

# Abu Jamal supporters up voltage on protests

By Farhan Hag

Special to Sentinel-Voice

NEW YORK (IPS) — Defenders of African-American journalist and convicted murderer Mumia Abu Jamal used an array of tactics last month, from rock concerts to marches, to prevent his impending execution.

As Abu Jamal's lawyers prepare a habeas corpus appeal against his conviction for the 1981 murder of Philadelphia police officer Daniel Faulkner, activists have stepped up their efforts to draw attention to the death row inmate's case.

Late last month, Abu Jamal's supporters held a week of protests with a march in New York City, a demonstration outside the U.S. Embassy in Paris and dozens of other marches across the United States.

Earlier in September, several musicians, including Gil Scott-Heron and the group Rage Against the Machine,

also participated in efforts to raise awareness about flaws in Abu Jamal's 1982 trial.

The activists are asking for the same thing that Abu Jamal's legal team, led by Leonard Weinglass, are pressing for in the courts: a new trial for someone who they believe did not receive a fair trial 17 years ago.

"We want to have a situation where you can't turn around without having to deal with Mumia in one way or another," said Robert Meeropol, an Abu Jamal supporter and the son of Julius and Ethel Rosenberg, who were executed on treason charges in 1953 in an equally controversial case.

Abu Jamal's accusers, including the Fraternal Order of Police, a 283,000-member police union, contend the Black journalist shot and killed Faulkner on Dec. 9, 1981, when the two men were both found in a Philadelphia alley with gunshot wounds.

Abu Jamal had been shot



MUMIA ABU JAMAL

and injured, with his gun having been fired and Faulkner was dead.

Abu Jamal's defenders, however, blame the killing on another person, noting some eyewitness accounts that claim another man fled the alley after the shooting. Abu Jamal has maintained his innocence and argued he was unfairly accused because of his leftist and Black nationalist political views.

His defenders have drawn attention to contradictory testimony from witnesses and

the heavy-handed efforts of the trial judge, Richard Sabo — a longtime FOP member — to discourage evidence helpful to Abu Jamal.

"The pattern that Mumia's case fits is a pattern that includes conflicts in identification, falsely reported or uncorroborated confessions, prosecutorial misconduct, official mishandling of evidence, perjured police testimony, (and) a so-called prison snitch," said Sam Jordan, director of Amnesty International's U.S. Program to Abolish the Death Penalty.

"These are the six elements that are present in almost every case of the 82 men and women who have been released from death row due to wrongful convictions. Mumia is most likely a wrongfully convicted person."

That is an argument the FOP has rejected, and the police union has repeatedly urged boycotts of concerts

and events staged to support the attempt to win a new trial for Abu Jamal.

In one of their more controversial tactics, the FOP printed the names of people who have signed petitions for Abu Jamal under the heading "Supporters of Daniel Faulkner's Killer."

In a recent statement, the FOP called Abu Jamal's supporters "blind and uninformed" and said the inmate was "a stone cold killer."

Last week, the union declared that securing Abu Jamal's execution was a top priority. Yet, Abu Jamal remains the center of attention for many human rights activists worldwide.

With supporters ranging from Amnesty International to noted authors E.L. Doctorow and Alice Walker, Abu Jamal has increasingly become the focus of national attention.

His book, "Live from Death Row" which focuses

on the problems of capital punishment and the U.S. justice system, has also gained the inmate notoriety. But Abu Jamal has faced a considerable backlash from prison officials for his popularity, with Pennsylvania officials pushing for new laws designed to discourage access to death row inmates, regulations which some activists contend target Abu Jamal's outspoken attitude.

This year's campaign could be the final push to spare Abu Jamal from execution.

The Pennsylvania Supreme Court last year denied his request for a new trial, and he now has one final appeal to make before execution procedures begin.

If the appeal to be filed by his lawyers within the next month is rejected, Abu Jamal may soon face a new phase of his existence on death row — the countdown to an actual execution date.

## Study: Race has extremely powerful role in America

BOSTON (AP) — Blacks still end up at the bottom of the pack when it comes to opportunities ranging from jobs to housing, according to a new study that indicates race continues to play an enormous role in the success of Americans.

Fifty researchers studied the cities of Atlanta, Boston, Detroit and Los Angeles and found race is deeply entrenched in the country's cultural landscape — perhaps even more than many Americans realize or are willing to admit.

"I think this study tells you not only that some of these perceptions are true, but it tells us in more detail where inequality is being generated," said Alice O'Connor, a historian at the University of California-Berkeley, who wrote the introduction to the report.

The recently released Multi-City Study of Urban Inequality found that racial stereotypes and hierarchies heavily influence the labor market, with blacks landing at the very bottom.

The seven-volume study looked at job market participation, racial inequality and political attitudes among 9,000 households and 3,500 employers in the four cities.

It was sponsored by the Russell Sage Foundation — a private research center on social policy — and the Harvard University Multidisciplinary Program in Inequality and Social Policy.

The Harvard program includes researchers from several Harvard graduate schools and disciplines.

Initiated in the early 1990s, the project attempted to understand the patterns of racial inequality in modern, metropolitan areas and how race has been affected by economic changes.

According to the study, race is pervasive at many levels, manifesting itself in everything from highly segregated housing to labor markets that prefer hiring some racial groups over others.

Stereotyping is often at play, particularly when it

*Initiated in the early 1990s, the project attempted to understand the patterns of racial inequality in modern, metropolitan areas and how race has been affected by economic changes.*

comes to where people want to live and whom they will hire, O'Connor said.

Blacks "continually end up at the bottom in terms of preferences for neighbors as well as when employers talk about hiring preferences," she said.

While the study found that minorities are doing better in the strong economy of the 1990s, it found they are making less money and working fewer hours than their white counterparts. It also found they had a

significantly harder time landing a job.

In Detroit, for example, it took unskilled, unemployed whites an average of 91 hours to generate a job offer. It took blacks 167 hours.

"Clearly there is a heavy burden that minorities face in the job market," said Katherine Newman, an urban studies professor at Harvard's Kennedy School of Government. "Minorities are working, but they're diverging in their good fortune from whites."

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Both the household surveys, conducted by telephone between 1992 and 1994, and the employer interviews identified pervasive stereotypes, particularly targeting blacks.

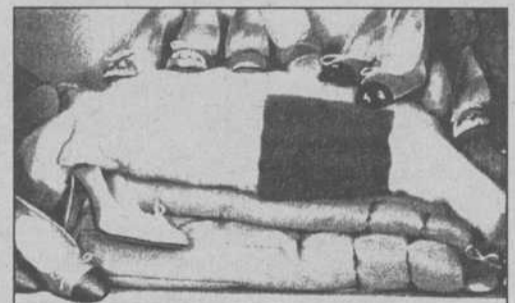
Blacks, many of the respondents said, are more likely to be on welfare, more likely to commit crimes and harder to get along with than other groups.

In the work force, where native-born blacks are losing

jobs to recent immigrants, employers indicated blacks rank low on their hiring preference charts.

"We didn't get a whole lot of employers coming out and saying 'Blacks are worthless,'" O'Connor said.

Employers instead talked in code and subtext when referring to minorities, she said. Employers also were fearful of relocating to areas that were perceived as heavily minority.



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### AP corrects racial profiling story

SACRAMENTO, Calif. (AP) — In a Sept. 30 story about California's governor vetoing a bill that would have forced law enforcement agencies to track the ethnic background of all motorists stopped by police, The Associated Press erroneously reported that North Carolina was the only state with such a law. A similar law, designed to end the practice of racial profiling, was passed in Connecticut this year and took effect Oct. 1.