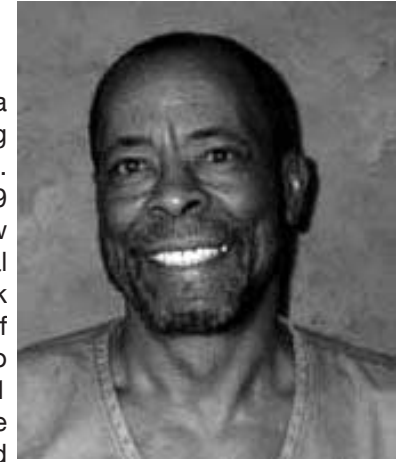
Originally born in Texas, Sundiata graduated with a degree in mathematics in 1956 and shortly afterwards went to work for NASA as a computer programmer. Sundiata started his political activism in 1964, travelling the American south with the Student Non-violent Co-ordinating Committee (SNCC) to conduct voter registration drives. Sundiata joined the New York chapter of the Black Panther Party in 1968.

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