

“The Heat Is On in Mumia’s Case”

Kiilu Nyasha Interviews Robert R. Bryan, Lead Attorney of Mumia Abu-Jamal

KPFA, July 25, 2005*

KN: Greetings, I’m Kiilu Nyasha, and I’m here in the studio of KPFA with San Francisco attorney Robert R. Bryan who has specialized in death penalty litigation for over 30 years and is lead counsel in various murder cases pending at the Federal and State level. He is a member of the bar of California, New York, Alabama, the U.S. Supreme Court, various Federal courts, and a fellow in the American Board of Criminal Lawyers He was chair of the Washington-based National Coalition to Abolish the Death Penalty between 1987 and 1990 and served 10 years on its board of directors. Robert Bryan became the lead attorney for Mumia Abu-Jamal in 2003, although he began corresponding with Mumia as early as 1985 and met him on a visit to him in Pennsylvania in 1991.



Good afternoon, Robert, it’s good to have you back here in the studios of KPFA, so first, I want to ask you: Who is Mumia Abu-Jamal, for those who may have never heard of him?



RB: Well, first, Kiilu, it’s a pleasure to be here. You’re one of my heroes and I’m sure many people out there share my feeling about the great work you do, continue to do and have done for many decades in the area of protecting the rights of the downtrodden and to expose human rights abuses. It’s always a pleasure to be here at KPFA.

Mumia’s case is at a very crucial juncture. We’re at the point now where the train is moving, and it’s moving very rapidly, and at the end of the track is the death chamber and his execution. My goal is to turn that train around, get him a new trial and get him out. Politically, the case, it cannot be more political. The authorities want to kill him and shut him up because he continues to come out weekly with these incredible commentaries in which he talks about human rights abuses and many problems that plague our society and the society of the globe, of the world. As far as his case is concerned, I’m sure, many people are familiar with this, so I’ll just touch on it if you would like...

KN: I want to back up just a little bit and ask you about Mumia himself. Why was he targeted? I understand he was a member of the Black Panther Party, that there are COINTEL-PRO [FBI's counterintelligence program] files dating back to when he was in high school!

RB: Mumia has been targeted since he was actually an adolescent and a teenager, because of his work as a member, and one of the leaders actually of the Black Panther Party, and so the authorities have been after him for a long time. The problem they’ve had was that Mumia is not a criminal, so they had a hard time, they kicked the hell out of him, beat the devil out of him, some white people were beating him, and a cop was there and put his boot to Mumia also, and as Mumia said, he kicked him right into the Black Panther Party...

* This is a transcript of the program aired by KPFA on July 25, 2005, with additional material that had to be cut out of the program for reasons of space. Kiilu Nyasha has taken the time to review the transcription and to reinsert the material that was deleted from the program as it was actually aired.

KN: Yes, I think they were trying to protest the presidential bid of George Wallace, the overt racist of the day, and he thought with his school friends that they could go down and protest, and they really got beat half to death by some racists, and he called the police to help him and the police finished the job. So they literally kicked him into the Black Panther Party.



RB: Yeah, and they kicked him into being very much an advocate for the downtrodden, exposing the wrongs in our society, and that's what led him to being targeted in this case and actually being on death row as we speak today.

At the time this cop was killed in Philadelphia in December 1981, Mumia was a very well known, very prominent radio journalist, as you are, in the Philadelphia community, and he was constantly, like the old story, the parable about the child who's saying: "Oh, look, the King's wearing no clothes," he was pointing out the corruption and so forth in the Philadelphia Police Department, and many other wrongs that were occurring, and he was a real thorn in the side of all the authorities, and they *said*, one of these days we're going to get you. And they thought that by charging him with murder, putting him on death row – it was a very quick trial, a rush to a judgment – that they would hear no more from him. Ironically what happened is that since he's been on death row, his commentaries are now heard not just in the Philadelphia area as they were at the time of his arrest, and some national, but now they are heard throughout much of the world weekly –

KN: Right –

RB: So just to finish this train of thought before I loose it: Mumia has become bigger rather than smaller as far as a person speaking out against human rights abuses, and the authorities now know that the only way they're going to silence him is to kill him in the name of law, to execute him. The case could not be more political.

KN: Right. He's also written four books, *Live from Death Row* was the first, *Death Blossoms*, *All Things Censored*, and the final book *We Want Freedom*, about the Black Panther Party. Mumia Abu-Jamal, formerly Wesley Cook, was cofounder of the Philadelphia chapter of the Black Panther Party, and of course, he learned journalism writing for the *Black Panther* newspaper, and went on to become a commercial radio journalist in Philadelphia.

Let's go straight to December 1981, when officer Daniel Faulkner was murdered in the wee hours on Locust Street, I believe, in Philadelphia. It was a red light district, and Mumia at the time was driving a cab. Will you describe that scene and exactly what happened? As much as we can know.



Beaten by the police:
Mumia's brother Billy Cook



Daniel Faulkner

RB: Well, it was in the wee hours in the morning, and Mumia, I will say, doesn't remember very much, because he was shot at the scene and almost died. It was dark, wee hours in the morning, he sees a cop stopping somebody, and the cop was hitting the person, beating the person with a heavy steel, metal flashlight, and it turned out to be his brother. He ran across the street to try

to help, and he wound up getting shot himself.

There was somebody who fled the scene, another person whom we think, well, not just think, but the evidence certainly reflects that this person was the killer of the cop, and Mumia really doesn't know very much about what happened, except that all of this occurred in a matter of seconds. Shots were fired; when other cops arrived, Faulkner, the one who died, was found there on the sidewalk, as was Mumia, both having been shot. The police picked up Mumia, rammed him headfirst into a no parking sign pole a couple of times, stomped him, and he was in agony with this wound in the chest, threw him into a vehicle and took him to the hospital and knocked him around there some more.



Shot and beaten: Mumia himself

The knew him, they recognized him right off, and as soon as they saw him they knew this is the guy they had been after. And as I already said, he never committed any crimes, and so they finally said, Ah! At that point, when they arrived on the scene, it was decided at that point without any investigation that he must be the killer. And from then on, the end justified the means, and that was to get him, and so all the evidence was shaped to fit him. We have discovered a wealth of facts that people who the police brought in to the trial the following summer, the summer of 1982, lied. For example, there was a prostitute in the area, who testified that she saw Mumia shoot the cop. Well, what we have uncovered is evidence that in fact she did not –



The Southeastern corner of the intersection 13th and Locust Street from where Cynthia White claims to have observed the crime. No other witness saw her there. Faulkner was shot at Locust 1234, approximately where the first two parking cars are.

KN: Is that Cynthia White?

RB: Yes. And in fact, White did not show up until after the shooting. She has admitted to other people that she did not see what happened, but the cops came up to her and said “Look Cynthia, we need your help, you know, we know he did it, we need you to say you saw him do it, we’ll back you and we’ll take pressure off you, we will help you, we will not harass you.”

And there were various people brought in in that way. For example at the hospital, there was a wannabe cop, a security guard named Durham, Priscilla Durham, and she later testified at the trial that Mumia said he shot the cop when he was in the hospital.

KN: “I shot the M-F-er” or something like that.

RB: Right. And in fact, Mumia was in such a critical condition that he wasn't really able to talk, only groan and say “help me,” or something like that, or “get off me,” when the cops were roughening him up, being so brutal to him. And we have uncovered evidence that she later admitted that the cops said, “Look, we’re all a brotherhood of cops, of police officers, and

we’ve got to stick together and we need your help.” In fact, the cop who was with Mumia at the hospital the whole time, guarding him, that was his assignment, wrote in his report that the accused, the defendant, said *nothing*, other than groaning, because he was in pain.

KN: I think this didn't come out until months later ... this so-called confession.

RB: Much longer than months. The defense tried to subpoena, to get this cop into court to testify, because they had the report, and he exonerated that aspect of the case of Mumia. And the prosecution went like, “Oh gosh, we can’t find him, he’s on vacation, he’s away,” and of course the attorney, the appointed attorney who represented Mumia at trial, did no pretrial investigation; the case was not prepared –

KN: Anthony Jackson, I believe –

RB: Yes, Anthony Jackson, and who has since been disbarred, and he did not subpoena this cop and he waited until virtually the time when he needed him and said I have a witness I need, and the question was, well why didn’t you subpoena him months ago when you knew we were going to trial?

KN: So virtually his original defense was completely incompetent.

RB: Oh, legally, what we say in the words of the Sixth Amendment, it was ineffective assistance of counsel, but to be more blunt, as you just were, the defense was absolutely incompetent. And what’s interesting is that the defense was so poorly prepared that Mumia early on decided that he would rather represent himself. You know, he could not do any worse since his attorney wasn’t doing anything. Actually there’s a case, the Faretta case, that’s right on point that held many years ago that one does have the right to represent himself. The judge let him represent himself a little bit and then took the right away.

And what’s really shocking, and in thirty years of specializing in death penalty litigation, I never had a case in which a client was tried in absentia – I mean, that’s not legal in this country. But it happened in Mumia’s case.



Anthony Jackson as portrayed in a courtroom drawing by Steve Werblun



Between courtroom and prison cell:
Mumia in June/July 1982

KN: They banished him from the courtroom.

RB: Exactly. And not only banished; he could not even hear or monitor what was going on in his own trial. I mean, he could have been on the other side of the globe –

KN: He couldn’t follow the proceedings.

RB: Exactly, exactly. And they would remove him for a day or a few days and bring him back and then they would send him back out – the only thing Mumia did that was “wrong” was that he would stand up and say, “Your Honor, I would like to exercise my constitutional right to represent myself, I would like to have good counsel, I would like to have an investigation...” In other words, he was objecting and making requests, based on the U.S. constitution, the Fifth, Sixth, and Fourteenth Amendments, and the judge would get angry, and say, “If you don’t shut up and sit down, I’m going to have you taken out of here,” and Mumia would say something to the effect, “Your Honor, I’m just trying to exercise my constitutional rights,” – “Bailiff, take him out!”

“Your Honor, I’m just trying to exercise my constitutional rights,” – “Bailiff, take him out!”

KN: Actually, I witnessed Sabo. I went to Philadelphia and I witnessed the last hearing in 1995, and I was appalled. I could not believe a sitting judge could be as biased as he was. And I really felt sorry for Len Weinglass, who was handling the case at the time, because he was so disrespected by the judge. It was incredible.



Judge Albert F. Sabo, † 2002...

RB: Well, the judge was a monster; he was a bigot.

KN: Yes, that was very clear.

RB: You know I cut my eye teeth years ago litigating a number of cases in the South. My clients would always be of color; we'd be before white juries and I've experienced judges, one who threw me in jail for contempt of court because I kept challenging him. My African-American client was acquitted and I went to jail for three days because I stood up to the judge. But even with that experience, years of fighting racism in the south, I have never seen a case in which the presiding judge was as bigoted, racist, and biased as Judge Albert Sabo was in this case, and the way he treated Weinglass and the legal team [during the 1995 PCRA hearing just mentioned] was horrendous. He threw one of the lawyers, Rachel Wolkenstein, in jail for contempt of court.

KN: And fined her a thousand dollars, I believe. One quick comment we might slide in right here about Judge Sabo is that one of the court stenographers, unfortunately a little bit late, came forward and signed an affidavit to the effect I believe that the judge had said in chambers –

RB: Watch your language!!!

KN: Yes, but I can say it; it's not against the FCC, "I'm going to help them fry the nigger!" quote unquote, "Fry the nigger!" is exactly a quote from Judge Sabo.



Court stenographer Terri Mauer-Carter, who testified in August 2001



...a career built on 32 dead bodies, most of them colored.

Of course none of this evidence has been permitted to my understanding.

RB: Well, that statement was made during the trial, during a recess, by Sabo. There's a hallway behind as in most court houses, behind the court rooms, and the judges' chambers and so forth. And Sabo was walking down the hallway and encountered someone, and started talking about this big case, the biggest case of the century in Philadelphia, and they were talking about Mumia, and he said, "I want to fry –," using the N-word. Basically, he referred to Mumia in the most offensive ... using the most offensive term imaginable. And also, even aside from that, the racism of the remark regarding my client, he said that he was going to see to it that he in effect was convicted and executed!

KN: Exactly.

RB: And I have never seen this before. I thought I had seen everything. But Mumia's case is out of a central casting in Hollywood for a movie, you know, everything that they would make a movie out of or write a story about, everything that is wrong with the legal system, and the judicial system, and the death penalty, tragically for Mumia is all in this case, everything is there –

KN: It's classic...

RB: This is a good example. And I will say about this claim, of the racism of Judge Sabo, I just filed, we're, we're in two different courts. Federally, I'm in the United States Court of Appeals for the 3rd Circuit, which is just below the U.S. Supreme Court, and on July 1, I filed a rather lengthy motion, asking that the court accept some additional issues on appeal, and in that, I do use twice the statement of Judge Sabo, and one of the issues I raised in that is the bias of Judge Sabo at the trial, and also at this hearing in 1995, and so it's – it's incredible!

KN: And speaking of racism, what about the jury selection process, wasn't there pretty much overt bias demonstrated in the jury selection, and isn't that sort of a – I understand that it was actually part of the training of the prosecutors...

RB: Right, there's only one issue that's been certified for the defense on appeal, and I'm trying to expand that, to get into incompetence of counsel, the bias of the judge, and so forth. But the one issue, if I had to pick one, that's *to be considered* certified, is the one of racism in jury selection, and we do have that in the U.S. Court of Appeals. It's what we refer to as the Batson issue and that's a case that was decided some years ago in which the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that racism, the prosecution use of racism in jury selection is offensive to the U.S. Constitution and will not be permitted. And the U.S. Supreme Court on June 13 in the Miller-El case...

KN: Just recently – June 13, 2005 –

RB: Right, Batson was 1986, *Batson v. Kentucky*, but then Miller-El was decided June 13, 2005, *Miller-El v. Dretke* in Texas, and the court reaffirmed Batson in the strongest language. And I think a lot of us were surprised at how strong the case is. So that's very helpful to what we're doing on behalf of Mumia.

KN: I thought it might be.

RB: And not only am I briefing and arguing this case on appeal, but also the NAACP Legal Defense Fund will be doing an amicus brief on this very issue.

KN: Oh, wonderful. That's good news.

RB: As a matter of fact, I just talked with the lead attorney there who will be handling this issue this morning [i.e., July 25]. I was in contact with her early on when I took over Mumia's case.

KN: And her name?

RB: Christina Swarns, and she's based in New York – she was in Philadelphia in the Federal Defender's Office before, where she also did death penalty work. So this is a massive issue, because, Kiilu, the prosecution systematically removed African American people from the jury, and you mentioned that we have now, since it was discovered



since the trial, we have a training tape where they trained the prosecutors, that when you have an African American defendant, and the alleged victim was white, remove every person of color you can. You know, particularly African Americans. That's what they did in this case, and constitutionally, that's just intolerable.



A cop is shot, and early on...

And of course in this case, being as political as it is, my adversary, the District Attorney's Office, even on appeal in Philadelphia, they argue against even the things that seem like obviously they would not argue against, they argue this: I mean they're not claiming they didn't strike, remove eleven, over eleven people of color – but mark my word, when we do the briefing on this issue, somehow they'll try to find a way to get around it and not assume responsibility for the wrongs that they've committed in that courtroom, and that's of course just one of many. Racism, I will say this, Kiilu, and not only does it tie in the jury selection, and there is a couple of threads that run through this case from the time that Mumia was arrested in those early morning hours of December 9, 1981, through today. One of the big threads running through is racism.

KN: Absolutely.

RB: At the time he was arrested, into the jury selection, the judge, the whole trial, the atmosphere around the trial, and what the authorities have continued to try to do since then, and that's to put him in the death chamber.

KN: By the way, I'm Kiilu Nyasha, interviewing death penalty attorney Robert Bryan, who is the lead counsel for Mumia Abu-Jamal. Robert Bryan, what – is there really any evidence against Mumia that would, if all things were fair, in a court of law would stand? Any real evidence? Do they have any evidence?

RB: Let me say this: You know, a lot of people, because this case is so political, a lot of people make statements and speeches and say things that may be exaggerated. He was at the scene, he was shot, he was near the cop, I mean there certainly was enough to charge him. But there also enough to convict him? Therein lies the rub. A lot of evidence presented against him we now know was false. It was trumped up. People lied. People fabricated evidence. The *cops* lied, Kiilu.



...his fellow cops decide they know who did it.

KN: Right. What about the ballistics report?

RB: That's still an open issue. They could have, the police, very simply, at the scene could have done things, like they could have tested Mumia's hands at the hospital, they could have tested the revolvers at the scene. None of that was done, just basic police work, it kind of reminds me – I've done a lot of work in Los Angeles in murder cases – of the Los Angeles Police Department, they're like the Keystone Cops sometimes, how they mishandle cases par-

ticularly when people's lives and freedom is at stake. There are some real holes in the case, some giant ones.

What we want is a total reversal, a new trial, in which the jury will hear not just one side of the evidence, and a lot of contaminated evidence it was, but a trial in which he will be represented, in which there will be a full airing of the facts, so that justice can be done. And justice would be an acquittal and for Mumia to go home. And my ultimate goal, Kiilu, is a complete reversal, a new trial, an acquittal, and for him to go home to his wife and family.



Arnold Beverly in May 2001:
"I killed P.O. Daniel Faulkner."

KN: I heard that. I'd also like to question the Arnold Beverly confession. Where does that fit in? What is your opinion of that phenomenon?

RB: Well, I'm not sure my opinion is very important on that issue – we're not sure whether what Beverly said was truthful or not. Whether his memory is accurate, put it that way. There is evidence that somebody else fled the scene who was the real killer, his name is Freeman. The evidence seems fairly persuasive with regard to him.

However, the problem with the whole Beverly issue is: Here you have a person who popped up years later, and said, "I killed the cop." Now, there are some inconsistencies in things he said, *BUT* – being a person who has tried many murder cases and specializes in capital litigation, it really *bothers* me in any case in which somebody else says they committed a homicide, or participated, and yet there is no hearing, there is no airing out to determine, is what Beverly said, is what he claims true or not? And there's never been a hearing, and at the very minimum, there should have been a hearing some years ago when Beverly came forward with this, to determine, you know, is this accurate, is this –

KN: Is this valid?

RB: Is it valid? Is it reliable? And we don't know because it's never been tested in a court of law, and I think that's tragic. I think anyone of the thousands of people languishing on death rows across the land – in any case in which there is evidence that someone else may have committed the homicide, of course it should be heard in a court of law.

And unfortunately, because the issue was so late in being presented and dealt with, it's not one that's before the courts. Now I might mention that I am before two different courts. We have just appealed from the Habeas Corpus Petition which I had filed in December of 2003 and which was recently denied. And it involves fabricated evidence, police getting people to lie, false evidence, and Mumia's innocence.

The court denied us a hearing after a lot of briefing and a lot of arguing on my part, and what I wanted was just an opportunity to be able to go in, and the judge was Pamela Dembe, Court of Common Pleas, Philadelphia. I wanted to go in and look at her, and argue! I'm fairly persuasive on my feet in a courtroom, and she originally set a hearing for February 11, [2005], and then rescinded it and took it off calendar, and said she wanted briefing on whether or not you have a right to a hearing. And so we did full briefing and then she denied relief. And then I filed a petition for rehearing, and just recently she affirmed her decision to deny relief. So a week ago, we filed a notice of appeal, so those issues on Mumia's innocence and fabrication of evidence involving a couple of witnesses are now going to the Pennsylvania Supreme Court.

But the center of the storm is the U.S. Court of Appeal for the 3rd Circuit. I don't know how

much time's left, but at some point people might be interested in knowing Mumia's status today and what might happen to him.

KN: Please, tell us, because I'm very concerned about the possibility of another death warrant being signed by the Governor of Pennsylvania, Ed Rendell.

RB: People need to understand that Mumia is still on death row; he has not left there in over two decades.

KN: Right. Twenty-three years.

RB: Exactly. The U.S. District Court reversed it as to penalty in 2001, December, 2001 because the trial judge made a mistake in jury instructions. The District Attorney immediately appealed that, which stopped that relief, it stayed that, and so he's remained on death row. So there are two issues now, pending before the U.S. Court of Appeal, and that is the death penalty, and the other issue is the racism in jury selection, even although as I mentioned on July 1, I filed a very involved motion asking for additional issues to be certified or considered on appeal by the Federal Court.

His status, in addition to sitting on death row, what might happen to him? To give you just a couple of quick scenarios: One is, if the lower Federal Court is reversed, as to the death penalty, and our issues for relief are denied, i.e., if we lose across the board, that's the end. We certainly can go to the U.S. Supreme Court, but it rarely grants relief, only in – it will even accept for consideration only two to three percent of cases each year – so the chances of success in the Supreme Court are – in any case, you just don't count on that.

KN: Especially the political court that exists, who's sitting on it, it's very unlikely that they'll even hear it...

RB: ...and who's about to be appointed; he's against women's rights, etc. etc.

KN: It's unlikely that they would even hear it.

RB: Yes, in any case, I'm not passing judgment on this case, because we have some very strong issues. So if all is denied, Mumia dies, he gets executed. That's the end of the story. And the train is moving. And people have kind of been lulled into a sense, because they've been litigating this so long, that, well, we don't really need to worry about Mumia. Well folks, it's time, the heat is on now, things are moving forward, and – yes, we need everybody, everybody needs to be concerned because his life is on the line –

KN: And the political climate is terrible.

RB: And things are going to be moving very quickly in this case. So, if all is lost, Mumia gets executed. And I haven't lost a case before, and I don't intend this to be the one, but that is one scenario.



Mumia with a box of legal material, during the 1995-97 post-conviction (PCRA) hearings. What might happen to him if we don't act?

Another scenario is if the court affirms the lower District Court, and reverses as to the death penalty, that doesn't mean he's off death row. What that means, Kiilu, is that Mumia goes back to trial, in Philadelphia, with a jury. The only issue will be whether he spends the rest of his life in prison or dies. There is no innocence, we can't put on any evidence – or rather, regardless of what evidence we present in the courtroom, we cannot walk him out of the courtroom a free person. In other words, he goes back to death row, if that trial is lost, or in the alternative, the best he could hope for would be to die in prison a very old person. He would never be out. So that's the second scenario.



July 1999: A fight for both KPFA and Mumia

A third scenario is – and this is where I'm going – is a reversal of what we call the guilt phase, either on the racism in jury selection or one of the other new issues I presented to the court. If that happens, if we get what we call a total reversal, it goes back to a new trial as if he had just been arrested. It's a new guilt phase. We start on square one of the chess board. And in that trial at the end, and this is where, if one wants a prediction, if people will keep fighting and raising their voices on the injustice in this case, this is where I think we will eventually go.

The outcome could be again that he gets the death penalty, goes back to death row. The other end of the spectrum which is what we're shooting for, going for is an outright acquittal. He walks out of the courtroom a free person and he goes home to his family. There, the jury would have a choice in between those two extremes, of second degree murder, manslaughter – there are a lot of things that could happen. But the new trial, we've got to get that first.

The bottom line is, as we're sitting here in 2005, Mumia Abu-Jamal is in grave danger, and one of the things, I mean, I do the legal work, and the people that work with me, and we do, I think, I know a very high caliber job of work product. What I need, this is a political case, it can't be tried in a legal vacuum, hidden in the courtrooms. People need to demonstrate, they need to make noise, they need to write letters, they need to be – you know, we need activist support.

KN: Right. I believe that Mumia has a website that people can go to for more information on how to fight, and that's www.mumia.org, you can just google Mumia...[laughter]

RB: Yeah, if you google for Mumia, you get a lot of things, and there a lot of people interested. And it's interesting: I was on a speaking tour in February, in Berlin, and Hamburg, Germany, in March, and in France in April and I just came back from a trip to England, and giving a talk in Paris. There is a lot of international support is the point I'm making.

KN: I understand he's required reading to graduate in the high schools in Paris, and he's an honorary citizen. Amazing.

RB: Yes, he is. He's been made an honorary citizen of a number of cities. And it's funny, you know, I think about...Mumia and I kind of laugh, and I'll be seeing him, he and I have legal conferences every week, and he calls me every Friday, usually Friday afternoons. And I'll be seeing him again in a couple of weeks. I try to see him monthly.

KN: Please give him our collective love.

RB: Oh, I certainly will. But I think back, he and I laugh about growing old together, and you mentioned in your introduction that he first wrote me in the eighties, and we finally met 1991, and he asked me to represent him, and I reluctantly had to turn him down because I had so many other commitments and other death penalty cases, my plate was full.

He came back to me nearly three years ago and said, would you reconsider after all these years. I said, my friend, I cannot say no to you this time, too much is at stake. And I could not say no a second time. This case is important to people,

should be important to people everywhere, and people sometimes wonder, well why should someone in San Francisco or Berkeley or Oakland or Paris or Rome or wherever be interested: because Mumia has become not only as a human being as I look at him as my client and as you know and love, but he also has become a symbol in the fight against the death penalty, in the fight against –

KN: Injustice.



As Mumia's representative, Angela Davis accepts the Honorary Citizenship for Mumia Abu-Jamal from the Mayor of Paris, October 2003. In the background: left, Robert R. Bryan, middle, Julia Wright.



Youthful speaker at Mumia demonstration, Spring Garden Street/Broad Street, Philadelphia, not far from where Mumia's family lived (Wallace Street 718). The date is October 16, 1999, immediately after the second execution order against Mumia, and the speaker is about the age Mumia had when he joined the Black Panther Party.

RB: Injustice. Human rights abuses, and as I mentioned, anything that could go wrong in a case, seems to have gone wrong tragically for him in his case, and as someone once said, “The death penalty is a privilege reserved for the poor.” And Mumia did not have the funds to hire good counsel, to do an investigation, to bring in ballistics experts and so forth at trial. If we get a new trial, that’s all going to be different.

KN: I wish you the very very best of luck of course –

RB: Not luck, Kiilu –

KN: Not luck, right –

RB: Luck is what the Bush administration might need...

KN: Right, the best outcome – in your efforts, and I thank you so much for taking this case, Robert Bryan. If you recall, we, I first learned that you knew Mumia when I interviewed you on a death penalty special many years ago...

RB: We’re growing old together, too, hopefully gracefully, you, Mumia and I.

KN: I know, but I want Mumia out here, I love hearing his commentaries, I love writing to him and he calls me occasionally. But I want to see him in person, I want to be able to hug him. [laughter]

RB: Well, Kiilu, I’d say, in my many conversations with him, if he had a list, a numbered list of people he had greatest respect for, I think you would probably be number one on the list. And I just want to thank you for this, your interest in this, not only the plight of my client, Mumia Abu-Jamal, but also many people who are being wrongfully persecuted by this Government. And just thank you for your good work in bringing out the truth to the light of day.

KN: Well, that’s my job, just as it’s Mumia’s job. We’re basically the same, radio journalists, revolutionaries, former Black Panthers. So we are the same.

I can’t thank you enough, Robert Bryan, for being my guest here and for getting the word out, and for taking care of business for our brother. We shall be forever grateful to you. Again, this has been Kiilu Nyasha, interviewing death penalty attorney and chief counsel for Mumia Abu-Jamal, Robert R. Bryan, who is based here right in the Bay Area in San Francisco. Thank you once again.



Still doing his thing: Mumia in SCI Greene, Waynesburg, Pennsylvania, being interviewed by Janice Leiber for the Prison Radio Project

RB: Thank you.

**Transcription: Michael Schiffmann/Kiilu Nyasha.
Howard Keylor aided with the transcript.**