

# FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

## NEWARK CITYPLEX-12 BACKS OUT OF PLANS TO SHOW NEW FILM ON MUMIA ABU-JAMAL

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PRESS CONFERENCE: Friday, April 26, 12 noon, Cityplex-12 Theater, 360-394 Springfield Ave.

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### Area Human Rights Groups and Film Producers Plan Press Conference & Picket of Theater

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Newark. April 19, 2013. After weeks of promotional planning, Cityplex-12, Newark's only major movie theater, announced Thursday, April 11, that it was canceling plans to show the critically-acclaimed film *Mumia: Long Distance Revolutionary (A Journey with Mumia Abu-Jamal)*. The film focuses on Abu-Jamal's life story, from his teenage years writing for the Black Panther newspaper to his award-winning professional journalism, up to his recent victory in federal courts. Abu-Jamal won a 2011 ruling that his death sentence had been unconstitutional, after he served 29 years on death row for the shooting death of police officer, Daniel Faulkner, in 1981.

The Cityplex-12 cancellation came just as activists were preparing to gather in Philadelphia on April 24th to mark Abu-Jamal's 59th birthday and also the growing momentum to win his release from prison. Abu-Jamal's ability to fight off execution was due to a worldwide movement on his behalf, and the flagrantly biased nature of the case against him, say many analysts and human rights groups, among them Amnesty International, which has called for a new trial. Numerous officers working on Abu-Jamal's case were subsequently indicted and many jailed on charges of corruption in a federal probe.

Producer and director of the film, Stephen Vittoria, reports, "Cityplex-12 managers claim this is simply a business decision. But management's sudden reversal of a long-arranged agreement to run the movie suggests otherwise." He noted further, "Let's remember the community was awaiting the film; there were no protests, no written objections, nothing."

Activist, Lawrence Hamm, of Newark's *People's Organization for Progress*, noted, "There's no cogent rationale for the suddenness of this cancellation. I visited the theater's General Manager, heard him claim that their policy is not to show independent films, only commercial ones. But they admitted to having shown one before. So, *POP* now has sent a written letter to management arguing

that they should make an exception and show this film on Mumia. It's important to the black community in Newark to run this film, and at this theater that is in the heart of Newark's communities."

"We're still researching reports of a former Newark policeman influencing the theater's decision. Shaq O'Neal, part of the theater's ownership, has expressed interest in being a sheriff in Florida and is tight with law enforcement. There's a long history of police organizations in Philadelphia, New York and other cities, especially key lodges of the Fraternal Order of Police, closing down or pressuring venues that treat Mumia and his case," noted American Historian, Johanna Fernandez, of Baruch College (CUNY), and Coordinator of Educators for Mumia Abu-Jamal (EMAJ). "Police have even come down heavy on universities and colleges (such as Temple University in Philadelphia) simply for bringing informed analysis to bear on the case."

Mark Taylor of Princeton Seminary and founder of EMAJ stressed, "If there's police pressure in this case it is especially outrageous. Mumia's story in North Philadelphia is also the story of urban communities in Newark and across the country." He added, "This cancellation is certainly an ugly stain on anything like the noble 'redevelopment' plan that Mayor Booker trumpets for Newark urban communities."

*Long Distance Revolutionary* has already been an "Official Selection" at multiple film festivals, opened in New York City ranked number 3 nationwide among documentaries, number 1 in Los Angeles in March as well as number 1 in the Oakland/BayArea in mid-March. The film has played in numerous cities around the country. It has also played on numerous campuses in the US and Canada, including Princeton and Temple Universities. "Even if this was only a business decision - and we contest that - Cityplex-12's apparent preference for Hollywood's violent films over this riveting documentary about an inspiring struggle for justice and peace by Mumia - well, it does a disservice to the people of Newark," added Fernandez.

Boston activist Jamila Wilson emphasized, "Abu-Jamal's journalism still reaches a U.S. and international audience, through print, radio and online venues, exposing the failures of U.S. criminal justice, the prison industrial complex, and police violence. He's now published seven books and thousands of columns and essays. In this, he remains our much-heralded 'voice of the voiceless.' "

Philadelphia activist, Pam Africa, summed up her response to Cityplex-12's cancellation: "We must stay steadfast and focused on governments' and corporations' attempts to suppress the people's voice, whether in speech or film. If we are not careful, our voices will soon be silenced."

# LONG DISTANCE REVOLUTIONARY

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## A Journey with Mumia Abu-Jamal