

## Henry George Newsletter

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## MUMIA ABU-JAMAL: A POSSIBILITY OF HOPE

"Why HGI?" wrote Mumia Abu-Jamal, in response to instructor Lindy Davies's query, "To keep my mind alive, and to learn." At that point in July, 1990, Jamal was midway through the second course of the Henry George Institute's *Principles of Political Economy*, and the Institute had just learned of his notoriety. Until 1981, Mumia Abu-Jamal was a widely published newspaper columnist, and a Philadelphia radio personality, known as "The Voice of the Voiceless". Since then, convicted of a 1981 shooting of a Philadelphia police officer, Jamal has been on death row in Huntingdon (PA) state prison. In early 1990 he first contacted the Institute, and he finished all three courses in less than a year. In his remarks upon completion, which appeared in the fall 1990 *Georgist Journal*, Jamal wrote:

*It would be tempting to damn the incumbents now in power but misleading to do so, for, George notes, and I agree, that the problem is systemic.... To call for stability when the boot of poverty crushes so many, is to call for a stasis of a false status quo -- a deceptive stability. It is a recipe for disaster. George, at least, raises a possibility of hope. His theory deserves application in the real world, to see if theory, applied to practice, survives the test.*

The case against Jamal, as reported in *The Nation* and elsewhere in the "alternative press", is highly suspicious. Witnesses made conflicting statements and, themselves under arrest for prostitution, were offered special leniency for their cooperation. Some said they saw a second assailant; this man was never found. Police admitted that they did not know whether Jamal's gun fired the fatal shots. Jamal was denied his right to carry out his own defense, and denied his right to review and challenge the jury selection process. He was cross-examined by the district attorney while attempting to make a closing statement at the trial. His previous connections with the Black Panthers were repeatedly stressed to the jury, though they had no bearing on the case. Finally, the DA urged the jury to sentence him to death, because he would have "appeal after appeal". It might seem that sufficient irregularities existed for the decision to be successfully appealed, but the Supreme Courts of Pennsylvania and the United States could see nothing improper about the verdict.

Jamal has continued to write from death row, where, because of his refusal to cut his dreadlocks, he remains in solitary confinement. His columns have been published in *The Philadelphia Tribune*, *The Atlanta Inquirer*, and *The Nation*, among others. A campaign on his behalf has been organized by the New York-based Partisan Defense Committee, which has sponsored rallies in New York, Philadelphia, and Chicago. The one person now, however, who can change the course of Jamal's fate is the governor of Pennsylvania. His address is: The Governor of Pennsylvania, Robert Casey, Main Capital Building, Room 225, Harrisburg, PA 17120.

--Lindy Davies



Jamal and son, in happier times

## ON TEACHING GEORGIST IDEAS -- An Opinion

Becoming aware of oppression and acting against it to secure personal and political freedom has become a widespread social phenomenon in our time. Whether women, blacks, the Third World poor, homosexuals, students, the homeless, or native Americans are involved, the diverse political movements of each include a personal growth in the awareness and understanding of the pertinent issues. The voyage by these groups into fuller consciousness changes individual lives. It must, if it has any reality at all, but what is learned and what changes lie outside the methods of formal education.

Has Georgism as a formally taught discipline changed a significant number of lives recently? Has it changed enough of them to make a significant social or political difference?

A good starting point in trying to answer the question centers around gaining an understanding of the difference between consciousness-raising and formal education. It is only a starting point, for consciousness can be raised to far greater heights than to an awareness of personal oppression, and can include being borne to high levels of spirituality. For the present, however, let us limit our view to the basic difference.

People whose lives are changed by dealing with their own oppression must, of course, begin by being able to see it as it relates to them *personally*. Understanding their social condition adequately and acquiring the ability to deal with it follows, but neither come quickly or easily. These significant learning processes, which involve personal moral and psychological growth, always require a certain amount of suffering. (Continued on page six)