

Community, activists demand ‘Free Mumia!’

written by Stephen Millies
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Two hundred people took to the streets of Philadelphia's Germantown neighborhood on April 27 to demand freedom for Mumia Abu-Jamal and all political prisoners. Every year, supporters march to honor his birthday on April 24. This year Mumia turned 65.

Abu-Jamal is a world-famous revolutionary, writer and radio commentator who was framed for killing a Philadelphia police officer in 1981. His real crimes were to help found the Philadelphia chapter of the Black Panther Party in 1969 and exposing police corruption in the city.

Mumia spent almost 30 years on death row before his sentence was commuted to life imprisonment. Two death warrants to execute Abu-Jamal were signed by former Pennsylvania Gov. Tom Ridge.

Only the power of the people — through mobilizations inside Philadelphia and around the world — saved Mumia's life.

But Mumia Abu-Jamal is still in jail. Authorities refused to treat his hepatitis C condition, and that of thousands of other Pennsylvania prisoners, until protests compelled the state to do so.

On April 17, Philadelphia District Attorney Larry Krasner finally dropped his objection to Judge Leon Tucker's ruling giving Mumia Abu-Jamal the right to appeal his unjust conviction.

Mumia's previous appeals to the Pennsylvania Supreme Court were turned down even though its chief justice — former Philadelphia DA Ronald Castille — insisted on hearing the case. A former prosecutor like Castille, whose office tried to have Jamal executed, isn't supposed to do that.

The day after Krasner's announcement, the International Family and Friends of Mumia Abu-Jamal held an important news conference to discuss this forward step.

Murder Incorporated

People came to Germantown's Vernon Park to celebrate Tucker's important ruling, which was denounced by the racist Fraternal Order of Police. Gabe Africa of the MOVE organization chaired the rally there.

People marched down Cheltenham Avenue and other Germantown streets carrying colorful banners, including those from Struggle-La Lucha newspaper and the Peoples Power Assembly in Baltimore. Drivers honked their horns and raised fists in support. On one corner, several people stood and held up their fists as the march passed.

Signs were carried for the MOVE 9; American Indian Movement leader Leonard Peltier; and two Puerto Rican political prisoners, Ana Belén Montes and Nina Droz Franco.

This is the peak of the capitalist economic cycle. Yet half of the stores were shuttered in this Black neighborhood.

People proceeded to a neighborhood church, where the publication of Jamal's latest book, "Murder Incorporated, Volume 2," was celebrated. Activists took turns reading passages where Mumia detailed the crimes of Wall Street's bloody empire.

Among the readers were Mumia's nephew Wayne Cook and Mike Africa Jr., the son of Debbie Africa and Michael Africa. Mike said he was "honored and humbled" to be there.

Mike Jr. was born in a jail cell after his parents were locked up following the 1978 Philadelphia police assault on the MOVE house in Powelton Village. Police fired so many shots that they ended up killing one of their own cops, James Ramp.

The MOVE 9 were framed for this death even though the judge said that he didn't

know who had killed Ramp. MOVE 9 members Debbie and Michael Africa spent 40 years in jail before being freed last year.

Other members of the MOVE 9 remain incarcerated.

Whenever you hear the Trump administration accusing Venezuela, Cuba or Nicaragua of human rights violations, remember Debbie Africa, Michael Africa and Mike Africa Jr.

Free Mumia, the MOVE 9 and all political prisoners!

Photos: Youth Against War & Racism, Bill Does, Stephen Millies

