



**American Friends
Service Committee**

Newark Area Office

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June 15, 2020

The Honorable Governor Phil Murphy
The State House
225 State Street
Trenton, New Jersey 08625

RE: Commutation of Sentence – Sundiata Acoli (aka Clark Squire)

39794-066/NJ000440810a

Dear Hon. Governor Murphy:

I am writing to share my experience and support for the immediate release of Sundiata Acoli (Clark Squire) who is currently being housed in the Cumberland, Md. Federal facility. Sundiata is 83 years old, in failing health and has been imprisoned for the past 47 years. I would strongly urge you to use your executive authority, which would literally save the life of this man.

I have benefited from knowing Sundiata since for over 30 years. During this period, I have visited him in Pennsylvania, New York and New Jersey and have the years have developed a unique connection with him. Knowing him for over 3 decades puts me in a position to attest to his accomplishments which include having a discipline free record for over 25 years, completing over 100 program and mentoring young people through his writings and willingness to respond to letters from our student interns and volunteers.

Our work on the COVID19 pandemic and its impact for New Jersey prisons has been consuming much of our time and concern these past months. We are especially anxious about the impact of the virus on the elderly, which have been designated at high risk. Sundiata was already hospitalized with COVID, which he survived. He continues to deal with dementia, which is advancing, among other health issues. Those of us who care deeply about him are increasingly concern about his ability to survive a COVID infected atmosphere.

Should you grant commutation, I believe you can feel confident that sending him home to his family is the right and humane thing to do. His daughter is able financially and physically to house and care for him. He would also have the support of friends who have known him for decades and are willing to ensure his wellbeing.

It is the power of your office that can make a difference in whether he is able to survive. Your consideration is very much appreciated. If you have any questions or concerns, please don't hesitate to be in touch with me.

Sincerely,

Bonnie Kerness, MSW
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