

The Tradition

Carry it on now.
Carry it on.

Carry it on now.
Carry it on.

Carry on the tradition.

There were Black people since the childhood of time
who carried it on.

In Ghana and Mali and Timbuktu
we carried it on.

Carried on the tradition.

We hid in the bush
when the slavemasters came
holding spears.
And when the moment was ripe,
leaped out and lanced the lifeblood
of would-be masters.

We carried it on.

On slave ships,
hurling ourselves into oceans.
Slitting the throats of our captors.
We took their whips,
And their ships.
Blood flowed in the Atlantic--
and it wasn't all ours.
We carried it on.

Fed Missy arsenic apple pies.
Stole the axes from the shed.
Went and chopped off master's head.

We ran. We fought.
We organized a railroad.
An underground.

We carried it on.

In newspapers. In meetings.
In arguments and streetfights.
We carried it on.

In tales told to children.
In chants and cantatas.
In poems and blues songs
and saxophone screams,
We carried it on.

In classrooms. In churches.
In courtrooms. In prisons.
We carried it on.

On soapboxes and picket lines,
Welfare lines, unemployment lines.
Our lives on the line,
We carried it on.

In sit-ins and pray-ins
And march-ins and die-ins,
We carried it on.

On cold Missouri midnights
Pitting shotguns against lynch mobs.
On burning Brooklyn streets,
Pitting rocks against rifles,
We carried it on.

Against water hoses and bulldogs,
Against nightsticks and bullets.
Against tanks and tear gas.
Needles and nooses.
Bombs and birth control.
We carried it on.

In Selma and San Juan.
Mozambique. Mississippi.
In Brazil and Boston,
We carried it on.

Through the lies and the sell-outs.
The mistakes and the madness.
Through pain and hunger and frustration,
We carried it on.

Carried on the tradition.

Carried a strong tradition.

Carried a proud tradition.

Carried a Black tradition.

Carry it on.

Pass it down to the children.
Pass it down.
Carry it on.
Carry it on now.
Carry it on
to FREEDOM!

--Assata Shakur