

An Insightful Documentary on Mumia Abu-Jamal

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An important film documentary about the life of Mumia Abu-Jamal premiered in New York City on Feb. 1. "Long Distance Revolutionary: A Journey with Mumia Abu-Jamal" explores through prison interviews, archival footage and narrations, the life of a political prisoner known as "the voice of the voiceless." It was written and directed by Stephen Vittoria and co-produced by Noelle Hanrahan from Prison Radio.

It begins with Mumia's childhood and family life, as told by his sister, Lydia Baranshango, who died two months after filming her interviews. This segment includes early photos and videos. The movie then progresses to his political life, before, during and after his long term of incarceration on death row. The film also touches upon the great Black Migration from the South to escape Jim Crow, rooted in U.S. slavery.

Mumia is a Black radical journalist, activist and radio commentator, imprisoned in Pennsylvania by its criminal "injustice" system. For 30 years, he survived torturous solitary confinement on death row, with no human contact allowed. In December 2011, his death sentence was overturned and he was transferred to the general population at SCI Mahanoy prison in Frackville, Pa.

In December 1981, Mumia was shot, severely beaten and arrested by Philadelphia police, and subsequently railroaded into an unjust conviction in 1982, charged and convicted of murdering a white police officer. The then police chief, Frank Rizzo, headed a brutal police force which was determined to destroy the Black Liberation Movement in the city. As shown and analyzed in the documentary, Philadelphia was (and still is) a city rife with racial tensions.



The film reveals that Mumia had been profiled and targeted by the Philadelphia police department and the FBI from the time he was 14, when he joined the Black Panther Party. Because of his political activity and radical journalism, the racist judicial and law enforcement system skewed the facts of his 1982 case and denied him a fair trial. He was found guilty and sentenced to be executed before his death sentence was originally overturned in 2001.

The state refused to entertain any notion of, or admit evidence of, his innocence; therefore, his appeals for a new trial were denied. The film also exposes lies that were promoted regarding Mumia's political activities.

The documentary highlights Mumia's uncompromising commitment to speaking truth to

power, voicing his resistance to all forms of repression, despite attempts to silence him. Mumia says, “The state would rather give me an Uzi than a microphone” and “I am a revolutionary because of the love.”

The film is a powerful, passionate documentary that introduces the viewer to an important, historic and remarkable person. It does an excellent job of telling Mumia’s life story and that of the long history of U.S. racism and imperialism, class oppression and of the present-day domestic policy of mass incarceration, particularly of African Americans. Mumia’s humanity is captured and made evident throughout the film, as is his strength and courage.

Featured in the film are notables such as Alice Walker, Cornel West, Ruby Dee, Dick Gregory, Giancarlo Esposito, Tariq Ali, Angela Davis, Ramona Africa, Pam Africa, Amy Goodman, Linn Washington, Rubin “Hurricane” Carter and many others. The film includes video clips of an interview conducted by Workers World Party leaders, Monica Moorehead and Larry Holmes, with Mumia in 1996. Angela Davis describes Mumia as “the most eloquent and most powerful opponent of the death penalty in the world — the 21st century’s Frederick Douglass.”



Mumia is currently serving a life sentence in prison without the possibility of parole. He continues, however, to share his brilliant and insightful commentaries, visions, critiques and observations. From his prison cell he has written seven books, numerous articles and aired thousands of radio commentaries. His weekly radio essays, via prisonradio.org, have educated, provoked and inspired many.

Mumia’s life still remains in danger, and he continues to fight for his freedom. The Free Mumia Movement, an international coalition of dedicated supporters and advocates in several countries, has tirelessly worked for decades on Mumia’s behalf to obtain his release from prison. Last year, a street in Bobigny, France, near Paris, was renamed “Rue Mumia Abu-Jamal” in his honor.

“Long Distance Revolutionary” was originally scheduled to be shown for a one-week run at the Cinema Village movie theatre in New York City. But due to the publicity, high attendance and a totally successful week at the box office, it has been held over until Feb. 14. After New York City, the film will be shown in several additional cities through the end of March. Go to www.mumia-themovie.com for city and theatre listings. Watch the trailer on YouTube and spread the word among theatre distributors and activists about this powerful documentary.

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