The Black Panther Party 40 Years Later: a Block Report Radio interview wit" Mumia Abu Jamal by Minister of Information JR of the POCC

Last Sunday I did a POCC: Block Report Radio interview wit" political prisoner Mumia Abu Jamal, who on December 9th of 2006, will have been locked behind enemy lines, on deathrow, on a government orchestrated trumped up murder charge, that a man by the name of Arnold Beverly had already confessed to.

So while some of us will go to the 40th Anniversary Reunion of the Black Panther Party, in Oakland, Mumia, as well as a whole host of other Black prisoners will be reading about it, behind enemy lines. This Panther gathering is a sort of celebration of our resistance but it is also a rally point for us to learn and talk about the past, compare notes, and organize for future battles, including the freedom of our political prisoners and Black prisoners in general.

After reading this interview, think about what you could do to help Mumia, and the rest of the political prisoners who fought, and are fighting for us in this genocidal war against Black life, in this capitalist white supremacist world. As we say in the POCC, "Free"Em All!"

Check out political prisoner and journalist Mumia Abu Jamal, as he talks about his own plight, and his reflections on the Black Panther Party, 40 years later...

MOI JR: December 9th marks the 25th Anniversary of the killing of Daniel Faulkner, that Arnold Beverly confessed to, and you were brought up on trumped up charges and convicted of, do you have any comments on this violation of your human rights and this miscarriage of justice?

Mumia: It's been 25 years of hell; 25 years of injustice, 25 years of false confessions, 25 years of judicial hatred, 25 years of jurors being removed because they"re Black, 25 years of living in a cell the size of a bedroom, 25 years of hell. You know the struggle continues, but it ain"t no short change for hell.

MOI JR: This October also marks the 40th Anniversary of the Black Panther Party, many of the veteran of the BPP have continued to do work in the community, while other have "retired" from the movement, although we"re still fighting the same empire that the Panthers were against, what are your thoughts on this phenomenon?

Mumia: Well, I have nothing but praise for those people who have continued to struggle in various communities and various other organizations, and they bring pride to the Black Liberation struggle, to their communities, and to their people, and to their history, as well. I also don"t criticize those people that have retired, because people can do what they feel compelled to do based on what they can do. This is the longest war in Amerikkka, with the possible exceptions of the Indian Wars. You know Black people have been fighting for freedom as long as their has been an Amerikkka, before there was a United States of Amerikkka, and it continues in many cities, in many fronts, in all areas of life. When I think of those 40 years, its amazing that it has been 40 years, but now more than ever...I mean when I look about Black communities either east, west, south, or north where ever, I see the need for something like the Party, at least somebody with the spirit of the Party, to at least address the needs of the poorest and the least of these...I mean when you look at the Civil Rights Movement, that really addressed middle class people, in many ways; you know the jobs, the education, and what have you. But if you"re poor and Black in this country, in many ways, much has not changed. And in some sad ways, things have gotten progressively worst.

MOI JR: Observing this anniversary of the founding of the Black Panther Party from behind enemy lines, as a political prisoner, what kind of reflections do you have for the world?

Mumia: Just like I said, I"m reminded when I look back over the works of people like Angela Davis, who was writing in the early 70's, I think "72 or "71 perhaps, in her autobiography, she was a young woman but worthy certainly of an autobiography, "If They Come For Me in the Morning", she was profoundly critical of the prison industrial complex in the 70's. And if you look at the population of prisons in the 70's, then look at it now, we literally have millions of people, 45-52% African American, and an explosion in the imprisonment of Black women...I mean damn. This place is far more pervasive than it was in the 1970's, when we were talking about the imprisonment of a people. So things have gone from one level to a worst level.

MOI JR: In looking back over the 4 decades since the founding of the Black Panther Party, how do you feel about the media's portrayal of the organization, then and now? And I"m talking about mainstream, Black, and alternative media.

Mumia: Well we shouldn"t be surprised that the bourgeois media will for the most part tend to denigrate the work of the Party. That's their job. I mean the Party opposed this entire system in a way that few Black organizations did, at that time, at least with that kind of energy pervasive attack. So what do you expect the system to say, "oh yeah, we"re wrong. We"ve been wrong for 300-400 years, and we shouldn"t treat Black folks that way". Nah, its going to respond through its cultural artist, through its own form of bourgeois propaganda. There are many people, on the left who have also done extraordinary work, to teach people of a later generation about the Party, like "The Black Panther Party Reconsidered", the book that was edited by Charles Jones, is an extraordinary volume of work on women in the Party, on the Black Panther newspaper, on its educational and survival programs, you name it and it is a storehouse of information. At the risk of sounding modest, my book, I think also helps open up perspectives. So people have done work, the question is, is it being exposed to the people who need to read it, which are young people, young Black people, young Puerto Rican people, especially young people so they could know what was possible. We forget Huey P. Newton, 40 years ago was 24 years old.

MOI JR: That brings me to my next question. Minister of Defense Huey P. Newton didn"t live to see the 40th Anniversary of the Black Panther Party, which he cofounded, what would you want people to remember about him?

Mumia: When I think about him, I think about his extraordinary brilliance, his revolutionary audacity, his courage, his love for Black people. I think, again, for a 24 year old man to found that Party, was a remarkable, remarkable thing, but I think that when you look at the wide swath of Black life of that period, there were people all across the country in small communities that we don"t hear about, doing essentially the same thing. They didn"t, say, find the Black Panther Party, but they did found other organizations, you see, because it was felt in the hearts of the people and it was necessary to build organizations to address their needs, because the socalled mainstream middle class bourgeois organizations, were not addressing their needs.

MOI JR: The 10 Point Platform of the Black Panther Party was the foundation of what the organization believed, is it still relevant?

Mumia: Boy, every time I read them, it's almost as if it was written yesterday; 40 years goes quickly. Because look at the problems that they talk about; the prison problem, whoa...It was bad then, but look at now. Look at the unemployment problem you know, look at the problem of Black people going into the service to fight for the empire, then look now. You see, everything

that they addressed is still relevant now, in my opinion, and they still speak to very real problems, not just in the African-American community, but in the poor communities of color, and among poor people generally. But certainly, yes, in the Black community, yeah, oh yeah, very, very, very relevant, in my opinion.

MOI JR: It is reported that one of the reasons that the Pennsylvania state government had it in for you was because of your history as well as your news coverage of the MOVE organization, how important is it for journalists to cover stories that ain"t being covered in the news, as well as offering a progressive opinion to the stories that are being covered?

Mumia: Its literally as important as life or death. Think about this... in 2002 almost all of the corporate media in Amerikkka knew, this was before the so called war on terror, the war in Iraq. They knew that the world was a crock, yet they sold the war. They muted all dissent, with very few exceptions. And they sold the war for the White House, they wore flags on their lapels, they play marshall music. And now in 2006-2007, people could look back and say that was b.s.. But it is not important after the war, but its not important after the war to say it was wrong, it was the job of real journalists, real media, alternative, radical, or even bourgeois straight corporate media to say that this was a false war, that the premise upon which it rested is not true. And you probably still, because of media, have millions of people who think that Sadam Hussein was working wit" Osama Bin Laden, on 9-11. People who study this thing know that Osama Bin Laden hated few men more than he hated Saddam Hussein, because Iraq was run by the Baath Party, which was a secular, non-religious party, and it was nominally socialist, it wasn"t really socialist, but you know, it was a state party. Osama Bin Laden hated that more than anything, and they hated each other. So they were not working together...(The prison cut off the phone call) The point that I wanted to make is simply that the media generally did not educate and inform Amerikkkan people or people around the world about the real nature of this war. And so it didn"t just allow, it pushed people by lying and not telling the truth, they pushed people into supporting a war that they knew was bogus.

In looking at the cases of political prisoners like yourself, the New York 3, the Angola 3, Veronza Bowers, Seth Hayes, Aaron Patterson, the Move 9, Sekou Odinga Sundiata Acoli, and political exiles like Assata Shakur and the O"Neals, what should be the role of somebody who calls themselves a supporter?

Mumia: I hesistate to say one thing because people can do different things. What we always say is "to do what you can do", and I think that that is more honest because people feel intimidated if you ask them to do a lot of things, but everybody can do something. Some people can do more than others, and people know in their hearts what they can do and what they feel

compelled to do, and that should be fair, you know? Everybody can do something.

You will be able to hear the live audio from this interview and more on Saturday, October 14 during KPFA's live coverage of the Black Panther Party's 40th Anniversary Reunion on 94.1FM or on www.kpfa.org from 2-6pm.

Minister of Information JR of the POCC