

UPDATES ETC.

The International Concerned Family & Friends of Mumia Abu-Jamal (ICFFMAJ) Office in Philadelphia Suffers Political Break-In

The headquarters of the International Concerned Family and Friends of Mumia Abu-Jamal in Philadelphia experienced a COINTELPRO-style burglary on the night of June 8, when an unknown person or persons made off with important files containing financial records and lists of high-profile contacts. The stolen documents are vital to the work of ICFFMAJ and could be mis-used in the wrong hands. Other items in the office, including valuable office equipment appeared to be untouched. The office's one entrance is kept locked; the burglars either used a governmental lock pick or obtained a key to the office. The ICFFMAJ regards the incident as clearly politically motivated: a thievery of sensitive information, not items of monetary value. "I believe that this was a government plan to disrupt our work," says ICFFMAJ Coordinator Pam Africa, who said the incident closely resembled the FBI and police COINTELPRO break-ins of "leftist" organizations epidemic in the 1960's and 1970's. The ICFFMAJ is cautioning other groups working on Mumia's case to be wary in the event that other offices are targeted for similar burglaries.

Article by Mumia Abu-Jamal: Cops "Protect" Free Speech Column Written 6/5/00

*"... You'll say people can speak freely until the speech begins to threaten your *idea* of so-called freedom, then folks *ain't* free to speak, they're kicked, punched, clubbed, stomped, handcuffed, shot, jailed by the cops, and jailed again by you judges when the trial takes place..."*

*-- John Africa, *The Judges Letter**

On May 13th, 2000, in cities around the world and across America, activists, students, and anarchists gathered on the 15th anniversary of the nefarious massacre of men, women and children of the MOVE Organization in Philadelphia, and marched in support of the MOVE political prisoners, this writer, and also against state terrorism.

In Philadelphia, hundreds of people gathered at a protest in front of the Police Administration Building, and marched thereafter to City Hall. This action was the first for a newly-organized group called Mothers Organized Against Police Terror (MOAPT), a group composed of parents and loved ones of young people killed by cops. In Chicago, several hundred people gathered, and one of them, Elise, wrote the following account of what transpired:

"This past Saturday May 13th I participated in a rally and march in Chicago on your behalf. It was a cold windy day but

*about 400 people came to the rally! Unfortunately, the march through Chicago became very unpleasant because of the Chicago police. The police were out in force. I have been to several marches on your behalf and have never seen as many police and they have never been menacing before -- but they certainly were this past Saturday! They were definitely trying to be intimidating. There were several mounted police wearing riot helmets who were riding very closely to the marchers and they seemed eager to create an incident -- and they did. At one point there was a melee during which several protesters were arrested and several were roughed up and beaten with fists. What is really shocking is that a couple of those arrested were minor females who said they had been sexually harassed by police officers! I am still very shaken by what I saw and what I heard later about the treatment of the girls in custody. And this on the same weekend that the Chicago police shot two people! Is this *because* of all the recent publicity about police brutality in New York, Los Angeles and elsewhere??... Best wishes, Elise"*

What Elise is describing happening in America's heartland would be clearly recognized if it were occurring in El Salvador, in Chile, or Peru. That's simply because these places are seen as so-called Third World nations, and as such, places where such behavior, if not seen as strictly "acceptable", is at least quietly tolerated. What Elise seems to be saying is that such things are not supposed to be happening here!

For millions of young whites like Elise, such events are disorienting precisely because the myth that "it doesn't happen here" is so deep-seated. In truth, it happens every day -- perhaps hundreds of times a day, in Black, Puerto-Rican, Mexican, and predominantly poor neighborhoods all across the nation.

For them, Seattle was new only because the beaten, the kicked, the assaulted, shot, threatened and harassed were white kids of a certain class.

Elise reminds us that millions of people may live in the same nation, yet they live in vastly different worlds. For millions of people, living in so-called "free" America, their lives, their movement, and their liberties are circumscribed by a periphery of police terror

Elise, and hundreds of her contemporaries, got a brief and chilling glimpse of an American reality. © MAJ 2000

Philadelphia Daily News, 6/27/00 British Poles Plea for Mumia's Life by Jim Smith, Daily News Staff Writer

Twenty-two members of the British Parliament have asked U.S. District Judge William H. Yohn Jr. to vacate Mumia Abu-Jamal's death sentence.

In a "friend of the court" brief filed in federal court Friday, the British legislators contend that the trial court's refusal to let MOVE founder John Africa sit beside Abu-

Jamal at the defense table at his trial for the 1981 murder of Philadelphia Police Officer Daniel Faulkner violated Abu-Jamal's rights to a fair trial and due process of law.

"You don't have a constitutional right to have some guy you know sit at your table," responded Assistant District Attorney Hugh J. Burns Jr., acting chief of the appeals division.

What may be a violation of British law has nothing to do with American law, Burns said yesterday.

The prosecutor suggested that the 22 MPs represent "a few who really aren't marching in step" with more than 1,800 other members of Parliament.

Abu-Jamal, the nation's best-known death-row inmate with many celebrities and activists around the world pulling for him, was convicted in 1982 of shooting and killing Faulkner on a Center City street.

Judge Yohn is presiding over Jamal's latest and, maybe, last appeal - a habeas corpus petition (which places the burden of proof on prosecutors to justify detaining a prisoner) to overturn his conviction. No hearing date has been set.

In their brief, the 22 British MPs said they were "dedicated to preserving and defending around the world the right to a fair and public trial.

"The British politicians contend that the late John Africa, who died with five other adults and five children in the MOVE catastrophe in 1985, was someone whom Abu-Jamal "trusted and in whom he had confidence to sit beside him and give him . . . advice.

"Allowing lay persons to sit next to and to quietly counsel criminal defendants who represent themselves during trials is done all the time in England and Wales, the MPs noted.

British courts acknowledged this as a right "as long ago as 1831," noted the MPs lawyer, Nick Brown, of London.

Denying Abu-Jamal the right to have a friend assist in his defense resulted in "enormous" prejudice to him, they maintain.

It "led directly" to Abu-Jamal's removal from the courtroom during seven of 14 trial days and during parts of jury selection, the MPs asserted.

They also contend that it was "the primary reason" why Abu-Jamal elected not to testify in his own defense. "The decision to refuse to allow Mr. Jamal the assistance of John Africa effectively prevented Mr. Jamal from meaningfully exercising his right to self-representation at his trial."

Earlier this year, statewide branches of the NAACP and the ACLU filed a joint "friend of the court" brief on Abu-Jamal's behalf, asserting a different ground for vacating the death penalty.

The two groups contended that the trial prosecutor had improperly questioned Abu-Jamal about his teen-age affiliation with the radical Black Panther Party during the penalty phase of the trial.