

FREEDOM ABOLITION

A Critical Moment in the Fight to Free Mumia Abu-Jamal

Johanna Fernandez: Good afternoon, everyone. It is a pleasure to be with you this afternoon, Monday, November 16th, 2020. My name is Johanna Fernandez. I'm an associate professor of history at Baruch College of the City University of New York.

I'm one of the hundreds of people who have been leading a movement to free Mumia Abu-Jamal, the imprisoned radio journalist and former Black Panther, one of many people around the world struggling to free him, but also other political prisoners. There is an urgent matter that we must immediately tend to.

We are interrupting the flow of this press conference to bring this information to you. I will remind everyone that in the spring of 2015, Mumia Abu-Jamal fainted in the infirmary. It took an international movement of very dedicated people to save his life.

We have an urgent emergency, and this is off the press. I will read you an urgent medical message about a beloved prisoner in Pennsylvania. "Urgent action is needed," it says. "Our beloved elder, Russell Maroon Shoatz, suffering stage four cancer for the last year and a half, has now been diagnosed with COVID-19."

This infection is no doubt a result of the full-blown resurgence of the virus in Pennsylvania state prisons and the callous disregard shown by prison authorities to elderly and infirm incarcerated people, including withheld testing and unhygienic isolation of those who report symptoms.

Maroon is asking that all supporters call the office of Pennsylvania governor Tom Wolf and demand his immediate unconditional release, as well as that of all elderly prisoners infected with COVID-19. Please call this number you see on screen immediately, beginning this morning, Monday, November 16th, 2020, and keep the pressure on. Our sincere gratitude for all of your support.

This is signed by Russell Shoatz Jr., the son of Russell Maroon Shoatz, who's in Pennsylvania's prisons as we speak, an elder political prisoner, who we want to bring home.

We will not accept the killing of Russell Maroon Shoatz on account of the state and its refusal to decarcerate in a moment when the COVID crisis and the COVID pandemic is essentially a life sentence for so many prisoners, especially our beloved Russell Maroon Shoatz.

Please, the call is to immediately put the pressure on the governor, but also on the Department of Corrections by calling 717-787-2500. Thank you so very much for that.

Before we start, I'd like to thank all of those who participated in putting together this important conference. Before we move forward, I'd like to announce that we have a very special presentation by a very special historic actor in American society today. That special presentation is going to come at the end of the press conference.

I'd like to acknowledge the folks who have contributed to putting this press conference together. Those people include, of course, Mobilization for Mumia, Black Lives Matter Philadelphia, Black Philadelphia Radical Collective, Black Alliance for Peace, Common Notion Books, Yale

Justice Collaboratory, No Cops Union, Yale Green Haven Prison Project, Workers World Party. The YLS MLSA, those are the folks from Yale Law School.

Quite a number of organizations from Yale Law School, including its chapter of the National Lawyers Guild, the National Lawyers Guild, the YLS Defender Society, Quinnipiac National Lawyers Guild, Connecticut Bail Fund, YLS Capital Assistance Project, YLS Law and Political Economy, Minority Pre-Law Association at Dartmouth, International Concerned Family and Friends of Mumia Abu-Jamal, FGPLLSA and Gym, The Campaign to Bring Mumia Home, and The Free Mumia Coalition NYC among others.

Thank you all for helping us put this event together. I want to start by saying that in the 19th century, the United States was the largest producer of cotton in the world, and of course, that cotton was produced by enslaved Africans. In the late 19th century, the United States was producing steel, in the 1950s the United States was producing automobiles, and today in the late 20th century and 21st century, the United States is producing prisoners and a carceral state.

Imprisonment and the prison apparatus, the carceral apparatus, is the third largest employer in the United States. Third only to Walmart and Manpower Inc. That is a catastrophe of epic proportion. The people who have been disproportionately imprisoned in this period are black Americans and increasingly Latinos.

Now why do I start with this? Because there was a generation of black radicals, who in the 1960s, called attention to the fact that incarceration would be the new face of white supremacy and racism in the United States, after the embers of the urban rebellions of the 60s cooled off. Those radicals include Mumia Abu-Jamal, members of the Black Panther Party, and over a dozen black panthers, who are today imprisoned.

The people who rang the alarm in the 1960s against the law and order campaigns deployed against the Black Freedom Movement, the Black Power Movement, and black radicals, who said they are going to transform the project of racism from segregation and lynchings in the South, to our mass imprisonment, those people were targeted by the state and imprisoned, and today as a new generation of black Freedom Fighters emerge, they too are being targeted by the State for political reasons.

Anthony Smith, from Philadelphia, a beloved teacher and organizer in the Black Philadelphia Radical collective, is one of those victims of targeting, on the part of the State, for his struggles against black freedom.

One of the people who was targeted by the state, we know as the award-winning radio journalist, Mumia Abu-Jamal, who spent 28 and a half years in the harrowing torture of death row. He was imprisoned in 1981 and sent to death row in 1982, but in 2011, after 28 and a half years on death row, a federal court ruled that the DA's office in Philadelphia had obtained a death penalty in his case, unconstitutionally, through trickery. That year his sentence was commuted to life in prison without parole and this year marks the 39th winter of Mumia's imprisonment.

For over two decades, the Pennsylvania Supreme Court has refused to hear even one of the over 21 constitutional violations in Mumia's case. Why? Because it's Chief Judge, Ronald Castille was irreparably biased. The man who appointed himself to hear Mumia's appeals, which were to discuss the violations in his case. This man, Ronald Castille, was unduly influenced by the Fraternal Order of Police, the institution most emphatically committed to Mumia's imprisonment and execution.

How was Judge Ron Castille's judgeship a problem? Why should he have recused himself from hearing Mumia's appeals? Because he was funded by the Fraternal Order of Police, and he was

named Man of the Year by the Fraternal Order of Police, the same institution that has attempted to get Mumia first executed, and who wants Mumia to continue to be imprisoned.

If this weren't bad enough, Ronald Castille was both prosecutor and judge in Mumia's case. This is why we're here today, because a landmark Supreme Court ruling in 2016, Williams versus Pennsylvania, finally established the parameters of judicial bias. It essentially said that you cannot be both prosecutor and judge in the same case.

A judge, Leon Tucker, of the Philadelphia Court of Common Pleas essentially established that that's exactly what happened in Mumia's case, and he ordered all of Mumia's issues that he presented on appeal to the Pennsylvania Supreme Court, reopened.

What has happened since? The widow of the fallen officer that Mumia Abu-Jamal is wrongfully accused of killing, Daniel Faulkner, has filed a rare petition to stop all of the decisions of the lower courts and intervene in Mumia's case.

We are going to talk about why that is happening and what is the new evidence that has emerged in Mumia's case that has the Fraternal Order of Police, the entire establishment of Pennsylvania, and Philadelphia, and the Fraternal Order of Police, running?

They know that if the new evidence that has just emerged in this case sees the light of day, Mumia will walk, and the entire apparatus of mass incarceration in the United States and Pennsylvania will be exposed. The framing of Mumia will be exposed once and for all.

I want to now turn to our first speaker. Our first speaker is someone I've known for more than two decades now. She is the person who has singularly kept the case of Mumia Abu-Jamal alive in the public sphere, through thick and thin, through highs and lows, and that is Pam Africa.

Pam Africa is the Minister of Confrontation of the MOVE organization. She is the Chairwoman, and she's part of the uncompromising International Concerned Family and Friends of Mumia Abu-Jamal. I'd like to open up the floor to the powerful Pam Africa.

Pam Africa: On a move, thank you, Johanna, and thanks to everyone who's participating today. We have here a clearly factually a case of judicial prosecutorial and police misconduct. I like to add terrorism to that.

The District Attorney, Krasner, has released 15 people dealing with judicial and prosecutorial misconduct. Mumia, who has been on the foregrounds, and Krasner know about his case, has not released Mumia. We must demand that Krasner do for Mumia what he did for the other 15 exonerees, 13 black, one white, and one Latino.

We're asking people to help us stop the plot, stop the plan. It's clear that they're trying to kill this innocent man. 15 cases, and just before the King's Bench Act -- which someone else would talk about later -- just before then, he could have released Mumia.

I can't express enough, Mumia is very ill in that prison. Not like he was two years ago. Mumia's liver, he has cirrhosis of the liver. He's under the COVID, that everyone else is under inside them prisons.

The thing is, he should be on the street based on evidence. We need to immediately put pressure and demand that Krasner release Mumia based on judicial and prosecutorial misconduct. A move that you don't have to come back to court because Krasner released two of the prisoners from prison. They never came back to court.

I can't express this enough. The failed plots for 39 years where they tried to kill Mumia, if it wasn't for a judge in Scranton and the movement, Mumia would be dead today. The prison officials were in a plot that got exposed inside the courtroom before a lot of people that they were manipulating papers to kill him.

We're not talking about judicial prosecutorial misconduct. We're talking about a continuous plot to try to kill Mumia. Everyone else is going to speak on details of what it is that I'm talking about. I'm saying, "On a move, long live revolution and free Mumia Abu-Jamal, a black political prisoner on death row, who is a world-renowned journalist, as well." Thank you, on a move.

Johanna: Thank you so very much, Pam Africa. Pam Africa is having to leave us for health reasons and her family. I want to remind everyone that she was referring to bribery on the part of the prosecutor's office in the case of Mumia Abu-Jamal, the bribery of witnesses to obtain a conviction.

She was also referring to what we discovered in court when Mumia fell ill with hepatitis C, we sued in court and we learned as the case was developing in court, that the Department of Corrections had attempted to manipulate their own doctor to say that Mumia's critical case of hepatitis C was not serious.

In court, that doctor said, "Oh no, no, no, no. You tried to get me to say that Mumia was not seriously ill, but the science and the record suggests that he is."

At that point the judge intervened and said, "You all have to figure this out because someone is about to perjure themselves and there are going to be serious problems in the case."

Eventually we won and we got Mumia the health services and care he needed, and as a result of this health lawsuit, other prisoners across the country are now using Mumia's case to sue for treatment of Hepatitis C.

We are now going to turn to a video that was produced overnight, very quickly, by two students at the Mayday Space where I'm teaching a course on race and black liberation. Their names are Graham Carter and Mia Shmaryahu.

They prepared this video on the case. It was just delivered to us like three minutes ago. Thank you. That's the one that begins with "Democracy Now," that we're about to show. Can we roll the first video?

[silence]

Johanna: Can you put this from the beginning and also give us sound? Can you widen the...?

[video plays]

Female Narrator: 10/82 Mumia Abu-Jamal was sentenced to die for killing Philadelphia police officer Daniel Faulkner. He's always maintained his innocence as perhaps America's most famous prisoner.

Female Narrator: The many problems in Mumia's case plague thousands of cases every day in our court system.

Male Narrator: People really don't understand what the climate was in Philadelphia in the years before Mumia was arrested because if they did, they would look at his arrest and his trial in a different fashion.

Male Narrator: The US Department of Justice file suit against the city of Philadelphia, its mayor, and other officials, charging they allowed constant brutality in the city police department.

Male Narrator: That legacy of police brutality is parallel to an equally ugly legacy of corruption.

Male Narrator: A federal grand jury indicted 13 Philadelphia police officers.

Male Narrator: One of the biggest cases of police corruption in modern United States history.

Male Narrator: In Philadelphia today, seven former policemen were found guilty of corruption.

Male Narrator: Shortly after the Jamal case had gone to trial; the federal government prosecuted the police department in Philadelphia for corruption.

Male Narrator: 15 of the cops who worked on Mumia's investigation went down on FBI convictions.

Male Narrator: It was bribery, extortion, manufacturing of evidence to win convictions, all the things that would lead to the kind of faking of evidence that we know went on in the Jamal case.

Male Narrator: Pedro Polakoff, a freelance photographer, was one of the first persons at the scene of the crime. His photographs were dismissed by the prosecution.

Pedro Polakoff: There's the gun in the officer's hands. If this photograph was presented in court, they would have dismissed that evidence instantly as contaminated. Apparently, the path that I took to come around the scene to get photos put me right through where a taxicab was supposed to be that a witness was in.

There's no taxicab there. There was no cab driver that anybody was talking to. I walked right past the cruiser in order to take the photograph.

Male Narrator: Single most important fact people should know about this case is that there was a fourth person at the crime scene.

Johanna: The presence of that person at trial was suppressed by the prosecutor, Joe McGill.

Veronica Jones: I was standing on a corner [inaudible 22:13] chit-chatting, girl talk, and then we heard gunshots. I looked across the street to my left angle. I've seen this white person falling. I kept looking, and I've seen these two black individuals running away from him. Regardless of what anybody says, I know what I saw. These eyes don't miss too much. Not too much.

Male Narrator: A few months before Veronica Jones was scheduled to testify in the Abu-Jamal trial, she was arrested and jailed on a robbery charge.

Veronica: I couldn't make the bail. They were telling me how they could work a deal with me. All I had to do was name Mumia as the shooter, Mumia Jamal as the shooter, and that they would make sure that I'll got off on 5 to 15 years. I was totally confused. I didn't know what to say. I'm looking at a man I've never seen in my life, and I'm getting ready to lie on. I'm looking at these officers that can put me away, so I just said I didn't see anything. Sorry.

Female Narrator: Again, this is the intimidation that these people have used on people like Veronica Jones. They're talking about the FOP history, this government history. Again, it points to what liars and bullies these people are.

Jack McMahon: The Blacks from the low-income areas are less likely to convict. As a result, you don't want those people on your jury.

Martha Richards Conley: The elimination of Blacks from juries is a problem all over the country. McMahon's tape, unfortunately, detailed a common practice.

The experience of Black people with police is different. They're much more skeptical of police testimony, so to have Blacks on your jury means that they're not going to accept everything that the police officer says just out of hand. I think whites have a very different experience with police officers in this country.

Male Narrator: When you look at the context of police brutality in Philadelphia and the context of systemic injustice in Philadelphia, what happened to Mumia happens to so many other people.

Johanna: The reason why we are here really is because, approximately one year ago, there was a great discovery in this case. New exculpatory evidence in the case of Mumia Abu-Jamal that says and suggests clearly that the main witness was bought off by the cops and by the prosecutor to finger Mumia.

Female Narrator: For our family, we've been on hold waiting for Mumia to come home. We expect Mumia to come home.

[video ends]

Johanna: That was an excerpt of the film "Justice on Trial -- the Case of Mumia Abu-Jamal." This excerpt was produced and edited by Graham Carter and Mia Shmaryahu.

Part of what we discovered in the last three years when Mumia's case was in court was that, not only was there judicial misconduct and bias, but we also discovered six boxes with exculpatory evidence in it. That is the subject in part that we are going to hear about from Linn Washington. Linn Washington Jr. is a professor of journalism at Temple University.

He's going to talk to us about the King's Bench petition, which has stayed all of the proceedings of the lower court, which have given the go-ahead to reopen the issues that Mumia presented on appeal to the Pennsylvania Supreme court between the 1990s and 2007 or 2009. We welcome Linn Washington Jr., professor of journalism at Temple University.

Linn Washington Jr.: Good afternoon, Johanna. Thank you for having me as a part of this. The King's Bench is a power that the Pennsylvania Supreme Court has to be able to intervene in matters, even matters that are not before the court. This particular power is supposed to be done in only extraordinary instances of the public interest.

What the Pennsylvania Supreme Court did was to involve itself by granting a petition filed by the Fraternal Order Police, which is involved in corruption in this case, as well as the widow, whose mindset is that "Mumia did it, and I don't want to hear anything else beyond that."

The fact that the Pennsylvania Supreme court granted King's Bench authority to look at a really tangential and nonsensical aspect in this case when part of the problem with this case is the Pennsylvania Supreme Court itself just shows the corrupted nature of what Mumia has endured. Just quickly, let's understand Pennsylvania Supreme Court.

A few months ago, the Chief Justice was put under investigation for initiating a racist revenge effort against a former member of the Pennsylvania Supreme Court, who just happened to be a black female.

Years before that, two members of Pennsylvania Supreme Court had to resign because they engaged in sending out racist and homophobic and misogynistic emails with members of the Pennsylvania's Attorney General's Office.

We can see very clearly from where the Pennsylvania Supreme Court got involved with the King's Bench is that it is a corrupted process. The fact that it has been such a corrupted process for almost 40 years is the reason why this press conference is taking place today, because Mumia has been victimized by that.

Let me jump ahead to these boxes that were discovered. When the current DA, Larry Krasner, entered office in, I think it was January 2019, he was looking around seeing physically how the office was laid out. They were looking for some furniture. They went to a sub floor, a floor between two floors that they didn't even realize existed.

In this storage room, they found six boxes of evidence. Now, by law, that evidence should have been given to the defense, either during the 1982 trial. If it wasn't during the '82 trial, at least during the 1995 appeals. If not, the proceedings during this particular century, the 21st century.

The existence of the boxes alone is more evidence of corrupted behavior by the prosecutors and by the judges. Except for Judge Leon Tucker who in this whole mess over all of these decades is the first judge to use the word justice as it applies to Mumia Abu-Jamal.

I want to just talk about three items that were in those boxes. One involved one of the prosecution's witnesses, the other involved the procedures at the District Attorney use, and another involved me. The District Attorney's Office initiated an investigation of me, a reporter in an effort to discredit my reporting on this case.

They checked with the FBI, they couldn't find any criminal conduct or anything that I've done wrong because I don't. What I do is report, I don't engage in criminal activity unlike the police and the prosecutors in this case and also the judges.

Now, at the case the matter involving the cab driver, Robert Chobert, there is a letter there. He wrote to the District Attorney in the case, the guy named Joe McGill, one of the persons who's involved in this King's Bench and the letter was very short and sweet, "Where's my money?"

What does that mean? You are asking a prosecutor where is my money? Chobert has testified in court that McGill promised to get him his license back because let's understand when Chobert was at the scene of the crime in 1981, he was driving on a suspended license and he was also on probation for firebombing a school.

If somebody who is on probation and driving without a license, will that be somebody who drove up behind the car, the police officer's car, as he testified in court? No, absolutely not.

Also in these boxes is a statement from a police officer who was assigned to go with Chobert from the crime scene in Chobert's cab down to homicide to be investigated.

There's no crime scene photos as was noted in this video of Chobert's cab anywhere at the scene. If it was, then the removal of the cab is tampering with evidence, we should get a new trial. We have Chobert with this letter saying, "Where's my money?" exposing corruption on the part of the DA and also undermining the credibility of his tainted testimony even further.

The last item that I will address involves notes from the prosecutor where he meticulously kept notes on the race of the potential jurors. He struck 10 of the jurors from the pool, Abu-Jamal's jury only had two Blacks on it and they removed one of them with a corrupted process.

In past practice, the existence of such notes shows that the prosecutors were engaging in illegal conduct, they would contentiously be excluding Blacks from the jury. If that wasn't bad enough, in the 1995 appeal hearing -- very important appeal hearing -- Abu-Jamal's defense attempted to present material showing that the jury selection was a corrupted process.

The judge in the case, the notorious Albert Sabo blocked that evidence from coming into court. So much so that he actually incarcerated one of the Mumia's attorneys who kept pushing for this evidence to come forward.

When this matter got into the Federal Court, the Federal District Court judge just blew it off, just blindly blew it off, when this was a matter that could have absolutely unequivocally given Mumia a new trial. When they get up to the appeals court level, the appeals court majority that was two members of a three-member panel said, "No harm, no file, no big deal."

But you, the defense was at fault for not presenting this evidence the evidence that Sabo blocked. That decision was so outrageous that the third member of that panel wrote a 64-page descent, the first descent ever in a Mumia case where he criticizes fellow jury saying that Mumia should get some relief.

For any and all of the above, you could see very clearly how there a pattern of corrupted process in the Abu has been-Jamal case that screams injustice. Thank you.

Johanna: Thank you so very much, Linn Washington. I'll repeat that just in case you didn't hear.

That's that the police department investigated Linn Washington for his reporting on the case of the Mumia Abu-Jamal and that is part of the file.

The files that had been recovered mysteriously in the last number of years when Leon Tucker demanded that the files in Mumia's case that were sitting in the DA's office be releases because he needed that to prove that there was judicial bias on the part of Ronald Castille at the 11th hour. Six boxes emerge, and they're in some middle...between two floors in the DA's office.

Six boxes with Mumia's name on them with evidence of bribery, but also evidence that proves the Batson claim, which Mumia has litigated before the Third Circuit Court of Appeals. The Batson claim in the post-Civil Rights Movement era is very important.

It establishes that if there is a racial bias in the selection of jurors. All you need to do is look at the case, and if superficially there is suggestion of racial bias in jury selection, the case should either be thrown out, or there should immediately be a new trial.

Mumia has put this before the court previously, but because of the Mumia exception, because the courts are willing to undo precedent in order to keep Mumia from gaining relief, they denied him the Batson trial. In fact, when he was at the Third Circuit Court, there was a judge who dissented on the decision of that court on this issue of Batson.

That judge, Judge Tom Ambro of the Third Circuit Court on the issue of Batson and discrimination in jury selection said, "I see no reason why this court should not afford Abu-Jamal the courtesy of our precedents."

Meaning that in previous cases where defendants have presented this issue to us with the same evidence, we've granted them relief. Why are we denying Abu-Jamal the same courtesy? I see no reason why this is happening.

Of course, now that the new evidence proves that there was discrimination in jury selection, the Philadelphia establishment, the fraternal order of police, they're running scared. They're trying to

stop discovery from happening of this new evidence. Now this new evidence, six boxes, have to be put through the courts and examined and reviewed for legitimacy.

That's what we are fighting for in this moment, and that's why the powers that be have stayed the process.

I'd like to know welcome Kwame Ajamu. Kwame Ajamu is an Ohio death row exoneree. He's also the chairman of the board of Witness to Innocence.

Kwame Ajamu, I think you have to unmute yourself, and perhaps Linn Washington should mute himself. Kwame, we still do not hear you.

Kwame Ajamu: You hear me now?

Johanna: We do indeed, and we'd love to see your camera if that's at all possible.

Kwame: Thank you. So sorry. There we go. As aforementioned, I'm Kwame [inaudible 39:28] Ajamu, Chairman of Witness to Innocence, which is the organization of nationalities that is comprised of both death row exonerees, and its leadership is of that also. We have an intention and a desire and a strong mission to stop capital punishment [inaudible 39:57], to end the death penalty. This is what we do.

I am a survivor from years gone by. 1975 was the year of which I had been, I'd like to say, accosted by Cuyahoga County Police in Cleveland, Ohio, at the tender age of 17, sentenced to die for a crime of which I didn't do. You want to talk about terror, disruption of your mental facilities.

All these things happened to me as a child or young man-child, as I was ushered off by Cleveland police, who did one of those famous pre-dawn raids of my mother's house gun, shotguns drawn. I wasn't actually a part of that raid. They came to get my brother and my friend. As it was three of us who was arrested and sentenced to die that day.

What happened with me was that...Because with the guns was drawn, and I knew that my mother was being victimized, as such...I apprehended one of the cops from getting close to her and cursed him out, and he roughed me up a bit and took me in.

It would take 12 days before it was written into the scene of the crime and thus committed to the Ohio adult prison system for 28 years, three years of which I spent on death row.

My objections to Brother Mumia being falsely accused, sentenced to die, political prisoner, one of the millions and hundreds of thousands of Black men who have been so critically victimized by the state.

Especially Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, is that not only is just so wrong, but no one looks at the fact that this is a human being. This man is capable of being one of the greater or foremost teachers that our society right now could know had he been given the opportunities to walk in that path of righteousness.

I think that Brother Jamal has been so wrongfully, not only in his convictions, but mistreated as a human being and disrespected as a man. I would stand behind this brother to all eternity. When a society, like Philadelphia, which is married to Cleveland, I might say, in Ohio.

When I was arrested in 1975, the city of Cleveland was just coming out of two major disruptions, on the violent side, with the cops and the residents -- the Glenville riot and the Hough riots. It

left a real bad smear in our communities. The cops were just jumping out, doing what they wanted to do. It was like that just about in 1975 when I was arrested.

There is a long history of the political scene of people being sentenced to die right around October, November, December when it's time for the elections to happen over here in Ohio. As such, it happened to me, and my brother, and my good friend as well.

My case happened in May, but I was sentenced to die late September, the same time that the judge and the prosecutor was going up for re-election -- to which they were in fact re-elected. I'm quite sure...I don't know the Philadelphia scene like that, but I'm quite sure that politically it is like that.

Why would this Judge Sabo say, "I'm going to help them get..." and he used the N-word with reference to this brother? Why would he say that? "Them" "I'm going to help them..." "Who is them?" It gives me the impression that they are all in cahoots together, not gives me the impression, but it says that they are all in cahoots together.

Then, the situation with the young sister, Veronica Jones. Just on and on how his brother is terrified. If they got the man's brother afraid to live his life. This is something beyond just a cop getting shot or an individual being charged in the shooting of a police officer.

Brother Mumia Abu-Jamal may very well be, not only a political prisoner, but he could very well be a scapegoat as well. What was that cop into? These are the questions that comes to my mind on things like this. When you an entire judicial system in the city doing all they can to cover up this man on this misjustice in trial.

What was the cop into? Why don't we hear nothing else about this cop and what his life was? Oh yeah, he was a great guy, and they gave him honors and all this. No, something is far more amiss than that. I'm thinking that this is why this brother is being so, treated the way he is. I abhor that. I really do. Thank you so much.

Johanna: Thank you so very much Brother Kwame Ajamu. We are now going to turn to Gregg Gonsalves before Dwayne Betts because Gregg is a professor at Yale Law School and he might have to go teach a class.

He's also assistant professor at Yale School of Public Health, and co-director of the Yale Law Global Health Justice Partnership.

Gregg Gonsalves, welcome and thank you for joining us this morning.

Gregg Gonsalves: Thanks, Johanna. I want to broaden this out this discussion to the plight of prisoners, people who are incarcerated, across the United States in the context of the pandemic of COVID-19. The largest clusters of COVID-19 in the country are in prisons and jails in the United States.

There is no way to keep people safe in prisons and jails. These are congregate facilities like cruise ships, and other tightly packed venues in which it's very difficult to social distance where mass squaring can't be readily enforced, where communal activities like showering or eating meals, necessitates people being together.

Prisons push people into the path of epidemics, and it's no different than with COVID-19. Many of us have been working around the country to ensure that prisoners, including Mumia, are released from prison because this pandemic is putting their lives at risk.

Particularly for older prisoners and prisoners with underlying conditions whether it is diabetes, or asthma, or any sort of immunocompromised condition, such as cirrhosis, or a history of cancer.

Let's elevate this to talk about every prisoner in this country who is now in jail and is at risk of contracting SARS-CoV-2, as a new wave of this virus sweeps over the nation. We'll have a million cases this week. A million new cases, and many of them are going to be in prisons and jails.

There's no way to keep people safe, but by decarcerating and letting people out compassionately, because nobody deserves to die from SARS-CoV-2, when we can keep them safe by letting them out into the community to live their lives free from the virus. Thank you.

Johanna: Thank you so very much, Professor Gonsalves, for joining us this afternoon. We'd like to remind everybody that there is a crisis with at least one prisoner. That is the case of Russell Maroon Shoatz, who's suffering stage IV cancer.

He's been suffering from stage IV cancer for the last year. He has now been diagnosed with COVID-19. There's a full-blown resurgence of COVID-19 in Pennsylvania. We're asking the Pennsylvania Department of Corrections to release immediately Russell Maroon Shoatz, who's in his 70s or 80s.

We're also joining the call of Release Aging People in Prison, an organization that long ago, argued that if a pandemic is to hit the United States, an entire generation of Black men aging in prison would be sentenced to death by illness.

We are calling on the United States and governors who have failed to heed the call to decarcerate, probably because governors are being lobbied and pressured by the Fraternal Order of Police and other police unions.

We're calling on governors, the governor of Pennsylvania and of California, and of New York to decarcerate immediately. Other countries, Turkey, Iran have to decarcerated in this moment. The United States is the only country that has not.

We are calling on the United States to decarcerate aging prisoners over the age of 50. Also, prisoners with illnesses who are vulnerable to COVID-19. We're asking for the immediate release of our brother Russell Maroon Shoatz, a political prisoner in Pennsylvania. The number to call is 717-787-2500. Once again, 717-787-2500.

We are now going to turn to Dwayne Betts. Dwayne Betts is director of the Million Book Project at Yale Law School which is part of the Yale Law justice Collaboratory. He's a public defender and an award-winning author. Thank you so very much, Dwayne, for joining us.

Dwayne Betts: Yes, both a pleasure and an honor to be here, although it's as always a difficult moment when you contemplate why people deserve to be free and why they aren't. I'll just read a prepared comment.

My name is Reginald Dwayne Betts. I'm a poet. I'm a lawyer. I'm a convicted felon. In 1997, I went to prison as a 16-year-old, pleaded guilty to carjack and then was sentenced to nine years. During those years in cells, I discovered Mumia Abu-Jamal's writing.

I discovered him in a same way that I discovered Satoshi Kon and George Jackson and James Forman Jr. and Stokely Carmichael, Rob Brown and Fred Hampton and Huey Newton and Bobby Seale and Malcolm X and Dr. Angela Davis, who I had an unbelievable honor of sharing this space with today.

I discovered them all in books passed to me by men doing time and in prison is that sometimes felt like graves. Men named Goofy, Starr, O'Hare, Divine, [inaudible 51:56], men named Snake and Black and Smoke, and Jonathan. Men named Ray and Charles and Slim. Men named Pops, Spratly, and Pops Grey.

We were incarcerated for violence and most of us were guilty. Yet, those books were our mechanism to become more than crimes that we are committed. We all refer to Mr. Abu-Jamal as Mumia as if we were kin because we wanted him to be so.

The first book I read was "Death Blossoms." I bought that book with money earned cleaning floors and toilets in prison for 23 cent an hour. Mumia Abu-Jamal went to prison in 1981, a year after I was born. By the time I went to prison, he'd spent 15 years in cells. I've been free for 15 years and he is still incarcerated.

Being in prison is a fight to not recede from the memory of those who love you. A fight to keep from receding from the public's memory. I remember Mumia because I remember the men I did time when I was still in prison, still waiting for their freedom.

Death Blossoms gave me life. I've done a bit. I've graduated from Yale Law School, one of the best in the world. I've defended clients in front of judges who were facing [inaudible 53:26] in prison. Now strangely, I'm in a situation here in Connecticut, where I'm on a commission at highest prosecutors.

The understanding of what it means to be a fair and just society is the center of whatever endeavor I've embarked upon since the day after I put a pistol on a man in a parking lot. Many will argue my incarceration wasn't political.

Country with more than two million people are locked up with sentences in a 30, 40, 50, 60 even 100 year range are considered constitutional. Every one of our state numbers is the mark of a perverse political action. Many people understand Mr. Mumia Abu-Jamal as a symbol for oppressive conditions brought down on a political prisoner. I get that.

I believe that, but I think a Mumia and think of Rojai Fentress who did 24 years for a crime he didn't commit, before finally being granted a conditional pardon.

I've recognized all our names that we don't know and believe that when I say Mumia's name, I'm saying their name as well.

I think of a half a dozen names rattling around in my head right now. Men and women who have done decades in prison for crimes they didn't commit or they did commit. They all deserve to be free.

Some of these men are locked up in Pennsylvania. I visited them, a great effect. I know their names. I've exchanged correspondence with them and I know deeply that they should be free.

When I state free Mumia it is because a long, long time ago Mumia became two things for us, a model for cultivating, writing with a fierce intelligence, and the symbol for the relentless pursuit of freedom and justice. It's far past time for Mr. Abu-Jamal and so many others to return home to their loved ones. Thank you.

Johanna: Thank you so very much for those poetic words, Dwayne Betts. When we spoke last night and you said that you had been imprisoned and that Mumia's words brought life to you when you were in solitary, it was just moving to hear them.

You also said that you would speak, not just on the framing of Mumia and Mumia's innocence, but you'd speak on all people in prison, regardless of their innocence. Because they're human beings and we live in a society that has decided to throw so many black people and so many people who were from Latin America away.

I want to recap before we move to our next speaker, and partly because we are expecting a very special announcement and presentation from someone who's been fighting against racism and amplifying the struggle against police violence and terror in this country and internationally.

Mumia Abu-Jamal is a former Black Panther and imprisoned radio journalist. At the time of his imprisonment, he was an award-winning radio journalist who got a coveted prize for broadcasting, from Columbia University, for his reporting on the Pope's visit to Philadelphia. I've often wondered, had Mumia been an award-winning White radio journalist, would we be having this conversation?

Mumia was arrested and railroaded in the courts, but he was also framed by a police department who was infamous for its corruption and tampering with evidence to obtain convictions. In 1979, the Department of Justice took over the Philadelphia Police Department. It was the first police department that the Department of Justice investigated.

It concluded that the level of homicidal violence on the part of the Philadelphia Police against Black and Latino detainees, and the level of corruption, and bribery, and tampering with evidence to obtain convictions on the part of the police "shocks the conscience."

You heard earlier that 15 of the 30-or-so police officers who collected evidence in Mumia's case went down on a trial and conviction over corruption and tampering with evidence to obtain convictions.

That's not all. I interviewed Jack McMahan for the film, "Justice on Trial." Jack McMahan is the famous ADA, assistant district attorney, who made the infamous McMahan tapes, training tapes, produced for other prosecutors on how to exclude Black people from the jury.

Part of what Jack McMahan told us was that the cops work hand in glove with the prosecutor's office. Part of what we've learned over the course of 39 years was that the prosecutor's office and the prosecutor, Joe McGill, coerced witnesses into confessing that they saw something and that Mumia was the killer. The prosecutor hid evidence, potentially exculpatory evidence.

This is known as a Brady violation. Misconduct on the part of the prosecution when proven leads to a defendant's walking. It leads to people getting out of prison, and there are quite a number of Brady violations in Mumia's case.

On the issue of police lying and tampering with evidence to frame Mumia Abu-Jamal, I will say this. A professor in Germany by the name of Michael Schiffman discovered the Polakoff photographs. The first photographs taken at the crime scene in 1981 connected to Mumia's case.

Those photographs show Police Officer James Forbes mishandling the guns. In court, he was asked if he had properly handled those guns and he said yes. But of course, the Polakoff photographs were not available then, even though they had been offered...At the time of the crime, they had been offered to the prosecutor's office, the prosecutor's office said, "No, we don't need them."

I'll remind people from Philadelphia that the infamous prosecutor-elected DA, Lynne Abraham, whom the "New York Times" identified as America's deadliest DA in the 1990s, Lynne Abraham

said, because, of course, in Philadelphia, every five years, there's this horrific scandal around police corruption, tampering with evidence, and lying.

In one of those crises, Lynne Abraham said that if she is to encounter a case in which a police officer lied on the stand, she would immediately dismiss the case and let the prisoner go. We have that situation in the case of Mumia Abu-Jamal. Officer James Ford lied in the stand, saying that he properly handled guns when he did not. There is a lot more to say about the ballistics evidence in this case.

One of the ways that this country and the court system has been able to mass-incarcerate so many Black and Latino people is through police tampering with evidence and prosecutorial misconduct.

I want to now turn to a very important, special human being. Probably the reason why so many of us around the world and around the country are talking about abolition. In 1973, there were approximately 250,000 to 300,000 people in prisons today. There are 2.4 million people in prison. We know that the United States incarcerate more people than any other country in the world.

In the early 1970s, the person we're about to hear from began to ring the alarm on a mass incarceration and proposed that we don't need prisons and that the future worth fighting for is a future without prisons. We know who that person is. She has been celebrated off late across the country and across the world.

Finally, an idea that seemed impossible in the 1970s and in a previous period has now been popularized and mainstream because of her work, but also because movements change history. They shift the terms of debate and open up a new vision and possibility for organizing our society. We know that the movement for Black Lives has transformed the way we talk about the police and prisons.

It was Angela Davis who opened up this conversation in the United States. Angela Davis has many things. Among them, she is professor emerita at the University of California at Santa Cruz.

Professor Angela Davis, welcome to this press conference.

Angela Davis: Thank you, Johanna. I'd like to thank all of the phenomenal speakers who preceded me. I am so grateful for this opportunity to register my unwavering support once again for Mumia Abu-Jamal. He has played such a pivotal role in the processes of popular education that have led us to this critical juncture.

What one might call the century-and-a-half-year-old effort to acknowledge the structural and systemic character of racism and to take seriously demands for abolition of the death penalty of prisons of police. It is right and just that we should accelerate our efforts on this new terrain to finally free our brother comrade.

Much attention has been focused on Philadelphia recently from the elections to the police killing of Walter Wallace because he was experiencing a mental health crisis, to the arrest by federal agents of the teacher and community activists, Anthony Smith.

We know that barely a week before his arrest Philadelphia magazine had applauded Anthony Smith's community service and his exceptional leadership. All around the world, we've followed the work of Anthony Smith's organization, the Black Philadelphia Radical Collective. Many of us passionately support the 13 demands they have submitted.

We know also that the city council and Philadelphia recently offered an official apology for the 1955 bombing which killed 11 MOVE members including 5 children and destroyed 61 homes.

I've been asked to briefly discuss Mumia's case in the context of the long history of political repression in this country. In the context of the utilization of the criminal legal system to produce pretext for incarcerating people who have chosen to develop radical resistance strategies in relation to racist state violence.

Mumia is a relatively younger member of a generation of Black radical activists and intellectuals who have challenged the structural and systemic character of racism long before this recognition helped to accelerate efforts to reimagine some of our society's fundamental institutions. Because of our radical stances, we were targeted by the state.

In many instances, the state demonized and railroaded countless numbers of Black radicals. Some of us who were freed, but many of whom have been imprisoned for as many as five or six decades. Mumia was targeted by the Philadelphia Police and COINTELPRO, beginning with his membership in the Black Panther Party.

His declassified 500-page FBI files show that the Philadelphia Police in consultation with COINTELPRO, for many years had tried to peg a crime on Mumia. We also know that at least one-third of the police involved in his case were jailed after it was discovered that they had systematically tampered with evidence in large numbers of cases across the city of Philadelphia.

I think that few people know that the investigation of the killing of Daniel Faulkner, the policeman whom Mumia is accused of killing, that this investigation was conducted not by the homicide unit of the Philadelphia Police Department, but by its Civil Defense unit which was the local police arm of J. Edgar Hoover's COINTELPRO.

In 1981, Mumia was sentenced to death. From death row produced brilliant critiques of the prison industrial complex, mass incarceration, capital punishment, and other institutional consequences of racial capitalism. Many of us are aware of the fact that his widely circulated writings have helped to humanize people in prison and people on death row.

Like many others of my age, I've been an active supporter of Mumia for many decades. I've had the honor of speaking on his behalf at United Nations conferences and in other international venues where Mumia, for example, was declared an honorary citizen of Paris. The last person before him to receive that distinction was Pablo Picasso. I participated in that ceremony in Paris as his surrogate.

Leonard Peltier, Mutulu Shakur, Russel Maroon Shoatz, Ed Poindexter, Veronica [inaudible 71:23], Romaine "Chip" Fitzgerald, David Gilbert, and my former co-defendant Ruchell Magee are a few of the US political prisoners who have spent the vast majority of their lives behind bars, and as we know are currently the most vulnerable with respect to COVID-19.

We've already heard about Russell Maroon Shoatz condition, and we've heard Gregg Gonsalves emphasize the need for compassionate decarceration and evolutionist strategy.

Thanks to international organizing efforts, Mumia is perhaps the most well-known political prisoner in the world, and these international efforts saved his life when he came dangerously close to execution in 1995.

Mumia's case exemplifies the lengths to which the state will go to silence, those who speak truth to power and this is why the fraternal order of police has been unrelenting in its attempt to silence him and his supporters.

Now, that structures of policing have finally been exposed for their systemic racism, and as we call for justice in the names of Breonna Taylor, George Floyd, and Walter Wallace and so many others, and now that the city of Philadelphia has issued an official apology to MOVE, now is the time to accelerate our campaign to bring Mumia home.

Let's not forget that Mumia's identification with MOVE and his empathetic reporting on the city's repression of MOVE rendered him a major target of the Rizzo administration. As you've heard from Johanna and others, Linn Washington, for example, his case is a riddle with violations, especially the concealing of exculpatory evidence. The concealing of the presence of Kenneth Freeman at the scene of the killing of Daniel Faulkner although the prosecutor was aware of the fact that Freeman had been identified as the shooter by four witnesses.

The same night of the MOVE bombings, Kenneth Freeman was found dead in a parking lot, gagged and handcuffed. We know that there were clear violations in relation to the selection of the jury. A 11 out of the prosecutions, 14 peremptory challenges were used to eliminate black jurors.

This in itself as this already pointed out supports the call for a new trial. The Supreme Court has ruled that the elimination of jurors on the basis of race is a major violation and as Johanna and others have pointed out, newly discovered filed boxes in the DA's office, which were there for 37 years or so contain a list of potential jurors highlighting their race.

Perhaps, even more abridges are the instructional taste that were produced by ADA Jack McMahon who pointed out that educated black people should not be selected to serve the jury.

He said, blacks from the low-income area are less likely to convict and as a result I'm quoting "I don't want these people on your jury." As he said, and it may appear that you're being racist or whatnot but again you're just being realistic, you're trying to win the case.

Finally, the framing of Mumia and his incarceration are part of a larger story of structural racism and repression linked to global capitalism, linked to racial capitalism. Racism drives incarceration and infects policing all over the world, from Rio de Janeiro, to Johannesburg, to London, to Paris. Here in the US, mass incarceration especially affects indigenous people and Black and Latinx communities.

We need to emphasize the fact that the very same forces that have driven the creation of the prison industrial complex are responsible for the fact that many people in other countries and countries of the Global South have seen their home economies destroyed by capitalist incursions. They have no other choice than to flee.

Thus the borders, and the walls, and immigrant detention facilities are integrally linked to racist policing and the prison industrial complex. I should point out that abolitionist strategies emphasize the connections of all these institutions.

Finally, at a time when critiques of structural racism are gaining traction, and specifically, its centrality to policing, we gather here to demand the release of Mumia Abu-Jamal and other political prisoners whose trials and sentences were irreparably influenced by their political beliefs and by their challenges to this very system. Thank you.

Johanna: Thank you. Thank you, Angela Davis, for your remarks and for joining us this afternoon. I want to turn immediately to our demands.

I want to invite everyone who's in the press to pose questions to the panel. The number to call with questions as we open up the press conference is 845-768-3463. Once again, the questions to pose should be called in to the number 845-768-3463. 845-768-3463.

But before that, we'd like to present a series of demands. Those demands are going to be presented by someone who has been on the ground making every detail of this press conference possible and dealing with my [inaudible 79:30] self throughout this process. [laughs]

That is a phenomenal human being who learned about Mumia Abu-Jamal many moons ago when he was only a child and he's been in this work ever since, and that's Santiago Alvarez.

Santiago Alvarez: Hey, you all. Thank you, Johanna. First, I just want to say thank you to all the elders, like Angela, Pam, Ramona, Janine, and Janet Africa, for teaching us, guiding us, and helping us, the younger generation, as we continue to fight to free our freedom fighters like Mumia, like Russell Maroon Shoatz, like Leonard Peltier, and many others.

I just want to say that we should all know that us coming together today is lifting Mumia's spirits. Our list of demands is the immediate release of Mumia Abu-Jamal. We demand the immediate release of all political prisoners. We demand the immediate release of our elders, aging prisoners over the age of 50, and others vulnerable to death through COVID-19.

We demand the abolition of all prisons and radical socioeconomic redistribution of wealth and transformation of neighborhoods towards a sustainable and life-affirming society.

I would also like to read a quote from John Africa. It says, "You can imprison weakness, but you can never imprison strength. There's plenty of evidence of this throughout history. All throughout history, these people have been attempting to imprison water in dams. All throughout history, the dams have turned to dust, but the water is still wet. For you see, you can jail the powerless, but you cannot jail the powerful. Water does not believe in prison.

"Water is the power of life. For water flows with the freedom of life, nobody can stop the power of freedom. This is why nobody will stop the power of MOVE." We want to say Long live John Africa, Long live revolution. Thank you all for being here. Turn it back over to you, Johanna.

Johanna: Thank you very much Santiago for all of your work and for sharing those demands with us. We want to open up the lines to media questions. We've already received a few, but we'd like to remind you that you can call your questions in to 845-768-3463. There will be someone answering the call there, 845-768-3463.

Our first question is from Michael Schiffman, who's calling in from Germany. He's with T-Online, which is Germany's biggest news portal. His question is, "What legal options are left? Should the Pennsylvania Supreme Court decide to withdraw Krasner from the case?"

I'd like everyone to open their cameras, and perhaps Linn Washington can take this question.

Linn: If the Supreme Court continues with its corrupted process, the removal of DA Krasner will mean that another prosecutor would be assigned to the case. That prosecutor will in all probability be the Attorney General for the State of Pennsylvania.

The proceeding would go forward. The district attorney's office would be replaced by the State Attorney General's office. The matters that Judge Tucker ordered would be litigated. If they weren't litigated, it's my understanding, I defer to someone who has more legal insight and acumen than me.

It is my understanding that if the matter is quashed by the Pennsylvania Supreme Court, and when I say quashed to mean the ability to litigate based on the orders of Judge Tucker, then that could be appealable to the federal judiciary.

This King's Bench investigation only deals with the ability of the Philadelphia District Attorney's Office to stay on the case. It does not in any way, at this stage, crush the case totally.

Johanna: Thank you, Linn. I want to remind everybody that we are in fact expecting imminently that special statement that I referred to previously. While we're waiting for it, and it's expected to come in in about 10 minutes, I'd like to remind everyone that there is an urgent call to the Pennsylvania governor to decarcerate and to release Russell Maroon Shoatz, a political prisoner, who has had cancer for the last year and a half and has just been diagnosed with COVID.

That's Russell Maroon Shoatz, who's been imprisoned for decades, an elderly man in his 70s or 80s. The number to call is 717-787-2500. We are standing with the call for decarceration of abolitionists across the country and across the world, especially in this moment of pandemic, but also the call to immediately release aging people in prison.

That's the name of an organization RAP, release aging people in prison. That's been working on these issues for at least 10 years. We're asking you to uphold this demand to go find the organization release aging people in prison, but also to call for the immediate release of prisoner Russell Maroon Shoatz.

You should call the governor of Pennsylvania 717-787-2500/717-787-2500. Also call your governor if you're in California, or in Ohio, or in New York, and ask governors who've been essentially taking a step back on this issue of decarceration to the carceral.

You can't be against racism, and not be against the structural racism of the 21st and late 20th century, which is essentially the hyper imprisonment of Black Americans and Latinx people up. We're going to pose another question.

The other question is...This would make Mumia's legal future look pretty gloomy, wouldn't it? That's if the Pennsylvania Supreme Court decides to withdraw Krasner from the case. All the more so since the case would be handed to the attorney general's office and they have already indicated incredible partisanship.

This is important for us to understand why are we here? What's going on? What is the King's Bench petition about and what does it ask the Pennsylvania Supreme Court?

The Pennsylvania Supreme Court is being asked by the widow of Daniel Faulkner to remove Larry Krasner, the so called a progressive DA from the case and transfer the case over to the attorney general's office in Pennsylvania. What the King's Bench petition claims is biased on the part of Larry Krasner's office, literally that somehow, Larry Krasner's office is in cahoots with Mumia's attorneys.

What's fascinating about this and what we should acknowledge, because our aim is to win, and we need to understand the opposition, this is a common strategy on the part of far-right-wing reactionary elements in society. They blame the opposition of what they are responsible for.

In fact, this is what Trump did over and over again. They throw the ball at you in order to distract attention from the issue.

The Pennsylvania Supreme Court is proved to be biased because Ronald Castille, its chief judge, the chief judge of the Pennsylvania Supreme Court had a conflict of interest. That was established. Why?

He was funded by the fraternal order of police and he was named man of the year by the fraternal order of police and he said publicly that he wanted to make an example of "cop killers."

That makes him biased. He should never have heard the appellate process. Well now, that same court, ironically, cynically is being asked to state the process because Krasner is somehow prejudiced.

This is the thing. In 2015 or 2014, there was an article in the "Enquirer" that identified the DA's office in Philadelphia as the deep state. There are 300 prosecutors in the DA's office that have systematically worked with police to put black and Latino youth imprisoned.

Such that Philadelphia is the city that incarcerates more black and Latino youth proportionally than any other county in the country because of the deep state and the power that prosecutors have. You know what happened as soon as Larry Krasner -- who's no friend of Mumia -- you know what happened when he took office?

Where do you think the deep state migrated to? They migrated to the Attorney General's office. Now the Fraternal Order of Police, through the widow of Daniel Faulkner, is asking the goat to watch the lettuce.

Take the case out of the DA's office, the office of Larry Krasner. Larry Krasner was elected by the black people, by the black working-class people in Philadelphia. What does that count for? Now the call is for the case to be taken out of the District Attorney's office and put in the hands of the Attorney General's office in Pennsylvania.

The same people who deep-sixed or deep-nined the boxes. Those were the people who hid the boxes, the six boxes with exculpatory evidence in a demi-room within the DA's office. Those are the people who should now investigate claims of prosecutorial misconduct.

It's cynicism of epic proportion. Ultimately, this is not just about Mumia, because there were over 32 or 100 boxes of other defendants who were found in this back room hidden from public view for decades.

We have another question. It seems that Linn Washington wanted to say something when I...Did you want to add to that?

Linn: I just wanted to add to it. You were talking about the extraordinary cynicism here, and it is extraordinarily obscene. When the Pennsylvania Supreme Court ruled against Mumia for the second time in 1998, one of the members was this guy, Ron Castillo, who was the former DA at that point of Philadelphia, who had fought against Mumia's appeals.

When the case went to the Supreme Court, there was a request that Castillo recuse himself based on the ethics code that was in force at the time. That said that if a judge had been a former government attorney and knew facts of the case, they needed to get off the case. Castille wrote a lengthy opinion saying why he wasn't going to get off the case.

One of the effects his strongest defense for staying on the case was this. He said that Mumia's defense team has accused him of possible impropriety because he had taken campaign money and campaign support from the Fraternal Order Police, the organization that at that time was the prime proponent of Mumia being executed.

He said, "Why did they target me when four other members of this court have taken money in campaign support from the FOP?" Here you have five members of a seven-member court in cahoots with the Fraternal Order of Police. Tell me how that is not a gross injustice.

These are the kinds of games -- well not games because a man's life is on the line and others -- this is the systemic corruption, the kind of blue suit, black robe corruption that masquerades as justice, not only in Pennsylvania but across the United States.

Johanna: Thank you. We have another question coming in about the recent statement on the part of the City Council in Philadelphia. The City Council and Philadelphia on Thursday formally voted to apologize for the aerial bombing of the MOVE's house in 1985.

The question is what is the relationship between this bombing of the MOVE organization and Mumia's case? There's a request to comment on the meaning of the statement of apology on the part of city hall about the MOVE bombing of 1985 and what it means from Mumia's case. Does anyone want to speak to this?

Linn: I could address that if you would like.

Johanna: Sure.

Linn: In May of 1985, May 13th 1985, the Philadelphia police department dropped a bomb on the MOVE's house in trying to get some members of MOVE to surrender. That bomb started a fire. The commissioner of police at the time, a guy named Gregore Sambor gave a direct order to allow the fire to burn.

That fire turned into an inferno. That inferno killed 11 people inside the MOVE's house, including five children, burned down 61 homes, left 250 people homeless. Here, we have a connection but not a direct connection but is parallel. The then district attorney Ed Rendell, who had prosecuted Mumia under his administration, went to federal court in fact, to block a grand jury investigation. He won.

His successor, a guy named Ron Castille the one that we're talking about in a Mumia case, convened a grand jury, came out with a multi-hundred-page report where he said that there was no crimes committed by the police anywhere, including the police who perjured themselves before the grand jury.

We have Ron Castille, whitewashing the MOVE bombing, and then he later, or at the same time, is fighting against Mumia's appeals. Then later, when he gets elected to the Supreme Court of Pennsylvania, through support by the FOP, financial and campaign support, then he rules against Mumia having some appeals a couple of times.

Again, we just see the gross nature of injustice embedded deeply in the justice system of Philadelphia. That apology, I want to add while it was approved by city council, the initiative in the effort to effectuate an apology was done by a man named Ulysses "Butch" Slaughter even been working for over two years to get all of the parties together.

The city council through the new city council person from West Philadelphia where a bombing occurred, Jamie Gottlier, had did in fact push the resolution through city council. That was commendable.

I think it's of importance that the members of MOVE, and particularly those who have been released after serving more than 40 years in prison for their wrongful conviction for killing a police officer during an incident on August 8, 1978, their position is "We don't want your

apology. You killed our family. You killed some of our children. That apology will never bring them back.

"If your apology is real and sincere and it means something, release Mumia Abu-Jamal." This is their consistent position. MOVE doesn't want an apology. They want to release Mumia Abu-Jamal.

Johanna: Thank you. We have another question here generally to Angela Davis. How can we decarcerate. Before we turn it to her, we'd like to invite Mumia Abu-Jamal's, grandson, Jamal to speak. He's in the gallery here with us. Jamal, you can unmute yourself.

[pause]

Johanna: Common notions?

Jamal: Those actually start...Hey, how are we doing today? Can you guys see me?

Johanna: Yes.

Jamal: How are you doing, Johanna? This has been something that I've been, I guess, happening indoor the majority of all my life. It is great to see so many organizations coming together in strategizing and figuring out actionable plans to get my grandfather free, especially after, as we saw from various speakers and also in the media that that was played earlier.

If my grandfather didn't have a special rules, the Mumia rules, that this case will look a lot different. I think we all would agree. Right now, especially after George Floyd fell, Ahmad Aubrey, Walter Wallace, Breonna Taylor and countless names at the rib. We've been mobilizing all summer. We should be continuing to mobilize through into and throughout next year.

It's a really good time to have my grandfather's case come to the forefront. There's a lot of individuals who are just uneducated on Mumia's case. There's so much misinformation provided by the fraternal order police and other journalists who sympathize with their cause.

Right now, we should be on or we should have the mindset of not only shedding light onto his case but also actively attempting to get him free today. I had a conversation with a young man who runs a local Instagram account. Now, this was when the judge wanted us to investigate Mumia's trial felt that we're doing a great injustice, not looking into Mumia's trial again.

This is after that. His comment was, "I can't believe we're still fighting for this. This should have been done 25 years ago." This should have been done 25 years ago, but it's not. Today is the day.

Obviously, I'm grateful that so many people are being active. Obviously, I'm grateful for Johanna, Pam. I see Angela Davis on the call.

It's just great this to see us come in for...I think somebody sent me something. It's something else. Johanna, you can take over the microphone again if you want.

Johanna: Thank you. We have a question. Two questions for Angela. How can we decarcerate is the general question and the other is, what is the importance and role of supporting political prisoners for the overall project of abolition?

Angela: First of all, decarceration is not difficult. As a matter of fact, there are examples of prisons in the US and other parts of the world where people have been released because there is no other way to address the threat of COVID-19. Now, there's no social distancing behind bars.

We know that all of the other measures we've been asked to take to protect ourselves from this virus are not possible behind bars. The only effective solution is an abolitionist solution. Simply release people who are inside in order to begin to reduce the threat of COVID-19.

This is not only for the sake of those who will suffer like Russell Maroon Shoatz in prison, but for the sake of our entire communities. The most active major clusters of COVID-19 are in prisons.

Now, I just want to say that as we discuss abolition, we should not forget about those who are locked away. We don't necessarily see what is happening in prison, as we have seen dramatic and egregious examples of racist police violence.

We should know by now that that is precisely why prisons have sustained themselves because of their capacity to render themselves and invisible. Simply release people. Release people in order to minimize the threat of COVID-19. Then, that should serve as an example how we can begin to engage in processes of decarceration more broadly.

What was the other question?

Johanna: The other question is -- I'll read it -- "What is the importance and role of supporting political prisoners for the overall project of abolition with the relationship between political imprisonment and abolition?"

Angela: Exactly. First of all, we should all recognize that it was because of the intellectual and activist work of people behind bars that we are talking about abolition today. People like the Attica Brothers, George Jackson, Ericka Huggins, many others, have created the foundation for us to begin to imagine abolition as a broader strategy.

Much of this unfolded because of the work of political prisoners. Of course, back in the 1970s, we realized that political prisoners were not only those who were directly targeted because of their political beliefs, but by those behind bars who were being kept there because they were attempting to create communities of struggle in prison.

I'm referring, for example, to George Jackson, whose writings help to create the foundation for an analysis of the ideological war of the prison system and certainly of the extent to which it serves as the most dramatic instance of structural racism. We're still trying to free political prisoners. Leonard Peltier should not be behind bars. The many members of the Black Panther Party who are still in prison should not be behind bars.

My co-defendant during my trial in 1972, Ruchell Magee, has been in prison well over a half a century. As we go about the work of attempting to point out the viability of abolitionist solutions, we should especially call for the freedom of Mumia Abu-Jamal and all political prisoners.

Johanna: Thank you, Angela. We have a few more questions here, and still expecting a statement coming any time now. The question is, "Who is Chobert?" It's a very confusing person in this trial. Who is Chobert? Robert Chobert.

Linn, do you want to take that?

Linn: Yes, I could take that. I can fully understand, with all of these names and places and players and years -- and actually decades -- it's hard to keep everything in order. During the original trial, there were basically two prime witnesses for the prosecution.

One was a guy named Robert Chobert, who was a cab driver, who claimed that he saw Mumia shoot Officer Faulkner. The other was a prostitute named Cynthia White, who claimed that she

also saw it. Now, interestingly, in terms of where they both were, they were no more than 10 feet from each other, but neither of them says that they saw each other.

Robert Chobert's testimony was that he was driving a cab, he pulled in behind Officer Faulkner's car to start working on his cab log, and then he saw the events take place while looking out the front window of his car. That would be in the middle of the night, it's dark.

He looks through Officer Faulkner's car that has his flashing lights on, look through the Volkswagen of Mumia's brother, Billy Cook, and then sees Mumia shoot the police officer.

What is problematic about Robert Chobert's testimony is a couple of things. Number one, at the time that he claimed that he saw what he saw, he was on probation for firebombing a school and he was driving without a license because that was taken away from him twice for drunk driving.

Would a person who is essentially doing something illegal, driving a car without a license, and a person who is then on probation, would that person drive up behind a police officer? Absolutely not. Chobert has given conflicting statements outside of court, unfortunately.

He claims that he in fact was not behind the police officer's car, but was parked in another location and observed some things through his rearview mirror. The short answer in terms of who is Chobert is that Chobert was one of the prosecution's two prime witnesses against Abu-Jamal.

His testimony was suspect. The trial judge Albert Sabo, the one who said he was going to help prosecutors fry the inward, refused to allow the jury to hear that Chobert was a convicted arsonist who was driving without a license. Sabo said it would be unfair, essentially to Chobert's testimony, if the jury heard that information.

If the jury heard that information, they may have thought that this person may not be telling the truth, and may have an incentive to lie, so he would stay out of prison. If his probation was revoked, he would have had to serve five to seven years in prison for that arson.

As we know now from the boxes that were found in Krasner's office that Chobert had written the prosecutor. After the trial he said, "Where's my money?" Now, he didn't say, "Where's my lunch money?" "Where's my bus money?" He said, "Where's my money?" which seemed to indicate that there was some sort of promise made between the prosecutor and Chobert that he would be paid for his testimony.

Johanna: You can stay right there. I'd like to remind everyone that we are imminently expecting a video from a very important person in our society. That's coming. Literally the video is pooling or being transferred.

In the meantime, we have a question. As a Black journalist, for Linn, as a Black journalist in Philadelphia, what role do you see media playing in Mumia's initial frame up and ongoing incarceration?

What is the role of the media in the FOP's agenda? What responsibility do journalists have and what role does media have in general, on the question of incarceration, but also Mumia's freedom?

Linn: Wow, that's a lot. [laughs] Let me start it at the end and then work back. Journalists' role is to be accurate in what they report. They're supposed to be truthful and honest and do this with integrity. That's what the ethics provisions say.

Journalist's role is to inform the public and to serve as a watchdog on government. That's why there is the first amendment, Freedom of Press clause.

Now, let's roll it back to December of 1981 going into January through July of 1982, during the pendency and the trial of Mumia Abu-Jamal. Initially, the coverage of Mumia was so bad that even some journalists came forward and said, "This is wrong. They are not covering this fairly inaccurately." Every ugly thing that they could come up with is what they were publishing.

They were painting Mumia as a radical, somebody who was undeserving of any benefit of the doubt or of benefiting of the rights to have innocence until guilt is proven. He's a member of the Black Panther Party.

Listen, I hung out with Mumia when we were working as journalists before his arrest and also on a friendship level, two guys together.

He never talked about being a Black Panther. That was dug up. They also were saying, "He's a radical, and he's crazy" because he was the President of the Philadelphia Chapter of the Marijuana Users Association of America. Again, understand the context of the time.

In the 1970s, it was a few years after marijuana had been re-illegalized by the federal government. There was a lot of civil trials. There was a lot of legislative action to try to take marijuana out of the category of making it comparable to heroin and other drugs that had no medicinal purposes.

The coverage, initially, of Mumia's case was outrageous in that there was an attitude by reporters in Philadelphia that anybody who's black and radical, and particularly anybody who has any association with MOVE, is undeserving of any fair treatment.

Now, this is very interesting. By the time that we get to the mid-'90s, and Mumia's appeal was taking place before Judge Sabo, again, under the auspices of the Pennsylvania Supreme Court, Sabo's behavior was so outrageous that members of Philadelphia's media, columnists, reporters, as well as editorial boards, were highly critical of Sabo to the point that the two largest newspapers in the city, "The Philadelphia Inquirer" and "The Philadelphia Daily News," both read editorials saying, "Sabo needs to be taken off the case."

The coverage by hundreds of journalists from around the world was so negative in terms of showing the corrupt behaviors of Sabo that that material was a part of the appeal that went to the Pennsylvania Supreme Court.

The argument was that "Hey, you don't believe our legal arguments? Look at what journalists have written about it, including journalists who hate Mumia's guts." The Pennsylvania Supreme Court, when they got to that issue, said this blithely.

They said, "The opinions of a handful of journalists do not convince us that Sabo essentially was not corrupt. He was not biased and he didn't acted in a very unjudicial manner." That phrase, "handful of journalists," is quite deceptive.

Technically, a handful means six or less of whatever you could put in your hand. The editorial boards of the Inquirer and the Daily News was more than 20 people combined. That was more than a handful. The Pennsylvania Supreme Court deliberately ignored the coverage, and particularly the coverage that was critical of the way Sabo was conducting and really marauding over that case.

In recent years, coverage of Mumia from journalists has changed somewhat because a new crop of journalists has come in. Now, you see that there is some recognition in the coverage that there may be some problems with the structural aspects of Mumia's conviction.

They are not saying that Mumia is innocent. They are not saying that Mumia has been railroaded. Now, you do see this recognition that there are serious problems in Mumia's case. What journalists should do in terms of coverage is being accurate and fair. Also, to do what is in the provision of the Society of Professional Journalists Ethics Code.

That is give voice to the voiceless. Report on the people that you don't normally hear about. That would include prisoners and others who have been wrongfully treated by the justice system. I'm going to make one final point.

At the time that Mumia was practicing his award-winning journalism in Philadelphia from 1976 through 1980, he was known as the voice of the voiceless because of his empathy, because of his true concern for reporting not only at the top of society but at the grassroots.

He was called voice of the voiceless. That provision in the ethics code of the Society of Professional Journalists to give voice to the voiceless did not enter that ethics code until the mid-1990s. Mumia was reporting on as the voice of the voiceless years before the organization that represents or purports to represent journalists saw that that was something they needed to do.

Johanna: Thank you. We have another question and four minutes to go for a video that is about to be sent to us, less than four minutes to go. The question is...Just one second. I want to read it.

This is for Angela Davis. "Can we have abolition without altering the role of the state? Can we have abolition without altering the role of the state?"

Angela: That's a big question. Abolition is not necessarily a state that we reach but rather a process. That process requires us to critically examine and reimagine the way in which our society is structured.

It involves recognizing that prisons and police cannot be abolished without at the same time creating new institutions that can more effectively address the reasons why currently so many people are subject to state violence, to the violence of imprisonment, the violence of the police.

One answer would be, no, we cannot have abolition without reimagining the role of the state, perhaps even more importantly, reimagining the socioeconomic conditions more broadly. I suppose I could say that abolition is also a pathway toward a more effective, more capacious democracy. It helps us to rethink the meaning of democracy, and calls upon us to change, transform, recreate, abolish, rebuild of those institutions that continue to perpetuate structural and systemic racism.

Johanna: Angela, there is a follow-up question here that was attached to that one. That is, "What lessons can today's anti-police and prisons organizers and organizations learn from earlier moments in the abolitionist movement?"

Angela: I would answer by saying that this particular conjuncture was rendered possible precisely as a consequence of the ongoing work of activists, of intellectuals, of artists, and especially of prisoners, and especially of political prisoners.

I think that an impetus for our struggle to free Mumia at this moment has to do with the fact that his contributions from behind bars, from death row, helped us to create a new terrain. Helped to engage in a popular education that has finally resulted in larger numbers of people recognizing the structural and systemic character of racism.

I would say that what we are experiencing at this moment resides on a continuum that goes back to those in the '50s and '60s and '70s. Prisoners especially during the 1960s and the '70s and the '80s who have kept alive our struggles for justice and equality, even when the activism has not been as widespread in the so-called free world.

Johanna: Thank you, Angela. I think we are ready now to play the statement that we've been waiting for. I'm sure that it's without introductions. Can you...?

[video plays]

Colin Kaepernick: When I was invited to speak on behalf of Mumia, one of the first things that came to mind was how long he's been in prison, how many years of his life had been stolen away from him, his community, and his loved ones.

He has been incarcerated for 38 years. Mumia has been in prison longer than I've been alive. When I first spoke with Mumia on the phone, I did very little talking. I just listened. Hearing him speak was a reminder of why we must continue to fight.

Earlier this year, the United Nations Human Rights Office of the High Commissioner issued a statement noting that "Prolonged solitary confinement, the precise type often used in the United States, amounts to psychological torture." Mumia Abu-Jamal has spent roughly 30 out of his 38 years in solitary confinement.

In his book, "Live from Death Row," Mumia wrote that "prison is a second-by-second assault on the soul, a day-to-day degradation of the self, an oppressive steel and brick umbrella that transforms seconds into hours and hours into days." He has had to endure this second-by-second assault on his soul for 38 years.

He had no record before he was arrested and framed for the death of a Philadelphia police officer. Since 1981, Mumia has maintained his innocence. His story has not changed.

Mumia was shot, brutalized, arrested, and chained to a hospital bed. The first police officer assigned to him wrote in a report that "The Negro male made no comment," as cited in "Philly Mag."

Yet, 64 days into the investigation, another officer testified that Mumia had confessed to the killing. Mumia's story has not changed.

But we're talking about the same Philadelphia Police Department whose behavior shocks the conscious, according to a 1979 DOJ report -- behaviors like shooting non-violent suspects, abusing handcuffed prisoners, and tampering with evidence.

It should, therefore, come as little surprise that, according to Dr. Johanna Fernandez, over one-third of the 35 officers involved in Mumia's case were subsequently convicted of rank corruption, extortion and tampering with evidence to obtain convictions in unrelated cases.

This is the same Philadelphia Police Department...

[interruption in video]

[silence]

Johanna: We've lost sound.

[silence]

Johanna: We've lost sound and we are trying to get the sound back for everybody. We've lost sound but we are going to try to get this fixed as soon as possible. You're hearing the words of Colin Kaepernick, the person who has sacrificed everything to stand up against police terror in this country.

He has made a special statement on the case of Mumia Abu-Jamal and the broader crisis of hyper incarceration of Black and Latinx people in the United States. We are just waiting for our tech folks to get a sound.

This is a press conference sponsored by the Movement to Free Mumia Abu-Jamal. We call this conference because this is a critical moment in the case of Mumia Abu-Jamal and other political prisoners...

[video continues]

Colin: ...Order of Police has unrelentingly campaigned for Mumia's execution. During their August 1999 national meeting, a spokesperson for the organization stated that they "will not rest until Abu-Jamal burns in hell."

The former Philadelphia president of the Fraternal Order of Police, Richard Costello, went as far as to say that if you disagree...

[video rewinds]

Colin: "...and hours into days." He has had to endure the second-by-second assault on his soul for 38 years.

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This is the same Philadelphia Police Department where officers ran racial profiling sweeps, like "Operation Cold Turkey" in March 1985, targeting Black and Brown folks, and bombed the MOVE house in May of that year, killing 11 people, including five children and destroying 61 homes.

The same Philadelphia Police Department whose officers eight days before the 2020 presidential election shot Walter Wallace Jr. dead in the streets in front of his crying mother. The Philadelphia Fraternal Order of Police has unrelentingly campaigned for Mumia's execution.

During their August 1999 national meeting, a spokesperson for the organization stated that they will not rest until Abu-Jamal burns in hell.

The former Philadelphia president of the Fraternal Order of Police, Richard Costello went as far as to say that if you disagree with their views of Mumia, "You can join him in the electric chair," and that they will make it an "electric couch."

The trial judge on Mumia's case in 1981, Albert Sabo was a former member of the Fraternal Order of Police. Court reporter, Terry Maurer-Carter overheard Judge Sabo telling a colleague, "I'm going to help them fry the nigger."

Found in December 2018 in an inaccessible storage room of the DA's office, six boxes of documents for Mumia's case reveal previously undisclosed and highly significant evidence showing that Mumia's trial was tainted by a failure to disclose material evidence in violation of the United States and Pennsylvania constitutions.

In November 2019, the Fraternal Order of Police filed a King's Bench petition asking the court to allow the state attorney general, not the Philadelphia DA's office, to handle the upcoming appeals. As the FOP president John McNesby said just last year, "Mumia should remain in prison for the rest of his life."

A King's Bench order provides the legal angle for the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania to uphold Judge Sabo original wish, which was for Mumia ultimately to die in prison.

Today, we're living through a moment where it's acceptable to paint "End Racism Now" in front of the Philadelphia Police Department's 26th District Headquarters. Yet, a political prisoner, who has since the age of 14 dedicated his life to fighting against racism, continues to be caged and lives his life on a slow death row.

We're in the midst of a movement that says Black Lives Matter. If that's truly the case, then it means that Mumia's life and legacy must matter. The causes that he sacrificed his life and freedom for must matter as well.

Through all of the torture Mumia's has suffered over the past 38 years, his principles have never wavered. These principles have manifested themselves in his writing countless books while incarcerated, in his successful radio show, and the time and energy he has poured into his mentorship of younger incarcerated folks, and the continued concern with the people suffering outside of the walls.

Even while living in the house of the prison system, Mumia still fights for our human rights. We must continue to fight for him and his human rights.

Mumia is 66 years old. He is a grandfather. He is an elder with ailments. He is a human being that deserves to be free. Free Mumia.

[video ends]

Johanna: You've been listening to the words of Colin Kaepernick that are beyond compare and I'd like to bring in Santiago Alvarez to comment on the statement, but also read a bio for Colin Kaepernick.

Santiago: All right. Yeah, that's a powerful, powerful video. First of all, I just want to really thank Johanna Fernandez for her amazing work in pulling that video together and putting so much of this press conference together too.

Yes, so we also want to -- before we get into the bio -- ask people to stay involved with this movement. There's a lot of information that we're going through during this press conference. It's really important for folks to stay involved.

There's some ways to contact us through email, and that would be mobilization4mumia@gmail.com. It's the number four, so mobilization4mumia@gmail.com. That's also a website, mobilization4mumia.com.

We've also got a linktr.ee. If you go there, it's going to be something that's a project that will be constantly updated. If you check that out, we'll have Mumia's latest reports and essays and commentary. We'll have videos, educational information, additional readings.

I also want to bring up that Mumia wrote an essay for Colin Kaepernick series entitled, "Abolition for the People" just this month. Angela Davis contributed to that as well and wrote an essay. There's a lot of things that are going on with the movements to free Mumia.

Mumia, maybe physically inside, but he is mentally so free, and we have so much to learn from him. He's always giving so much of his wisdom and knowledge. I really encourage folks to tap in on social media as well. On Facebook, it's [mobilization4mumia](https://www.facebook.com/mobilization4mumia), Instagram and Twitter, it is [bringmumiahome](https://www.instagram.com/bringmumiahome) and, on YouTube, you are streaming now on Mumia campaign.

Who is Colin Kaepernick? Colin Kaepernick was born in Milwaukee, Wisconsin in 1987. An athletic and mobile quarterback, Kaepernick attended the University of Nevada, Reno, where he set several school and college records. The San Francisco 49ers drafted Colin Kaepernick in 2011, and he led the club to Super Bowl less than two years later. In 2016, Colin Kaepernick drew attention for refusing to stand for the national anthem, a form of protest that was adopted by many other players and became a hot button political topic.

He filed a grievance against NFL owners the following year for colluding to keep him out of the league before agreeing to a confidential settlement in February 2019.

Johanna, do you want me to keep on?

Johanna: I'd like to give it to Angela to conclude this press conference. I'll reiterate that we'd like folks to demand the immediate release of Russell Maroon Shoatz, whose life is in the balance right now. He has stage IV cancer and COVID-19. We've given you the numbers previously.

We'd also like to remind you to join the movement of Free Mumia, which is also part of a broader movement for justice in this country and for abolition. You can go to mobilization4mumia.org. You could also email us at bringmumiahome.com.

I'd like to say that Black Americans in this country, because of their condition of enslavement as Africans in a previous period, have always forced this country to come to terms with its contradictions.

That it professes democracy and justice but, in fact, creates violence and exploitation and horror in the streets for those people who are part of this previous generation of enslaved Africans, but also other racialized people of color. Because of the role of slavery in this country, Black people have always put a mirror to this country and forced it to make good on its promise of democracy.

It's always the descendants of enslaved Africans who take to the streets and inspire the nation and the world to fight for a different world. We are in one of those moments when this generation is saying that there's something profoundly wrong with this country, with our society, and structural racism. The legacy of slavery is part of that crisis that we must reckon with and come to terms with.

This crisis of incarceration and police violence is at the core of that. This is a moment when those of us, like Angela Davis, who've been fighting around this issue of abolition are coming

together with sports heroes like Colin Kaepernick to say that it's the moment for a new America and a new world to emerge.

We've gathered here for Mumia, but this is not just a struggle to free Mumia and political prisoners. This is a struggle for our selves. This is a struggle for the liberation of our society, for fighting for a country that will respect life amidst of a pandemic.

I just want to thank everyone who's worked hard to pull this event together. It's not been easy, but we hope to offer it to those who continue to struggle in the streets, to amplify the value of Black life in this country and around the world. I would just like to give it to Angela to take us out.

Angela: First of all, I'd like to thank everyone on this call, especially Johanna Fernandez who has been indefatigable in her work on behalf of Mumia. The words of everyone on the call, from Pam, and Linn, and Dwayne, and Kwame, and Santiago, to the last speaker, Colin Kaepernick, have enlightened us.

Let me thank Colin for his consistency in the struggle against racist state violence. Just as he did not hesitate to take a knee when he knew full well that his future was at stake, now he has not hesitated to join the demand to free Mumia Abu-Jamal.

This is our challenge. This is the major challenge of this conjuncture. Free Russell Maroon Shoatz. Free all political prisoners. Free Mumia. Decarcerate our prisons and forward to an abolitionist, anti-racist, feminist, and democratic future.

Johanna: Thank you.

[background sounds only]