

THE
**Final
Straw**
A WEEKLY ANARCHIST SHOW

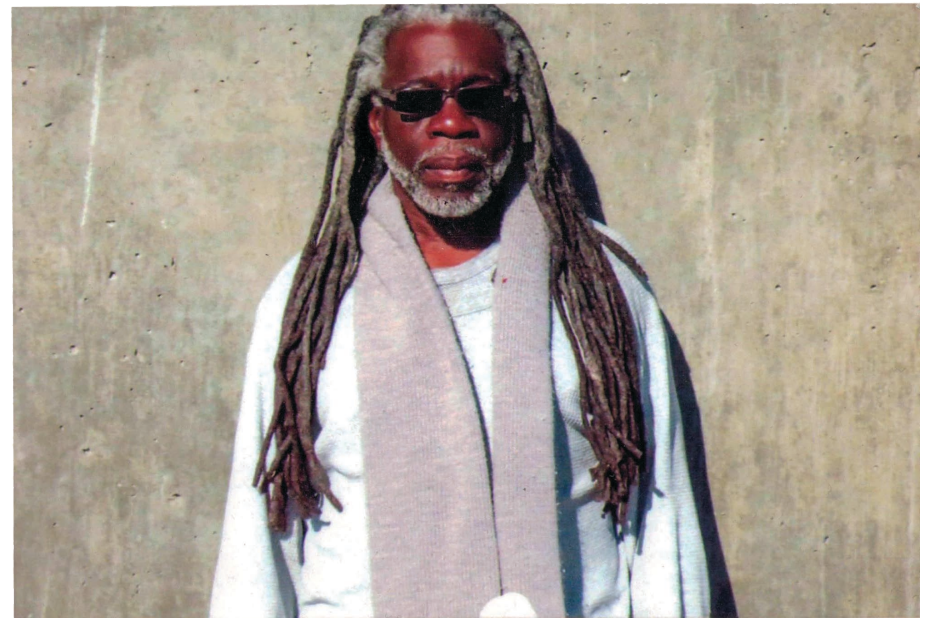
The Final Straw is a weekly anarchist and anti-authoritarian radio show bringing you voices and ideas from struggle around the world.

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**FREE
MUTULU
SHAKUR**



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as a way to compromise it.

TFSR: Yeah, I know that during the Green Scare that was how one of the major breaks in the eco-activists, like the Earth Liberation Front cases that came up in the early 2000s, was through at least one individual who was compromised because of drug use.

WT: Yes. So people so so it was Tyrone Ryson and Peter Middleton was the two primary people the government used to target Mutulu. Basically what they're saying is he was a kingpin, you know, he was a shotcaller. Not that he was a participant in any of the activities, but I think Tyrone Ryson may have actually said Mutulu was there. There's no other independent witnesses and no physical evidence that put Mutulu there, and I'm talking about the 1981 Brink's expropriation attempt, where the two cops and one security guard was killed.

TFSR: Well, again, thanks a lot for the chat and I'll be sure to put links to what you had mentioned, as well as we're going to put out a transcript afterwards, so if it's easier for folks to read through this content and be able to go back and footnote it and reference it, then that will be available for them. It's been a real pleasure talking to you.

WT: Okay, so I'm here. Alright. Appreciate it.

WT: Okay, I hope I hit everything that you asked me to.

TFSR: Absolutely. Was there anything that I didn't ask about that you did want to touch on since we do have some extra time?

WT: Well, I think that it's important for people to recognize that Mutulu is a victim, he's a victim of COINTELPRO, and he's also acknowledged his participation in the conspiracy. In other words, Mutulu's done his time. If he's supposed to do 30 years on this, he's done his 30 year, let him come home. That's one of the things, you know, he's not trying to say "let's relitigate this whole trial". It's just "let's just deal with the reality where we are right now". And so if the system is going to work the way it's supposed to then Mutulu should have been home in 2016. I would argue that he should have never been in, there but you know, when you when they deal with RICO, and for the audience to understand is that being a part of the conspiracy doesn't mean that you actually did anything that was a part of a conspiracy. And they use RICO to go after the mob, you remember when they couldn't get mob bosses so they brought in RICO. And so RICO has been utilized for the mob, it's also been utilized for the progressive movement. Particularly if they're tryna target people and they can't find any kind of criminal charges — and that's generally what happens. So if you can't find a criminal charge, and you can give em a RICO conspiracy.

TFSR: Yeah, not only do they get to indict a ham sandwich, as it were, but also they get to claim a bunch of — I mean, maybe not in this case, I don't know if they took a lot of needles from BAANA or what have you — but, you know, they can also acquire cars or people's houses or whatever, as saying that "it's a means towards a criminal and that we can't prove but we have a pretty good idea".

WT: Yeah, I'm not sure what they took from BAANA. Peter Middleton was one of the people in BAANA also, that they used as a FBI informant. Peter Middleton was somebody that Mutulu had saved, you know, from drugs, and taught him acupuncture and became a doctor of acupuncture. But they also utilize Peter Middleton on their behalf because the way they turn people is by getting them in a compromising position. Unfortunately, Peter Middleton was also dealing with drugs, so he was under the influence of drugs, he was dealing with them and I think the FBI utilized that

Watani Tyehimba of the Malcolm X Grassroots Movement and a supporter and comrade of New Afrikan political prisoner Dr Mutulu Shakur speaking about Dr. Shakur's life, activism and the struggle for his release since he's been diagnosed with serious bone cancer.

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The Final Straw Radio: Would you please introduce yourself with any name, gender, pronouns, location or affiliations that you feel will help listeners understand a bit about you?

Watani Tyehimba: Sure. My name is Watani Tyehimba. I'm a founding member of the New Afrikan People's Organization and the Malcolm X Grassroots Movement. I run an investigative and protective services company in Decatur, Georgia, we primarily focus on our high profile capital cases, as well as human rights and political prisoner cases. And that's, for the most part, what we do. I was a part of Mutulu — and still am — a part of Mutulu Shakur's legal team. I was there from the beginning from 1986 until...well, currently. So that's who I am.

TFSR: Awesome. Thanks a lot for being willing to have this conversation, I really appreciate it. So we're here to speak about Dr. Mutulu Shakur, a political prisoner of war and conscious citizen of the Republic of New Afrika, held by the US government since 1986. Would you please tell us a bit about the man, where he grew up, his family and development and how did he come to political organizing?

WT: Sure. Of course that's a story that's going to take longer than an hour, but we're gonna do all that within this one hour.

So Mutulu was born in August 8th 1950 in Baltimore, Maryland. He was born to a legally blind mother, which means that his first confrontation with the state was trying to help her negotiate through those systems. He didn't know his father, so he grew up without a biological father, but he had two surrogate father figures. One was Salandeen Shakur. Salandeen Shakur is the father of Zayd Malik Shakur, who was killed on a New Jersey State turnpike when Assata Shakur was wounded with her hands in the air and Sundiata Acoli was arrested. Salandeen was a member of RAM, Revolutionary Action Movement, friends with Malcolm X was part of the Muslim Mosque Inc., the Organization of Afro-American Unity, as a Muslim Pan-Africanist.

His other surrogate father figure would be Herman Ferguson. Herman Ferguson is out of Queens, New York, a member of RAM, Muslim Mosque Inc. also, Organization Afro-American Unity, and was assistant school principal and was involved in the struggle of Ocean Hills of Brownsville, which was talking about the independence of schools in New York area. Eventually, Herman became a school principal.

TFSR: That says it right there. Mr. Tyehimba, you mentioned getting congressional support, getting any sort of support, can you talk about what the Malcolm X Grassroots Movement right now is coordinating alongside of — I know that there's also a push by his family also — but can you talk about sort of the initiatives that you're pushing in terms of getting Dr. Shakur out.

WT: We have reached out to congressional people, in fact, we have a letter writing campaign or calling campaign they're doing it now. Some of them have gotten on board, we're getting other people involved. We have some high profile clergy, they participate in a demonstration on Mutulu's birthday on August 8, in DC. We have ongoing weekly events where we're talking about Mutulu where we're trying to get people involved, having various activities. There's a documentary called Dope is Death, which focuses on Mutulu, so that's one of the vehicles that we utilize. We just showed this film called Black August Hip-Hop Project, Mutulu was highlighted in that. We just showed that this past weekend at the Pan African Film Festival in Atlanta, Georgia. And so we utilize every vehicle we can to get the word out about Mutulu Shakur.

TFSR: And where can, just in sort of wrapping up now, we're definitely below the hour-

WT: Oh okay! I went too fast [laughs].

TFSR: No! You were concise. But how can people find out more about the organization you work with and also around this initiative to get Dr. Shakur free.

WT: Sure. Family and Friends of Dr. Mutulu Shakur has a website called **MutuluShakur.com**, as well as the Malcolm X Grassroots Movements **mxgm.org**. Those are two websites that you can go to, to get information on Mutulu Shakur, particularly MutuluShakur.com is going to have all the latest medical, as well as the legal updates regarding him. And ways of support is also financial as well as getting the word out.

TFSR: Thank you again, Mr. Tyehimba for having this conversation, for taking the time and for all the work that you do.

is a Gemini so you had two cats in there, [both laugh] so you had some positive you had some of the other stuff. But that's still you know, the holistic person.

TFSR: Yeah, yeah, that's people. This is a, you know, as another example of someone who it's amazing to see intergenerationality of this sort of thing, involved in political movements and it's a shame that he was denied such easy access to his father during that period.

WT: Right. Yeah. Yes. I mean, in fact with FOIA we found that Tupac was targeted as well, you know, so COINTELPRO didn't end with Mutulu.

TFSR: Begs the question of “what are they doing now?” [laughs]

WT: Well, now they're keeping the man in there till he dies. I mean, I think if we look at his present condition he's in a Federal Medical Center in Lexington, Kentucky, but he's going back and forth to the hospital all the time. Even though it's a medical facility has to go outside. He's caught COVID three times while being incarcerated. That was one of the reasons we filed for compassionate release. He's had bone marrow cancer. He's had stem cell replacement, it didn't necessarily take. Just in May, I believe, they gave Mutulu six months to live, so his condition is dire right now. We need all the support we can, we want. You know, congressional support, anybody, if there's somebody with some kind of influence to talk to the Congressional people, or those people that are on the parole Commission, or even Biden.

So that's where we are right now, we're really trying to get as much support for Mutulu as possible. I think the main thing would be is to allow him to come home and live out his last days was among his family. I think, unfortunately, what they do with many of our political prisoners and prisoners of war, they keep them in there until they die, or until, when they're released, they only have a few months to live outside. I think Marilyn Buck only lived a few weeks, that was one of Mutulu's codefendants. Forgot how long Russell Shoatz lived. But you know, these are things we're looking at, you know, we just look at how long they keep our people in there, and then you just compare that to the criminal. If you just look at that criminal, they're on the streets in 10 years. The political prisoners are the people who are targeted with their politics and, given these crimes, do longer time in the worst conditions.

Mutulu got involved with this work at the age of 15. In 1965 he worked on a campaign to defend Herman Ferguson. Like I said, Herman was the first Black assistant school principal in New York. And in 1968, the Ocean Hill Brownsville strike, those are the things that got Mutulu involved in a struggle. But in Queens, New York, you had a lot of people that was involved in the movement at that particular time.

In 1968 Mutulu Shakur basically followed his surrogate father, Herman Ferguson, when he joined the Republic of New Afrika, they were founding members of the Republic of New Afrika. Which, March 31st 1968 in Detroit, Michigan, they held a conference that included Black organizations from all over the country, from Marxist to Nationalists, over 500 different organizations, and Mutulu was a part of that. He was a minister of defense to the New Afrika from the New York area, Eastern Regional Minister of Interior. He was a soldier in the Black Legion, as well as the New Afrikan security forces. And one of the things I want to say about his role as a soldier: March 29th 1969, at an anniversary of the founding of the Republic of New Africa, they came under attack by Detroit police, several rounds was fired in there, Mutulu was one of the occupants in there who actually utilized his body to protect Iyaluua Ferguson and Herman Ferguson who were members that he was responsible for. And so I'm not sure if I rambled on too much [starts laughing] for the question. Apologize. [laughs harder]

TFSR: No not at all. No, that's great. I know it can be kind of hard with video off to gauge someone.

WT: Right! [both laugh.]

TFSR: No, that's great. And thanks for noting that attack, because that attack was something that the United States government used to ramp up its repression of the New Afrikan Movement. And I'm wondering if you could — you mentioned that he was involved in this and at the founding of The Republic of New Afrika — could you talk about the New Afrikan Independence Movement, some of the groups that were involved in it, and some of its predecessors and goals of the movement? Again, big question, short amount of time.

WT: Yeah. Yeah, big question. So The New Afrikan Independence Movement, like I said, came into fruition in March at a Black Government

Conference in Detroit, Michigan, in 1968. But it falls in the tradition of Africans that have been enslaved in this country that are struggling for self determination, and so the only difference was that they put the name New Afrika. In fact, Queen Mother Moore I should say that, Queen Mother Moore gave the name “New Afrika” — to be similar I guess to New York or New Mexico — to basically talk about identifying ourselves with Africa, but at the same time, recognize that we are a new land and new territory, and that we are a combination of many different nations coming together that struggle against common oppression in how to get out of that oppression.

So, there was a Declaration of Independence that was signed in 1968 with several members, I think you asked what organizations? I think that for the Yoruba Temple Obaba Oseijeman [Adefumi] was involved. US organization, Karenga was involved; Amiri Baraka, they were the ministers of culture; you had at that time was called H. Rap Brown, Jamil Al-Amin; you had members like Imari and Giadi Obadele, who came from the Malcolm X Society; and also formation called GOAL, Group On Advanced Leadership, and I can't remember any of the organizations that were involved with that particular time. But the whole objective is to talk about creating a space where Afrikans in this nation, in this territory, could set up a sovereign territory. Basically, five states that were identified as a South Carolina, Georgia, Alabama, Mississippi, and Louisiana as being those areas where Afrikan people have historically lived, we've buried our relatives there, we shed blood in that land, and that's the land that we said we want to carve out as an independent New Afrikan nation. So I think that's a nutshell.

TFSR: And I think that a difference you mentioned — there's new New Mexico, there's New York — I think a difference, as I understand, in the determination to create a territorialization of a place where Black folks have sovereignty, or New Afrikan folks have sovereignty, was also a recognition that this was on stolen land. And I really appreciate that, if you could speak a little bit, just to that, that intentionality and sort of that communication with Indigenous folks.

WT: Sure. We recognize that, you know, the United States came as a result of settlers, you know, we recognize settler colonialism. We were kidnapped and brought here, but we have a historical working relationship with the Native population. You can reference the Seminole Nation and

to other people, across lines with people like someone from Aryan Brotherhood or whatever.

But yeah, so can you also talk about some other parts...he does have family on the outside, he's got a couple of generations now. And I wonder if you could talk about his his family a little bit and, and sort of, if you have an insight into what he's said of the experience, or his family has said about the experience, of having to visit Dr. Shakur behind bars, and, you know, having their lives pass with those walls in between?

WT: Sure. I guess it would be like any family, really. It's always, you know, when a person does time the family does time with them. And so even if they're not going to visit, it's the phone calls, it's putting the money on the books, it's all those things that are involved. And unfortunately, he has grandchildren that have only seen him inside, you know? They weren't even born when he was initially incarcerated. His youngest child Chinua you know, well actually he saw him them inside, but also you have Nzingha, you have Sekyiwa, and so you have young children — they're not young now, they were young when he went inside — and so majority their life has been dealing with their father behind the walls. And that's always a tough thing to do. Because how do you, you know, when you go to make the visit, the difficult thing is when it's time to go home, they have to go one way and you have to go another way.

You know and the inhumanity, I guess, how they deal with [visits], they allow you to touch in the beginning of the visit and at the end. They keep you separated in the chairs. It's just such an inhumane situation, the way they treat the prisons there. You know it's similar to slavery, they're strip searched coming into the visit, they're stripped leaving the visit, you know, all the humanity is taken away.

TFSR: Yeah. It would be kind of remiss if we didn't bring up Tupac Shakur in this conversation since Dr. Shakur was his stepfather. Is that right?

WT: Yes. And we often just use the term “father” as opposed to “stepfather” but yes, that will be accurate. Tupac was one of our youth leaders as well, he was the chair of our New Afrikan Panthers. I managed Tupac from 1992 to 1994, so he's a part of our whole overall family and as much of his music pushed out politics when he was doing positive things. Pac

WT: Yeah, I mean, one parole process right now — because we have old law and new law. Mutulu was one of the last people of the old law, I think after 1986 they went to a different system, where they took parole away. In the new federal system you just do a certain amount of time, whereas with Mutulu's case you had parole as an option. There are only three people, I believe, left on the parole commission, so even when we appeal, we appealing to the same people that came and did the interview or either, you know, a reviewing. And so they're supposed to actually have phased out the whole parole system, so that's part of the struggle we're in right now.

Even under Trump's First Step Act that they're saying that old law prisoners do not qualify for compassionate release, or a sentence reduction under the First Step Act. And that's part of our dilemma now. A few ways Mutulu could be released is: Biden could give clemency; the original sentencing Judge, Judge Haight, could go ahead and do a sentence reduction, which basically we call "compassionate release", but Judge Haight has refused to do that. There's now a motion in front of him that's pending as he's reviewing it, and so we still don't have a final thing, but he's already in 2020, I believe, he refused. And then recently, when we submitted, he asked for the government to totally prepare their case and make an argument for why they want to keep Mutulu in prison. So Judge Haight hasn't come up with a final decision yet.

But I think the question was about the parole commission, the parole commission basically is outdated. And the biases I think that's one of the things you said, right?

TFSR: Yeah.

WT: Yeah. Clearly, there's some biases but I think that one of the things we found is the entire 36 years Mutulu's has been incarcerated, that once the staff actually knows him, he's the best person to deal with. He stopped violence on the compound. He's the person that they go to when they want to get things done, you know? And so he would be the model prisoner. Somebody you would want to release back to society because he helps to keep down violence and keep things going.

TFSR: You've mentioned he didn't have a prior history of incarceration — which I mean, that's great, a lot of people that go into prison aren't bad people also, right? And then also, since he's been on the inside, he's been a peacemaker. He's been providing his medical services

Seminole wars in ongoing relationship with Native Americans. We totally recognize that. And even though international law says you must identify a territory, and so they identified those five states we talked about, but clearly they will be negotiated with Native Americans. In other words in the final analysis Native Americans would have veto powers over whatever landmass that we would talk about.

TFSR: And just to correct myself, I said "Native people" as if excluding New Afrikan folks from that, so apologies.

WT: Not a problem.

TFSR: So as a member of and co-founder, as I understand, of the Malcolm X Grassroots Movement, and as I understand, Malcolm X giving a lot of impetus to organizers around the movement...like yeah, anyway, sorry, I just had a brain fart. [laughing]

WT: Not a problem. "Why Malcolm X?" Is that the question?

TFSR: Well, that's a part of it, though, but the whole "free the land" is a quote that gets referenced over and over again, and any anti-colonial freedom fighter in history could have said that thing and it would be just as legitimate. But yeah, I guess, if you could tie in Malcolm... or Dr. Shabazz', influenced on this, and also talk about like, where the Malcolm X Grassroots Movement came from and what y'all do.

WT: Okay, that's, once again... answers to the questions would be very long, but I'm gonna attempt to do it. So one is that: we recognize Malcolm X as being an icon. But Malcolm X was also working with the Revolutionary Action Movement, RAM, which Muhammad Ahmad — Max Stanford at that particular time — Muhammad Ahmad was one of the founders of. And many of the members of RAM actually joined Malcolm in the Organization Afro-American Unity, as well as the Muslim Mosque Inc. And so Malcolm was the foundational person that we looked at, along with Queen Mother Moore and Robert Williams, as our, what we call our Political Legacy.

So many of the young radical New Afrikans had come together around 1978 and began to work in coalition's, we worked in the National

Black Human Rights Coalition, we were part of the National Task Force of COINTELPRO Litigation and Research. And so many of us worked in those various formations, and we surfaced in 1984 as a New Afrikan People's Organization, with like I said, Queen Mother Moore, Malcolm X, and Robert Williams being those shoulders that we stand on.

So the Malcolm X Grassroots Movement is the mass association of the New Afrikan People's Organization. Basically, we have a formation that talks about the organizing around self determination, we have six basic principles. So first one is human rights, so we basically actively support everyone's right, as a human being, towards self determination and being free. The second one is we demand reparations. We promote self determination. We oppose genocide. And we demand the release of our activists who have been targeted, and some of them become political prisoners or prisoners of war. And our final one is the end of sexism oppression. So those are our six basic principles that the Malcolm X Grassroots Movement espouses.

TFSR: Awesome. Thank you. So stepping back — and this isn't stepping too far back from Dr. Shakur's case, because you brought up COINTELPRO — but can you talk about the FBI's war on freedom struggles in the so called USA, including COINTELPRO, like as far as what we know about it, the RNA cases and how they developed in that period?

WT: Well, COINTELPRO is an acronym by the FBI was basically a domestic counterintelligence program. And we found out about COINTELPRO in 1971, when there was a break-in in Media, Pennsylvania, some anticolonialist white left[ists] broke in and they leaked information to the media. That's how he was able to determine COINTELPRO existed — that word was in there — what we realize it's been around since 1956, for the period that covers '56-'71, but it wasn't always called COINTELPRO. In fact, Marcus Garvey was a victim of what would have been called COINTELPRO at that particular time. J. Edgar Hoover, as you know, spanned many different generations and so Hoover was there for Garvey wells for the New Afrikan Independence Movement.

It's intent was to expose, disrupt, misdirect, discredit or otherwise neutralize (particularly) young people in our movement. One of the goals of COINTELPRO was to make sure that we didn't unite with youth in our movement and also make sure that we didn't have any respect-

They denied his parole, and they said that he would possibly reoffend and that he was still influential. It should be noted that every person there was a part of the conspiracy with Mutulu is out of prison or either deceased. Marilyn Buck is deceased, but everybody else is out of prison. Mutulu is the last one there and is the only New Afrikan that is still left inside.

And you said before that he didn't have a prior criminal record. So it's questionable what they're basing that on, right?

No criminal history. And so we've seen people come out with a hell of a criminal history, with all kinds of bodies on them, violence inside, but Mutulu has no violence inside. He's had parole recommendation by former warden, former assistant warden, numerous staff in the BOP support his parole and has a great relationship with them. And so we recognize that keeping him there is not coming from the BOP staff, but is coming from above from that. It's the parole commission right now that has denied the parole, but I'm not sure who's pulling those strings. But I think if we talk about COINTELPRO, we have to look at the reality that they have targeted certain individuals, and even though the United States would not acknowledge that they have political prisoners, Mutulu is being housed and kept as a political prisoner. The only reason he's in prison today is because of his politics.

TFSR: I remember some years ago, it's probably 2015 or 2016, hearing some of the letters that were able to get accessed — this was from one of Jalil Muntaqim's support people went through and read some of the letters that had been made available through Freedom of Information or through some sort of Sunshine Act, and the content of those letters was terribly racist. A lot of the letters were attributed to people, or people claimed that they had been written by law enforcement, that they had been prison guards, that they had been some part of the like, you know, the prison state that is the United States beforehand and had this invested view that Black political prisoners in particular, not be released out to the public. And I don't know if that's the case, in this instance, if you all have had any clear documentation come up and that sort of thing. But it seems like the amount of leeway that parole boards are given and the sort of, you know, question of "okay, well, who gets drawn to do these sorts of jobs? What are their politics? And how much sway do they have after the fact with these institutions that can be based on just personal hatreds that they have?" I wonder if you have anything that you could say about the parole process?

Brink's armored truck expropriation in Nyack, New York where two cops and one Brink's guard was killed.

TFSR: Can you talk a little bit about the context of the struggle for the Republic of New Afrika and Assata Shakur was a participant in the Black Liberation Army, was pretty high up in it. What's known about, sort of, the actions that he was accused of participating in, his stance is that he was innocent and not a participant in those, is that right?

WT: Well, I think...Mutulu has been an activist, like I said, since he was 15 years old. In fact when we went to trial, the COINTELPRO documents were brought into trial, and Judge Haight acknowledged that Mutulu was a victim of that, of COINTELPRO. In fact... I'm gonna see if I can pull up a statement that Judge Haight made, he says this in his sentencing statement. He says "it is said that Dr. Shakur was illegally pursued by federal law enforcement officers. That is undoubtedly true. The Freedom of Information Act documents received the evidence at trial, so the rights of Dr. Shakur, rights that he and others share, were violated by the COINTELPRO program." And so people were aware that we were victims of these things. In fact, after the judge read that, he sentenced him to 60 years with a recommendation of no parole.

So they acknowledged that Mutulu, one, was not...there was no physical evidence that puts Mutulu there. There was no eyewitnesses that were put in there. What they have is a testimony of a paid FBI informant, Tyrone Ryson, who acknowledged and admitted that he's a shooter. The government knows Mutulu didn't kill anybody, didn't shoot anyone. But they did a negotiated plea with him, for him to give them false information around Mutulu, as a mastermind. Mutulu has no criminal history, you know? His first incarceration was this, when he was arrested in 1986. And he's been in prison for 36 years.

TFSR: And so to my understanding, a few years ago, he was actually up for release, right?

WT: In the federal system you have, after 45 years or life sentence, 30 years you have what they call a "mandatory parole". So Mutulu had a 60 year sentence — which we will still treat as a life sentence — and so 30 years is a mandatory parole, that was 2016. His mandatory parole was denied, in fact they said mandatory doesn't necessarily mean mandatory.

ability among the masses of our people. So, many of the people that have been involved in struggle have been targeted. You know, often I watch movies, and for context, there is a series called Boardwalk Empire. And in that particular series they have a person playing J. Edgar Hoover and he talks about Marcus Garvey. He says "Garvey is who we really need to be focused on, as opposed to looking at the bootleggers such as John Kennedy," JFK's father, who was a bootlegger. So, they made a clear distinction that the political, particular Black political, people were more dangerous than these criminals over here. And so, there was always an attempt to criminalize our movement, in order to justify incarceration for our people. That's how they end up becoming political prisoners, because they are targeted for their politics, however they then use trumped up charges to criminalize them and send them to prison. And in fact, what it does is criminalize our movement.

TFSR: And one of the more famous quotes from Hoover about, you know, that's wrapped up in the COINTELPRO is his fear of the rising of a Black Messiah that would undermine the white supremacist order of the United States, not he doesn't use "white supremacist order," but he does use the phrase Black Messiah.

WT: He does use "Black Messiah", and he begins to name people. He, in fact Max Stanford is one of the people you mentioned, that's Muhammad Ahmad. In fact, in 1967, he said Muhammad Ahmad was one of the most dangerous people in America. That forced Max to go underground from 67' and he was arrested in 72.

But yes, Hoover did target those individuals. He did talk about the Black Messiah, he says that Elijah Muhammad could have that role at that particular time, King. So this was after the assassination of Malcolm X, because he said there was a void, and many people was trying to fill that void. But we recognized after the assassination of Malcolm that, you know, cutting off the head of a formation was dangerous for us. And so we develop a model called collective leadership. So we wouldn't just have one person being the person that's considered to be a leader.

TFSR: That makes a lot of sense, as an anarchist I appreciate that.

WT: Ok, alright [laughs]. I appreciate you appreciating it as an anarchist. [Bursts and Watani both laugh]

TFSR: So, while he was living in New York, Dr. Shakur was developing and using his knowledge of acupuncture to treat victims of opioid addiction. Can you share a bit about what you know on this and his legacy of harm reduction treatment that's still being applied to this day?

WT: Sure. So, Mutulu Shakur worked at Lincoln Detox People's Program from 1971 to 1978. He initially came there to teach political education classes, it was along with the Young Lords Party, Black Panther Party, Republic of New Afrika. And one of the things that got Mutulu involved in that was his children were involved in an accident, and it was an exposure to acupuncture that really piqued his interest and caused him to begin training. He went to China in, I believe it was 1976. Eventually, he graduated from the Quebec Acupuncture Association in 1976, with a doctorate in acupuncture. And what he was doing with this was taking the skills he learned in acupuncture to go back and fight the heroin addiction that was taking place, particularly on the East Coast at that particular time they were using methadone as a drug to treat the heroin addiction. Which, methadone, called a maintenance drug, was more addictive than heroin. And all it did was kept people on the program.

And so developing a holistic nonchemical approach like acupuncture, clearly took money out of the major pharmaceutical companies, they didn't particularly care for that. And so that also targeted Mutulu Shakur as well as Lincoln Detox Hospital, because they were taking money out of their pockets. It was more of a holistic way, in fact, Mutulu's whole, I guess, introduction to acupuncture — and I shouldn't just say Mutulu, cause Mutulu Shakur and Dr. Richard Delaney are cofounders of the Black Acupuncture Advisory Association of North America — and their whole intent was to make sure that they detox people using nonchemical methods. That has been a model that's been utilized throughout the country that day.

TFSR: And, like, I'm sure that there was a sense of just a love of other people that was... I mean anyone who gets into any sort of medical or health care for other people is giving up a lot of themselves and giving a lot of, you know, a lot of appreciation and love for other people's health, a lot of their time a lot of their energy.

WT: Yes.

TFSR: Can you talk a little bit about his view of the politics of attempting to undermine opioid addiction among his communities and the communities they lived in?

WT: Sure, well, I guess the politics or the impetus, like I said, I believe starts with the mother. And he sees, you know, how she has to try to negotiate these systems and how difficult it is. And so the politics flows from that. He sees that oppressed and poor people get the worst treatment. He wants to level the playing field, and anyone that knows Mutulu knows that he cuts across every class, every race, doesn't make a difference: if people need assistance, Mutulu is here to assist. And acupuncture was a way of him doing that, bringing that whole method of trying to help people there. And we know that we have survival programs or programs that help people, it runs, you know, sometimes head on into the people who want to keep us oppressed, the people want to keep us in these environments where we have poor medical care, and so Mutulu's whole plan was to change that paradigm.

TFSR: Has he been able to continue working with people around health care issues while he's been inside of prison?

WT: Sure he has. Clearly he's not been able to utilize needles from acupuncture, but he uses acupressure, he uses all the knowledge he has. There are numerous testimonies from many people that talks about things he did for them while incarcerated. In fact, one testimony that a young man gave talks about Mutulu really treating this person that was, I guess was overdosing off of drugs inside of prison. Mutulu treated him. The person was a part of the Aryan Brotherhood, which would seem to be a total contradiction to, you know, working with him. But out of a humanitarian position, Mutulu saw here's an individual that needs his help. And that's what he did.

TFSR: Would you talk about the specifics of his incarceration, the case against him?

WT: He's charged in a RICO statute, that was eight counts of Racketeer Influenced and Corrupt Organizations, or RICO conspiracy, as my memory serves: armored truck and bank expropriations; 1979 liberation of Assata Shakur; aid in foreign government; in October 20th 1981 attempted