

## "In Defense of Mumia"

### The Political Economy of Race, Class, Gender, and Social Death

**Analyzing the structure of the political economy of prisons provides a way of understanding the impact of prisons upon communities of color. This session addressed the socioeconomic dimensions of the prison system and its structural relationship to the crisis of corporate capitalism.**

*Leonard Weinglass:* I'm here tonight to speak of course about Mumia's case, which will be the subject, as you know, of the major demonstration in Philadelphia, which I hope many of you will attend. I don't know how many of you know, but on the West Coast of the United States, from Seattle to San Diego, not a single ship will move. Thanks to the action taken by the International Longshoreman's Association, which voted unanimously to back Mumia's case by having a work stoppage on the day of the demonstration in San Francisco.

And to further indicate the reach of the case, today 105,000 teachers in the provincial schools of Rio de Janeiro in Brazil convened a one-hour seminar in each of their classes to instruct their students on the case of Mumia Abu Jamal. And it is a case which has garnered international support and attention, the likes of which we haven't seen since the trial of Angela Davis. Forty members of the Japanese [diet] took a position calling for a new trial. Seventy-five members of the Danish parliament, the former president of West Germany, the foreign minister of Belgium, Bishop Tutu, Nelson Mandela, and the list is endless. Mumia's book is now being published in seven different languages and his

second book is about to be translated into a number of languages as well. And the question is raised why Mumia, why this case, why this time, why is it happening? I'm not sure I have all the answers, but I want to give you some of the underlying data, which might point to the answers. First, let's talk about Philadelphia. You can't talk about Mumia's case without talking about Philadelphia.

Philadelphia now has one of the largest death rows of any city in the United States. I think it ranks third. Its death row population is 126 inmates. All of those inmates are of color, with the exception of just fourteen. There is no other venue, no other jurisdiction in the United States, with a racial disparity on death row as wide as Philadelphia. No jurisdiction in Alabama, no jurisdiction in Georgia, no jurisdiction in Mississippi or Texas or any other state that you can name. Even more astounding is the fact that of the last fifty-two death sentences handed down in the city of Philadelphia, forty-nine have been of people of color.

Professor Baldus, who did the study in the McCleskey case, which Ray referred to, also did a study last year of Philadelphia. And what he found in his study was that if you grew up male and black in Philadelphia, you were 11.5 times more likely to end up on death row than in any state of the South. It is a city that is marred by race, and of course where that condition exists, it's reflected on death row. And his case symbolizes the ultimate racism that pervades that city. And if you look at the death row and you look at

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Mumia's case, you will have a clearer understanding of what is happening in Philadelphia, and perhaps even a better understanding of what's happening throughout the country.

The racism also exhibited itself in his trial. The district attorney who used to debate me doesn't debate any more. Even he had to acknowledge that they removed eleven qualified African-American jurors. Eleven. And they only permitted two African-American jurors on this jury in a city that is 49 percent African American

because they were older and had grown up in South Carolina, the other in the Virgin Islands. And a year ago a tape was released by the district attorney's office in Philadelphia, the McMann tape, in which the DA instructs incoming DAs on how to pick juries in death penalty cases. And he advised them on how to engage in racial exclusion of prospective jurors. This was a lecture given after the United States Supreme Court decided the Batson case.

The one juror that Mumia had selected before his right of self-representation was taken from him, an elderly African-American juror, Jenny Dawley, the judge removed her in his chambers in Mumia's absence. That's an issue we have raised yesterday in a petition to the United States Supreme Court.



*Leonard Weinglass.*  
*Photo by Delphine Fawundu*

own practice in Philadelphia. And when you look at the total amount that was paid for Mumia's case, you realize the quality of the justice he received. In New York state, when New York adopted the death penalty, a commission looked into what was needed to properly defend someone who is accused in a capital case. They came up with the figure of \$600,000. In the county of Los Angeles, the average death penalty case costs the county \$60,000, which attorneys in California tell me is much too low. The total amount allocated to Mumia's case for [an] attorney, for experts, for exhibits, for photographs was \$14,000.

And so class matters. About a year ago in Philadelphia, they took away the practice of retaining private practitioners and replaced them with public defenders. The number of

On the issue of class, Mumia, like many people on death row, went to trial without an investigator, as his investigator left the case before the trial began since there were no funds; went to trial without a forensic expert in firearms, which he needed, because he said there weren't sufficient funds to retain him; went to trial without a pathologist because a pathologist couldn't be retained on the \$150 that the court had allocated. As a matter of fact, he went to trial with a lawyer who hadn't talked to a single witness because he was appointed by the court and was just starting to open his

convictions and the number of death penalties sharply went down because of the funding that was made available to the public defenders and the expertise they brought to their cases.

Lastly, the politics that pervaded Mumia's case: The jury came back after two hours of deliberation in a case where Mumia was undefended, he had no expert witnesses, his main witnesses were made unavailable, witnesses have come forward and said they perjured themselves, other witnesses said that the police prevented them from testifying. After all of that, what did his jury do, a jury that was improperly selected and purged racially? The jury asked the court to instruct them on the law of manslaughter and third-degree murder. In an undefended case, that jury was thinking manslaughter even as they thought perhaps Mumia had shot the officer.

And the judge of course instructed them that under our laws in Pennsylvania respecting premeditation, they could find premeditative murder in the fraction of a second it takes to squeeze the trigger of a gun. And the jury then returned first-degree murder, qualifying Mumia for a death sentence. The next morning at nine o'clock the judge asked the jury to reconvene itself, it was July 4 weekend, and they had been sequestered for three weeks. The prosecutor knew we had a problem, this jury is thinking manslaughter, how is he going to get the death penalty in this case? And what he did is he presented the jury with a twelve-year-old newspaper article quoting Mumia when he was sixteen years old and a member of the Black Panther Party stating that political power goes out of the barrel of a gun and quoting Chairman Mao Zedong of the People's Republic of China. Mumia was being interviewed at that time about the police assassination of Fred Hampton in Chicago. And the reporter asked this sixteen-year-old, eloquent even then, what do you make of this, and Mumia, citing Chairman

Mao Zedong, recited political power was out of the barrel of a gun. Seizing that twelve-year-old article, the prosecutor then held it before the jury and said in effect what you have here is someone who is exercising political power by using a gun, twelve years later when he was twenty-eight years old. And Mumia got the death penalty within one hour. Because as all the studies have shown, it's tremendously difficult to get a fair trial when there is a killing and the race of the victim is white, as in this case, and the accused is black. It's even more difficult if the victim also happens to be a police officer. And it's extraordinarily difficult if the prosecution can show that the defendant is dangerous and radical. And that's what they did by introducing a twelve-year-old article in Mumia's penalty phase. Has the Supreme Court spoken to this? Yes, they have since. In the case of *Dawson vs. Delaware*. The state of Delaware got the death penalty against Mr. Dawson, who was a member of a white racist organization, called the Aryan Brotherhood. And they introduced the fact of his membership in the Aryan Brotherhood and he got the death penalty. The United States Supreme Court in a vote of eight to one said this conviction cannot stand, the penalty cannot stand. In the United States, we do not give the death penalty on the basis of someone's politics, their political associations or their political statements. Mumia asked to have his case joined with the Dawson case because the Dawson case coming out of Delaware relied in part on Mumia's case coming out of Pennsylvania, citing *Commonwealth vs. Jamal*. The United States Supreme Court took the Dawson case, they rejected Mumia's case.

And so he remains, seventeen years later, on death row. In all of these issues, and I've only touched on some, our briefs are 500 pages in length and I haven't gone into prosecutorial misconduct, I haven't gotten into the witnesses who were denied, the witnesses

who came forward and said they perjured themselves. But this is a case that commands itself to your attention and the attention not only of the country but it's a case that has earned worldwide recognition and support.

**Ray Brown:** For about thirty years I've been talking as often as it was possible or maybe necessary to black kids, especially in high schools and in junior colleges. And I have had one question that I have posed on each of those innumerable occasions: What was the principal issue facing black folks around the time of World War II? And only once in thirty years have I gotten the right answer. People talk about employment and housing and all kinds of discrimination, but only once in thirty years has some kid had the curiosity to read, or listen to his parents while they talked, and remember that the answer is lynching. A fundamental question of due process you might say. And something that puts in perspective the nature of the struggle we have with the death penalty and with high incarceration rates today. As children, we're progeny of that practice we like to think is outlawed.

And I mention that in part to suggest that one of the interesting things about this gathering is it gives a chance to pose an interesting question, which is: Why have progressives been so unsuccessful in effectively articulating problems of justice and talking about them in ways that have meaning to ordinary folks and can be effectively used to galvanize us?

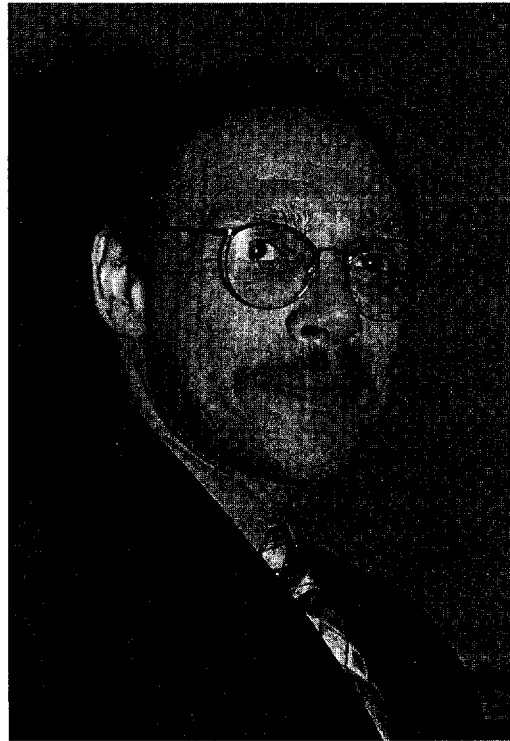
Now, we are not the only ones who lack education about ourselves. The American Bar Association in 1985 did a study of college-educated folks and two of the answers have always interested me—one is that more than 50 percent said that the president had the power to suspend the Constitution in emergencies. And the other interesting one, and I suspect it might be of special interest to this group, is that more than 50 percent thought that the following

words were in the United States Constitution: "From each according to his ability and to each according to his means."

In the context of jobs, I was raised across the river in Jersey City and for those of you who think that on the other side of the Hudson River is Kansas, let me remind you that if you have been in southern New Jersey, you saw the big Colgate clock. There used to be a plant there with lots of jobs. When I was a child, not so long ago, lots of jobs were available there, semiskilled and unskilled labor. There was a Valentine plant within eyesight of where I was born. There was a Pabst Blue Ribbon plant, and a lot of beer being produced over there. When I first started picking juries twenty-five years ago, many of the jurors came from General Electric and Westinghouse plants that provided huge opportunities for people . . . if we sat here we could list 1,000. None of those plants exist today. None of those jobs exist today. And instead, if you ride, as I do sometimes, the Amtrak, the Metro Liner, or the ones that are not on time, the unreserved trains, and you see downtown Newark and Philadelphia and Baltimore, you see a lot of gleaming spires and refurbished downtowns. They have got something I think of as an obscenity. The fact of the matter is those gleaming spires do not provide jobs for the people who no longer work at General Electric and Westinghouse. And their children, who do not receive adequate training in schools, do not fit into the service-sector economy that supplies the jobs in those buildings.

It's an interesting question about why Mumia should be a galvanizing force for so many folks who have not responded to anything else. He's an incredibly articulate black man, but he's not the only one in that category. He writes well, but there are black folks who write well. He's on death row, but unhappily of the 3,500 folk on death row, 40 percent are black. So what? That's one of those questions that the panel is going to respond to.

But let me suggest to you that sometimes we get caught up in the headlines. This morning I made some reference when we were talking about the death penalty, there's something a little less dramatic but infinitely more trendy, and that is the question of racial profiling. And it's easy to see that as the problem of a few bad cops with a maladministration of, say, the New Jersey State Police, which indeed has been a fascist organization since the thirties. And of course the current governor has nominated for the spot on the state supreme court the attorney general who presided over that for the last five years. And by the way, 80 percent of those searched on the turnpike are minorities. Those are astounding numbers. But not a surprise if your eyes are open and you drive down the turnpike. But what does that mean? Is that an aberration? Is all we need a little twist, a few more blacks in the hierarchy? But we know that's nonsense, because one of the truths we don't like to look at is that sometimes when minority folks become police, they become as vicious as some of the people they serve with. We can look at things, but as Bill Sales always used to say, quoting Emma Cabral—tell no lies, claim no easy victories. But truth is more complex than that.



**Ray Brown.**  
*Photo by Delphine Fawundu*

One of the interesting things about our Supreme Court, because it's the one institution that should be above moral corruption, is that it has consistently looked in a benign way on the warrant requirement for searching of homes under the Fourth Amendment. All the while it consistently whittles away the protections for those who move by common carriers on the highways and byways and buses and planes, because those common carriers carry common folk.

And it has also been willing to turn a blind eye if race was just one of the reasons for a stop, just one of the reasons for a search as long as there was something else. And two weeks ago, what did the court say? Talk about individualized determination and probable cause: That they can search you if they have a suspicion to stop me if I'm driving you, the passenger. Giving license to police who are asked to solve complex social problems, which they have neither the clues nor the resources to solve. And so these are fundamental questions, not simple questions to be solved by finding some black guy who would be willing to head the New Jersey State Police. And those are the kinds of solutions that are going to be forthcoming after Christie Whitman runs for the Senate and promises to be nice to black folks.

In the final analysis, it leaves us in the position of not having solved the problem of how it is that for black folks and for other communities of color and other communities without resources, the choice is between being victimized by crime or being victimized by police. That's not a real choice. And the failure of progressive force is to provide analysis and to galvanize around that contradiction, because the truth is your mother or your grandmother may be at risk if she goes to the store. Your son or your nephew is at risk from the police. That's not a way to live. That's not justice.

And I spoke this morning about something which I think is a core concept and that is justice as a secular faith. The problem is it's not something you can eat or drink or ride home in. It's an abstract concept, but it's a critical concept. And if we don't talk about social justice surrounding the temple of the secular faith, then it's meaningless. Eighty billion dollars are spent on criminal justice-related activities, and nary a drop in the bucket spent on the health care aspect of drug policy. And not a mention of drug policy in the context of the health care debate that took place earlier in this administration. We have not been effective at articulating an agenda that addresses bread-and-butter issues as they relate to justice. And sometimes even people we think would have better sense get confused. I don't apologize for having said it, violated any sense of proportion or Constitutional sense to impeach Clinton for what was obviously absurd but hardly significant conduct. And yet on the other hand, this is the man who got elected to office by going to Arkansas and symbolically pulling the switch on a black man so retarded he said he would save his piece of pie and have it after his execution and also he would vote for Bill Clinton in the upcoming election. This is a man who passed the crime bill that Reagan and his ilk were unable to pass.

You know one of the contradictions surfaced in 1995, I remember when one of the men who was one of the stars of the legal profession was doing his best to keep the executioner at bay for Mumia, and there came a time in August when the moments towards the stay were getting narrow. And a lot of us were going anywhere, on any television program, places we wouldn't be ordinarily talking about this issue, and people around the world were marching, talking about this issue incessantly. And all of a sudden a judge whose roots, his personal roots, lie in fascism grants a stay. We have mixed feelings. It's good to see a stay, it's good to see a chance to fight again, but you say should judges grant stays based on the number of people marching in the street? Is that due process? But what happens is there is a larger arena. And it's in the larger arena that the hypocrisy plays itself out in its most graphic forms. The United States wants to be not just a part but a leader of an international community, so much so that it thinks it is its mission to be bombing Belgrade in the midst of what is at best a hypocritical claim that it's fighting genocide. There are international fora like Amnesty International that say the way in which we house prisoners violates not just our Constitution but international norms. U.N. commissions echo what we have said for years about the death penalty being racist and improper, not just under our Constitution but according to international norms.

Just looking at what we have done in the Balkans in the name of the rule of law is curious. In 1991 a Republican Secretary of State said Milosevic was a war criminal. We know an accusation is not a formal charge, let alone a conviction. But prosecutors at The Hague have said since then that the United States has failed to turn over intelligence, for which it should be prosecuted. Not only did we sit down with him at Dayton but no move was made to arrest others charged with genocide.

We think an apology is enough in Rwanda where a million people were slaughtered in three months. Try to find some coverage of the activities of the Rwanda Tribunal even in the pages of the *New York Times* or some place else in the media.

And I talked earlier today about the fact that Court TV had lost its shirt trying to televise the trials in the former Yugoslavia and quickly abandoned any thought of doing the trials from Rwanda. Because Americans said we don't mind a little violence, but they got to look like us and be like us. Because you know the reality of lynching was that people who wouldn't commit another crime or wouldn't steal an apple from a grocer would eviscerate a black man on a rumor because he was the other, he wasn't like us.

And of course men on death row are not like us, outstanding citizens who wear ties and nice clothes. And so we don't have to concern ourselves with whether the Constitution applies. And all those other guys in prison, they are not like us, even though they happen to be my cousin or my nephew. Look at the two victims of police violence in New York. A man named Diallo and a man named Louima. Not what we would call in the old days African Americans. What does that mean? Does it have implications? And are those additional challenges we have to overcome?

I've spent a lot of time going to what are called CLE [continuing legal education] events where lawyers figure out how to be more effective. The conversation at these events is more and more about how to deal with the problem of the noncitizen, because there is a separate constitutional standard. There is a separate set of problems as our courts make more and more distinctions. And I got to tell you that in East Orange I have seen pitched battles in the middle of Central Avenue between African Americans and black folks of Caribbean descent. Pitched battles. Because there isn't political leader-

ship in either community that steps up and says we have some broader issues. Because they put all our kids in jail.

Three years ago the New Jersey Department of Corrections did a study and found an incredibly high correlation among juvenile offenders between low rates of literacy and math skills and high rates of incarceration. And those didn't distinguish between various kinds of people of color. And the few folks that weren't people of color were white folks who were poor. Because class is relevant too. And we don't like to talk about that. And one last thing I will say that came out earlier today in the death penalty conversation, maybe the most interesting case in the line of death penalty cases, is McCleskey, the young black kid sentenced to death in Virginia. The Supreme Court was presented with overwhelming statistics about the racial realities of the death penalty: Both victims and the race of defendants determine whether or not a person is sentenced to death. And the court rejected that reason not just because of what it meant for the death penalty but because it meant that "we were then going to have to do something" about the prisons. If we can't kill them because they are black, we can't lock them up for that reason either.

And Brennan, an Irishman from New Jersey—one of the most corrupt political machines in the history of this country—says the majority is afraid of too much justice. The courts are in the process of abnegating their moral authority. And that was why it seemed important also this afternoon to talk about A. Leon Higginbotham. Because his conversation with Clarence Thomas was about the moral and ethical reality that underlies this political struggle. Because we tend to walk away from it because our communities are increasingly fractured. The word Christian doesn't mean so much as maybe Baptist or Catholic, and there are increasing numbers of Muslims in our community. We have to make

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common cause with folks who are Buddhists or who have totally other world-views than many folks who say they see no God at all. But the ethical and moral questions remain. And if you go elsewhere in the world, you need ordinary folks who resolve issues by reference not to Karl Marx, but to the [Qur'an], to the Bible, to other holy word. And so ethical and moral questions have to be raised and looked at in the context of economic issues.

**Charles Ogletree:** Sometimes when we fail to understand history, we are doomed to repeat it. I think that if we really want to understand the case of Mumia Abu Jamal, we have to look back about twenty-seven years or twenty-eight years ago and really understand what happened with Sister Angela Davis. I'm very much aware of that case because I was a student at Stanford University when she was arrested in California. I was going to school right across the street from where she was held in the Palo Alto women's detention center and had the chance to visit with her and organize some young people in California to bring some political pressure to make sure that Angela Davis would not be railroaded like so many other political prisoners that had gone through the system in California. We confronted a lot in 1972 trying to defend Angela Davis and raise political consciousness. I was from California, that was a state you may recall that had a governor whose name was



**Charles Ogletree.**

*Photo by Delphine Fawundu*

Ronald Reagan. This was a country that had the president whose name was Richard Nixon. And that was the state that had the president of the university called San Francisco State. It was a tough time in 1972. And for me, looking out as a student at Angela Davis's trial, having seen George Jackson go to trial and go to prison for lack of \$15, having seen his brother die and having seen so many other political prisoners at San Quentin 6, just hundreds and hundreds of people go to prison, it was not a time to be optimistic. But when I went to the women's detention center and saw Angela Davis, she was sitting there a symbol of defiance and strength. Never once doubting that no matter what the jury said, she knew that she was not guilty of any crime and that they were not ultimately going to decide her fate. That was a very difficult time in America and yet the lawyers who represented Davis were very good, she had black women and men representing her, including Margaret Buram, who quit her job at the NAACP Legal Defense Fund because they wouldn't let her



represent Angela Davis, she quit her job and went to California to defend Angela Davis on principle, that was important. She had great lawyers. She had a jury in San Jose, California, that was an all-white jury. But what she had on her side was a local, regional, national, and international movement that understood that we would not let anybody take away Angela Davis's liberty or her life because we were willing to throw our bodies down in front of her to make sure that that didn't happen. And you can't imagine a more difficult time than 1972 unless you look at 1999. There is something that is happening in the land today, America has gone insane when we talk about our criminal justice system. We have, as you've heard over and over today, nearly 2 million people in prison. That figure in 1989 was 1 million. It has doubled in one decade. And in ten years we have twice as many people as we have had in the history of our country. We have people who now see the criminal justice system as following them from the cradle to the grave or from the womb to the tomb because there is no justice in America. We have laws talking about racial profiling and we talk about driving while black, but let me tell you that's not the only problem facing America. If it were the only problem facing America, then African Americans and Hispanics and others, I wouldn't be troubled. But it's not just driving while black. If you live where I live, you know that it's walking while black that's a problem. You know it's riding while black that's a problem. Some of you know that it's shopping while black that's a problem. And some of you know that simply working while black can be a problem. In fact it's living while black that's a problem in America.

There is no community in America where people of color are not examined and judged by their color. There is no safe haven. We talk about Roxbury and Harlem. We talk about South Central Los Angeles and Chicago. But

it happens in Cambridge and in Wellesley and Westchester. If you're black or brown and you are in the wrong neighborhood, you are going to be a victim of some type of police suspicion that is not justified by law or common sense or by justice. And it's not just walking and driving. I talk to my students all the time about drug courier profiles and try to give them an intellectual answer. And this is where I'm caught in this dilemma. I tell them there is a case that's been decided for every one of these examples I give them: The law is not racist, it doesn't discriminate. We can talk about race discrimination and it happens from suspicion through execution. It happens from the beginning of the time we're in the system until the end of the time we're in the system. And what we haven't done as people who are black or brown or bilingual is to stand up and say that the death penalty as a penalty is insane, it's unjust, it's discriminatory and we have to get rid of it now, once and forever.

*Conrad Muhammad:* I'm glad that we were visionaries enough to have someone who represents the hip-hop generation. I don't like to say the youth, because in this society we don't get a chance to be young that much any more. The children are old. The children grow up very quickly. And when you look at society today, we in the hip-hop generation, and that's a term that we use, that speaks to this generation, often do not have the luxury of being young, but rather we have come up in a very turbulent era, turbulent times. So many people say to me Minister Conrad Muhammad you can't organize young people today like they did in the sixties. Because there are no issues. But then I remind them, I said, in 1966 Huey Newton and Bobby Seale formed the Black Panther Party for Self-Defense. What was the issue? What was the main objective of the Black Panther Party for Self-Defense? To fight against po-

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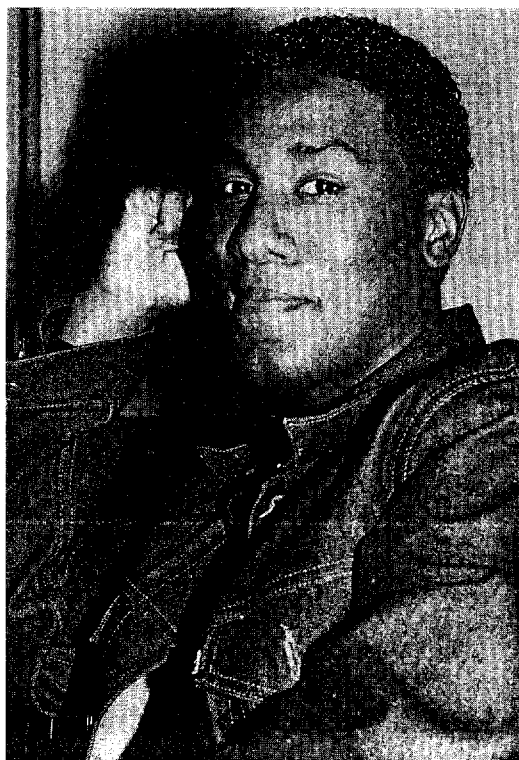
lice brutality. New York, 1999—what has really changed?

Mayor Giuliani is attempting to do to New York what a man named Frank Rizzo did in Philadelphia. And you cannot talk about Mumia Abu Jamal, you cannot talk about Philadelphia, the city of brotherly love, without talking about the big bambino, a man who had a size 50 chest and a fascist mentality. Frank Rizzo.

The only police cars probably more feared in the country than the New York City police cars were the light

blue cars of the Philadelphia police department. Philadelphia, city of brotherly love, is the only city in America where not only did a white mayor create a climate of fear but a black mayor came in on the heels of that mentality and dropped a bomb on [a row house] in west Philadelphia to abuse and persecute the same group that brother Mumia is a part of. Intolerance existed in that day in Philadelphia and Mayor Giuliani is attempting to create the same reality in New York City in 1999 and we cannot sit idly by and allow that to happen.

Whether it's Amadou Diallo, Mumia Abu Jamal, or any other name that you could pick from the long list of those who are deprived of justice, we who are yet to face that situation must ourselves stand up and say we



*Minister Conrad Muhammad.*

*Photo by Delphine Fawundu*

shouldn't become involved in Mumia's case to fight for a new trial for him simply because we like him. And we should not do it simply because we don't like him. But what we must do is take a stand as citizens of this country that love liberty because what visits the other man's door today can come back and visit you tomorrow. And it's a shame that people don't respond until it affects them personally.

They are saying around the country now that crime is down. But rather what has happened

in America is that they have criminalized and subsequently locked up a generation. Yes it's race, yes it's class. That's right. I don't know about you, but I'm a logical thinker. And when the factories, as Brother Ray Brown talked about them, leave the cities and there is no employer in the inner cities, corporations have moved to the suburbs to rural areas and into foreign countries and yet people remain in these central communities, central cities. They must feed their children, they must pay their rent, they must eke out some existence. If the dope man is the only one hiring, people will seek employment. And this is an outrage. And this is a shame that we have to address.

Mumia Abu Jamal was poor, Mumia Abu Jamal was black. Race, class, gender. These

are ill in our society. You hear politicians today say that crime is down but when we look we see the Rockefeller laws and we see laws that have said that a young black person in the inner cities that sells a minuscule amount of crack has to go away for long mandatory sentences. Now, those that engage in powder crack cocaine, a drug of a higher socioeconomic class, can often get suspended sentences. Then that tells me that we have grave problems in the criminal justice system. And I'm glad that Mumia's case can crystallize our interest in that system, our interest in changing that system. But those of you that are members of the hip-hop generation, you should recognize and understand that we have lost the whole generation of young black males and now increasingly women to the prison system. The lack of economic ingenuity, and creativity, on the part of the political leaders of this county has caused the direction of public policy to go in the direction of building jails and not schools. Some of the upstate towns in Pataki's New York base their sole economic development on the buildup of a prison-industrial complex in their cities. This is an outrage and we must do more than raise our voices, we've got to march, we have got to go to jail, but lastly and finally as I leave you, I say this to you. We have got to become more politically involved in this governmental system. I'm speaking now to young people. We can no longer engage any longer in a ghetto fabulous bubble. Something has to burst it. Nor can we engage in the ivy league

professional, corporate suit fantasy that makes us believe that we are immune to addressing some of these issues. The Bible says to whom much is given, much is required. And that's why I love men like Thurgood Marshall and Charles Hamilton Houston, because they were not from the bottom rail of society. Judge Leon Higgenbock didn't fight for justice because he had to. He fought for justice because he understood that he had a responsibility: those who have been given much have a responsibility to do more.

I close by saying this. It costs less money, as I'm sure you have documented throughout this day, to educate a young person in this society at Harvard or Yale than it does to imprison them for one year in this country—much less sending them to city college or some other state university. But America is a place that wants it two ways. I have evolved to the point where I don't indict this country anymore per se. I used to. I spent long hours doing it. Became quite eloquent at it. But one of the things that I've realized is that in spite of the warts, one of the things I like about it is that we have a right to agitate, to organize, and to change the system of government into whatever we want it to be, if we are able to stay vigilant and become active. And so if you don't like America the way it is, you don't have to leave it. Those who say like it, love or leave it, no, they are inaccurate, they are wrong. You don't have to like it the way it is. We can work to change it, to make it what it should be.