

Protestors voice support for Mumia Abu-Jamal

Rally outside American consulate about 'institutionalized racism'

BY SALLY THOMAS

Seventy five brave souls faced the bitter cold and blinding sunshine last Saturday to stand up for one man who doesn't get the chance to feel either bitter cold or blinding sunshine — a man protesters say is facing death for something he didn't do.

The protest was for Mumia Abu-Jamal.

Abu-Jamal is a journalist who many are convinced was wrongfully convicted of killing a police officer in 1982, and was sentenced to death for the crime. Abu-Jamal maintains his innocence.

There is evidence of police corruption in the case but he remains on death row. Abu-Jamal's last legal appeal for pardon was denied on Oct. 30 and his death warrant could be signed any day.

Abu-Jamal was a prominent black leader who was reportedly under FBI surveillance since he was 15. Before his conviction he was a radio journalist who spoke out about oppression and racial injustices.

Mumia's supporters say his case represents the growing problems of the criminalization of black men, the expanded death penalty and the erasing of defendants' rights.

Back in Halifax the crowd in front of the American consulate on Barrington St. was full of brightly coloured mittens, red cheeks and sniffling noses. Cars honked their horns as the protest shuffled back and forth and the only visible signs of dismay came from scowling old ladies as they tried to pass through the crowd.

Protests like this one were held all over the world, and Halifax march organizers say it's because Abu-Jamal's case is so serious and urgent.

Isaac Saney was one of those

organizers. A Dal Law student, Saney says time is running out for Abu-Jamal and people have to come together to show their support.

"It's a matter of principle. It's a struggle for justice that encompasses everyone."

"It's heartening that internationalist and broad-minded people exist in Halifax. People have taken to heart that injury to one is injury to all."

On Nov. 10 CKDU, Dalhousie's campus-community radio station, had a full day of broadcast that dealt with Abu-Jamal and the concerns his case raises. Abu-Jamal is part of a Prison Radio Network and has done several radio documentaries on his plight, police corruption and racial injustices. CKDU aired these tapes and others about the case in part to raise awareness. Station manager Fiona York says it was something the radio station felt it had to do.

"The struggle against injustice anywhere strengthens the struggle for justice everywhere."

"I know [about] lots of activism in this case and we all worked together," she said.

But Saturday's protest wasn't just for and by students. Esther Surobell was visiting from New York City. She attended the protest with her son and grandson because she says this case is important because not only has Abu-Jamal been treated unfairly, but because he's on death row.

"I'm opposed to the death penalty in any case. And in this case he hasn't even been given a fair trial."

Fred Furlong went to the protest on behalf of the Canadian Union of Postal Workers. He says his union decided to get involved in the

m a r c h because of the "struggle against the racist judicial system in the U.S." He says if this is allowed to happen in the US, it can happen anywhere, including Canada.

"We believe we have to speak out against institutionalized racism," he said.

Jessica Squires is a fourth-year student at Nova Scotia College of Art and Design (NSCAD) and the Canadian Federation of Students' Nova Scotia chair. She says she went to the protest

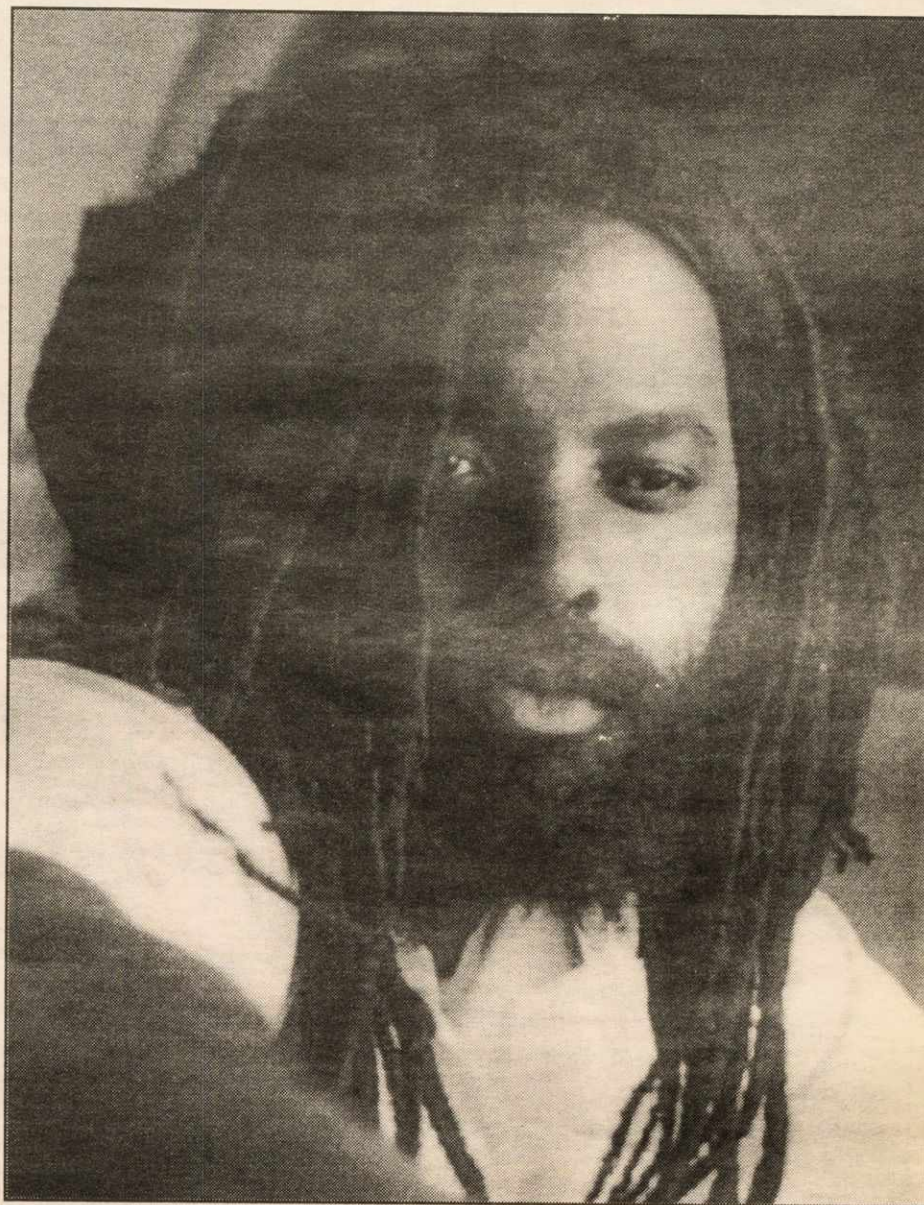
because of the case's underlying issues — freedom of speech and freedom of expression.

"The experience of Mumia shows how expression threatens those in power and then freedom of expression goes out the window."

Don Higgins agrees. He says he went to the protest because he felt it necessary to stand up against a corrupt justice system.

"We're supposed to live in a democracy but these things happen. We have to do our part and make a change."

When the protest began at



noon, there were only around seven people there. But as the march moved up and down Barrington St., more and more people joined, and by the end, Saney estimates over a hundred people took part.

And as more people came the protesters became more vocal. People took turns speaking into the bullhorn about other human rights violation cases in the United States while others yelled from the crowd. One man screamed "our voices are our choices", while the chant of the day was "Free! Free Mumia now!" The protest lasted over an

hour and Saney says he was "very, very happy" with the turnout.

"It's heartening that internationalist and broad-minded people exist in Halifax. People have taken to heart that injury to one is injury to all."

Saney says the public has to keep their eyes open to other events like this. He also says the fight to save Mumia is far from over — people have to be aware of miscarriages of justice.

"The struggle against injustice anywhere strengthens the struggle for justice everywhere."

Trudeau dies in avalanche

Michel Trudeau, the 23-year-old son of Pierre Trudeau and a former Dalhousie student, drowned Friday after being caught in an avalanche that carried him into a lake near Nelson B.C.

Trudeau, who studied Biology at Dal from 1995 to 1997, had been hiking and skiing with three friends in Kokanee Glacier Provincial Park when he was swept into Kokanee Lake by the avalanche. One of his friends was also swept in the lake but made it back to shore.

The three survivors could

only watch as Trudeau, 10 to 20 meters out in the icy water, struggled against his heavy gear and floating debris from the avalanche.

The accident has thrust the young man's life and relations under the close scrutiny of the national media.

Due to bad weather, the search for Trudeau's body has been called off. Authorities will resume searching if they get a two-week period of suitable weather.

Some Dalhousie students will attend his memorial service.

Graduate students want an end to "out of date" taxation

Taxing of graduate fellowships and bursaries unfair, critics say

BY SEAN RYAN

ST. JOHN'S (CUP) — A federal government policy which allows taxation of all scholarships, fellowships and bursaries over \$500 is outdated and unfair, especially to grad students, student leaders say.

The policy has remained unchanged since the late 1960s, and graduate students say an overhaul is long overdue.

"It's well, well out of date," said Michael Conlon, chair of the national graduate caucus of the Canadian Federation of Students.

Conlon says if you take inflation into account, \$500 in the 1960s would be more than \$2000 today.

Awarded on the basis of merit and in order to promote research, Conlon says it seems

counterproductive to tax the money given to encourage students to do research or to complete a degree in the first place.

He argues that fellowships are a form of student assistance and so, like student loans, shouldn't be taxed.

"We just don't understand the logic."

But Conlon also says there's no reason Ottawa can't move quickly on the issue if it wants to.

A source in the federal finance department says there have been recent requests to raise the tax-free level on scholarships, fellowships and bursaries to \$1,000.

But Nancy Peckford, president of the Memorial University of Newfoundland's Graduate Students' Union, says the policy is unfair regardless of the minimum tax levels. She says

many graduate students rely on their fellowship money to live, and taxing that income forces some into "even further poverty".

"So many grad students live on very meagre incomes," she said. "Taxing what they do have really hits grad students hard."

Graduate students in Memorial's faculty of science often live on only \$12,000 a year.

Peckford also says grad students represent many of Canada's future researchers and they need adequate financial support to live up to their promise.

"Canadian universities will not be able to attract and retain bright scholars," she said. "Grad students will not be able to support themselves... many will opt to not do graduate studies at all."

"There is no recognition here that fellowships for grad students are an investment in the future."

write here
write now
write for

THE GAZETTE
rm 312, SUB