

# **Collective Punishment Inside U.S. Prisons Must End!**

## **Mumia Abu-Jamal and Bryant Arroyo have filed Inmate Grievances.**

Treating People With Dignity and Respect Is the Best Violence Reduction Program

By [Prison Radio](#)

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*News from inside is that collective punishment is being rolled out across the state. Under the guise of their new "Violence Reduction Initiative" the Pennsylvania Department of Corrections (PA DOC) has begun punishing all inmates "associated" or on the same tier if there is a fight or someone is accused of a violent act. K. Brittian Facility manager at SCI Frackville responded to Bryant Arroyo's grievance by stating that "Facility Manager/Designees [are authorized to] ...utilize lock downs as a response to critical incidents...disorder, a threat to security or an inability to maintain orderly control of inmates." This reason for denying Bryant's grievance misses the point, it waves "security" as a red flag to obscure the unconstitutional action of punishing someone for something they did not do. This is not the "some" evidence standard, this is the NO EVIDENCE standard. Furthermore, the sanctions go far beyond reimposing order and locking folks down. The sanctions are targeted specifically at innocent individuals, continue far beyond the lock down, and escalate. With no due process and no grievance appeals allowed. Mail and visits are rights that involve access to the courts and additional constitutional protections.*

Following any violent incident, any inmate or many inmates (who often have little knowledge of the incident in question) can lose phone calls, basic (necessary) commissary, recreation and yard time, access to the law library, mail, work, and more.

Collective punishment is immoral. It is unconstitutional and dangerous and it does not work. It is a tool in a repressive regime to get compliance. It is inhumane and brutal.

As a fascist stick in the prison guards' toolkit. It offers the guards and prison officials unlimited and unaccountable latitude for selective enforcement and the targeting of specific prisoners.

The policing industry is endorsing this program, which means we will soon see this not just where it's already started in Washington, Maryland, Mississippi, and Pennsylvania, but all across the nation—if we don't respond.

If someone on Bryant Arroyo's or Mumia Abu-Jamal's tier throws a punch, and their whole tier can be locked down. Well this happened recently, and ironically the guys who threw the punch were given a semblance of "due process": they could grieve their 2 days in the hole.

But Mumia and Bryant could not. They were not allowed to challenge the “collective punishment” given to the whole block. This threat looms over every person in these prisons, every day.

History has proven that often the targets of prison officials are the jailhouse lawyers, community leaders, and the folks that are outspoken and organized.

Our correspondents are the most vulnerable in the face of these repressive policies. Prison Radio correspondent Bryant Arroyo shares with us what it is like to live in these conditions:

“Every day I’m in a state of impending lock down. We’re anxious all the time. The mood is very tense and it’s become dangerous for both inmates and staff alike.. ..It’s gotten to the point where if you see a fight might be about to break out, you grab your towel and head to the shower because you don’t know when your next chance will be.”

His room had been turned upside down by guards during the last lock down, based on a fight he wasn’t even aware of.

As we have come to expect, these same brave men and women in prison are taking the lead in exposing these unconstitutional practices.

In addition to talking to us and organizing inside their tiers, Mumia Abu-Jamal and Bryant Arroyo have both filed inmate grievances. Mumia’s came after he was subjected to a lock down for events of which he had no knowledge whatsoever: he argued that collective punishment is unconstitutional by its “inherent nature” as a violation of both the 8th and 14th amendments. From the letter:

“Collective punishment is anathema to US law, as it is a government process that punishes others who have not participated in the event giving rise to said government action. PA DOC cannot institute a policy based on an unconstitutional theory or practice. Period.”

“The [Eighth] Amendment must draw its meaning from the evolving standards of decency that mark the progress of a maturing society.” Chief Justice Earl Warren *Trop v. Dulles*, 356 U.S. 86 (1958)

“The relief requested is to grant my legitimate grievance by abolishing this dysfunctional, collectively punitive, officially oppressive, unconstitutional policy which directly affected the ‘actually-innocent’ inmates by broadly and arbitrarily/capriciously misapplying the policy to everyone.” —Bryant Arroyo, Prison Radio correspondent at SCI Frackville PA.

This past month after he filed his grievance Bryant Arroyo’s commissary through JPAY was frozen. He could no longer get stamps to send us copies of his research. If you can we ask you to send him a money gram. MoneyGram has a contract with the PA DOC and he can get funds that way. Bryant Arroyo Inmate number CU1126. PA DOC code 3209. JPAY will also accept money orders for Bryant if made out and sent to JPAY with his name and number on the memo line. JPAY 717 Market St. Ste 423 Lemoyne, PA 17043-1581.

Also when Prison Radio sent copies of the grievances to other inmates also filing complaints

the prison censors rejected the mail, saying that the paper copy of the grievance was a prisoner's "personal property" could not be shared. This information needs to be widely distributed so these decisions can be immediately and effectively appealed. We are filed a grievance on the blocking of legal documents being copied and sent to other inmates.

We can and must support folks inside when they are standing up for their rights.

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