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# Colin Kaepernick: Now is the time to release Mumia Abu-Jamal

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Colin Kaepernick

"Release Mumia Abu-Jamal and all political prisoners" was the message of the Nov.

16 Mobilization to Free Mumia Abu-Jamal Press Conference that featured a video appeal from Colin Kaepernick, calling on the movement against racist policing to join in the work to bring Mumia Abu-Jamal home.

Listen to and view Kaepernick's entire presentation on YouTube —



Colin Kaepernick on Mumia's Case.

Johanna Fernandez opened the virtual press conference with an urgent emergency message regarding 77-year-old political prisoner Russell Maroon Shoats. Shoats, suffering stage 4 cancer for the last year and a half, has been diagnosed with COVID-19.

This infection is no doubt a result of the resurgence of the COVID-19 virus in Pennsylvania state prisons and the callous disregard shown by prison authorities to elderly and infirm incarcerated people, including withholding testing and unhygienic isolation of those who report symptoms. The message included a request for all supporters to call the office of Pennsylvania Gov. Tom Wolf and demand the unconditional release of Russel Maroon Shoats and all elder prisoners with COVID-19. The message was signed by Russel Maroon Shoats Jr., son of Shoats. The number to call (717-787-2500) was posted on the chat and Fernandez repeated this information throughout the press conference

Fernandez, the chair of the virtual press conference, is an associate professor of history at Baruch College, author of "The Young Lords: A Radical History" and producer of "Justice on Trial: An examination of the case of Mumia Abu-Jamal."

## **Police frame-up of Mumia**

Pam Africa of the International Concerned Family and Friends of Mumia Abu-Jamal followed, explaining why this is a critical moment in the fight to release Black political prisoner and world renowned journalist Mumia Abu-Jamal.

Mumia is clearly a target of judicial, prosecutorial, police misconduct and terrorism. District Attorney Larry Krasner has already released fifteen people who had been subjected to judicial and prosecutorial misconduct. The police frame-up of Mumia has been in the foreground, internationally recognized, as Krasner knows, but he has not released Mumia.

"We must demand that Krasner do for Mumia what he did for the other fifteen exonerees, thirteen Black, one white, and one Latino," Pam Africa said.

"We are asking people to help us stop the plot and stop the plan. It is clear they are trying to kill this innocent man. Mumia could have been released just before the Kings Bench Act, which Linn Washington will talk about later."

Africa continued, "I cannot express enough how very ill Mumia is in that prison, not like he was two years ago, Mumia has cirrhosis of the liver."

Cirrhosis is a liver disease that involves loss of liver cells and irreversible scarring. Viral hepatitis B and C are common causes of cirrhosis of the liver. According to the Mayo Clinic, life expectancy for advanced cases of cirrhosis of the liver is six months to two years depending on complications.

"Mumia is now living under the threat of COVID-19, which is the case for everyone else inside the prisons," Africa continued. "The thing is, he should be on the streets based on the evidence. We need to immediately put pressure and demand that Krasner release Mumia based on judicial and prosecutorial misconduct."

Pam Africa added, "I cannot express this enough. The plots, the failed plots for 39 years where they tried to kill Mumia. If it were not for a judge in Scranton and the movement, Mumia would be dead today! The prison officials were in a plot that got exposed inside the courtroom before a lot of people that they were manipulating papers to kill him. We are not just talking about judicial and prosecutorial misconduct. We are talking about a plot, a continuous plot to try to kill Mumia."

Fernandez explained that Pam Africa was referring to bribery on the part of the prosecutor's office in the case of Mumia Abu-Jamal. The bribery of witnesses to obtain a conviction and also when Mumia fell ill with hepatitis C. Fernandez said the committee supported a court suit that revealed that the department of corrections manipulated their own doctor to say that Mumia's critical case of hepatitis C was not serious. In court, the doctor said that the prosecutor was trying to get him to say that Mumia is not seriously ill, but the science and the records suggest that he is. At that point, the judge intervened saying that someone is about to perjure themselves and there are going to be serious problems in the case. Eventually the struggle was won and Mumia got the health care and services he needed. As a result of this health lawsuit, other prisoners across the country are now receiving treatment for hepatitis C.

Linn Washington, a professor of journalism at Temple University, explained that the "King's Bench," gives the Pennsylvania Supreme Court the power to intervene in matters brought before the court and take up cases that are before a lower court. This power is supposed to be done in extraordinary instances of the public interest. What the Pennsylvania Supreme Court did was to involve itself by granting a petition filed by the FOP (Fraternal Order of Police) to block Mumia's legal appeals, which had been granted by the state's Superior Court.

Kwame Ajamu, one of three wrongfully convicted prisoners in Cleveland, Ohio, was exonerated in 2014. All three were initially sentenced to death for murder based on

the testimony of a 12-year-old, Edward Vernon. Their sentences were commuted to life in prison, and, after forty years, Vernon came forward and said the Cleveland police detectives coerced him to testify falsely at the trial. Kwame was 17 years at the time of his conviction. Ajamu was paroled in 2003 and exonerated in 2014.

Ajamu is currently the chairman of Witness to Innocence, an organization that has an intention, desire and strong mission to stop capital punishment and end the death penalty. Ajamu said he will stand behind Mumia until eternity.

### **Mumia's words brought life**

Dwayne Betts is director of the Million Book Project at Yale Law School, public defender and award winning author. Betts read a prepared poetic statement that began:

“My name is Reginald Dwayne Betts; I am a poet; I am a lawyer; I am a convicted felon. In 1997 I went to prison as a 16-year-old. I pleaded guilty to a carjacking, sentenced for nine years. During those years in cells, I discovered Mumia Abu-Jamal’s writing. I discovered him in the same way that I discovered Assata Shakur, and George Jackson, and James Foreman, and Stockley Carmichael, and H. Rap Brown, Fred Hampton, Huey P. Newton, Bobby Seale, Malcolm X, Dr. Angela Davis.” Betts said that Mumia’s words brought life to him when he was in solitary and he speaks for all people in prison regardless of their innocence.

Professor Angela Davis, author of “Are Prisons Obsolete,” registered her unwavering support of Mumia Abu-Jamal. “It is right and just for us to accelerate our efforts to Free Mumia Abu Jamal and all political prisoners,” Davis said.

Mumia’s grandson Jamal spoke of how “This is something I’ve had to endure all my life.” He said it is great to see so many organizations coming together, strategizing and figuring out action plans to get my grandfather free. Jamal spoke the names

George Floyd, Ahmaud Arbery, Breonna Taylor and Walter Wallace, who was recently shot by the police in Philadelphia.

Jamal said, "It's a good time to have my grandfather's case come to the forefront. There are a lot of individuals who are miseducated, so much misinformation provided by the Fraternal Order of Police. I am grateful for so many that are participating in this press conference."

The press conference concluded with a powerful statement from Colin Kaepernick. Watch the complete event [on YouTube](#).

For more on the movement to free Mumia Abu Jamal go to [Mobilization4Mumia.com](#).

