

MUMMUNA



YOUTH RISING
SUMMER 2000



America 2001 is in a state of emergency. The NYPD has decided that we are public enemy #1 and carrying a wallet is a crime if your skin is dark enough. Some may think it's a few bad apples that spoil the bunch, but a closer look at the cases of Mumia Abu-Jamal and Amadou Diallo reveals a system that must violate the human rights of people of color to turn a profit. This magazine is the work of students interning with the SLAM High School Organizing Program. All power to the people, no doubt.



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IN THE AFTERMATH OF THE DIALLO VERDICT, ARE THE POLICE PUBLIC SERVANTS OR PAID PREDATORS?

BY MUMIA ABU-JAMAL

The Amadou Diallo trial of four white cops charged in the firestorm slaughter of the West African has ended in the predictable acquittal of his killers. When is a killing not a killing? Apparently, this is so when the victim is someone slain by the police. When police kill, it is an accident, a "mistake," an "oops!"

Let us examine how the police achieved this judicial sleight-of-hand. As soon as the case arose, the legal forces defending the state fled the very area that the police claim to be "serving."

Why is it okay to enforce the law in a given neighborhood, yet automatically wrong to have citizens of that same neighborhood try to enforce (as jurors) some of that same law when it comes to these particular public servants? Those four cops fled the jurisdiction as quickly as possible, showing their continued, naked contempt for the people that they say they were sworn to "serve." Amadou Diallo was "served" by the state, and his name has now become a dark example of the paramilitarism of police power; the deadly wages of the so-called "oops factor."

In New York City in recent months, Black and Latino men have been shot for having keys, candy bars, wallets in their hands. This deadly rain of "accidents" is an official expression of Negrophobic oppression, and it can only escalate after this unholy acquittal of the four killer cops from the Bronx.

When the case began, the police immediately opted for a bench trial, before a judge, not a jury. When an African-American jurist was selected, they put in a change of venue motion that put them on the first-thing-smoking to Albany, in upstate, white-bread New York. So much for the "community" that they "serve!"

The service that the state delivers is death! What of the recent case of the

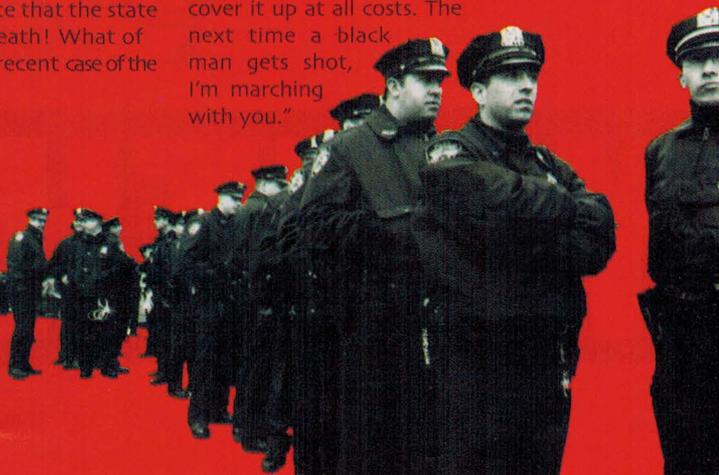
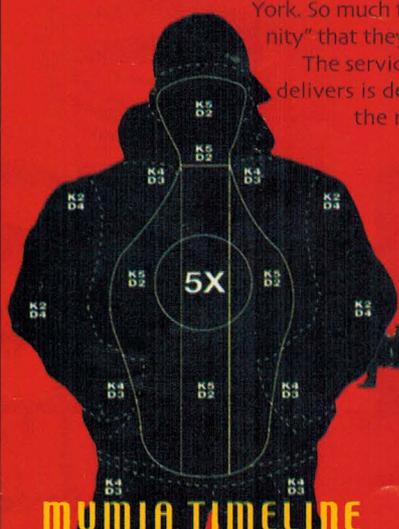
Orthodox Jewish man, Gidone Busch, who was cornered by four cops in Boro Park, New York City? Busch, a Ba'alshuva (newly Orthodox Jew), was shot 12 times outside of his home. Immediately, New York's Mayor Rudolf Giuliani and Police Commissioner Howard Safir, attacked the dead youth, and painted him as a "fanatic," whose shooting was "justified." Key to their justification theory, was their claim that Busch "attacked" an officer with a hammer. Eyewitnesses uniformly disputed this claim, but nonetheless 3 months after the August 1999 shooting, a Grand Jury exonerated all four cops, and pronounced the killing "justified." Welcome to the Terrordome.

The vile and violent attacks on Black and Puerto Rican life in the nation's capital of capital cannot long be limited to their communities. Consciousness does not obey the laws of geography, and repression, like water, seeks the lowest level.

Busch's life, like Diallo's life, was expendable in the larger interests of the consolidation and projection of state police power. Both men were gentle souls, who couldn't fathom the hatred and vehemence with which they were perceived by the police.

Both men were executed twice, once in the streets near home, and next in the court system, where their sacrifice was deemed acceptable to the larger political interests of the status quo.

According to published reports, one resident of Boro Park confided to a black reporter, "Yesterday I believed that when the police would shoot down a black man, they had a reason. Now I realize that the police can be animals – and they have the power to cover it up at all costs. The next time a black man gets shot, I'm marching with you."



MUMIA TIMELINE

1954 – Robert Wesley Cook born, later changes his name to Mumia Abu-Jamal. 1968 – Mumia joins the P

WHO IS MUMIA ABU-JAMAL?

Mumia Abu-Jamal is an African-American activist who became known for defending the poor, the homeless and speaking up about police brutality and racism. In 1968, at the age of fourteen, Mumia was arrested and beaten for protesting at a rally against the openly racist presidential candidate George Wallace. When he was fifteen he joined a campaign to change the name of his high school to Malcolm X. Around this time, he also became a member of the Black Panther Party. This is when the FBI began keeping a file on him. Having served as minister of information for the Philadelphia Black Panthers, Mumia learned skills that led him to a career in media.

Mumia is an award-winning journalist; he has been broadcast on several national radio shows, including the National Black Network, National Public Radio and the Radio Information Center for the Blind. On those shows he spoke about the abuse of people of color, and the MOVE organization.

MOVE is a black organization based in Philadelphia. In 1978, the police shot at their communal home. When one police officer got shot, ten MOVE members were arrested and prosecuted. By 1985, the Philly's police department's confrontation with MOVE led to the bombing of their house with women and children still inside. Mumia consistently covered official press conferences and on his radio show spoke about the injustices that were being directed towards the MOVE organization by the Philadelphia police. All this pissed off the police department and then-mayor Frank Rizzo.

During the summer of 1981 Mumia covered the trial of John Africa, founder of the MOVE organization. Africa defended himself and was acquitted of a group of charges including weapons violations and conspiracy. Mumia was very impressed by John Africa although his views were in the minority.

On the morning of December 9, 1981 Mumia was driving his taxi in downtown Philadelphia. He noticed a police officer beating a young black man. When he went to find out what was going on he realized that the young black man was his younger brother Bill Cook. Mumia got into a struggle with the police and gunshots were fired. One shot hit Mumia in the stomach,

BY MARIA SORIANO

and the other shot and killed police officer Daniel Faulkner.

Before Mumia was taken to the hospital for treatment, the police savagely beat him and then took their time driving him to the hospital. During the trial, the prosecution claimed that Mumia loudly confessed that he had shot the police officer. This confession was never even mentioned until two months after it supposedly happened. The police officer who guarded Mumia in the hospital reported that Mumia didn't talk at all, and the doctor that was on call also said the Mumia didn't talk. But the jury never heard from the police officer because the prosecution lied and said that he wasn't available.

During his trial, Judge Albert Sabo didn't allow Mumia's court appointed lawyer to prepare adequately. He was given insufficient money and didn't interview one witness. When Mumia tried to exercise the right to defend himself, he was accused of disruption and was removed from the courtroom for most of the proceedings. Judge Sabo has sentenced more people to death than any other sitting judge in the United States.

Witnesses say that they saw someone running away from the scene, but it doesn't appear in the police report. Mumia's brother, perhaps the most relevant witness was not interviewed by either the defense or the prosecution. The prosecution claimed that ballistics evidence proved that Mumia was the shooter, but no one got to see the report of the medical examiner, neither Mumia nor his gun were ever tested for gunpowder residue, and on top of that the bullet that killed the police officer was "lost."

The prosecution said that a witness identified Jamal as the shooter, but the jury never heard from eyewitness William Singletary. He saw the entire incident and reported at the scene that Mumia wasn't the shooter. When he came forward with a story that differed from the "official story," the police intimidated him

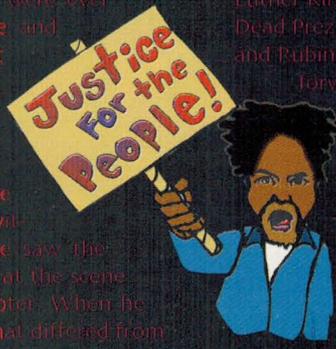


and he quickly left the city. Key witnesses Veronica Jones, Cynthia White and Robert Cohobert testified in favor of the police during the trial in 1982. It was later discovered that Jones was threatened with taking away her children if she didn't testify in their favor. Cohobert, a white cab driver, told the police at the scene that a shooter ran away, but some how he ended up agreeing with the police story. When Veronica Jones testified in Mumia's support during the appeals process, she was immediately arrested in the courtroom on old out of state charges, even though she was given exemption from criminal prosecution along with Cynthia White.

At this point in time, Mumia's case is at a critical moment. This summer, Mumia will appear in court before judge William Yohn. Yohn will hear oral arguments and decide whether the federal district court should give Mumia a new trial. With this appeal, the federal district court could review the old trial and newly discovered evidence.

Some of the supporters involved in the movement for Mumia are Amnesty International, the National Coalition To Abolish The Death Penalty, Johnnie Cochran, David Dinkins, the Dorismond family, the Baez family and Martin Luther King, III. There are several celebrities like Dead Prez, Mos Def, Rage Against The Machine, and Rubin "Hurricane" Carter who have stepped forward on Mumia's behalf.

Many events have taken place in support of Mumia like rallies, civil disobediences and marches. Pressure from the people has kept Mumia alive. Mumia has received a stay of execution, first in 1995 and then another in 1999. All this so that one day he can be heard and the people can be heard and Mumia can be given back his freedom.





WHAT DO YOU THINK?

RESISTANCE

BUILDING A MOVEMENT

an interview with Rachel LaForest,
Coordinator of the Mumia Youth Task Force

What is the main connection between Mumia's situation and recent cases of police brutality? Mumia's situation is a very real possibility for many of our young people, especially after the Diallo verdict. That was really a wake up call for a lot of young heads and they had to take a second look at Mumia's case. There is a system of control aimed at our youth. When innocent men get shot down, and then their characters are attacked by politicians to justify it, resistance becomes necessary. Mumia was someone who saw that. He fought back with organization and information. Just because the police are still trying to take him down doesn't mean we'll put up with it.

In your opinion, how do you think everything that's been going on with police brutality will affect Mumia's case? Sadly, I think it will help strengthen Mumia's support system. Not that this is a bad thing, but it's a shame that it takes such ruthless murders for people to realize the current situation in the country and relate it back to when Mumia was younger. There is really very

little difference between the brutality then and now. They just try to mask it better now. Mumia fought for the Amadou and Fergusons of the 70's and early 80's and look where he is now. Young people are making those connections and getting more involved. They know Mumia's freedom is about all of our freedom.

What do you think young people need to do? They need to continue with their creative approach in educating and organizing other young people. The youth recognize that culture is an indispensable tool in building a movement. This is evident in the role that the Hip-Hop culture has played in Mumia's case and the movement to smash police brutality.

What would Mumia's release mean to the movement, and what would it say about the justice system? About the justice system? That's a hard call. There's a lot of different political interests involved. But what it would say for and about the movement is a whole other story. It would be a true demonstration of our strength, unity and determination. It would inspire people to continue to be committed to struggling for a better world. This victory will be such a blow to the system that the aftershocks are gonna rock their shit for decades to come.

RACHEL in action as MC for the April 5th Youth Day of Action Against Police Brutality. Schools walked out all over the city on the 41st Day after the Diallo verdict.



ALCINE MUMBY

Age: 23
Teacher
Bronx, NYC
Fannie Lou Hamer Freedom High School

What is your general opinion on what happened to Amadou Diallo? I think it was disgusting and horrible. It was a violation of his rights. I'm disappointed in the police officers and the justice system and their attitude towards people of color.

Would security be so tight, or would there be so many police officers in the streets if the shooting had not taken place in a black and Latino community?

The cops would still be around but there would be a different purpose. Downtown the cops are there to really help you, but in the Bronx and in Harlem they are there to let the people know that they have the power, and to put fear in them.

Are you afraid to carry a black wallet now?

Not really, I guess the reality for me, as a female hasn't hit yet. I would just be afraid to be a Black man in New York City.



SHANTAI PLATA

Age: 16
Junior
Bronx, NYC
Fannie Lou Hamer Freedom High School

What is your general opinion on what happened to Amadou Diallo? I believe it was simply a racist act.

Do you think the police officers lied about being sorry for Amadou's death?

Yes I do, because there is no reason to shoot someone for nothing, and Amadou didn't do anything.

Would security be so tight, or would there be so many police officers in the streets if the shooting had not taken place in a black and Latino community?

No, because they are not out there to protect us. They only serve and protect the high-class neighborhoods.

Are you afraid to carry a black wallet now?

You're damn right: my wallet is gray and baby blue.

WORDS

birds in this letter | by suheir hammad

birds rest there
mumia
in your hair resisting
teeth bars the cuffs on
your wrists

fists full of young locks
they twisted you by
raining locusts down upon
ill-a-delph nights
staining asphalt
with your poet's blood

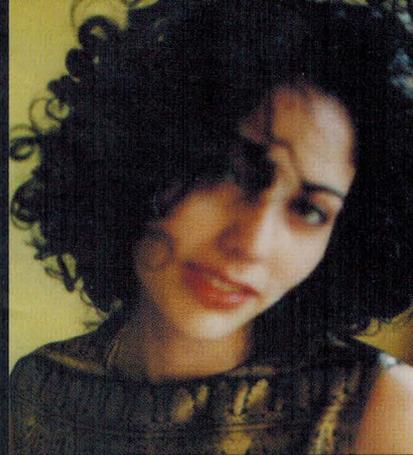
yes you a poet
and you yes a lover
made his woman sigh
a father a panther man an
africa man a move man

mumia you turn us poet
move us man us
pillars of salt weighed
down turn us our bodies
urns of ash
mud caked lids
we taste of tears

smell of sewage under fresh
gear it was fear did this
to us you turn
birds flaming your crown
around and turn us

it was fear did this
not medusa's lust
no serpent's temptation
it was fear froze us
turn around look at us
bring us back

dear mumia,
it is 2:30 in the morning and
preparing for a trip, i'm writing
you this. i've often wondered
how you sleep. how often. are
there naps on death row? such
a thing as a sweet dream?
knowing your face and spirit
permeates the sleep of so many
who know about and work
against your incarceration and
appointed execution. what does



Suheir is an original New York poet, author of two books and a student at CUNY.

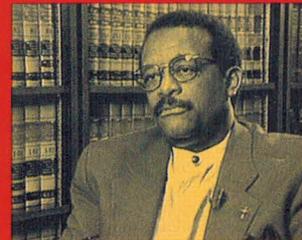
a condemned man dream of?
does your body rise to meet the
sun each dawn? a last second
wish before you open your eyes
to be home, be anywhere else.

in the five years since the '95
summer of mobilization to stop
your execution, how many
poems have been written about
you, read at fundraisers, rallies,
in classrooms and around
tables? how many my own
dreams have you appeared in,
your hair always on fire, the
smoke rising in the shape of
osage ave's dead children? and
how have you slept? fuck the
past 5 years. how have you
slept in the past 5 days? these
last 5 hours?

WHO SUPPORTS MUMIA?



I want Mumia to be free.
I want you all to remember
Mumia and all those who are
unjustly imprisoned. — **Mos Def**



This is a struggle that can't
be abandoned. We've got to
do whatever we can to free
Mumia. — **Johnny Cochran**

The media always runs police
stories and paints our chil-
dren as wrong. The criminal
justice system is very unjust.

We do not intend to see
Mumia Abu-Jamal added to
the list of stolen lives.

—**Nicolas Heywood, Sr.**
(father of Nicolas Heywood, Jr.,
murdered by the NYPD)

How many more are going to
keep abusing this system.

Those police covering up for
the others need to be behind
bars for perjury. We are not
the minority, we're the majori-
ty. If we get riled up, we'll
stop the whole city. We can't
allow Mumia to be another
victim of police brutality. He
speaks the truth. —**Iris Baez,**
(mother of Anthony Baez,
murdered by the NYPD)



POEM FOR BROTHER MUMIA

BY JAVIER GASTON-GREENBERG

And out of the sunrise
Comes a traveling man from the cosmos
The Alignment of the planets brings him
Piggy backing the sun
Casting his shadow on the world
And breast feeding the moon
He has light year burns
that haven't reached earth
covering his body
Caught in his black hole dreads
are Jupiter, Mars, Venus and me
Entangled in
Black pride

Javier is a poet
and senior at
Brooklyn Friends

Black hope
Black power
Black struggle
And he gently passes by Earth
Scratching the sky with lightning
Exhaling clouds
Playing with tectonic plates as puzzles
Whistling tornadoes
Dancing with smiles
Digging with words
Bathing in todays
Covered with yesterday's sweat
Whispering eternities
Visiting all as they awake
And welcome a new day