

Mumia would be a worthy speaker

To the Cooper Point Journal and the Graduation Committee, Class of 1999,

I strongly support Mumia Abu-Jamal as the main speaker for this year's Jun. 1999 graduation. There is strong student and faculty support for him as the graduation speaker. I urge you to select Mumia Abu-Jamal as the graduation speaker and to resist any pressure from sources inside and outside of Evergreen to withdraw this invitation.

He is a powerful speaker and writer. Mumia's commentary on prison conditions, U.S. society and racism are often heard on KAOS on the Pacifica program, *Democracy Now*. He is an award winning journalist and the author of two important books. Mumia's book, *Live from Death Row*, puts forward strongly an important and well reasoned perspective on prison, the

death penalty and many other social problems and on social change. It has been used in academic programs at Evergreen. I am certain that he would give a speech at graduation that would be remembered as significant and worthwhile by the majority of the graduating class.

Mumia Abu-Jamal has been on death row for 17 years for allegedly murdering a Philadelphia, Pennsylvania Police Officer. I have followed the case closely for many years. I have also carefully read his legal appeal to the Pennsylvania Supreme Court, written by Leonard Weinglass, his lawyer, whom I respect and trust. What is clear at a minimum is that Mumia AbuJamal deserves a new trial. Much of the evidence against Mumia was fabricated; key evidence was later recanted by witnesses who

testified under oath of police threats against them if they did not testify what the police wanted them to say. Mumia's membership in the Black Panther Party more than 10 years before the murder was used against him. He was targeted by the Philadelphia police because of his consistent exposing of police violence as a newspaper and radio journalist. Amnesty International as well as human rights groups throughout the world have called either for a new trial or for the charges against Mumia being dropped and Mumia being freed. A final execution date is imminent. His speaking at our graduation this year will further public knowledge about his planned execution and decrease the possibility of this occurring.

The Philadelphia Fraternal Order of Police have made the execution of Mumia a high priority of theirs and have pressured radio stations in Philadelphia and around the country not to carry Mumia's statements nor carry radio programs that advocate a new trial for Mumia or his freedom. Some stations like the one at Temple University and NPR have succumbed to this pressure.

I urge that you, the Graduation Committee, not bow to political expediency or cowardice, and that you support Mumia as graduation speaker. Do not let the process that has been used to select Mumia and other important past speakers in past years such as Winona La Duke, bell hooks, Leonard Peltier and Sherman Alexie be subverted by overt or sneaky means. Support the first amendment and strike a small blow against those who want to silence or kill Mumia. Let the important voice of a brave and courageous and insightful person on death row be heard at this year's graduation, that of Mumia Abu-Jamal.

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