



Activists rally in support of Mumia Abu-Jamal.

Free Mumia: A primer



BECAUSE EVERYTHING IS POLITICAL TAN-NEE NG

Mumia Abu-Jamal is a black man who has been in prison since I was born. A renowned writer and radio journalist, he was also a prominent member of the Black Panther Party as a youth. In 1981, Mumia was employed as a cab driver in downtown Philadelphia. At approximately 4 am Mumia pulled over on the corner of 13th and Locust Street and saw his brother (who had just been shot) staggering in the street. He immediately ran to the scene to help and was shot by a police officer. Minutes later more police officers arrived at the scene, only to find two black men and a white officer down. Mumia was "rushed" to the hospital (it took them over 30 minutes) and survived the ordeal.

Despite evidence to the contrary, Mumia Abu-Jamal was unjustly convicted of shooting Officer Daniel Faulkner and was sentenced to death row in 1983, having already spent two years in prison. And the evidence that led to his conviction? In spite of the medical report, which stated that the bullet removed from the officer's brain was a .44 caliber bullet, the prosecution claimed that the shot came from Mumia's .38 caliber gun. The most damaging piece of evidence used against Mumia was an alleged confession he made at the hospital, although the doctor who treated Mumia said he

didn't hear him speak. An officer on duty also said in a report that "the Negro man made no comments." The witnesses brought forth by the prosecution gave completely contradictory statements at Mumia's brother's trial, and later claimed police coerced them into changing their initial statements. (One of the witnesses was even thought to be a police informant.)

But how can I be so certain Mumia is innocent? First of all, it is no surprise that there is racism present in the courts, especially in the US. Black people are 7.8 times more likely to be imprisoned than whites when convicted of the same crime and out of 455 people who were executed for rape in the US, 405 of them were black. The judge presiding over the case was none other than infamous Judge Sabo, who has sent more people to death row than any other judge. In 2001, a court stenographer came forth to claim that she heard Judge Sabo say, "Yeah, and I'm going to help them fry the nigger," in reference to Mumia. Furthermore (and here's the ticket), in 1999 Arnold Beverly confessed to killing Officer Faulkner, however, District Attorneys refuse to investigate even with the fact that Beverly underwent a lie detector test and concrete evidence supports the confession.

Is it just me, or is something severely wrong here? The unjust imprisonment of Mumia Abu-Jamal should concern us all, for his struggle is one that challenges many issues — police brutality, censorship, the death penalty, white supremacy and racism, the prison industrial complex, and the persecution of political dissent. For more information and ways to help Mumia Abu-Jamal, please visit www.freemumia.com and www.mumia.org.

An obituary for the North Side News

Irving is not a mountain: it can be defeated

by Ben Isitt

From their tax shelter in the Caribbean, the Irvings have stamped out free speech on Fredericton's north side. While this is not surprising, it should raise alarm bells about the danger of concentrated economic power in New Brunswick.

Many of us are prone to accept, even respect, the Irving economic empire. From heating and forestry to petroleum and building supplies, thousands of New Brunswickers earn their livelihoods from Irving. We tacitly accept the company's control of the political system, as well as its monopoly control of the English-language press. We are not supposed to discuss the fact that in 1971 K.C. Irving moved to Bermuda to avoid paying Canadian taxes. It is just part of "the way things are" in New Brunswick.

Recently, Irving purchased the

North Side News. A forum for community discussion, the newspaper developed a wide readership among North Side residents, and provided an important voice for beleaguered Main Street businesses. It was a community newspaper, by no means perfect, but valued by citizens.

Now Irving has closed the north side offices of the paper, and collapsed operations into the *Daily Gleaner*. The *North Side News*, as well as an Oromocto paper, will now be distributed as inserts in the *Gleaner*. They have ceased to function as newspapers in any meaningful sense.

Along with the loss of the *News* as an economic institution on the north side (with its own employees, offices, and related economic benefits for surrounding businesses), the elimination of the *North Side News* poses a significant threat to the free exchange of ideas, information and viewpoints in Fredericton. Other than the two campus newspapers, with their student focus, and the alternative monthly paper *Fred*,

Irving controls all local print media in the Fredericton area.

We should not be surprised that Irving destroyed the *North Side News*. Corporations are guided by the profit motive and by self-preservation. Empowered and informed communities can undermine both of these objectives. For years, Irving has exercised cultural power (through the media) to control the political system, in order to protect its vast economic power. The *News* existed as an independent voice outside Irving's orbit, so it was eliminated.

But I will not end on a tone of defeat. Several years ago, I had the great privilege to talk to Noam Chomsky. He told me: "Corporations are not like mountains. They are human creations. They are given the power they have by governments, but that power can be taken away."

Early in January, a crack emerged in the Irving universe. Loggers in the state of Maine went on strike against Irving logging operations. Realizing that individually they were powerless, these workers clubbed together to

challenge Irving's economic power.

I come from British Columbia, where another economic dynasty was built around a man named Robert Dunsmuir. A Scottish coal miner, Dunsmuir was granted nearly one-quarter of Vancouver Island in the 1800s and soon became the wealthiest man in British Columbia. His son James served as premier and lieutenant governor. However by the First World War, weakened by labour unrest and economic crisis, the Dunsmuir empire collapsed. All that remains today is the odd street name and a museum.

To paraphrase Chomsky, Irving is not a mountain. It is a human creation. When New Brunswickers awake from their deep slumber, the power of Irving and other corporate giants can be subordinated to the needs of local communities and their citizens.

And then maybe the North Side will get its newspaper back.

Ben Isitt is a doctoral student in Canadian labour history and a member of the Fredericton NDP Club.

Bringing out the 'm' word in blood donations

Queer-ies column missed base on boycott

by Toby K. L. Stoddart

I agree whole-heartedly with val colden's sentiments in last week's *Brunswickan* (queer-ies column) that Canadian Blood Services is wrong to discriminate against men who have sex with men on the grounds of their same-sex relations alone. It is wrong from a "moral" standpoint, but is also wrong-headed from a practical standpoint: what Blood Services seeks to provide is blood, and it is cutting out willing donors for no good reason.

This might be seen as a consequence of unquestionably severe accidents like the 1990s tainted blood scandal. Unable to reduce the severity of harm in the case of an accident, Blood Services is trying to reduce the likelihood of harm through a sort of pre-emptive strike. As colden points out, the men discriminated against are statistically more likely to be HIV+ than other groups, however debatable the reliability of the statistics are. So, very faulty logic is employed, and Blood Services is wrong when it discriminates against men who have sex with men, but it would also be wrong for them to allow even the remotest possibility of tainted blood to infect an innocent person ever again.

Blood Services' aim is to provide the safest blood possible for medical use — albeit at the misguided expense of the feelings and the public perception of one of society's minorities. Colden's aim seems to be to hurt Blood Services, "regardless of the good they do," by no longer giving blood. The people who would suffer as a result of a "blood donation boycott" when there was no blood available at the crucial moment when they needed it most would be innocent victims of politics. If she thinks that refusing to give blood is somehow analogous to situations like boycotting products to prevent injustices, she has her logic backwards — refusing to accept the blood when she is on the operating table might be a closer analogy than refusing to give any.

While she is certainly free to choose to stop donating blood, I do not think it is responsible to suggest that this is a legitimate or responsible way to combat the discrimination. Blood donation is literally a life or death matter. The seriousness of the situation is what has led to the agency's wrong-headed decision to discriminate against men who have sex with men, when they really only mean to discriminate against infectious people.

I think it is plain wrong — I hate to dredge up the "m" word with respect to my own views, but: morally wrong — to do nothing when doing nothing would result in people dying when

they can be saved. It is wrong to allow people to die because, as a result of denying blood donations in order to score a political point, there is not enough blood available for them. It is wrong to refuse to help someone when you are able, and even more wrong when you are helping others who rely on you and then choose to stop. It is maybe especially wrong when it requires so little (of a very renewable resource) from the giver, but means so much to the recipient.

Refusing to give blood is an ineffective and even harmful way to fight this battle. A more moderate approach would be best here; this issue can be resolved through peaceful

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

evolution, through a change in values, policy, and the law, and does not need to be "won" for the gay rights movement through revolution "whatever the cost."

Refusing to give blood is not likely going to remedy the situation. In any case, there are other ways to express your discomfort with the policy. Write letters, lobby politicians, and maybe even protest in person, but please give blood.

But then, everyone is certainly free to choose to do nothing. Always.

Maybe it's time...



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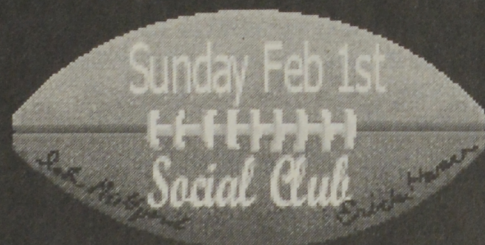
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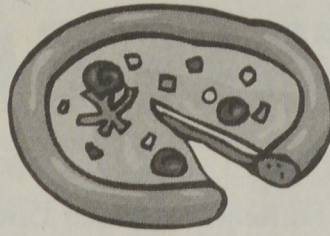


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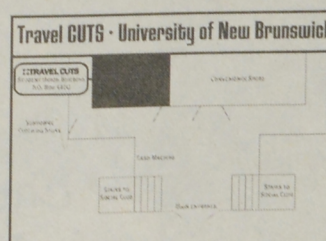
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