

## Who is Robert Seth Hayes?

Robert 'Seth' Hayes is one of the longest-held political prisoners in the USA. Born in the Bronx in 1948, Seth was imprisoned due to his activity in the Black Panther Party and the Black Liberation Army, a fighting formation that grew out of the Black liberation movement of the 1960s.

It was in the period of social upheaval in the late 1960s that Seth radicalized and joined the Black Panther Party and later the Black Liberation Army. Drafted into the U.S. Army and sent off to fight in Vietnam, Seth was wounded and awarded a variety of military awards including the Purple Heart, the National Defense Service Medal, the Vietnam Service Medal, and the Vietnam Campaign Medal. Back in the U.S., when riots exploded across the nation in response to the April 4th, 1968 assassination of Martin Luther King, Seth's unit was ordered to assist in putting down the massive rebellions, which took place and spread across the United States. According to Seth, "it was the saddest day of my life, and I could never identify again with the aims of the armed forces or the government."

After the military, Seth was swept up in the Black Liberation movement and joined the Black Panther Party. He worked in the free breakfast for children program and began dedicating his life to the betterment of Black people. His knowledge of the effects of racism

on the Black community convinced him that the Black Panthers' program of community service and community self-defense was what was needed. It was during this period the US government stepped up a program known as COINTELPRO (Counter Intelligence Program.) This program was design to



neutralize and destroy civil rights and progressive organizations, which were deemed as a threat to the American society. As part of the COINTELPRO, leaders of these movements were victims of illegal operations, up to and including political assassinations. The US government waged an open war against the Black Liberation movement, specifically the Black Panther Party. Throughout the country, leaders of the Panthers were being killed or falsely accused of crimes they did not commit.

Robert Seth Hayes was surrounded by people who fell victim to illegal activities of the US government. Fearing further attacks, he went underground, believing it a better way to protect the work of the Black Panther Party and the Black movement in general. Many

Panthers joined Hayes and others like him- and its then that an offshoot of the Black Panther Party was created- the Black Liberation Army (BLA).

The newly formed BLA believed that "the character of reformism is based on unprincipled class collaboration with our enemy" and asserted the following principles:

1. That we are anti-capitalist, anti-imperialist, anti-racist, and anti-sexist.
2. That we must of necessity strive for the abolishment of these systems and for the institution of Socialistic relationships in which Black people have total and absolute control over their own destiny as a people.
3. That in order to abolish our systems of oppression, we must utilize the science of class struggle, develop this science as it relates to our unique national condition.

On June 5, 1973, a transit officer, Sidney Thompson was shot and killed while trying to detain two individuals at transit station in the Bronx. Seth and another person were arrested for the death of the transit officer. Seth was convicted of the crime, in addition to eight counts of attempted murder of a NYC police officer, weapons possession, grand theft and collective association. He was then sentenced to 25 years to life in prison.

Robert Seth Hayes had two children prior to his arrest and imprisonment, and he has remained closely involved their lives and upbringing, despite the

difficulties presented by his long incarceration. His son, Chunga, lives and works in Atlanta. His daughter, Crystal, herself mother of 9-year-old Myaisha, is a student at Mount Holyoke College in Western Massachusetts. Seth is a doting grandfather and calls his family "the loves of my life." He describes his relationship with Crystal this way, "She has had the most intense impact on my life, always questioning, full of joy and insight, grasping lessons and maintaining her own dreams. She has kept me striving always to expand my knowledge and illuminate my principles, as I struggle to stay abreast of her questioning mind."

Seth has been diagnosed with both Hepatitis C and Type II diabetes. He has been extremely ill and had great difficulty procuring the necessary healthcare and has needed the help of his lawyers and some state political leaders in order to get adequate treatment.

While in prison, Seth continues to work for the betterment of the community in which he lives. He has participated in programs with the NAACP, the Jaycees and other organizations and has worked as a librarian, pre-release advisor and AIDS counselor. Whenever possible, he has taken college courses.

## Free Robert Seth Hayes

Write to the Robert Seth Hayes at:

Robert Seth Hayes #74-A-2280  
Sullivan Correctional Facility  
Post Office Box 116  
Fallsburg, New York 12733-0116

Local groups supporting Seth:

**NYC Anarchist Black Cross**

Post Office Box 110034

Brooklyn, New York 11211

[nycabc@riseup.net](mailto:nycabc@riseup.net)

[nycabc.wordpress.com](http://nycabc.wordpress.com)

[facebook.com/nycabc](https://facebook.com/nycabc)

twitter and instagram @nycabc

**New York City Jericho Movement**

Post Office Box 670927

Bronx, New York 10467

[nycjericho@gmail.com](mailto:nycjericho@gmail.com)

[jerichony.org](http://jerichony.org)

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**Black Liberation Army  
Prisoner of War  
Serving 25 years to life**

