

Urban guerrillas depend on the people.

SOLDIERS' ***STORIES***

PART TWO of a
CONVERSATION
WITH
BLA VETERANS



BLOOD: I'm going to squeeze it all in. This is the best thing because when I go to the airport, and then I tell those motherfuckers to bring me a wheelchair.

[They laugh.]

DHORUBA: My man was telling me I should use that wheelchair and shit at the airport, that way I can get over.

JARED: You take off your shoes?

DHORUBA: I say, "Look, I'm seventy-six years. I ain't taking shit off." They, "OK, old man, go ahead, man."

BLOOD: About three years ago, I was there at Rio de Janeiro. I was at that airport looking at all the people. Some old fella put me in a wheelchair. I struggled to put the cane down, and every fucking thing. I'm going to tell you something, if you get a chance, go to Rio. I should have went forty years ago.

JARED: Thanks everybody. I appreciate you. Thanks everybody coming through. Shout out to everybody doing this work, and thanks everybody for making this happen. We'll catch you next time. Appreciate you, peace, everybody.

DHORUBA: I saw him when I went out the last time. He was in the hospital when I went to see him.

BLOOD: So many of us leaving here. I'm trying to hang around. I want to live forever.

KALONJI: Stick around, brother.

DHORUBA: You're too bold to grow old, brother. You're too bold to grow old, Black.

BLOOD: You think so?

DHORUBA: We too Black to crack. Fuck these crackers.

[They laugh.]

DHORUBA: Excuse me...I know I'm not supposed to use that profanity. Now my fiancé looking at me like, "Oh, my God, how could you talk like that?"

BLOOD: He can delete it. He can take it out.

JARED: Nah, we going to keep it. We not sitting over here, Blood. Take it easy, Blood. Take care, Blood. Appreciate you, man.

BLOOD: Thanks again, everybody, and take care.

DHORUBA: OK, Blood, man. Is that how you exit stage-right on the cane?

[They laugh.]

DHORUBA: C'mon, you making us look bad, bro. [Laughs.]

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This interview was conducted by Dr. Jared Ball, Kalonji Changa, and Kamau Franklin on May 23, 2021. Thomas "Blood" McCreary became an Ancestor on May 25, 2022. Sekou Odinga made his transition January 12, 2024.

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Cover: Solidarity rally featuring Panther 21 codefendants Afeni Shakur, Dhoruba Bin Wahad, and Jamal Joseph, New York, April 4, 1970, by David Fenton

tell Black folks that your life matters when you know they don't give a fuck about your Black ass? You, your life will matter when they're starting coming home in body bags. When they got to deal with body bags, and you say, "Black Lives Matter," it'd be, "Why can't we settle this beef?" Huh? Kissinger didn't get the Nobel Peace Prize alone, he got it with Le Duc Tho who was speaking for who? He was speaking for Ho Chi Minh and the NLF and the North Vietnamese. He was speaking for people who were shooting at that time he was talking. We need to understand that white folks ain't never conquered the people, nowhere they ever went, they left voluntarily.

BLOOD: I've got to split.

JARED: Listen, first of all, brother Blood, it was an honor to meet you and to get to talk with you. Anytime you want to come back and do some more, we're happy to have you. As Dhoruba said, we intend for this to be a series.

There are so many more questions, there's so much more we want to talk with you all about. So, anytime we can provide an outlet, please let us know, or any support or any help at all, please let us know.

BLOOD: Let me say this shit to you guys, did you know the San Quentin Six? There was a brother named David Johnson. David Johnson, he's paralyzed. I just wanted to give a shout out about that. He's down in San Antonio, Texas.

JARED: I didn't know that. I need to try to get some words in. Thanks for letting us know. He contributed to our George Jackson work, on top of that too, so we appreciate him.

BLOOD: He was BGF, one of the generals.

support network of the BPP. If people remember that book written by Dell, called *The Bonfire of the Vanities*, and stuff like that, this was partly a takeoff after Leonard Bernstein's meeting with the families and the members of the party to support the Panther 21. Leonard Bernstein was hounded and hounded into anxiety attacks by the media, because he was portrayed as a self-hating jew who supported an anti-semitic organization like the BPP.

They had a letter-writing campaign called "Dear Irving," in which a so-called member of the Communist Party was writing to their leadership complaining about Charlene Mitchell, who was a Black woman and who was in charge of Angela Davis' Defense Committee and everything, and who was running for president or the leadership in the Communist Party. She was associating with revolutionary terrorists who are anti-semitic and anti-'israel.' We should understand that it was our newspaper, our ability to communicate our mass line, to communicate our party line to the masses of people, masses of Black people, so that we would always be clear about what we stood for, what our community should be doing, and how we should be moving.

Of course, that's not done today with hashtag movements because you have internet gangsters, you have internet activists, internet revolutionaries, and you have hashtag movements where people never even see each other face-to-face hardly. Organizing these hashtag movements leaves them wide open to infiltration, to confusion and to madness, and we know that that doesn't work. It's all coming to culmination today when we see the millions of dollars that's been given to a hashtag movement, like Black Lives Matter movement or whatever you want to call it.

That money would have never gone to these people if it was #BlackLiberationMovement. If it was Black Liberation Movement, they wouldn't have got a dime. Why are you going to

JARED: Can I ask you all real quick, because the rightward trajectory that you all suggest of folks out west, at least in part, and you mentioned engaging the electoral/political process, do you three not see any value in that? Is there no radical engagement in electoral politics?

DHORUBA: Yeah, absolutely. Blood and Sekou, we were all there. When the party first started in New York, one of our first projects was decentralization and community control of police. We organized and worked on it, coalesced with other organizations in New York, and got it on the ballot. We got community control on the ballot.

It was the police union who flipped the script and confused the masses of people in New York to vote no if they meant community control, and vote yes if they meant Community Review Board. That's what the politicians in New York, Black and white and the mayor in New York, at the behest of the police union...that's how they flipped the referendum.

SEKOU: We were also very involved in the educational struggle here in New York, and in the independent school struggle here in New York, where the people were saying, "No, we want a say in how our children are educated." Then we started moving towards taking that power to educate our own children. It was a real struggle here in New York. That was the real history that needs to be understood.

We always understood that we needed to work within and without the system. We never had known that we would get no work with nobody that's involved with electoral politics. We were not an electoral/political organization. We were not elected. We didn't run for office. I didn't run to be the section leader of the Bronx. I wasn't voted that way, they made me that. The committee here, the Central Committee of New York, the leadership in New York

did that. We weren't running for office here in New York as the BPP, although we did work with some of the office holders in New York.

KALONJI: I want to say, as the generation under y'all, man! Salute! We are always honored. First of all, it's an honor to even know y'all. Secondly, I fall between comrade and fan, I'm going to just keep it gangsta. Because of folks like el-Hajj Malik el-Shabazz and you all, you know what I mean, you helped us stay grounded.

One of the things you all have been talking about has been the whole counter-insurgency part of it. We know that it were folks like Gene Roberts, who was involved in Malcolm's situation, and also, I've been told that he was one of the founding members of the New York chapter. Can you all speak to that?

BLOOD: I don't know about Gene being a founder of the New York chapter.

SEKOU: He was not a founding member.

DHORUBA: He wasn't a founding member.

SEKOU: I have to take some responsibility for bringing them knuckleheads like him and Yedwah. What was Yedwah's name?

BLOOD: Ralph White.

DHORUBA: Wait, I don't think you should do that to yourself, Sekou, because I had the security section. Gene Roberts got involved in the security section because Kinshasa brought him there and said he grew up with him, that he knew him, and that he was his homeboy. That's how he wound up being where he was at, at least as far as I met him.

I used to pick up the paper at the airport, and the enemy knew this. They said this in the COINTELPRO memos, that the BPP's major source of funds and its major means of community support came from its party community news service, its paper. That was one of the geniuses of Bobby and Huey. When we were studying revolutionary activities, Mao Zedong had said that a revolutionary organization has to have a face-to-face relationship with the masses of people. It has to have its own organ. It has to have its own voice.

That's what we did with the BPP newspaper, to the point where the paper was under constant surveillance and targeted for disruption, the paper's distributor was murdered, issues stolen during transport even. Federal authorities actually used to intercept the shipments from New York, all the way... They were shipping to Canada, they were shipping to Florida. When I would go to the airport, they would tell me, "Oh, that shipment is still on the plane and is going to so-and-so." This is what they did to disrupt this.

BLOOD: Let me say something about that. Dhoruba's right. One thing that the COINTELPRO did, papers coming out of California, they would set the plane down in Detroit. They would take the end strip of the paper out and put lies in there, and then ship it on the way it was going to. We read this shit on the East Coast, they said they had never heard of that shit. They were really clever in terms of how they tried to fuck us around.

DHORUBA: And how they tried to paint us into a corner in the New Left with other organizations, with white organizations that were supporting us, whether it were legal organizations or churches. People don't know, for instance, that my bail was posted by a Catholic church, and Afeni's bail was posted by Black clergy.

We need to understand that COINTELPRO went after the

his window, there was a fire escape, and they had the fire escape covered. They were outside the fire escape window, they were outside the door in the hallway. The only place to go out was out the kitchen window or something, down a drainpipe that was next to the window, and he was, like, four stories up. They had the neighborhood closed off. Sekou went down this drainpipe, through the alley, through the backyard, and the next time you heard from Sekou, he was on the telephone in Algiers.

[They laugh.]

DHORUBA: We understand that we have to do these chronicles and we have to put them down. The names just have to be changed to protect the guilty, but yeah, absolutely. That's the reason why I agreed to do this in a series. We have more comrades, like Ashanti, who I wanted to be on here too. We have other comrades who were involved at different stages and different points in the BLA and the BPP. They have extra information and insights to give to our people.

The radical history and the radical tradition of Black people is something that the enemy is now bent on trying to revise and re-market, because this mass media allows for that in a very succinct and in a very easy way.

I saw one professor who gave a thesis on the Panthers who said that, basically, she doesn't know why people have a problem with Black Lives Matter getting funding because the BPP got its money from selling books and the writings of their leaders. There's nothing further from the truth. The party raised the majority of its funds and its operational funds from selling "The Black Panther Party Newspaper" and BPP posters and stuff like that. A certain percentage a month went to the local chapter, and the rest went to the international headquarters.

SEKOU: Ralph White walked up to me in the streets in the Bronx and I invited him in myself.

DHORUBA: You could take that responsibility, but Gene Roberts is Kinshasa's.

[They laugh.]

BLOOD: What I have a problem understanding about that history with Gene Roberts, as learned and well-read as most Panthers were, when the Panthers came in New York, why didn't we know that he was Malcolm's bodyguard? Where was he before '68, why didn't we know that history about him? Why didn't he make that known to us?

DHORUBA: Because the radical tradition in New York has always been distorted. The Black radical history and Black radical tradition has always been distorted either by revisionism over time, like you're seeing with "Judas and the Black Messiah" and with the movies that's coming out on the LA shootout with the Black Panther Party, when the first SWAT team in the u.s. was used against the Los Angeles chapter. We need to understand how they rewrote history. That's why we didn't know up until that point.

SEKOU: No, I disagree with that. He used that as a calling card. That was part of his calling card, that he had been a part of Malcolm's organization. People knew he had been a part. What we didn't know that he was the police in there. That's what we didn't know. We knew he had been in there before.

DHORUBA: Nobody knew that at the time.

SEKOU: Nobody knew that, though. It wasn't that nobody knew that he had been a part of the Organization of Afrikan Amerikan

Unity. That was known, Blood.

BLOOD: I don't want to change the course of this discussion, but when we were talking about politics earlier, Malcolm's widow at Ocean Hill-Brownsville, she was out there protesting for the decentralization of those schools. That was one of the big fights that went on in New York, if you remember that, Ocean Hill-Brownsville.

SEKOU: I remember it very well. I remember you and I were going to go to it together.

DHORUBA: I know you do, Sekou. [Laughs] Your boy Netanyahu and the Jewish Defense League, and that piece of shit Meir Kahane. They were all posted up in New York at that time. They had their own defense committee and their own relationship with the police.

KAMAU: You talked about how there were different phases of both the Panthers and BLA.

There was the second phase with the BLA forming an alliance with members of the Republic of New Afrika and members of the Weather Underground. This became known as "the Family" or whatever.

Can you talk a little bit about this, Sekou? I know you've got to go, but it sounds like this is something you need to hit on a little bit about how that formation came to be. It seemed that before that, there was either a slowdown or there wasn't as much action happening from a BLA point of view. Then came this second series of expropriations and some jailbreaks that happened during that time.

SEKOU: I think you're talking about the development of the

must have been pretty good at it.

BLOOD: We were very conscious of the people who were in the bank. I don't remember anybody being shot or injured inside those banks or whatnot, because my cell, we had a saying, that we simply come in there to make a withdrawal.

DHORUBA: That's right. Unauthorized withdrawal.

BLOOD: The 9mm is our bank book.

[They laugh.]

BLOOD: ...because that's where the money is at.

DHORUBA: Technology has changed now. We could probably do the same thing on a keyboard, with Bitcoin. We know you ain't going to do that, Blood, because you couldn't even log on.

[They laugh.]

BLOOD: Chip Fitzgerald, prior to him getting captured, the first pig he dealt with, he got shot in the back of his ear. Never went to the doctor. When they captured him, he had a little band-aid over it. He was another soldier, you know that.

DHORUBA: Like him, like Twymon, like the brother Sekou. If I had the money to write a Hollywood action movie or action drama, Sekou, I don't know who we'd get to play Sekou because Sekou would be too cool.

KALONJI: Tell us about some of those escapes with Sekou.

DHORUBA: Sekou and Twymon, man! Sekou, the reason why he went to Afrika is because when they came to get him, he had

dreadlocks, them cracker police will look at me and they see a rabbi driving a limousine.

KALONJI: I ain't feel like no rabbi in the backseat, I'm going to tell you that right now. [Laughs.]

DHORUBA: That's that camo. You know that cloak defense that they got in *Star Wars*, where they cloak the ship. I got that.

KAMAU: The idea about expropriations, particularly of banks, that just takes a lot of bravery and forethought. Obviously, the reason to do is that's where the money is. The fact that you all developed the ideas around, "Look, we need to fund revolutionary activity in different ways." Go into what you can, of course, doing that work.

DHORUBA: Let me say this, Blood and I never robbed a bank in our life. We never expropriated anything from anybody. We always believed in the BPP's legacy and program to take not one single needle from the masses of people.

Now, having said that, we could say that the banks, the institutions of finance capital, of course, have always been a primary target of any revolutionary organization, as well as the counterfeiting of money. Now that weed is legalized, I guess that could be done without stick-up kids and all of that stuff. We need to understand that often finance capital and the criminal enterprises of capitalism are prime targets for revolutionary movements and organizations to fund their activities.

Then, sometimes, certain activities like the after-hour clubs for the drug dealers became training exercises for newer members in the underground. Yeah, we became very good at it, in the sense that none of us or very few of us, if any, were actually captured doing this, or killed actually doing this, these expropriations. We

BLA. People in the family from present, myself, Lumumba Shakur, and a couple of the other brothers, we were all citizens of the Republic of New Afrika. I became a conscious citizen of the Republic of New Afrika in 1968.

Going along with what our party demanded was that we couldn't be part of their army. We couldn't be part of their military structure as a citizen. We had that argument with Eldridge and a few other of them when they came to New York when they were saying that we couldn't even be a part of that organization.

Anyhow, there were those in the party who related to land and independence from the start. Those of us who came out of the Organization of Afro-Amerikan Unity, those of us who related to that, we heard Malcolm when he said revolution was about land, about bloodshed, and we took that to heart.

When the folks from the RNA organized it, Queen Mother Moore, the Gaidi Brothers from out of Detroit, Imari, and Herman Ferguson. Different people like that. We had our own connection with these people already, people like Dr. Mutulu Shakur. That was a kid that came up under me. I met Dr. Shakur when he was thirteen years old, running behind me, wanting to get involved in stuff.

It wasn't like we reinvented that in the '80s, we just came to light in the '80s. That's when we started to fall. A lot of us got captured in the early '80s. We had been struggling right on through from the '60s. That wasn't stuff that all of a sudden happened in the '80s, but we had developed to a higher level of struggle. We had organized some support groups that weren't all New Afrikans. Some of them were European, some of them were Puerto Rican. Specifically, those two, white radicals and Puerto Ricans.

We were able to organize some support committee, some support

group out of those communities, that we were able to do some good work with. When you see that in 1981, what they called “the Family,” that was something that the media developed. They gave us that name, because we called ourselves a family. We did call ourselves the family, but that wasn’t an organizational name. It’s just like a group, like a family. We’re family.

DHORUBA: Absolutely. People don’t understand that New York especially was a hotbed of Black nationalism and radical Black politics. It’s always been that way. As Sekou pointed out, he, Lumumba, and Blood, they were all activists before they joined the party. If you notice, most of the activists from New York and from the East Coast had Afrikan names, and to those on the West Coast—because they were besieged by likes of that piece of shit, Karenga and the cultural nationalists on the West Coast—they thought everybody with an Afrikan name must have been a pork-chop nationalist like Karenga.

Of course, that was a mistake. Having said that, Sekou is absolutely right. We have always had a nationalist tradition, a solidarity tradition. Some of the brothers were even like a Bob Collier, he was in the Statue of Liberty case. He was with the Revolutionary Action Movement.

We need to understand that at that point in ’71, before when Kwame Ture left, we met at David Brother’s house with Lumumba, I believe Sekou was there. He had just come back from talking to Lumumba’s Baba, who was a renowned nationalist in Philadelphia. Zayd and Lumumba’s father. Sekou know him well.

KALONJI: Was that Sallahudin Shakur?

DHORUBA: Yes. He was a renowned nationalist and he was of a previous generation of Sekou and them. I didn’t know him.

JARED: I’ve got to say, man, forgive the interruption, but seeing Blood smoking cigarettes on the porch reminds me of the story I’ve always read of John Horse, one of the few revolutionaries to make it and live out his old age on his porch. I feel like I’m getting to talk to John Horse. [Laughs] I love seeing it. I love it.

BLOOD: You know what Assata Shakur used to say about Sundiata before they got busted? She’d say, “Sundiata looks like somebody’s grandfather.” We were sitting on a porch somewhere, Sundiata with a pipe in his mouth. Looks are deceiving.

We survived that way. There are certain individuals who couldn’t drive cars on highways because of their demeanor. There were a lot of motherfuckers with frowns on their face, they wouldn’t let them go through the toll booth, driving through the toll booth.

[They laugh.]

KALONJI: That would be Dhoruba.

[They laugh.]

KALONJI: I’ve got Dhoruba’s stories, too, we’ll come back to at another date, in different states, I’m trying to tell y’all.

DHORUBA: I’ve got juju working for me. If I drive a vehicle, I’m driving..

KALONJI: 120 miles an hour.

DHORUBA: If I’m doing 120 miles an hour in a red Mustang..

KALONJI: Going through Mississippi.

DHORUBA: In a red Mustang, going through Mississippi, with

DHORUBA: When Victor and some other folks got shot, we had people in Harlem Hospital that would lend us the instruments and the tools and even the facility on the DL if we needed it. That's important because we know the gunshot wounds got to be reported to the police. How do we survive? It was the masses of people, power to the people.

BLOOD: There are people who've been wounded, seriously wounded. Doctors working in these hospitals, "Get him to a motel, and we'll keep him alive." They did that and went back to work and did their business. They are unsung heroes. He's dead now. What's his name? Burke, Alan Burke, out of Brooklyn, white doctor. If that doctor, if it hadn't been for him and people like Prime who had four or five gunshot wounds, when they did the autopsy, old wounds. The support that so many people offered. It makes me think about Harriet Tubman. All the people on the Underground Railroad who lent their help and whatnot. We don't know about them people.

KALONJI: This reminds me of Che Guevara when he was talking about being in Bolivia. People, when you talk about guerrilla warfare and whatnot, guerrilla warfare is not you walking around with a whole bunch of equipment. You need the help of the people.

Che talked about how folks would leave food out in pots hanging outside of their homes, so when they passed by, they'll have something to eat, you know what I mean? Definitely a shout-out to those folks.

Sekou served, what, thirty-three or thirty-four years in prison, Dhoruba another nineteen. To have these brothers on BPM right now is an honor. That's one of the reasons we need to support political prisoners, because of the fact that they're coming out, they can come out.

BLOOD: One thing Sekou pointed out to me, and I was kind of shocked because I didn't know. The brother that was murdered that comes from the RNA.

SEKOU: Who are you talking about?

BLOOD: The brother that was killed with you when he got captured.

SEKOU: Oh, yeah, Utari.

DHORUBA: Utari.

BLOOD: A lot of people did not know that.

SEKOU: He came out of their military. He was with Alajo Adegbalola, who was the first Minister of Defense of the RNA.

KALONJI: Iya Fulani Sunni Ali's father? Is that correct?

SEKOU: Yes, he was.

DHORUBA: I think the lesson to be learned from this is that the struggle that required revolutionary politics and required the type of armed response or the type of extra-legal response, was imbued and endowed with revolutionary fervor because of the parent organizations they belong to, whether it was the RNA or the BPP.

If we know this, I know people are going to besiege you, Jared, but if you notice, you could judge the Nation of Islam by its Fruit. You've never seen the Fruit of the Nation of Islam on any frontline struggle. In fact, you've never seen the Nation on any frontline struggle in the civil rights or in the radical movement, they were always self-contained.

They never got involved in that type of politics. They were on that. We need to understand that Sekou was a citizen before he was in the party, we need to understand that this was not an exception. Fred Hampton was in the NAACP in Chicago. You see what I'm saying?

SEKOU: Let me just say this though, because I'm getting ready to leave. I want people to understand that not everyone who was part of BLA was part of the Black Panther Party. It should be made clear, that the BLA came out as a response to the violence of the pigs in our community. The people saw that and wanted to be part of a response to that. I worked with brothers from Louisiana that knew nothing about the BPP. Had never been even around the BPP, the crew I worked with out of New Orleans.

JARED: Baba Sekou, could you add to your final comments here, anything that you would want to tell people about the resurgence of any attention to Assata Shakur? The "Assata taught me" phenomenon. Sir, could you say a word or two about that too, please?

SEKOU: People always are holding her up and using her quote. I like to tell people that she was part of a movement. She wasn't somebody just out by herself. She was part of a movement. People need to remember that. There are people in prison because of her. Mutulu Shakur, one of his cases is for helping to liberate her. Sundiata Acoli was with her on that highway. No one ever calls his name. No one ever hollers, "Free Sundiata Acoli," an eighty-four-year-old revolutionary who's still standing strong. I talked to him two days ago, he called me. People need to understand that she was part of a movement. If they're going to support her, then they need to support everybody that was part of that movement.

We have political prisoners today that were a part of the same movement that she was a part of. The brother that Blood is

DHORUBA: Urban guerrillas depend on the people. That's right. Urban guerrillas and any guerrillas are supposed to be fish in the sea of the people. Isn't that Mao's axiom? You could believe what Blood is saying is true.

We got that way, especially in places like Brooklyn and Manhattan, because when we were selling papers in the community, when we were out in the community, Abdul, Blood, we'd be sitting up there playing checkers and stuff in the community with the pastors, drinking wine. We were in the pool halls and all of that stuff.

When we went underground, we still had that rapport in the community. The people knew that we were for real. The people knew that. I'm going to end with this. To this day, there are people who helped the BLA that nobody knows about. I want to give a shout out to all of these old-school people who are out there listening.

BLOOD: The unsung heroes. Have you ever seen that movie, "21 Bridges" about New York? Any rate. We were locked down in New York and couldn't get out for two weeks. The women that put us in the trunk of a car and drove us to Cleveland, they were bank tellers. They didn't know a damn thing about the BLA. It's an eight-hour drive. They went out there, Sunday night, we arrived, came by the trunk. They had some food and got back on the road, went to New York. We couldn't have done that because all the activists were monitored, them that was not out there, so we had to depend upon those people.

There are people in the BPP who had those connections, who never went underground. They kept us moving. We couldn't have survived without them, but people getting shot, man. We had a doctor, he's dead now. They had a saying about him. If you can get to him, you got 90 percent chance of surviving your wound.

KALONJI: Yeah, Gloria Richardson.

DHORUBA: Gloria and Flo Kennedy in New York.

BLOOD: There you go.

DHORUBA: Flo Kennedy in New York, girlfriend was bad. She was the one that mentored Shirley Chisholm on a lot of stuff.

BLOOD: Let me say this shit about the Black community and the BLA: they supported us fully. Most of the people we stayed with weren't in the BLA or other movements, yet they housed us.

DHORUBA: People don't know them to this day, that's right.

BLOOD: When we lost guns out there in them gun battles, they furnished guns to us. The Black community, oh, my God, man! I've been in Florida—no support—they opened their houses up, gave us weapons. The contribution of the Black community to the BLA is unbelievable. They may not have wanted to be identified because of jobs and because of whatever, but they supported us, they definitely did.

KAMAU: How do you respond, then, to the critique that it was too soon for the BLA? The community wasn't ready for it. It was easy for the enemies of Black radicalism or the Black movement to make folks look like they're the boogeyman, all that kind of stuff. How do you respond to the critique that it may not be too soon?

BLOOD: One of those things to keep in mind is that the BLA was supported immensely by the Black community. They gave us housing; they gave us weapons. When we got injured, they kept us moving, man.

talking about, who we're going to memorialize in a couple of weeks, he was part of that movement. Assata comes out of the BPP movement, out of the Black Liberation Movement. Other brothers and sisters who came out of that movement need the same respect, the same honor that she gets. People ought to give them that, because these brothers and sisters gave their own sacrifice. They lived a life that allows us to live this comfortably as we live today. They pulled some of these pigs up off our asses just like she did.

We have to remember that she's part of a movement. We need to relate to that movement, not just to relate to her as an individual.

JARED: Thank you, Baba Sekou. I just wanted to say, for me, personally, I just want to salute you very much.

SEKOU: Dhoruba, we've got to do this together again, because I would love to sit down with my brothers and just talk some of this history. We've been talking about doing this for a while and haven't done it yet.

BLOOD: You jogged a lot of memory in me, brought things back that were almost gone. I want to say this about the BLA, and people in the BLA not being Panthers. In the cells I worked in, we had individuals, prisoners, who went to jail prior to us, they were training people and sending them to us.

My codefendant was never in the BPP. Woody Green, he was never a Black Panther Party member. They were sent to us from the penitentiary. We need to honor those people.

DHORUBA: A lot of people don't know that the Black Panther Party stopped membership right before the Panther 21 were arrested. Everybody that came into the party was a community worker after that. Assata Shakur, Assata became a member when

...I actually took her down to the office and had her fill out her membership. Her whole NCCF up on Washington Heights were NCCF community workers, and they were BLA cadre.

SEKOU: Peace. BLA.

DHORUBA: All right, Salamu alaykum, Baba.

SEKOU: Wa'alaykumu salam.

KAMAU: A lot of folks have questions about some individual Panthers. One of the folks, obviously he died years earlier, but Kuwasi Balagoon often comes up. Can you guys talk a little bit about Balagoon and his work?

BLOOD: He was a soldier's soldier. That motherfucker had respect in the street, believe that.

DHORUBA: He started out in the Yoruba community in Harlem, of all places. He was a cultural activist in Harlem with the Yoruba community there, that would later relocate in South Carolina.

He was a soldier. The first time I met Kuwasi when we opened up the Harlem office. He was living in a squat. He had taken over an apartment building, him and his wife, Ife. They were living in a tenement building that they had taken over with the tenants. They weren't paying rent and they were living in there. It was occupied tenancy.

That was at the height of the tenant strike with Jesse Gray and Mae Mallory in New York.¹ One of the reasons why Kuwasi

1 A massive rent strike in New York City erupted in 1964 over the City Council's hearings on rent control and stabilization, spreading across three hundred tenements in Harlem to sixty in the Lower

seems to resonate is the same reason that this generation knows about Assata and doesn't know about Sundiata. They know about an Elaine Brown, but they don't know about Kathleen Cleaver, or they do recognize Kathleen Cleaver, but they assume that Angela Davis was in the Black Panther Party, which she was never a member.

They make all these assumptions because these are Black women. You have a generation of Black women who are being raised that needs she-roses, that needs heroines, that needs a connection to struggle that's not male-oriented. In this age of intersectionality, that's crucial.

BLOOD: I wanted to say this about Mae Mallory, she was a revolutionary to her soul. That woman, didn't pick up no gun that I know of, but she taught them sisters in the party how to destroy them big chain grocery stores, by taking a razor blade and just cutting fruit up in there. Mae Mallory was a soldier. Never carried a gun, that I know of, but she taught Afeni and all those people that you can do damage other than picking a firearm.

KALONJI: I'm glad you mentioned Mae Mallory because I was just talking about her a few days ago. When you talk about folks like Mae Mallory and Fulani Sunni Ali, Queen Mother Moore, these are revolutionaries that happen to be women. They're often forgotten about, so I'm glad that you're bigging her up because her work with Robert Williams and so many other people was tantamount.

BLOOD: Oh, yeah. That's just out of Cambridge, Maryland. Malcolm talked of Richardson, Gloria...

East Side, to forty-five in Bedford-Stuyvesant, and forty-five in the Bronx. The strike, organized by the grassroots Community Council on Housing, had the support of militant unions such as SEIU 1199 of the Hospital Workers of New York.