



Each educational institution has its own challenges and opportunities for organizing. However, the following tips are applicable to many different situations. These tips can be useful for bringing speakers other than Mumia as well. In order to gather student support (beyond your core group) and prepare for administrative resistance (and eventually, some public resistance), you need to think ahead. Many of the steps should be worked on concurrently, so it may be best to separate your group into specific divisions.

(Originally written by Chris Dixon from Evergreen State College, which presented Mumia as a commencement speaker in 1999. Final editing by PARC.)

Develop a timeline for organizing.

Create a timeline which incorporates each of the tips listed here.

- Don't wait until the last minute for anything—or else it will blow up in your face.
- Factor in countless dreary meetings with campus administrative bureaucrats as you pressure them to accept the nomination of Mumia as commencement speaker.

Research the case.

If you're going to gain support, you'll have to know your facts about Mumia's case. You don't have to be an "expert."

- Develop an understanding of the injustices and inaccuracies in his case (it's not difficult to find them).
- Check out the International Concerned Friends and Family of Mumia Abu-Jamal's website (www.mumia.org) to start.
- Look at the website of the (anti-Mumia) Justice for Daniel Faulkner (www.justice4danielfaulkner.com) folks, too.
- A good movie to watch is "Mumia Abu-Jamal: A Case for a Reasonable Doubt?" produced by HBO. Many school libraries or video stores have this available.
- Once you begin understanding some of the facts, try explaining them to friends and family members. The practice can't hurt.

Get the Word Out.

The key word here is "outreach." You want to make "Mumia" a household word in your community. Getting Mumia as a commencement speaker means mobilizing major student, faculty, and staff support (beyond campus "activists").

- Make Mumia's case and what he represents common campus knowledge. This requires creativity, commitment, energy, and openness.
- Try fliers, public speakouts, panel discussions, film showings, chalk graffiti, announcements in class, going door-to-door in the dorms, articles and letters in the campus newspaper, and/or anything you can think of.
- Don't be afraid to be bold, but don't unnecessarily alienate others, either.

Research your school's speaker selection process.

Learn exactly how your school makes decisions about selecting graduation speakers. Some points to consider:

- Where do nominations come from?
- Is there a ballot? Is the ballot really just "advisory"?
- Is there a graduation committee? Who is the chairperson of that committee? How can you make sure that committee is really representative?
- Who is ultimately in charge of the final decision?

Consider your student graduation speaker.

A student speaker who is supportive of Mumia is an incredible asset. With Mumia as speaker, your student speaker can help organize and lend support in his/her speech during graduation. And in the unfortunate case that your administration bars Mumia from speaking, your student speaker can deliver a sympathetic speech or read one from Mumia—an incredible embarrassment to your administration. In order to make sure that a student is selected as graduation speaker who is supportive of Mumia, use the same tips noted here previously.

Be in contact with Mumia and/or his representatives.

- Ask Mr. Abu-Jamal if he wants to record a graduation speech for your campus.
- Be in regular contact with the International Concerned Family and Friends of Mumia Abu-Jamal.
- Inform them of your efforts, and work with them to spread the word of your campus' work.

Contact Information

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Plan for the media.

The controversy of Mumia's case is a ripe media playground.

- You're going to need press advisories (advising that you'll be sending a release or doing a press conference), press releases, press statements, spokespeople, press packets, and press conferences—***all prepared well ahead of time.***
- Cultivate any press contacts that you already have and assemble a national list in addition.
- Most importantly, don't be afraid to ask for help from other activists (students and non-students) who have experience with the media.
- Remember: you are setting the stage for how you and your graduation are being portrayed. Maintain control.

Be prepared for resistance from your school and the anti-Mumia community.

If you begin to succeed in your campaign for Mumia as a commencement speaker, you will meet resistance.

- Plan for resistance from the Justice for Daniel Faulkner organization—one well-funded outgrowth of the National Fraternal Order of Police. They truly believe that Mumia killed Officer

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Faulkner, and they won't stop until they see their version of "justice." They will try to shut you down, embarrass your administration, and make you look like stupid kids. Moreover, they have access to resources and police officers (and family members), and they will travel far to make their point.

- For one, your school administration will do its best to avoid controversy and blemish its public image. And even if it appears that students have the final say, you'll need to prepare for your administration to take the power out of your hands when its public image is at stake in the face of controversy. Know their procedures better than they do, and always expect that they'll backtrack on or "forget" what they promise.
- Use whatever leverage and pressure you can to move beyond that point. Your success will hinge on your ability to negotiate with and (when necessary) pressure your administration (see following points).
- If you have followed the other tips to organizing, you should have enough public support to make your pressure real.
- Start with phone calls or letters from angry seniors who don't want their choice of Mumia violated.
- Faculty support at this point can help as well.
- Contact as many national (and international) Mumia supporters as you can. Ask them to support you by e-mailing, faxing, or phoning the key administrators who should be pressured. Provide the names, positions, and contact info for these administrators.
- A different kind of resistance may come from graduating seniors who don't want their graduation marred by "politics" (as if politics aren't part of every graduation ceremony). Keep an open dialogue with them and be respectful.

Plan for the graduation crowd.

While you will be reaching out to an inter/national audience through your interactions with mass media, you will be mainly reaching out to the audience that is present through your actions at graduation itself.

- Bear both audiences in mind at all times. The family watching you on television and the grandmother attending her granddaughter's graduation ceremony are basing their understanding of Mumia and what he represents on what you do. Put yourself in the shoes of a bewildered friend or relative of a graduate coming from far away to your graduation. Make your words relevant to them.
- Prepare a flier or pamphlet of some sort for the graduation audience.
- Consider using visual images and themes that can unite all Mumia supporters in the audience. They can usually translate and impact better than screaming, slogans, or signs.
- Remember: the point is to invite, not alienate, potential allies.
- Make sure that you frame the message your way.

Tips from those with experience...

- Remember that justice for Daniel Faulkner requires a fair trial for Mumia.
- Simply put, Mumia's guilt is "in dispute"—an especially important phrase when they attempt to argue details of the case with you in front of the media at your graduation.
- It's your graduation with the graduation speaker that you selected. You are the establishment.
- Don't let hostility and resistance take the day.

The Commencement Speeches of Mumia Abu-Jamal

Antioch College Commencement Speech by Mumia Abu-Jamal April 29, 2000

My congratulations to you all here today.

To the students graduating, to teachers exalting in their graduates, to administrators rejoicing in their professor's successes, to parents who secretly hope this is the beginning of their children's financial independence and an end to their bills, to you all at an extraordinary college, Antioch.

I thank you for your gracious invitation and I hope these words have worth and meaning to you all. I've thought long and hard about your proposed query about an individual's impact on the world. Against what passes or matters, I'll answer a question with a question. Who do you admire?

Of course, in any huge student body, as I hope this graduating class is, there is a wealth of perspectives, or should be. However, on any given list, if logical, the following figures will be found: Nelson Mandela, Malcolm X, Ella Baker, and W.E.B. DuBois.

Just a few folks, right? What are the common features of these people. Of course, they were all radicals or revolutionaries but that's not it. Add Paul Robeson to that list. Does that help? How about Angela Y. Davis. Some quick wits out there in the audience might well conclude, well, they're all communists. Close, but that's not quite it either. For neither Malcolm X nor Ella Baker, to my knowledge, ever joined the party. And, though that I'm not certain, I don't think Paul Robeson was a member of the CPUSA.

When you look at these people, you find folks who committed class suicide, who turned their backs on their acquired class advantages and potential opportunities, to give voice and supportive presence to the most oppressed sectors of their society.

Dr. Nelson Mandela, trained as a lawyer, then joined the armed wing of the ANC or African National Congress to further the African Liberation Movement in South Africa. Malcolm X, with a stellar intellect, could surely have joined any profession that he set his mind to — he chose to work for the dispossessed of the Black nation. Ella Baker, writer and organizer, worked in the Civil Rights Movement and in exposing the sexual exploitation of poor women who worked as domestics. Dr. DuBois, despite his patrician-like bearing, was a genuine radical and iconoclast who was constantly betrayed by his class brethren for his radical opinions. He was purged from the NAACP. Similarly, lawyer, athlete and actor Paul Robeson was vilified for his support of socialism and had his flourishing career broken like DuBois before him. Robeson had his passport illegally and unconstitutionally seized by the U.S. government for his anti-imperialist beliefs. Angela Davis, as many of you no-doubt know, was chased across the nation, captured, chained, jailed and almost imprisoned for life for her support of the Black Liberation Movement.

We admire these people because, at critical junctures of their lives, they cast their lot with the oppressed, the poor, the worker, or those in the third world. Now they didn't do this because it was popular, quite the contrary, it was quite dangerous for many of these people. All lived under constant government surveillance. Some lost their livelihoods. Others lost their lives. They joined, aided and/or formed the movements that they did because it was the right thing to do. Look at them. For there your answer lies. Can one individual impact the world?

Dr. Mandela lead a chained nation from apartheid to multiracial political democracy. Malcolm X inspired the Black Nationalist Movement of the 1960s. Ella Baker was a key organizer who helped the Student Non-violent Coordinating Committee, called SNCC, survive. W.E.B. Dubois was a founder of the NAACP and a leader of the Pan-Africanist Movement. Paul Robeson's cultural and political contributions to people the

world over were, and remain, immense. And Dr. Angela Y. Davis' work furthered Black Liberation and Prisoner's Rights Movements of the 1970s.

Have those lives had impact?

Their lives have expanded the very notion of what freedom means in the minds of millions. Although they are and were extraordinary individuals, they worked with movements that truly transformed consciousness and how we look at the world. Their lives teach us all what it means to betray one's class, to contribute to the movements that have meaning, and to work on behalf of the oppressed.

You, at this commencement at Antioch, have the somewhat unique opportunity to prove that old axiom, that man is made for more than meat and life is more than bread. In an age where everything, even the human gene, is commodified, it can't be denied that we are all material beings. Yet, aren't we also social beings? If we say we are, then we must ask, what is owed to one's class? What is owed to humanity? What is owed to life, itself? Think of the lives of those people you admire. Show your admiration for them by becoming them. For by so doing, you give birth to movements.

Thank you.

On the move. Long live John Africa.

From death row, this is Mumia Abu-Jamal

**Brooklyn Friends School Commencement Speech by Mumia Abu-Jamal
June 16, 2000**

First, please let me congratulate all of the new graduates of Brooklyn Friends. I congratulate you young folks for your hard work, and your perseverance which led to this day. Your parents and your teachers are justly proud of you, and I join them in saluting you.

Secondly, I thank you for your brave invitation for me to address your graduation; I am really delighted to speak to you, because I really enjoy young people; young folks are the human detergent that washes society clean! So, I thank you!

Now what can an old geek like me tell young folks like you; kids sitting with robes on, dying to get outta here?

I can only think of the words of the late Black revolutionary, Malcolm X, who said, "History best rewards our research" Uh-oh! I think I hear some kids groaning, and saying, "Oh no! Not another history class! We're graduating! And we're tired of that stuff!" To which I can only reply, I can dig it! This won't be history class - but none of us can ignore history, for we are all, yourselves included, part of the vast river called history. Who we define ourselves as, how we speak, how we see the world, how we dress even, is a function of our history. None of us can escape history. For example, all of us know that the early Quakers were leading Abolitionist, who worked against slavery, right?

Well, that's true, but it wasn't always so; George Fox, the founder of the Quakers, owned slaves; so did his famous disciple, William Penn, founder of the Pennsylvania colony. Over a century later, as late as the 1730's, one of the leading slave dealers in Pennsylvania (called "The Quaker State") was a Quaker named Isaac Morris.*

Did you guys and gals know this? If you didn't, or if you did, I hope it gives you some inkling of the value of history.

History isn't just a boring excursion into cry, hoary piles of books, filled with a mind-numbing explosion of dates, names and facts. History, true history, teaches us more about today than yesterday. History can tell us why things are the way they are, and how they came to be.

History, done well, can be utterly fascinating!

Brooklyn Friends is a good school, according to some friends I know, who have kids there. Therefore, names of historians like John Hope Franklin, Howard Zinn, Herbert Aptheker, Ella Forbes, Eric Foner, James Mc Pherson, and the like, should be familiar to you. If they aren't, don't panic. For let me tell you a secret; graduating from high school isn't the end, it's the beginning of learning. You'll find, if you go to college, or study independently, that much of what you've learned will have to be unlearned. Welcome to the maddening world of adults! The world adults have fashioned is one of sheer complexity, and stark conflict.

No one could blame you if you looked at it with serious concern, or even fear, and trepidation. Don't worry: that's normal. Your youthfulness is the one thing that will carry you through, for to be young, is to have hope, and nothing is ever possible without hope.

Don't let the adult world beat that out of you, for that is one of your more glorious features.

We live in a world where social movements have shaped consciousness. How could this have been possible without hope?

You all, in your hearts, in your souls, have something truly precious in your midst: hope.

With this alone, you can begin to transform history.

*Source: Thomas, Hugh, *The Slave Trade* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1997) pp.259, 451.

With all my best wishes, Thanx, Ona Move! Long Live John Africa! >From Death Row, This is Mumia Abu-Jamal

From: Suzanne Ross <suross@ibm.net>

(On Friday June 16th, Mumia Abu-Jamal addressed the Class of 2000 of the Brooklyn Friends School, a Quaker School, at its commencement exercises held at the Marriott Hotel in Downtown Brooklyn. At the same time as the graduation was taking place, a discussion with three of the senior class students who had been interviewed in the WBAI studios earlier in the week, was aired over the Pacifica news. The students discussed why they had invited Mumia to speak at their graduation.

Mumia seemed pleased to address a still younger audience than the college audiences he has now spoken to on several occasions. To the best of our knowledge, Brooklyn Friends is the first high school Mumia has addressed from prison.

When the Brooklyn Friends School administration heard of the students' plan to have Mumia speak at the graduation, they tried to derail the plan. They were upset both about the potentially "bad" publicity this would bring to the school, and about Mumia's reference in his speech to the fact that several of the early Quaker leaders had been slave owners. (He also noted that Quakers had played a leading role in the Abolitionist movement.) As a result, the head of the school called a meeting with the senior class and tried to pressure the students to vote again, this time with greater secrecy than had initially been in place. The students were quite angry at this maneuver, strongly and loudly objected, and refused to hold a second vote. Ultimately, permission was granted to play the speech.

Two seniors, CeCe Ross and Javier Gaston-Greenberg, introduced Mumia to the audience, and the tape was played. At the end of the speech, a transcript of which follows below, there was a loud, prolonged, and enthusiastic ovation from the entire audience. No one walked out. No one booed. Many students, parents, and guests noted that Mumia's address had lent the graduation a very special quality, had made it that much more meaningful to everyone. Indeed, Mumia had reached yet another audience - without compromise, omission, or false praise.

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Let the word spread. Let Mumia speak to two, three, many schools. Let's reach out to every possible corner of support.

Ona Move! Free Mumia! Free all Political Prisoners!)

***Evergreen State College Commencement Speech by Mumia Abu-Jamal
June 11, 1999***

A Life Lived, Deliberately

Welcome, students of Evergreen, and thank you for this invitation.

On the MOVE. Long live John Africa.

I feel privileged to address your chosen theme, not because I'm some kind of avatar, but because a life lived deliberately has been the example of people I admire and respect, such as Malcolm X; Dr. Huey P. Newton, founder of the Black Panther Party; like Ramona Africa, who survived the hellish bombing by police of May 13, 1985; or the MOVE Nine, committed rebels now engaged for up to 100 years in Pennsylvania hellholes despite their innocence, solely for their adherence to the teachings of John Africa. These people, although of quite diverse beliefs, ideologies, and lifestyles, shared something in common: a commitment to revolution and a determination to live that commitment deliberately in the face of staggering state repression.

No doubt some of you are disconcerted by my use of the term "revolution." It's telling that people who claim with pride to be proud Americans would disclaim the very process that made such a nationality possible, even if it was a bourgeois revolution. Why was it right for people to revolt against the British because of "taxation without representation," and somehow wrong for truly unrepresented Africans in America to revolt against America? For any oppressed people, revolution, according to the Declaration of Independence, is a right.

Malcolm X, although now widely acclaimed as a Black nationalist martyr, was vilified at the time of his assassination by Time magazine as "an unashamed demagogue" who "was a disaster to the civil rights movement." The New York Times would describe him as a "twisted man" who used his brains and oratorical skills for "an evil purpose." Today, there are schools named for him, and recently a postage stamp was even issued in his honor.

Dr. Huey P. Newton, PhD, founded the Black Panther Party in October of 1966 and created one of the most militant, principled organizations American Blacks had ever seen. J. Edgar Hoover of the FBI targeted the party, using every foul and underhanded method they could conceive of to neutralize the group, which they described as the "number one threat to national security."

Sister Ramona Africa of the MOVE organization survived one of the most remarkable bombings in American history, one where Philadelphia police massacred eleven men, women, and children living in the MOVE house and destroyed some 61 homes in the vicinity. She did seven years in the state prison on riot charges, came out, and began doing all she could to spread the teachings of John Africa, the teachings of revolution, and to free her imprisoned brothers and sisters of MOVE from their repressive century in hellish prison cells.

These people dared to dissent, dared to speak out, dared to reject the status quo by becoming rebels against it. They lived—and some of them continue to live—lives of deliberate will, of willed resistance to a system that is killing us. Remember them. Honor their highest moments. Learn from them. Are these not lives lived deliberately? This system's greatest fear has been that folks like you, young people, people who have begun to critically examine the world around them, some perhaps for the first time, people who have yet to have

the spark of life snuffed out, will do just that: learn from those lives, be inspired, and then live lives of opposition to the deadening status quo.

Let me give you an example. A young woman walks into a courtroom, one situated in the cradle of American democracy—that's Philadelphia—to do some research for a law class. This woman, who dreams of becoming a lawyer, sits down and watches the court proceedings and is stunned by what she sees. She sees defendants prevented from defending themselves, manhandled in court, and cops lying on the stand with abandon. She saw the judge as nothing more than an administrator of injustice and saw U.S. law as an illusion. Her mind reeled, as she said to herself, "They can't do that," as her eyes saw them doing whatever they wanted to. Well, that young woman is now known as Ramona Africa, who lived her life deliberately after attending several sessions of the MOVE trial in Philadelphia. After that farce she knew she could never be a part of the legal system that allowed it, and she found more truth in the teachings of John Africa than she ever could in the law books which promised a kind of justice that was foreign to the courtrooms she had seen. The contrast between America's lofty promises and the truth of its legal repression inspired her to be a revolutionary, one that America has tried to bomb into oblivion. What is the difference between Ramona Africa and you? Absolutely nothing, except she made that choice.

Similarly, Huey Newton studied U.S. law with close attention when he was a student at Merritt Junior College in west Oakland, California. His studies convinced him that the laws must be changed, and the famous Black Panther Party ten-point program and platform proves, then and now, that serious problems still face the nation's Black communities, such as all the predominantly white juries still sending Blacks to prison, and cops still treating Black life as a cheap commodity. Witness the recent Bronx execution of Ghanaian immigrant Amadou Diallo, where cops fired 41 shots at an unarmed man in the doorway of his own apartment building. Huey, at least in his earlier years, lived his life deliberately and set the mark as a revolutionary. What was the difference between Huey Newton and you? Absolutely nothing, except he made the choice.

Each of the MOVE Nine—including the late Merle Africa, who died under somewhat questionable circumstances after nineteen years into an unjust prison sentence—members of the MOVE organization whose trial initially attracted the attention of a young law student named Ramona decades ago, was a person who came to question their lives as lived in the system. Some were U.S. Marines, some were petty criminals, some were carpenters, but all came to the point of questioning the status quo, deeply, honestly, and completely—irrevocably. One by one, they turned their back on a system that they knew couldn't care less if they lived or died and joined a revolution after being exposed to the stirring teachings of John Africa. They individually chose to live life deliberately and joined MOVE. And although they are individuals—Delbert Africa, Janet Africa, Phil Africa, Janine Africa, Chuckie Africa, Mike Africa, Debbie Africa, and Eddie Africa—they are also united as MOVE members, united in heart and soul. What's the difference between the MOVE Nine and you? Absolutely nothing, except they made the choice.

Now, unless I miss my guess, Evergreen is not a predominantly Black institution, and my choices heretofore given may seem somewhat strange to too many of you, for far too many of you may identify yourselves by the fictional label of "white." In truth, as I'm sure many of you know, race is a social construct. That said, it is still a social reality formed by our histories and our cultures. For those of you still bound by such realities however, I have some names for you like John Brown, like Dr. Alan Berkman, Susan Rosenberg, Sue Africa, Marilyn Buck, for examples. Each of these people are or were known in America as white. They are all people I know of, who I admire, love, and respect. They all are or were revolutionaries.

John Brown's courageous band's attack on Harper's Ferry was one deeply religious man's strike against the hated slavery system and was indeed considered one of the opening salvos of the U.S. Civil War. Dr. Alan Berkman, Susan Rosenberg, and Marilyn Buck were all anti-imperialists who fought to free Black revolutionary Assata Shakur from an unjust and cruel bondage. They are the spiritual grandsons and granddaughters of John Brown. Dr. Alan Berkman, Marilyn Buck, and Susan Rosenberg were treated like

virtual traitors to white supremacy and thrown into American dungeons. Buck and Rosenberg remain so imprisoned today. They lived lives deliberately and chose liberation as their goals, understanding that our freedom is interconnected. They chose the hard road of revolution, yet they chose. And but for that choice they are just like each of you seated here tonight, people who saw the evils of the system and resolved to fight it. Period.

Now, the name Sue Africa may not be known to you. She's what you may call white. Yet when she joined the MOVE organization, the system attacked her bitterly for what was seen as a betrayal of her white-skinned privilege. On May 13, 1985 she lost her only son because the Philadelphia police bombed the house she was living in. She served over a decade in prison where the guards vilely taunted her in the hours and days after the bombing. When she came out, she went right to work to rebuild the MOVE organization in Philadelphia. She lives her life deliberately by promoting John Africa's revolution each and every day. Except for that choice, she's just like you.

Now, some of you are sure to be wondering, "Well, if this guy's gig is with revolutionaries, why is he saying this to us?" The answer of course is "Why not?" OK, I know you ain't supposed to answer a question with a question, but do I expect you guys and gals who've just received your degrees to chuck it all for so nebulous a concept as revolution? Nope. I ain't that dumb. The great historians Will and Ariel Durant teach us that history in the large is the conflict of minorities. The majority applauds the victor and supplies the human material of social experiment. Now, I take that to mean that social movements are begun by relatively small numbers of people who, as catalysts, inspire, provoke, and move larger numbers to see and share their vision. Social movements can then become social forces that expand our perspectives, open up new social possibilities, and create the consciousness for change.

To begin this process, we must first sense that (1) the status quo is wrong, and (2) the existing order is not amenable to real, meaningful, and substantive transformation. Out of the many here assembled, it is the heart of he or she that I seek who looks at a life of vapid materialism, of capitalist excess, and finds it simply intolerable. It may be 100 of you, or 50, or even ten, or even one of you who makes that choice. I'm here to honor and applaud that choice and to warn you that, though the suffering may indeed be great, it is nothing to the joy of doing the right thing. Malcolm, Dr. Huey P. Newton, Ramona Africa, the MOVE Nine, Dr. Alan Berkman, Susan Rosenberg, John Brown, Susan Africa, Marilyn Buck, Geronimo ji Jaga, Leonard Peltier, Angela Davis, and others, all of them people just like you, felt compelled to change the conditions they found intolerable. I urge you to join that noble tradition.

I thank you all, and wish you well. On the MOVE. Long live John Africa.
From Death Row, this is Mumia Abu-Jamal.

[posted Fri, Jun 11, 1999]

***Merrill College, UC Santa Cruz Commencement Speech by Mumia Abu-Jamal
June 10, 2000***

An Ending; A Beginning

Dear Students, Professors, Parents, and Administrators at Merrill College of the University of California at Santa Cruz, Distinguished Guests, Friends,

I thank you for your gracious invitation to speak to you, at a time of dual significance: This is the fourth graduating class that I've addressed this year, and it's also the year I've formally graduated from my Master's program at the California State University at Dominguez Hills; So, I have some insight into how it feels to be a graduate, the work, the hassles, and the relief of completion. I can almost sense your pervasive aura of relief, right?

For many of you, no doubt, the last thing that you want to hear is a lecture, right? Well, more relief: 'cuz I won't give you a lecture Think of this as a kind of discussion; one-way, to be sure, but a discussion still; A discussion that emerges from another America; one that most of you have perhaps rarely acknowledged, much less interacted with. I speak to you from what is called "a Nation in Chains," a metaphor, to be sure; But I think quite apt in some ways. Why? Well, let's consider this simple fact: There are two million men, women, and children (yes: children) in American prisons and jails today; Two million. Did you know this? Does it stun you? Does it surprise you?

Think of it this way: That number of people are found in the combined populations of Dallas and Detroit; It's the combined numbers of Houston and Denver, Colorado; It's roughly the Same population as can be found in both Philadelphia, and Long Beach. There are at least 30 countries in the world with smaller total populations than the U.S. prison population; Surely, Americans have a serious prison addiction.

Moreover, this "Nation in Chains" is a vast population that lives lives of enforced silence. Is it not so that in your fair state no prisoner may be interviewed on radio or TV? In a nation that prides itself on its claims of freedom of the press and free speech, prisons have become 1st Amendment-free zones. I know something about that, as I was given a misconduct for writing my book, *Live From Death Row* (1995). My institutional offense "Engaging in the business or profession of journalism" — Really, When I argued that such a charge violated the 1st Amendment of the U.S. Constitution (not to mention a similar provision, the First Article of the Pennsylvania Constitution), I was convicted of being a journalist and given "hole" time: 30 days. The prison official running the so-called "hearing" said the First Amendment had nothing to do with it. (If you want to know more, and at the risk of shamelessly plugging my new book, I invite you to read *All Things Censored*, just put out by Seven Stories Press). I shared that tale to illustrate the repressive nature of the state, and to put some flesh on the bony image evoked by my portrayal of prisons as a 1st Amendment-free zone; A place where increasingly, the Constitution does not apply.

Now, why these words to you, now, on the day of your graduation—perhaps one of the happiest days of your lives? (I mean, like, isn't this a bummer?) Well, here comes the teacher in me, y'all: You may have graduated—But you're still here! Professor Angela Y. Davis, who is both one of my heroes and a friend (and who teaches at the University of California, incidentally) hit the nail on the head when she noted: "In the realm of material reality, prison construction is very big business. And we wonder why there is so little money for education, for scholarships, for research," (*The Angela Y. Davis Reader* (1998), p.229).

You have a state where billions of dollars goes every year — not millions, billions — to build an institution that, research has shown, not only does not correct, but makes people worse! While, education, the one thing that we know, rehabilitates people, goes begging.

You, the few, who have had the exquisite pleasure of education, who have had the resources to afford an education, and have now graduated, are entering a society that is addicted to the drug of prison; You'll be looking for a job, some to pay your loans; others to support a family; and the temptation to go the easy way, to go the way of the system will be great indeed.

Did you know that prison guards in California make more than college professors, there? Is it just me, or is this a kind of social madness?

When you look for a job, and if your interests are purely financial, well; few places can offer the goodies that prisons can. But I ask you, why work for state repression when you can work for freedom?

There is a movement growing in the nation, that is denouncing the Prison Industrial Complex; that is fighting for an end to the racist death penalty, that is fighting for social justice, instead of the status quo.

The French philosopher, Michel Foucault, came to the U.S. in 1972 to study prisons. He went to Attica, and Philadelphia County prisons, and years later, explained:

"At the time of the creation of Auburn and the Philadelphia prison, which served as models (with very little change until now) for the great machines of incarceration, it was believed that something indeed was produced: "virtuous" men. Now we know, and the administration is perfectly aware, that no such thing is produced. That nothing at all is produced. That it is a question simply of a great slight of hand, a curious

mechanism of circular elimination; society eliminates by sending to prison people whom prison breaks up, crushes, physically eliminates; the prison eliminates them by "freeing" them and sending them back to society;.. .the state in which they come out insures that society will eliminate them once again, sending them to prison..." [Jr. John K. Simon, "Michel Foucault on Attica: An Interview," *Social Justice*, 18 (3) (Fall '91), 27.]

Prisons are but machines for social elimination, Foucault argues, and who can dispute it? Will you become a pan of this vile machine, or will you work to abolish it?

I thank you for taking the time to listen; Ona Move! Long Live John Africa! Free the Move 9! And Let's Build A Movement! With congratulations to you all, This is Mumia Abu-Jamal.