

# Cops, Press, Politicians

## Pulling Out All the Stops to Kill Mumia

Fifth Estate Collective

2000

2000 may be the decisive year in the legal and political battle for the life of Mumia Abu-Jamal. As the campaign to save the falsely imprisoned journalist and ex-Black Panther gathers momentum, the police, politicians and media are stepping up their efforts to have him strapped to the execution gurney.

Mumia barely escaped a December 2, 1999 execution date set by Pennsylvania Governor Thomas Ridge on October 26, keeping his pledge to the frenzied Fraternal Order of Police (FOP). As soon as the death warrant was signed, Mumia was moved to an isolation cell in preparation for his execution and subjected to 24-hour-day video surveillance under bright lights.

Fortunately, with Mumia's appeal now in the federal court system, U.S. District Judge William Yohn, Jr. granted a stay of execution 14 days later. Yohn received over 15,000 letters from around the world urging him to grant Mumia a reprieve and a full federal review of his case. Support for a new trial for Mumia has been as diverse recently as the Detroit City Council, the Congressional Black Caucus, and members of the Japanese Parliament.

Mumia was convicted for the 1981 murder of a Philadelphia police officer in a trial marked by police and witness perjury, extreme prosecutorial misconduct, and dozens of procedural and constitutional errors which are the basis of his federal appeal.

### **“Until Abu-Jamal Burns In Hell”**

Yet, despite growing evidence that proves his innocence, if it were up to Ridge and the cops, Mumia would be a dead man today. According to FOP spokesman, Gilbert Gallegos, his organization will not rest “until Abu-Jamal burns in hell.”

Mainstream media, becoming dimly aware of the grassroots efforts to save Mumia have begun writing about the case, but always about how Mumia has duped his supporters, and never without referring to him as a “convicted cop killer.” A January Associated Press story about the Rage Against the Machine/Beastie Boys concert a year before in support of Mumia, referred to the event as a “cop killer concert.” The story, which went out to thousands of radio stations as “rock news,” reports on a 70 to 0 vote in the New Jersey state assembly to donate the state's profits from the pro-Mumia concert to families of slain police officers. Governor Christie Whitman was expected to sign the bill. No mention was made of Mumia's impending appeals.

Recognizing the support the death row inmate has among musicians and actors, the FOP posted a website ([www.grandlodgefop.org](http://www.grandlodgefop.org)) calling for a boycott of groups and persons who are aiding his efforts to seek a new trial.

Besides, the Beasties and Rage, some of the other artists added to the boycott list recently include David Byrne, Sting, Michael Stipe, Harry Belafonte, Bobby McFerrin, Pete Seeger, and Chumbawamba. At this rate, only Englebert Humperdinck will be left.

Major media sources seem no less rabid than the cops in their rush to finish off Mumia. The incredibly slanted hit pieces aired by NPR Radio's All Things Considered and ABC-TV's 20-20 were matched recently by an article in the August 1999 Vanity Fair. While presenting nothing other than a rehash of the FOP version of events which "prove" Mumia is guilty, the magazine fails to inform the unwary reader of the author's connection to the case. Buzz Bissinger worked as a publicist for former Philadelphia mayor Ed Rendell. Rendell, current chair of the national Democratic Party, was the city DA when Mumia received his railroad job of a trial in 1982. By the way, the current Philadelphia DA, Lynn Abraham, was the arraigning magistrate in Mumia's case following the shooting incident in 1981. Not a disinterested hand in the game.

As usual, it's the people versus the power of the state, the right-wing, and the rich. There is so much interest in Mumia's case abroad that the U.S. State Department distributed a so-called "fact sheet" at an American embassy in Europe that sounded like it was written by the FOP (it might have been).

## **Right-Wing Whacko Millionaire**

The ultra-conservative Accuracy in Media group, funded by right-wing whacko millionaire, Richard Mellon Scaife, is distributing a 38-page pamphlet entitled, "Cop Killer: How Mumia Abu Jamal Conned Millions Into Believing He Was Framed." And, right-wingers in Philadelphia have put up a new Website attacking Mumia and his supporters.

OK, conned millions (hopefully, we have those numbers), let's move to stop Mumia's execution. He has been on death row so long, his incarceration there seems like a permanent residence, but to those who want him dead, it's only a transitional abode. Mumia really might be executed. Remember Sacco and Vanzetti and the Rosenbergs; there were world-wide outcries against their impending death sentences, but still they were wrongfully killed.

The legal problem Mumia's lawyers face is that the "liberal" Clinton administration's 1996 Anti-terrorism and Effective Death Penalty Act severely restricts the power of federal judges to review state court convictions. Nevertheless, Mumia's attorneys are calling on U.S. District Judge Yohn to exercise his constitutional authority to see that justice is done.

## **Philadelphia Hanging Judge**

Yohn must decide whether to reopen the case, or have all future appeals be based on the court record of the notorious Philadelphia "hanging judge," Albert Sabo, who originally tried the case, and whose rulings, based on an almost pathological hatred of Mumia, constitutes a great part of the content of the appeal.

Bluntly put, Yohn will decide whether Mumia is sent to the death chamber without the evidence in his case ever being fully heard by an impartial court.

It is no longer a matter of "something"—being done, but everything! This paper appears too infrequently to list upcoming events, but many cities have groups such as Anti-Racist Action (ARA) active around Mumia's case. Contact ARA at [www.aranet.org](http://www.aranet.org), or the Free Mumia Coalition at [www.mumia.org](http://www.mumia.org), or call them at (212) 330-8029. In Detroit, contact (313) 869-9393; or e-mail at [detroitara@hotmail.com](mailto:detroitara@hotmail.com).

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