

Are you people totally out of your minds? This country has certainly gone

to hell. We try to keep children from being shot at school & you do this. GET A GRIP!

WHERE HAS COMMON SENSE GONE? EVER HEARD OF IT?

Cop killer to speak at graduation via audiotape

Evergreen College expects protests from police, students, victim's widow

BY ROBERTO SANCHEZ
OF THE SEATTLE TIMES

OLYMPIA, Wash. — Evergreen State College is bracing itself for an onslaught of protests and media attention today for including a convicted murderer — in absentia — among its graduation speakers.

Evergreen's choice of Mumia Abu-Jamal as one of five speakers has caused such public outcry that the college has hired extra police, asked students to behave themselves and begun a revision of how the college selects speakers in the future.

Officials are expecting demonstrations for and against Abu-Jamal by students, angry police officers and even the widow of the Philadelphia police officer Abu-Jamal killed in 1981. The college already has been the nationwide focus of talk shows, and it's expecting news crews from several national networks at today's ceremony.

"We are doing whatever is necessary to make sure this is a safe and sane ceremony," said Steve Hunsberry, director of police services at Evergreen, a progressive liberal-arts college.

Students will hear a 13-minute taped speech from Abu-Jamal, who is on death row in Pennsylvania. He will talk about the inequities of social justice and law enforcement in the United States.

The former Black Panther and eloquent radio journalist was framed, his supporters say. He is a cause celebre among opponents of capital punishment.

He is not the keynote speaker. Faculty member and author Stephanie Coontz will have that honor. But Evergreen's choice of Abu-Jamal even as a secondary speaker has drawn thousands of angry e-mails, calls and letters from all over the country.

House Majority Whip Tom DeLay, R-Texas, has denounced the use of Abu-Jamal's speech. DeLay's personal guard was one of two police officers slain in the U.S. Capitol shooting last year.

Police groups, including Washington State Patrol Troop Association and Concerns of Survivors, also have condemned the speech.



ABU-JAMAL

Maureen Faulkner, widow of Daniel Faulkner, the police officer Abu-Jamal killed, will attend the ceremony. She plans to hold a picture of her husband and to turn her back to the

stage during Abu-Jamal's speech. She asked the college for time to address the ceremony, but was turned down.

Faulkner bought newspaper ads in Olympia, urging students and residents to protest Abu-Jamal's speech. She was to fly in today from her home in Southern California.

"I think The Evergreen State College has stepped over the line in making the decision to have this murderer speak," Faulkner said.

Several police officers — possibly including some hired by Evergreen to police the event — are expected to join her protest. Hundreds of students plan to do the same or to walk out. Some will wear ribbons or black arm bands.

Campus police have asked students not to walk out of the ceremony during the speech, to avoid the

delays and disorder that could cause.

"I will respectfully protest. I will turn my back," said Susan Bogni, who will receive a master's in public administration today. "I don't know if he's guilty or not. That is not the issue. This is the wrong place for that argument."

However, the student groups that worked to bring Abu-Jamal's speech to campus say the ceremony is a proper forum for his speech.

"He's a renowned journalist and an amazing author," said Kassey Baker, a member of the Prison Action Committee. "They felt he'd make a good commencement speaker. ... A different voice, something other than the generic graduation speech."

Evergreen President Jane Jervis issued a written statement saying Abu-Jamal was invited to speak as part of an ongoing conversation on the validity of the death penalty and of the effects of racism and poverty in the execution of justice.

"He was not invited to speak because he is a convicted killer but because of concern for the issues raised in that conversation," Jervis wrote. "I deeply regret that our decision is being viewed as disre-

spectful of police, or as celebrating violence," she added.

Craig McLaughlin, director of college relations at Evergreen, said the school is changing how it selects its graduation speakers, to make sure

they represent more of the mainstream of opinions on campus. Possible changes include polling students on their choices.

Evergreen traditionally hosts one keynote speaker for the ceremony,

who must be approved by the president, and has additional speakers invited by undergraduates, graduates and faculty. The speakers are selected by a committee of students, administrators and faculty.