

RESOLUTION CALLING FOR THE RELEASE OF PENNSYLVANIA POLITICAL PRISONERS: MUMIA ABU-JAMAL, CHARLES SIMS AFRICA, DELBERT ORR AFRICA, EDWARD GOODMAN AFRICA, JANET HOLLOWAY AFRICA, JANINE PHILLIPS AFRICA, MICHAEL DAVID AFRICA, JOSEPH “JOE-JOE” BOWEN, FRED “MUHAMMAD” BURTON, AND RUSSELL “MAROON” SHOATZ

WHEREAS, these women and men have been incarcerated for their political views and actions in support of progressive movements for social justice and in defense of our planet and animals;

WHEREAS, even while in prison, these women and men continue to adhere to their principles;

WHEREAS, the term “political prisoner” is accepted throughout the international community;

WHEREAS, Mumia Abu-Jamal is an award winning journalist and, when he was only 14 years old, was one of the founders of the Black Panther Party Chapter in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania,

WHEREAS, Mumia Abu-Jamal was convicted of killing a police officer in 1982, even though many witnesses saw someone else shoot and then runaway from the scene, and many questions have been raised about his trial, including by Amnesty International which concluded “that justice would best be served by a new trial;”

WHEREAS, Mumia Abu-Jamal was able to overturn his death sentence in 2001, but remains imprisoned serving a life sentence with no opportunity for parole, and Mumia continues to fight for decent health care and treatment for severe and chronic symptoms from untreated, active Hepatitis-C including diabetic shock, symptoms which could be treated with new antiviral medications;

WHEREAS, after 35 years, Mumia Abu-Jamal should be free;

WHEREAS, Charles Sims Africa, Debbie Sims Africa, Delbert Orr Africa, Edward Goodman Africa, Janet Holloway Africa, Janine Phillips Africa, and Michael Davis Africa, the seven remaining “MOVE 9” prisoners, have been in prison since August 8, 1978, following a massive police attack on their home in the Powelton Village neighborhood of Philadelphia;

WHEREAS, militarized police forces and SWAT teams used heavy equipment and massive amounts of tear gas and fire department water cannons to assault their home while they sought refuge in their basement;

WHEREAS, after police opened fire, Officer James Ramp was killed by a single bullet that struck him on a downward angle, making it impossible for the MOVE members in the basement below to have killed him;

WHEREAS, more than 38 years later the seven remaining “MOVE 9” prisoners are still being denied parole, despite having becoming eligible in 2008;

WHEREAS, MOVE member and U.S. held political prisoner Merle Austin Africa died on March 13, 1998 at the Pennsylvania State Correctional Institution (SCI) in Cambridge Springs after having been imprisoned for 20 years;

WHEREAS, MOVE member and U.S. held political prisoner Phil Africa died on January 10th, 2015 at the State Correctional Institution in Dallas, Pennsylvania, on January 10th, 2015, after having been imprisoned for 37 years;

WHEREAS, Charles Sims Africa, Debbie Sims Africa, Delbert Orr Africa, Edward Goodman Africa, Janet Holloway Africa, Janine Phillips Africa, and Michael Davis Africa, the seven remaining “MOVE 9” prisoners, should be free;

WHEREAS, Joseph “Joe-Joe” Bowen first went to prison as a member of Philadelphia’s “30th and Norris” street gang, was politicized in prison, and was released in 1971, but was later convicted of killing a police officer and reincarcerated;

WHEREAS, Joseph “Joe-Joe” Bowen, after 45 years, should be free;

WHEREAS, Fred “Muhammad” Burton was one of the “Philadelphia 5,” accused and convicted of participating in planning an attack on a police station that left one officer dead in 1970, but he has always maintained his innocence and has continued to appeal his conviction;

WHEREAS, Fred “Muhammad” Burton has spent 33 years in a maximum security facility, 11 of those years in solitary confinement, and after 46 years, he should be free;

WHEREAS, Russell “Maroon” Shoatz was a dedicated community activist and founding member of the Philadelphia based organization Black Unity Council, which eventually merged with the Black Panther Party in 1969, and in 1970 Maroon became one of the “Philadelphia 5,” accused of attacking a police station, which resulted in an officer being killed, and escaped underground until he was arrested in 1972;

WHEREAS, Russell “Maroon” Shoatz spent 22 years in solitary confinement, and after 44 years, he should be free;

WHEREAS, Pennsylvania State Governor Tom Wolf is authorized to grant clemency, including commutation of sentences, upon a favorable recommendation by the Board of Pardons, which is a separate entity that has the authority to make recommendations to the Governor for pardons, reprieves, commutations of sentence, and executive clemency;

WHEREAS, Pennsylvania State Governor Tom Wolf's clemency power includes the ability to commute the sentence of a person imprisoned in the state of Pennsylvania;

WHEREAS, many U.S. held political prisoners, such as Mumia Abu-Jamal, have increasingly serious medical issues, which are not being treated, and they will die in prison unless they are released;

THEREFORE, be it hereby resolved that the National Lawyers Guild at its convention in New York City in 2016 calls upon Pennsylvania State Governor Tom Wolf to commute the sentences of the aforementioned Pennsylvania prisoners and immediately grant their release.

THEREFORE, let it be further resolved, that the National Lawyers Guild reaffirms its support for the aforementioned Pennsylvania prisoners.

IMPLEMENTATION: This resolution is to be implemented by the NLG Political Prisoner Support Committee, in coordination with the NLG National Office, and the anticipated support of other committees and chapters to educate their members and the public about this issue.

Submitted by: NLG Political Prisoner Support Committee (Benjamin Evans, Daniel McGowan, Judith Mirkinson and Melinda Power) Contact: politicalprisoners@nlg.org; 401-258-4239

NLG Executive Director Pooja Gehi has consented on behalf of the National Office to assist in implementing this resolution.