

# Street Legal Cinema

in association with

**Prison Radio**

presents

## LONG DISTANCE REVOLUTIONARY

A Journey with Mumia Abu-Jamal

Written, Directed, and Edited by Stephen Vittoria

Produced by Stephen Vittoria, Katyana Farzanrad, and Noelle Hanrahan

Music by Robert Guillory

"Society" Sung by Eddie Vedder

Cinematographer & Editor: Erik Sorensen

Sound Design: Dino Herrmann

### —Featuring—

Cornel West, Alice Walker, Rubin "Hurricane" Carter, Ruby Dee, Angela Davis  
Giancarlo Esposito, Peter Coyote, Tariq Ali, Michelle Alexander, Amy Goodman  
Dick Gregory, M-1 aka Mutulu Olugbala, Ramsey Clark, Aya de Leon, Michael Parenti,  
plus many more

Total Running Time: 2 hours

5:1 Dolby Surround Sound

### Domestic Distribution



First Run Features

The Film Center Building

630 Ninth Avenue, #1213

New York, NY 10036

212-243-0600

firstrunfeatures.com

[www.mumia-themovie.com](http://www.mumia-themovie.com)

You Tube: [www.youtube.com/user/mumiathemovie](http://www.youtube.com/user/mumiathemovie)

Facebook & Twitter (@LDRmovie)

# CONTENTS

Page 3

Synopsis: Long / Short / One-Liner

Page 6

Mumia Abu-Jamal Bio

Page 7

What People Are Saying About Mumia Abu-Jamal

Page 8

Filmmakers' Bios

Page 10

The Interviews (list and info about interviewees)

Page 14

The Cast

Page 15

Making "Long Distance Revolutionary"

Page 18

The Art of "Long Distance Revolutionary"

Page 23

Select Quotes from the Film



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## **LONG SYNOPSIS**

### **Overview**

“Long Distance Revolutionary” focuses on Mumia Abu-Jamal’s career as a prolific writer and journalist from the depths of prison. The film chronicles his life and work as a journalist, writer, and philosopher – a public intellectual who has spent thirty years in a Pennsylvania prison, twenty-nine of them in solitary confinement on death row. The film tracks Mumia’s early work in journalism as a writer for the Black Panther newspaper (at age 15) through his promising and emerging career as a reporter for National Public Radio. After Mumia is convicted for the murder of Philadelphia patrolman Daniel Faulkner, the story then exposes Mumia’s battles with the American judicial system (prisons & courts) to continue his journalism and radio broadcasts from behind bars – a battle he continues to wage to this very day. The film evolves into an exploration of his impact on social and political discourse both in the United States and around the world.

The film features exclusive and rare prison interviews with Mumia as well insights from Cornel West, Alice Walker, Angela Davis, Ruby Dee, Rubin Hurricane Carter, Amy Goodman, Dick Gregory, Peter Coyote, Giancarlo Esposito, Tariq Ali, Michael Parenti, Ramsey Clark, M-1 (Dead Prez), Dave Zirin, Aya de Leon, Frances Goldin, Ramona Africa, as well as many others. Ultimately, the film ushers the audience behind prison walls and exposes the horrors of the American gulag. The audience experiences this journey with Mumia... a journey that defines the triumph of hope, courage, and love.

### **The Early Years...**

sets the story in motion and is a unique look at the evolution and maturation of a brilliant student of life. Mumia’s growth before incarceration is defined by his inquiring mind... a mind sharply focused on social justice, political activism, a promising writing career, as well as his ongoing and sometimes epic battles – both journalistic and personal – with the FBI and the Philadelphia Police Department.

The early narrative uncovers an up-and-coming vibrant and radical journalist – a man hell bent on exposing the truth... a man committed to giving voice to the voiceless... a writer – who at a very early age – proves he can clearly shine a revealing light on the myth of American history as well as the repressive realities and nature of America’s imperial foreign policy. As Cornel West states in the film, “He forces us to come to terms with the depths of the crisis and how do you create some awakening.”

### **Life After Incarceration...**

is a look at how and why Mumia transcends and exposes America’s Prison Industrial Complex. He embodies a voice that has been repressed but continues to expose the facts of this Draconian system: one in three black men will do prison time; one in forty-six Americans will do prison time; America has the highest incarceration rate

in the world. In fact, Mumia's existence after incarceration is characterized by his courage as he refuses to be silent. He refuses to stop writing and stop reporting. As the story drives forward, the narrative shines a bright light on Mumia as a political and revolutionary force that rises out of an American nightmare. Even though the state tries to prevent his words from reaching the airwaves, he finds connection and life beyond the tyranny. The battle lines were clearly drawn with the State mobilizing vast resources... but for the most part Mumia wins as his voice soars far beyond prison walls, as his books hit the streets and his voice hits the airwaves.

### **Impact on Political Discourse...**

is a look at how Mumia connects with those outside the gulag... how he inspires hope, courage, and change. In fact, his work from prison continues to make a significant impact on an amazing variety of people from Detroit to Uzbekistan as they discover his essays or hear his voice – even as the State continues their attempts to silence him.

The story makes its way through the end of the 20th Century defining Mumia as a stalwart critic of empire – a historian and dissident who embodies, exemplifies, and represents those voices ignored and discarded by the mainstream ruling class... a writer who speaks for the poor, the disenfranchised, the wounded, and the dead. We witness the growth and the evolution of his writing – from a reporter to a noted historian. And not a safe or guild historian; his words are in the tradition of Chomsky, Zinn, and Arundhati Roy. Ultimately, his words are a check on American exceptionalism. The film illustrates how Mumia has inspired thousands of educators to teach his words... how students respond to his plea for peace, for hope, and always for compassion.

When all is said and done, Mumia's courageous life and shining words resemble a prayer... an intercession on behalf of freedom and justice

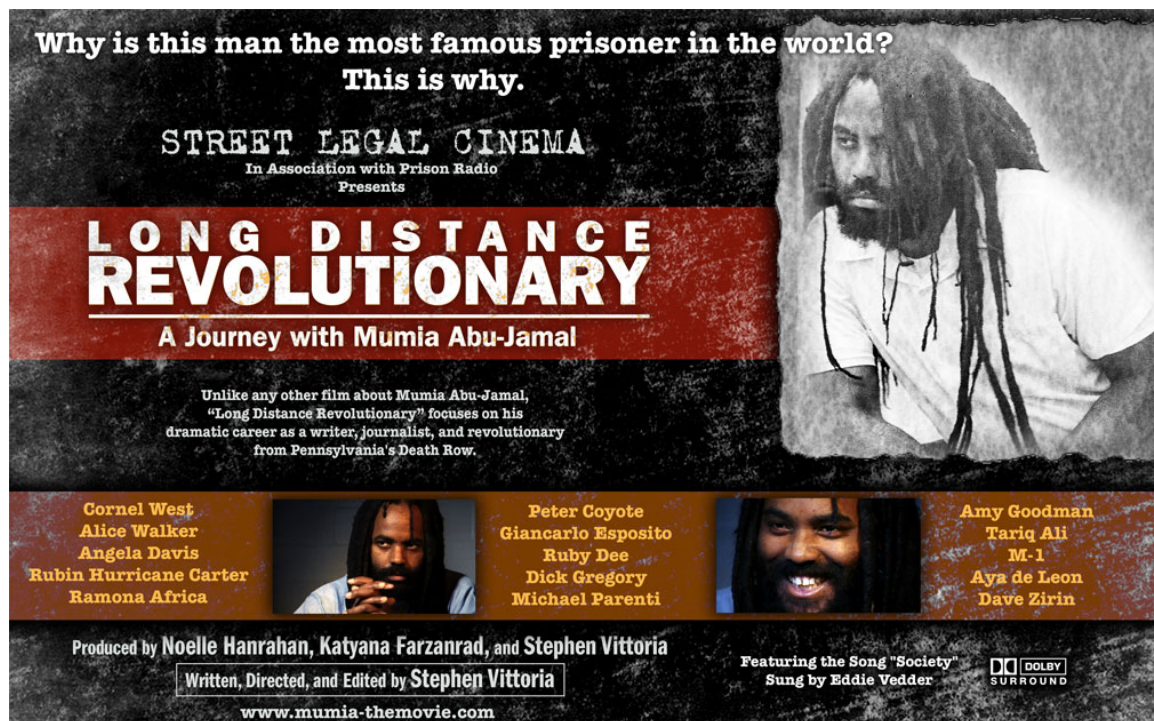
## **SHORT SYNOPSIS**

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## ONE-LINE SYNOPSIS

The film chronicles the life and revolutionary times of former death row political prisoner Mumia Abu-Jamal.



## **MUMIA ABU-JAMAL'S BIO**

Mumia Abu-Jamal is an award-winning journalist and author of seven books. For the past thirty years he has been a resident of the Pennsylvania State Prison System. Twenty nine of those years were spent in solitary confinement on death row. His books include *Live from Death Row*, *All Things Censored*, *Jailhouse Lawyers*, and *We Want Freedom: A Life in the Black Panther Party*. Prior to his incarceration, he was an award winning broadcast journalist. In 1981, he was elected president of the Association of Black Journalists (Philadelphia chapter) and was a radio reporter for NPR. As part of a team of reporters at WHYY, one of NPR's premier stations, he won the prestigious Major Armstrong Award from Columbia University for excellence in broadcasting. His 1982 murder trial has raised considerable protest internationally. His demand for a new trial and freedom is supported by heads of state from France to South Africa, by the European Parliament, by distinguished human rights organizations like Amnesty International, city governments from Detroit to San Francisco to Paris, and by Nobel Laureates Nelson Mandela, Toni Morrison, and Desmond Tutu.

Abu-Jamal obtained his GED in prison in July of 1992; he earned his BA from Goddard College in January of 1996; he was awarded an honorary Doctorate of Law degree from the New College of California in May of 1996; in 1999, he earned a masters of arts degree from California State University Dominguez Hills [MA Humanities History (major) African American Literature (minor)].

His books are all in print, and include best sellers. They have been translated into more than seven languages including French, Japanese, German, Dutch, Spanish, Portuguese, and Italian. Mumia Abu-Jamal has written and broadcasted more than 2,000 essays from prison, including commencement addresses and lectures. He is currently serving a life sentence without parole at the State Correctional Institute at Mahanoy in Frackville, Pennsylvania.

## WHAT PEOPLE ARE SAYING ABOUT MUMIA ABU-JAMAL

*"Prison and government officials are trying to censor and silence Mumia Abu-Jamal. I stand as one of many Americans who believe that there is tremendous value in his voice being heard."*—Susan Sarandon

*"Solitary Confinement is simply torture. It has been well known for a long time. It is savagery. Mass incarceration is an incredible crime. All of these things are a true international scandal. He (Mumia's) is a striking case, but it is far more general. Maximum security prisons in the United States are horrendous. They make Guantanamo look like a vacation resort."*—Noam Chomsky, Professor MIT

*"If Mumia Abu-Jamal has nothing important to say, why are so many powerful people trying to kill him and shut him up?"*—John Edgar Wideman, Professor, Brown University

*"A prophetic writer. Mumia refuses to allow his spirit to be broken by the forces of injustice; his language glows with an affirming flame."*—Jonathan Kozol, Educator

*"Mumia is a dramatic example of how the criminal justice system can be brought to bear on someone who is African American, articulate, and involved in change in society. The system is threatened by someone like Mumia. A voice as strong and as truthful as his—the repression against him is intensified."*—Sister Helen Prejean

*"We join with Amnesty International in demanding a new trial for Mumia Abu-Jamal. We will not allow his voice to be silenced."*—Tom Morello, Street Sweeper Social Club

*"The first time I heard a tape of Mumia's radio broadcasts, it was the first time I fully understood why the government was so intent on putting him to death."*  
—Assata Shakur, former member of The Black Panther Party

*"Mumia Abu-Jamal offers us an important gift of insight and analysis and we must treasure it."*—Susan L. Taylor, Editor in Chief Emeritus, Essence Magazine

*"Uncompromising, disturbing... Abu-Jamal's voice has the clarity and candor of a man whose impending death emboldens him to say what is on his mind without fear of consequence."*—The Boston Globe

*"Abu-Jamal's words flow like the sap of trees, pulsing with energy and capturing the essence of life."*—Library Journal

*"An incisive critic of our criminal justice system... a rare and courageous voice."*  
—Martin Sheen

## FILMMAKERS' BIOS

### **STEPHEN VITTORIA, Writer, Director, Producer, Editor**

"Long Distance Revolutionary: A Journey with Mumia Abu-Jamal" is Stephen Vittoria's current documentary and it opens in theatres this fall. His last film, "One Bright Shining Moment: The Forgotten Summer of George McGovern" won top honors at the Sarasota Film Festival as "Best Documentary Feature" and was released nationwide by First Run Features. In 1987, Vittoria wrote, directed, and edited his first film, the dramatic feature "Black & White," starring Kim Delgado and Frank Vincent – a story about racism set against the backdrop of post-World War II America. In 1995, Vittoria produced, wrote, and directed "Hollywood Boulevard," starring John C. McGinley, Jon Tenney, and Julianne Phillips – a dark and satirical look at the motion picture business.

In 1998, Vittoria wrote, directed, and edited the six-hour health documentary "Save Your Life – The Life and Holistic Times of Dr. Richard Schulze," and then in 2005 he wrote, directed, and edited the television documentary "Keeper of the Flame" with journalist Linda Ellerbee and actor Wilford Brimley – a film that deals with the current ecological crisis facing American forests.

Recently, Vittoria was a producer on two feature documentaries by Academy Award winner Alex Gibney: "Gonzo: The Life & Work of Dr. Hunter S. Thompson" and "Magic Trip."

Vittoria is the founder and creative director of two Southern California production companies – Street Legal Cinema and Deep Image. One day, Steve hopes to play centerfield for the New York Yankees. He lives in Los Angeles (under protest).

### **KATYANA FARZANRAD, Producer**

Katy is a producer and director who divides her time between documentaries, narratives, industrials, and web series. Most recently, she has been story producing in reality television.

Katy holds a BA from the University of Florida in Theater and an MFA in Cinema and Television from the University of Southern California.

### **NOELLE HANRAHAN, Producer**

Noelle discovered Mumia's voice in prison when she recorded him on death row at Huntingdon State Prison in July of 1992. These recording sessions inspired the controversial censored series on National Public Radio as well as Abu-Jamal's first bestseller "Live From Death Row." She has continued to amplify his voice for more than twenty years. She is an investigative journalist, private investigator, and Director of Prison Radio. Noelle has edited Abu-Jamal's books Jailhouse Lawyers and



All Things Censored, produced three of his audio CDs, and continues to produce and distribute his weekly radio commentaries and speeches (over 2000 have been recorded) to a worldwide audience. Ms. Hanrahan is a graduate of Stanford University (B.A.) and Boston University (M.A.).



## THE INTERVIEWS

CORNEL WEST

Philosopher, author, civil rights activist, and professor at the Union Theological Seminary

ALICE WALKER

Pulitzer Prize winning author, poet, and civil rights activist

ANGELA DAVIS

Professor, scholar, author, and political activist

RUBIN “HURRICANE” CARTER

Former middleweight boxer and former Executive Director of the “Association in Defense of the Wrongly Convicted”

TARIQ ALI

Novelist, journalist, filmmaker, and historian

RUBY DEE

Actress, poet, journalist, and activist

M-1 aka MUTULU OLUGBALA

Rapper, author, and activist

AMY GOODMAN

Author, journalist, investigative reporter, and host of DemocracyNow!

JUAN GONZALEZ

Columnist for the New York Daily News, journalist, investigative reporter, and co-host of DemocracyNow!

MICHELLE ALEXANDER

Author and professor of law at Ohio State University

RAMSEY CLARK

Former US Attorney General and activist

GIANCARLO ESPOSITO

Actor and director

PETER COYOTE

Actor, author, director, and screenwriter

AYA DE LEON

Professor, writer, poet, and spoken word artist

TERRY BISSON

Author and Mumia Abu-Jamal biographer

RAMONA AFRICA

Activist, member of the MOVE Organization

C. CLARK KISSINGER

Activist and former National Secretary for Students for a Democratic Society

DAVE LINDORFF

Author and investigative reporter

DAVE ZIRIN

Author and sports journalist

DICK GREGORY

Author, comedian, and social activist

MICHAEL PARENTI

Author and historian

BARBARA COX EASLEY

Former member of The Black Panther Party

EMORY DOUGLAS

Artist and former member of The Black Panther Party

REGGIE SCHELL

Former member of The Black Panther Party

PAM AFRICA

Activist and member of the MOVE Organization

FRANCES GOLDIN

Literary agent and activist

GREG RUGGIERO

Editor of the legendary City Lights Books

HEIDI BOGHOSIAN

Executive Director of the National Lawyers Guild

JAMES CONE

Author and professor at the Union Theological Seminary

MARK LEWIS TAYLOR

Author and professor at Princeton Theological Seminary

TODD BURROUGHS

Journalist, historian, and professor at Morgan State University

JERRY QUICKLEY

Journalist and performance poet

JOHANNA FERNANDEZ

Author and professor at Baruch College, City University of New York

LINN WASHINGTON

Author, journalist, and professor at Temple University

LYDIA BARASHANGO

Mumia Abu-Jamal's sister

TED NACE

Writer, publisher, and environmentalist

MIKE AFRICA

Activist and member of the MOVE Organization

TAMEKA CAGE-CONLEY

Teacher, poet, and author

SONALI KOLHATKAR

Radio producer and on-air host

GREG BRIDGES

Radio producer and on-air host

ANITA JOHNSON

Radio producer and on-air host

STU BYKOFISKY

Columnist, Philadelphia Daily News

KARIN PHILLIPS

Radio reporter

JOEY VENTO  
Proprietor, Geno's Steaks in Philadelphia

GABRIEL BRYANT  
Student at Temple University

TANAY HARRIS  
Student at Temple University

BENJAMIN CUOZZO  
Student at Baruch College

WELDON McWILLIAMS  
Professor at Cheyney State

TEDDY ROBINSON  
Radio engineer



Dr. Cornel West

## THE CAST

### Re-creations:

Troy Alcendor played Mumia (in the cell)

Brandy Scott played Mumia's Mother & Audrea (Black Panther woman)

Sydney Bloom played Mumia's Daughter

### Onscreen Narrators:

Ahsabi Monique Burris

Lorin Becker

Martha Boles

Vanessa Born

Rick Burns

Rodney Charles

Myles Cranford

Eric Davis

Gerald Emerick

Adrian Germany

Sheila Grenham

Elija Hall

Rachel Hasting

DaJuan Johnson

Howard McNair

Christina Moses

Marques Ray

Eartha Robinson

Rachel Robinson

Halima Scott

Tejah Signori

Saro Solis

Cornelious Jordan

Jim Underdown

Pranidhi Varshney



Brandy Scott as Audrea

## **MAKING “LONG DISTANCE REVOLUTIONARY”**

The roots of this film reach back to another Street Legal Cinema/Stephen Vittoria film entitled “Murder Incorporated: Empire, Genocide, and Manifest Destiny.” Vittoria wrote twenty-five detailed questions and talking points for Mumia to answer and record regarding America’s imperial history. The film is still in dormant production but Mumia’s brilliant work on the film as a historian and critic of American exceptionalism became the genesis of “Long Distance Revolutionary.” In fact, some of the Murder Incorporated sessions are included in the current film.

For almost two decades, Vittoria was an ardent reader and long-time audience member for Mumia Abu-Jamal’s books and recorded essays. After sharing Mumia’s work with colleagues and friends and constantly getting back strong reviews that were usually accompanied by the question “Who is this guy?”, Vittoria decided to begin researching and writing a long-form narrative structure for a new documentary film that would tell the story of Mumia Abu-Jamal: convicted murderer and brilliant journalist who speaks to the world from the depths of America’s prison gulag.

Unlike any other film about Mumia Abu-Jamal, “Long Distance Revolutionary” does not deal with Mumia’s case but rather his work as a journalist prior to and after incarceration on Pennsylvania’s Death Row. “I wasn’t interested in re-hashing the same polarizing standoff between those who want Mumia to fry and those who want him free,” Vittoria states. “What interested me most as a storyteller was this Herculean feat he accomplishes with grace under extremely oppressive conditions. The fact that his words transcend prison walls and criss-cross the world is a great story and testament to his courage. Like Ramona Africa says in the film: When you’re pushing the lie the truth is very threatening.”

One of the more difficult tasks associated with the making of “Long Distance Revolutionary” was securing interview footage with Mumia. The State of Pennsylvania’s Department of Corrections forbids the recording of prisoners in any of their facilities. This wasn’t always the case. Numerous filmmakers and journalists filmed Mumia for various projects but as Mumia’s voice and power began to take hold in the marketplace of ideas – ideas that underscored the tyranny associated with the Prison Industrial Complex, the powers that be passed a blanket ruling unofficially known as the “Mumia Rule,” which simply prohibited recording devices of any kind. So the producers, knowing that making a film without access to the main subject would be akin to making “Jaws” without the shark, began to seek out and secure the existing interviews with Mumia – all recorded before the winter of 1996. They were completely successful – tracking down every available visual record of Mumia recorded at either SCI Huntingdon or SCI Greene prisons in Pennsylvania. Those recordings are scattered throughout the film.

Vittoria also asked Mumia new questions about his life prior to and after incarceration. Mumia called in to the studios of Prison Radio where his answers were recorded by his long-time radio producer Noelle Hanrahan.

### **The Cell**

Reenactments in documentaries have not been a favorite technique of Vittoria's but the lack of access to Mumia coupled with his extraordinary living conditions pushed the filmmaker to employ this recreation for "artistic reasons... the audience deserves to know what life is like in solitary confinement for almost thirty years. Building the cell became an all-important element. The trick is to use it as connective tissue, not as a way to drive the narrative but as a way to allow the audience inside this man's hell. Quick shots, darkly lit, glimpses of this writer's claustrophobic concrete wall existence." Other similar moments in the film help to breathe life into Mumia's words as he describes topics like his mother's death and his initial invitation into the Black Panther Party.

Vittoria interviewed fifty-one different individuals who could speak about Mumia's career as a journalist, his life as a revolutionary, life as a prisoner, as well as his impact on social and political discourse around the world. More than 100 hours of interview footage exists and the producers plan on including highlights as an extra on the upcoming DVD and Blu-Ray. The production shoot covered thousands of miles: New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Maryland, Washington DC, northern and southern California, and finally London as well as Los Cabos, Mexico.

Post-production began in the spring of 2011 in Los Angeles. Picture was locked by the end of the year, followed by a rigorous schedule of graphic design by DesignPath, colorizing by Filmlook in Burbank, sound design at Sculptured Music in Los Angeles, the writing and recording of original scored music by Robert Guillory, the garnering of "Society" sung by Eddie Vedder of Pearl Jam, and the final 5:1 Dolby Surround mix by Dino Herrmann – also at Sculptured Music in LA.

The filmmakers celebrated the acquisition of all domestic rights by First Run Features in New York City. A long-standing independent distribution company, First Run is currently planning the theatrical release of the picture in early 2013 in New York and Los Angeles, followed by a wider theatrical release thereafter. First Run Features distributed Vittoria's last documentary "One Bright Shining Moment: The Forgotten Summer of George McGovern" in 2006.





© Mac McGill

## **THE ART FROM “LONG DISTANCE REVOLUTIONARY”**

“Any form of art is a form of power; it has impact, it can affect change.”  
— Ossie Davis

Note:

All the art can be seen here: [www.mumia-themovie.com/art.html](http://www.mumia-themovie.com/art.html)

Select images can be downloaded here: [www.mumia-themovie.com/press.html](http://www.mumia-themovie.com/press.html)

### **“THE GREAT MIGRATION”**

(Panels 1 & 3)

By Jacob Lawrence

The Great Migration illustrates the mass exodus of African-Americans who moved to the North in search for a better life. To include two panels from Lawrence’s historic series was an honor.

[2 images]

To see the entire series, click here

[http://www.phillipscollection.org/migration\\_series/](http://www.phillipscollection.org/migration_series/)

### **“THE LIFE OF MUMIA ABU-JAMAL”**

**“MUMIA SHAKES HANDS WITH DEATH”**

By Seth Tobocman

Radical New York City artist Seth Tobocman created twenty-three panels that depict the life of Mumia Abu-Jamal. Tobocman’s unique style and strong narrative was a perfect fit for the film.

[24 images]

To learn more about Seth Tobocman, click here

<http://www.sethtobocman.com/>

**“STREET COP”**  
**“FLAMING FIST”**  
**“MUMIA ABU-JAMAL”**

By Eric Drooker

Eric Drooker (American painter, graphic novelist, and frequent cover artist for The New Yorker) has long supported Mumia Abu-Jamal. His stunning work in the film is no exception.

[3 images]

To learn more about Eric Drooker, click here  
<http://www.drooker.com/>

**“FLAG”**  
**“MUMIA”**

By Mac McGill

One of New York City’s leading pen and ink artists, Mac McGill graced the film with two of his extraordinary works.

[2 images]

To learn more about Mac McGill, click here  
<http://www.booklyn.org/artists/Mac%20McGill,%20N.Y.,%20NY.php>

**“STOLEN LIVES”**  
**“REIGN OF TERROR”**

By Ann Erpino

California artist Ann Erpino has been fighting the corrupt machine since she picked up a paintbrush. Her surreal depiction of Mumia and American imperialism hold a dramatic and important place in the film’s narrative. Ann also appears in the film.

[2 images]

To learn more about Ann Erpino, click here  
<http://www.annerpino.com/>

**"FREEDOM"**  
**"POWER TO THE PEOPLE"**

By Emory Douglas

Former Minister of Culture for the Black Panther Party, Emory Douglas, also appears in Long Distance Revolutionary. His activist art and frontline thoughts help to capture the good fight waged by the Panthers.

[2 images]

To learn more about Emory Douglas, click here  
<http://www.moca.org/emorydouglas/>

**EL CORREDOR DE LOS SILENCIADOS**

By Ricardo Samaniego Mendoza & Helena Moguel Samaniego

Moved by the struggle of Mumia Abu-Jamal, young Mexican artists Ricardo Samaniego Mendoza and Helena Moguel Samaniego created this installation entitled "The Corridor of the Silenced Ones" or "El Corredor de Los Silenciados."

[2 images]

Lo más peligroso que puede existir para un sistema injusto, corrupto, ineficiente o represivo es la denuncia. La denuncia le abre los ojos al pueblo y politiza la vida diaria de las personas. He ahí la razón de que la libertad de expresión no pueda ser tolerada por aquéllos que temen que sus núcleos de poder se vean truncados ante el poderío del pueblo.

—Los Artistas



*"Contrary to popular belief, conventional wisdom would have one believe that it is insane to resist this, the mightiest of empires..."*

*But what history really shows is that today's empire is tomorrow's ashes, that nothing lasts forever, and that to not resist is to acquiesce in your own oppression. The greatest form of sanity that anyone can exercise is to resist that force that is trying to repress, oppress, and fight down the human spirit."*

—Mumia Abu-Jamal

## SELECT QUOTES FROM THE FILM

(Opening reading from “B-Block Days & Nightmares” by Mumia Abu-Jamal)

GIANCARLO ESPOSITO

“Wrapped in the sweet, false escape of dreams, I hear the unmistakable sounds of meat being beaten by blackjack, of bootfalls, yells, curses; and it merges into the mind’s moviemaking machine, evoking distant memories of some of the Philadelphia Police Department’s greatest hits—on me. *“Get off that man, you fat, greasy, racist, redneck pig bitch muthafucka!”* Another dawn, another beating, another shackled inmate pummeled into the concrete by a squadron of guards.”

(From the introduction or “Who is Mumia?”)

CORNEL WEST

Mumia how are you dealing with all of this darkness and despair and despondency and so forth. He said let me write about it, I’ll tell the truth about it, it’s a living hell, it’s a nightmare.

AMY GOODMAN

They have contained his body and they are trying to figure out how to shut him down entirely.

TARIQ ALI

They have moved heaven and earth to stop his voice being heard in the United States.

MIKE AFRICA

Anybody who has the ability to draw a crowd with their voice and then speak truth... oh my God.

TERRY BISSON

I know a lot of political prisoners and Mumia is locked down as hard as anyone I have ever met. But I’ve never met anybody that has such a warmth and such a sense of humor, and such a perspective on the world.

GREG RUGGIERO

Mumia Abu-Jamal is a revolutionary person. So he’s like a guerrilla in the jungle in a tent in the rain, writing to the community with next to nothing.

DICK GREGORY

He come through at a time that the technology was there, could go around the world... and one day we will find out that he was the voice of America – the voice of America is a fraud.

JAMES CONE

Powerful governments like to control, they love to control. And they love to silence people. They cannot silence Mumia.

LINN WASHINGTON

So, here we have somebody who defiantly says, “yes, I’m not only a journalist, but I’m a revolutionary journalist, and no, I don’t agree with anything that you’re doing. And yes, I have an international platform to talk about your ills – interestingly enough a platform that I never use to talk about my own case.” They want him ground up.

ALICE WALKER

I know about the midnight hour. I know about the darkness. And I know about the terror. And I know how hard it is to maintain ones humanity in the face of injustice. We don't see his midnight hour, except sometimes in his writing.

MUMIA ABU-JAMAL

We would not be who we are as African Americans of this date were it not for the Reverend, the Prophet, Nat Turner – who brilliantly merged the religious with the political. Who didn’t just talk about the world to come but fought to transform the world that is. You know, he is honored and revered today – not because he could quote that Bible well, he could do that, but because he worked in the fields of life to get the slave master off of his neck, off of all of our necks.

### **(About Philadelphia)**

DRAMATIZATION

“There is not perhaps anywhere to be found a city in which prejudice against color is more rampant than in Philadelphia.” — Frederick Douglass, 1862

CORNEL WEST

No doubt that Philadelphia has a long history of very very deep white supremacy. You remember the great WEB Dubois classic of 1899 the Philadelphia Negro. It’s the first sociology study of Black people in the history of the country. He reached the same conclusion that the great Frederick Douglass did.

LINN WASHINGTON

Philadelphia has a veneer of liberalism and this whole Quaker mystique. The reality is it has been this ruthlessly racist city - really from its inception.

### **(About his mother’s death)**

MUMIA ABU-JAMAL

I thought she would live forever – that this woman who carried me, my brothers, and my sister, would never know death. For thirty years she smoked Pall Malls and

Marlboros, yet still I thought she would live forever. When she died, of emphysema, while I was imprisoned, it was like a lightning bolt to the soul. Never during my entire existence had there been a time when she was not there. Suddenly, on a cold day in February, her breath had ended, and her sweet presence, her wise counsel, was gone forever.

**(About attending a campaign rally to protest George Wallace in 1968)**

MUMIA ABU-JAMAL

George Wallace was a candidate on the American Independent Party – very, very right-wing, although he probably wouldn't be considered very right-wing in terms of America's political context today, would he?

MUMIA ABU-JAMAL

I remember being pummeled and being beaten to the ground and I remember looking around and I saw a pant leg and it was blue and had a stripe on it, so, it told me this was a cop. So doing what I was taught to do all my life I said, "Yo, help, police!" and I remember the guy walking over very briskly and his foot going back and kicking me in the face and I've always said thank you to that cop because he kicked me straight into the Black Panther Party.

**(About writing for the Black Panther newspaper)**

MUMIA ABU-JAMAL

For me, political life began with the Black Panther Party. When an older sister named Audrea handed me a copy of "The Black Panther" newspaper around the spring of 1968 my mind was promptly blown. It was as if my dreams had awakened and strolled into my reality... I joined in my heart. I was all of fourteen years old."

TODD BURROUGHS

I was astounded at the fact that at 15-years-old, he was essentially the same writer. The style was a little more dogmatic as a Panther. You know, because he's using all this Panther rhetoric, "Do Something, Nigger, Even If You Only Spit!" But, at core, it is the same black leftist analysis that he does at 56. And I was shocked at that.

MUMIA ABU-JAMAL

A lot of people would tend to deprecate that kind of work – well, you weren't a professional journalist, or well you weren't a mainstream journalist. But consider this: the Black Panther newspaper at its height of publication, when I was working for it, sold over 250,000 newspapers every week all across the United States and we sold internationally. How can you write for or edit a newspaper that sells over 250,000 copies and not be considered utterly professional?

### **(About COINTELPRO)**

CORNEL WEST

The state is very clever in terms of keeping track, especially the courageous and visionary ones, the ones that are long distance runners. You can keep track of them, absorb 'em, dilute 'em, or outright kill 'em – you don't have to worry about opposition to 'em.

CORNEL WEST

Early on they zeroed in on Mumia Abu-Jamal. Now of course on one hand you have to say the state understood that they had a very very special freedom fighter, they had a very special revolutionary. They knew that he was for real so they really needed to keep track of him.

### **(About police brutality in Philadelphia and Frank Rizzo)**

PETER COYOTE

Police brutality in the City of Brotherly Love reached horrific levels under the reign of Frank Rizzo... levels so outrageous that the federal government – for the first time in American history – filed a lawsuit in 1979 charging Frank Rizzo and 3 top officials with aiding and abetting police brutality.

RAMSEY CLARK

Well I tangled with him a few times when he was Chief of Police. In my opinion he was an unprincipled person with compelling prejudices that caused abuse of police power and harmed good people.

JUAN GONZALEZ

From the time that Mumia was about 15 years old, Frank Rizzo knew who he was. So did George Fencel, who was the head of the intelligence squad that kept track of radicals. And Fencel knew Mumia from A to Z... so the top people in the police department always knew who Mumia was and saw him as an enemy.

### **(About Mumia's place in the pantheon of black writers)**

NARRATION

"The voice of black journalism in the struggle for the liberation of African American people has always proved to be decisive throughout black history. / When you listen to Mumia Abu-Jamal you hear the echoes of David Walker, Frederick Douglass, W.E.B. DuBois, Paul Robeson, and the sisters and brothers who kept the faith with struggle, who kept the faith with resistance." —Historian Manning Marable



### **(About the night Mumia was shot and arrested)**

#### **NARRATION**

After recovering from his gunshot wounds and surgery, Mumia Abu-Jamal wrote an essay entitled "A Christmas Cage." In it, he describes the beatings he suffered at the hands of the Philadelphia police on the night of his arrest.

#### **DRAMATIZATION**

Nowhere have I read how police found me, lying in a pool of my blood, unable to breathe, and then proceeded to punch, kick, and stomp me – not question me. I remember being rammed into a pole or a fireplug with police at both arms. I remember kicks to my head, my face, my chest... but I have read no press accounts, and have heard tell of no witnesses... Where are the witnesses to a police captain or inspector entering the wagon and beating me with a police radio, all the while addressing me as a "Black motherfucker?" Where are the witnesses...?  
(From "A Christmas Cage" – 1982)

### **(About life in prison)**

#### **AMY GOODMAN**

I can't remember the first time I heard one of his essays but I know the one that has always stuck with me: *"Imagine living, eating, sleeping, relieving oneself, daydreaming, weeping, but mostly waiting in a room about the size of your bathroom. Now, imagine doing all those things, but mostly waiting, for the rest of your life. Imagine waiting, waiting to die."*  
(From "A Bright, Shining Hell," All Things Censored (2000))

#### **MUMIA ABU-JAMAL**

It's almost impossible to communicate the reality of what life on death row is for someone who hasn't had that experience. In some ways, it defies description.

#### **RUBIN HURRICANE CARTER**

Prison is raw, naked violence... hatred and humiliation. Every day of my life in prison my life was threatened. Every day of Mumia's life in prison, his life is threatened.

#### **CORNEL WEST**

Most human beings would shrivel up... become very coarse in their conscious and very hard in their hearts and very chilly in their souls... it has had the opposite effect on Brother Mumia Abu-Jamal.

### **(About writing on Death Row)**

JERRY QUICKLEY

Charles Bukowski said “no one worth a damn ever wrote in peace.”

ALICE WALKER

My sense of Mumia is that he is working almost all the time. I mean he must work as much as I do and I work a lot.

JOHANNA FERNANDEZ

I think that writers above all need a room of their own and space and time to write. And Mumia has a room of his own and time and space to write.

TARIQ ALI

You know, the worst thing is that people get used to atrocities. I remember when I was in Vietnam during the war in the late 60s and I first saw the effects of American bombing and I couldn't function properly for a day or so, seeing dead children laying on the street and then the horrific thing is, I spent six weeks there and you get used to it. The first day you're shaken, the next day you're not so shaken, you're always angry and so in a strange sort of a way a political prisoner in prison knowing he's there indefinitely, comes to term with it, it's horrific!

### **(About the Prison Industrial Complex)**

MICHELLE ALEXANDER

There are more African American adults under correctional control today, in prison or jail, on probation or parole, than were enslaved in 1850 – a decade before the Civil War began.

JAMES CONE

See, you have to control a marginal population, a subservient, subhuman – as once thought – population, like black people, you have to control them. Slavery you could control them and define as property, but after the Civil War they're supposed to be free. Then you segregate them... and you lynch them. That's control.

MICHELLE ALEXANDER

Most criminologists and sociologists today will acknowledge crime rates and incarceration rates in the United States have moved independently of one another. You know incarceration rates – especially black incarceration rates – have soared regardless of whether crime is going up or down in any given community or the nation as a whole. So what does explain this? Well the answer is the war on drugs, a get-tough movement that was inspired not by drug crime or crime generally but instead by racial politics. The war on drugs was part of a grand Republican Party strategy known as the “Southern Strategy” of using racially coded get-tough appeals on issues of crime and welfare to appeal to poor and working class whites,

particularly in the south who were anxious about, resentful of, many of the gains of African Americans in the Civil Rights Movement.

MUMIA ABU-JAMAL

And also to provide a final solution to America's nagging problem of the black presence.

MICHELLE ALEXANDER

In the words of HR Haldeman, President Richard Nixon's former chief of staff, he quoted Nixon as describing the strategy this way, quote: "The whole problem is really the blacks, the key is to devise a system that recognizes this while not appearing to." End quote. Well they did.

### **(About the Nobel Peace Prize)**

TARIQ ALI

When Obama got the Peace Prize from the Nobel Peace Prize Committee, 10,000 people in Norway demonstrated against the decision because Obama had just announced that he was going to escalate the war in Afghanistan, which he then proceeded to do after receiving the prize... I could have given them two candidates who are very deserving of the Nobel Peace Prize this year. One is, of course, Noam Chomsky, who has fought for peace all his life. And the other is Mumia Abu-Jamal. Now, that would have given people something to think about. If there were any justice in the world, they would award him the Peace Prize next year but I'm prepared to bet you that they won't.

### **(About being a revolutionary)**

"The first lesson a revolutionary must learn is that he is a doomed man."

—Huey P. Newton, Minister of Defense, The Black Panther Party

CORNEL WEST

In both dialogues I had with him, he said over and over again: "I am a revolutionary because of the love." So when you love people you can't stand the fact that they are being treated unjustly.

GREG RUGGIERO

I think Mumia would agree with what Che said: "At the risk of sounding ridiculous, a revolutionary is guided by feelings of love and for love of the people."

CORNEL WEST

I think that's really what made him a revolutionary. That's why he is a long distance revolutionary. Most revolutionaries are not long distance.

ANGELA DAVIS

For all of these decades, he is a vibrant member of a community of resistance, a

community of struggle. As a matter of fact, he's one of the most important contributors to that community.

JUAN GONZALEZ

What makes Mumia so threatening to many people in the United States is that he is still a revolutionary. And because he has been in jail for so long, the system has not had the opportunity to calm him down.



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