

*Black Liberation Elder Mutulu
Shakur released from prison with
just months left to live*



Mutulu Shakur should have been released long ago, but the cruelties of carceral system know no bounds.?

San Francisco, November 11 (RHC)-- Mutulu Shakur at least won't die in prison. But once freed, he will only be free to die. On Thursday, the U.S. Parole Commission confirmed that the Black liberation elder and stepfather of rapper Tupac will be permitted, after more than 36 years behind bars, to spend his final days outside of prison walls.

In May, a Bureau of Prisons doctor said Shakur had less than six months to live. It was not until after an October hearing, however, that the federal parole commission admitted the obvious.

Shakur is dying of bone marrow cancer. His body and mind have deteriorated. In May, a Bureau of Prisons doctor said Shakur had less than six months to live. It was not until after an October hearing, however, that the federal parole commission — an antiquated institution that has denied the 72-year-old's release 10 previous times — admitted the obvious: that the dying man, who has long posed zero risk to society and holds an impeccable institutional record, and who is considered a mentor to many, will likely not commit another offense and should be released.

Shakur's belated release is a poignant example of the criminal punishment system's breathtaking cruelty. While Shakur's case turned on an obscure parole commission that today directly affects several hundred people, the broader forces behind his unnecessary and protracted imprisonment cast a shadow over America's entire sprawling mass incarceration system.

The federal parole commission is not acting out of compassion. It is simply — and finally — following its own purported guidelines. Shakur had been gravely ill with terminal cancer in April, when the same parole commission denied his release; medical reports had also attested then to his decline in physical function, his confusion and hallucinations. Yet it was only with the further dramatic decline of his health that he has now been deemed eligible for freedom.

He will spend his remaining days in Southern California with his family. Although long overdue, this is a result for which Shakur's lawyers, family, and supporters have been fighting tirelessly, on numerous legal fronts, for many years.

"We are relieved that the Parole Commission now recognizes what has long been true — that Dr. Shakur's release poses no risk whatsoever," said one of Shakur's attorneys, Brad Thomson of the People's Law Office. "It is tragic that it took until he was on the verge of death for that truth to finally be realized."

Mutulu Shakur was convicted racketeering conspiracy charges alongside several Black liberationists and leftist allies for his involvement in the 1981 robbery of a Brink's armored truck, during which a guard and two police officers were killed. Shakur has taken responsibility for his actions and expressed remorse for the lives lost. He was also convicted for aiding in the prison escape of Assata Shakur.

Prior to his incarceration, Shakur was a member of the Black nationalist organization Republic of New Afrika. He was a renowned acupuncturist and a central figure in the movement to bring holistic health care and self-determination to Black residents in the Bronx in the 1970s — a struggle against the conditions of organized abandonment imposed on poor, Black communities under racial capitalism.

Freedom for longtime incarcerated Black liberation elders has always been hard won. Several aging former Black Panthers — like Herman Bell, Jalil Muntaqim, and Sundiata Acoli, who were imprisoned in state prison systems for all too many decades — were granted parole in recent years, despite the zealous opposition of powerful police unions. Shakur has faced the same systematic, ideological intransigence, plus further institutional blocks as a longtime prisoner in the federal rather than state system.

Shakur was incarcerated under a set of federal sentencing guidelines, known as "old law," because he was convicted for crimes that took place before 1987, when the guidelines changed. As such, his parole decisions have been under the oversight of the U.S. Parole Commission: an outdated body consisting of

just two decision-making commissioners that was intended to be phased out decades ago.

The new sentencing guidelines eliminated parole for defendants convicted of post-1987 federal crimes, decreasing the need for the commission. The commission's very existence thus rests on the continued incarceration of fewer than 200 "old law" prisoners like Shakur, who are eligible for parole. There's a grim vested interest in keeping these people in prison. With Shakur on the verge of death, however, it would have been an extreme violation of the commission's own guidelines to deny parole once again.

According to the guidelines, the commission "shall" release any prisoner on mandatory parole if they have served two-thirds of their sentence, or 30 years of a sentence of more than 45 years, unless "he has seriously or frequently violated institution rules and regulations or that there is a reasonable probability that he will commit any Federal, State, or local crime." Shakur more than qualifies; he has qualified for years.

"We now find your medical condition renders you so infirm of mind and body that you are no longer physically capable of committing any Federal, State or local crime," noted the parole commission in its decision to grant Shakur's release.

Grounds offered by the commission to deny Shakur's release in the past have, as I've noted, been preposterous. The commissioners previously cited as a "serious violation," for example, the fact that Shakur had been put on speakerphone during a phone call with a professor and her class in 2013, while they discussed his support for founding a truth and reconciliation commission in the United States.

Meanwhile, Shakur's parole packet has been a glowing testimony to his character and the positive influence he has had on those incarcerated with him. "I recognize Dr. Mutulu Shakur not only as my father, but as the man who changed my way of thinking and saved my life," Ra' Sekou P'tah, who served 20 years in prison for a nonviolent drug crime before his sentence was commuted by President Barack Obama, wrote in a letter of support for Shakur's parole. Dozens of letters detailing how Shakur has been a transformative force for his communities both within and beyond prison walls accompanied his parole application.

That Shakur has only been released on his deathbed did not come as a surprise. A judge who rejected his request for compassionate release in 2020 told him he should not expect anything less. The judge told Shakur that he could reapply at "the point of approaching death." That same judge, now over 90 years old, was the one who sentenced Shakur to prison over 30 years ago.

In the end, Shakur's release has been granted through the parole commission, not the court, and only after his legal team and support committee had been urgently trying every avenue to secure his freedom before death.

Brad Thomson, his attorney, said: "Mutulu will now be able to live out his final days, surrounded by the love and care of his family and close friends."

<https://www.radiohc.cu/en/noticias/internacionales/304655-black-liberation-elder-mutulu-shakur-released-from-prison-with-just-months-left-to-live>



Radio Habana Cuba