

The Last Lap to Freedom: Mumia Will be Free

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“We know that Mumia will be free. We just want to delay Mumia’s release as long as possible.” Maureen Faulkner, at a Fraternal Order of Police (FOP) Lodge.

This is a startling admission. They know it and we know it: Mumia will be free. Freedom is coming and it is going to be a fast, harrowing last lap.

As I drive Route 309 past Allentown to see Mumia Abu-Jamal at SCI Mahanoy in Frackville, PA, I know I am scaling formidable walls. Just yesterday, I heard Maureen Faulkner tell Ashley Strohmier on *Fox and Friends* that she was going after Brown University for illuminating Mumia’s archival materials. This is a powerful development. See “Brown University Acquires the Papers of Mumia Abu-Jamal” *New York Times* story 8-24-22.

Mumia, the intellectual, the man, and the scholar, has a critical role in the discourse of abolition. And every accolade must acknowledge the demand for his immediate and unconditional freedom..

Bringing Mumia’s voice out beyond the walls to the airwaves is Prison Radio’s job. Freedom is our mission.

The brutality and banality of oppression in Pennsylvania prisons is tangible, palpable, naked.

On this visit, at least there are no snarling drug dogs circling my pockets for dog biscuit crumbs, and no one in the line to get in is turned away for setting off the notoriously fallible drug scanner.

Image: Mumia Abu-Jamal with his grandson and paralegal Jamal Jr.



We were on a legal visit — in an open room, with a recording camera and microphone just above our heads: a blatant affront to the Sixth Amendment right to counsel. The back of the room holds a fully stocked vending machine with cold bottled water on every shelf. But there is no water for this visit. A sign taped to the machine reads: “Out of Order. Use the next one”. When you try “the next one,” it flashes “Sold Out”. There is no water fountain. The only food on offer is a few overpriced pork hoagies, which no Muslim can eat and which are deadly for an aging population fighting heart disease.

The cavernous room is practically empty of regular visitors; the online portal makes it difficult to schedule a visit. Only 9 men have visits today. Although there is plenty of room, we are all expected to sit still. Stretching and standing is frowned upon — god forbid you want to get up and walk around.

Guards tell me that photos are no longer allowed on legal visits. This is both petty and unconstitutional. Obviously, these pictures below have power.

We know Mumia endures a full cavity strip search *before and after* every single visit. We know he is in his cell 21 hours a day with just 7 steps from the front to the back of the cell. His diet of processed food, with few fresh vegetables or fruit, is a violation of the 8th Amendment and ADA guidelines. After undergoing double bypass surgery in March of 2021, Mumia needs adequate exercise and healthy food. We work with Mumia to pursue administrative remedies, file Right To Know Requests, and document nutrition required for cardiac health. So much work for basic needs like healthy foods.

We continue. We plan, we strategize.

For 42 years, Mumia has appealed for a new trial in the 1981 shooting death of Philadelphia Police officer Daniel Faulkner. The current delays are a tactic designed to prevent justice and delay accountability.

On October 19th 2022 Common Pleas Court Criminal Division Supervising Judge Lucretia Clemens will issue her opinion regarding Mumia’s new trial. At issue are the practices of removing African Americans from his jury and burying evidence. Philadelphia District Attorney Larry Krasner is fighting to deny Mumia the right to challenge his conviction. Krasner has decided to defend a system (the cops, the prosecutors and the courts) that has literally victimized a generation.

Fighting to keep Mumia in prison is all about limiting exposure. It is about preserving the fiction that decades of mass incarceration (prosecuted by former Philadelphia police chief and mayor Frank Rizzo and former DA, Mayor, and Governor of Pennsylvania Ed Rendell) is not tainted by police and prosecutorial misconduct.

Their goal is to prevent the white hot spotlight on Philadelphia's long and sordid racist history. Everyone knows that Mumia's judge, Albert "*I am going to help them fry the N-word*" Sabo, is a stone-cold racist. Sitting Philadelphia Common Pleas Court Judge Barbara McDermott told me, "Sabo is the most racist, sexist, and homophobic jurist I have ever met." Rendell (The DA at the time of Mumia's trial) and Mayor Frank Rizzo, hand in hand, violated defendants constitutional rights at every turn. They knew what the cops were doing: everyone knew. Everyone still knows.

Image: Noelle Hanrahan, Esq, Mumia Abu-Jamal, and investigator Mike Africa Jr.



The immediate question is will the current court order an evidentiary hearing; in fact, they should simply order a new trial. This moment must be met with strong and strategic action. The FOP have promised to try to intervene and delay any new court hearing. They have been emboldened by the Pennsylvania Supreme Court, which heard their frivolous Kings Bench Petition.

Part of our job is to keep the shining light of the public on this case, and its impact on so many others.

We are struggling to have the funds to print our mailings, make payroll, and keep the phones on. We are poised to help the world hear this critical information. We rely on you. We just do. To keep us traveling to the prison and the phones on. You are a critical part of that small circle of folks that make this work possible.

We need you to help make these freedom dreams a reality. Can you give the largest amount you have ever given us? If not that, can you give double what you gave last year? Can you donate a building? Stock? We are so close. Your gift will help us make our next strategic, crucial, step.

We just got two cars, an Audi and a Subaru donated by Rod and Marcia. Thank you. But we need gas money and airfare ticket money.

We are in the final home stretch to freedom, and yes abolition. Please join us.

When We Fight, We Win, Cuando luchamos ganamos!

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