

Who is Veronza Bowers?

Veronza Bowers, Jr. is a former Black Panther political prisoner serving a life sentence for the killing of a forest ranger in 1973. Bowers has continued to maintain his innocence, arguing that he has been the target of the FBI's COINTELPRO. His conviction rests on two informants who exchange their testimony for funds, cars and reduced sentences. Furthermore, authorities have stopped at nothing to keep Veronza Bowers in prison, even detaining him illegally after his ordered release.

Veronza Bowers was one of the principle organizers of the Black Panther Party Chapter in Omaha, Nebraska in the late '60s. He then traveled to California where he took on the responsibilities as captain of the Richmond Branch. As the repression against the Panthers increased, like many of the members of the party, Veronza became a target of COINTELPRO, a program designed to destroy people and organizations the government considered "politically dangerous" to the national security of the United States of America.

On September 15, 1973, Veronza was



Veronza and Family

arrested in Mill Valley, California on state charges of robbery, receiving possession of stolen property pursuant to a federal search warrant. A small army of FBI, Marin County Sheriffs, Berkley and Oakland City detectives, and Animal Shelter police made a pre-dawn raid, which netted four adults, three children and two German shepherds. All the state charges were later dismissed because there was no probable cause for the search warrant.

After the state charges were dropped, the federal government stepped back in and charged Veronza with first-degree murder of a National Park Service Ranger. The government used the testimony of two informants, Alan Veale and Jonathan Shoher, who had also been charged with the crime, along with Veronza. These two men had both been convicted of armed bank robbery. However, in exchange for their testimony against Veronza, both had all charges against them dropped in connection with their part in the murder of the park ranger. In addition one of the informants served no time in connection with his bank robbery conviction for which he had been sentenced to 12 years in prison and was paid \$10,000 after entering the witness protection program.

There were no other eyewitnesses independent of these informants to link Veronza to the crime. At his trial, Veronza, who testified on his own behalf, and his wife offered alibi testimony, which was not credited by the jury. Nor was testimony of two relatives of the informants who insisted that they were lying. The testimony of the informants led to the conviction of Veronza. He was sentenced to life in prison.

Veronza has consistently proclaimed his innocence of the crime he claims he never committed even at the expense of having



Veronza Bowers

his appeals for parole denied--for which an admission of guilt and contrition as an expression of remorse is virtually required--he has insisted on maintaining his innocence.

In August 1979, after serving six years in federal prison, Veronza Bowers attempted to escape from Lompoc Federal Correctional Institution. However, he was captured before ever reaching the outside. After the failed attempt to self-liberation, Veronza made the decision to focus on his spiritual-self. He became a "model" prisoner, studying music, a variety of Asian healing arts - including shiatsu, acupuncture, tsubo and massage therapy - and developed a strong interest in Buddhist meditation. Veronza became an honorary elder of the Lompoc Tribe of Five Feathers, a Native American spiritual and cultural group. He became a mentor and founder of the All-Faith Meditation Group, a non-denominational spiritual organization devoted to healing meditation using the Japanese shakuhachi flute.

On June 21, 2005, Veronza Bower was to be released from federal prison on a mandatory parole after more than 31

years of incarceration. This date was based on a vote of the five-member U.S. Parole Commission in Washington, D.C., the highest governing body in our nation's parole system. However, Veronza was denied release.

This action was based on a petition filed by U.S. Attorney General Alberto Gonzales, on behalf of the Fraternal Order of Police, requesting that the National Appeals Board "reconsider" their decision granting him parole.

The truth of the matter is that Veronza has served his full sentence under law plus 16 months of illegal detention. He has been a model prisoner with the highest possible Bureau of Prison rating and recommended for parole several times, only to have his release rescinded, literally, at the last minute. He received a very favorable review and recommendation for release based on rigorous psychological and personality testing administered by a highly reputable independent agency. His petitions for parole have been strongly supported by a number of prison officials and administrators who worked closely with him over the years and can't say enough about his role as a mentor and role model to younger inmates. His efforts to be released have also been supported in writing by a former member of the USPC, head of the NY Parole Commission and a member of the U.S. Congress. Over the last three decades, he has worked hard to improve himself in all ways possible—personally, socially and spiritually. Yet, he continues to languish in prison, be subjected to threats and intimidation, demeaned by the news media and falsely accused by the very group that claims to be the guardian of law and order in our society. Today is a sad day for America and for the spirit of democracy in our land.

Free Veronza Bowers

If you wish to write to Veronza, write to him at:

VERONZA BOWERS, JR.
#35316-136
U.S. Penitentiary - Atlanta
P.O. Box 150160
Atlanta, GA 30315

Local groups working with Veronza:

Jericho Amnesty Coalition
PO Box 34186
Los Angeles, CA 90034

Anarchist Black Cross Federation
(ABCF)
PO Box 11223
Whittier, CA 90603
email: la@abcf.net

Veronza Bowers, jr.



Black Panther
Political Prisoner
Serving life Sentence

