

# **INTERPELLATED BY THE MUMIA ABU-JAMAL MOVEMENT: A CASE OF DUSSEL'S PEDAGOGICS OF LIBERATION IN NEOLIBERAL ACADEME**

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I begin with a story that comes from political prisoner Mumia Abu-Jamal as he wrote in 2007 from Pennsylvania's death row in a column titled "Decolonization: The Influence of Africa and Latin America on the Black Freedom Movement." In his account he recalls one Kwando B. Kinshasa of the New York "Panther 21" who went on to become a historian at John Jay College of Criminal Justice. Abu-Jamal relays this account that Kinshasa wrote in 1971 recalling his years in Guatemala of 1960-1963.

I arrived in Guatemala City, and the Guatemalans were in the middle of a revolutionary war, a war that is still going on. Right on to the Guatemalan revolutionaries! My political education progressed so far while I was in Guatemala that by the time I left two-and a-half years later I was on the verge of being kicked out by the reactionary government in power, not to mention the Americans there who didn't like my friendships with known revolutionaries. *I entered the country a very apolitical Negro marine, and came out a dedicated black revolutionary.* I made it a point to learn all I could about our Latin American and black brothers in Central America; and those brothers whose friendship I gained made it a point to educate this black marine from America.<sup>1</sup>

This political education of Kinshasa in encounter with revolutionary Maya activists is an example of an early intersubjective process among repressed and exploited peoples, which philosopher of liberation, Enrique Dussel, terms a "first solidarity (among the Others themselves as victims; among the oppressed)." Dussel follows immediately to say that this first solidarity "emerges out of the *originary re-sponsibility* of

1→ Mumia Abu-Jamal, "Decolonization: The Influence of Africa and Latin America on the Black Freedom Movement," in *Writing on the Wall: Selected Prison Writings of Mumia Abu-Jamal*, ed. Johanna Fernández (City Lights Books, 2015), 223 (emphasis added by Abu-Jamal). Originally from Kwando Kinshasa, *Look for Me in the Whirlwind: From the Panther 21 to 21st-Century Revolutions*. Eds. déqu kinoni-sadiqi and Matt Meyer (Oakland, CA: PM Press, 2017), 387.

the victims themselves as *subjects of the new history*.”<sup>2</sup> This process involves the sharing among exploited peoples themselves, through appeals, demands, mutual critique, self-teaching—all taking place on the underside of imperialism, colonialism, and white supremacy. They call out, cry out and teach one another, from their different sites of dispossession and resistance, recruiting one another, we might say, into resolute organizations to challenge those in the dominant structures. It is, wrote Dussel, “the victims themselves as part of their own process of acquiring a *critical consciousness*.”<sup>3</sup>

## **INTRODUCING DUSSEL'S NOTION OF “INTERPELLATION”**

The particulars of the story that Abu-Jamal offers can help elucidate Dussel's notion of interpellation that I use in this essay. Note from Abu-Jamal's vignette that there is a fluid and complex interplay of historical and cultural dynamics. One observes Mumia here, writing as a Black radical from death row USA, taking up the issue of decolonization by citing another U.S. Black radical (Kinshasa), who is learning resistance among the Maya of Guatemala. In the same essay from which this vignette is taken Mumia will go on to reflect on the importance of Frantz Fanon of Martinique who influenced still others engaged in Black struggle in the U.S. (Huey Newton, Eldridge Cleaver, Fred Hampton, Kathleen Neal Cleaver) working in multiple ways with the Young Lords, the Patriot Party of young white radicals, the Brown Berets, and Asian American radical groups like I Wor Kuen and the Red Guard.<sup>4</sup> All this makes for a complexity of challenge and counter-challenge that is inherent to this “first solidarity.” It is forged through victims' labors across many other “moments” that Dussel explicates in the complex arising of a “critical liberation consciousness.”<sup>5</sup>

It is a subsequent development of this “first solidarity” among

2 → Enrique Dussel, *Ethics of Liberation in the Age of Globalization and Exclusion*, trans. Eduardo Mendieta, Camilo Pérez Bustillo, Yolanda Angulo, and Nelson Maldonado-Torres. Ed. Alejandro A. Vallega (Durham: Duke University Press, 2013), 302.

3 → Dussel, *Ethics*, 302.

4 → Abu-Jamal, *Writing*, 224, 227.

5 → Dussel, *Ethics*, 212-14, 557n37.

victims,<sup>6</sup> however, that will be the primary concern of this essay. The first solidarity is preparatory to what might be called a “second solidarity.” This latter term is not Dussel’s, preferring as he does a notion of “co-solidarity”<sup>7</sup> worked out practically and theoretically by those within a prevailing system of dominating power. My use of “second solidarity” preserves Dussel’s sense that there is a solidarity by those in higher strata that is subsequent to and dependent upon the work victims do among themselves. Thus, after directing themselves initially to one another in a community of victims, this first solidarity “is then secondarily directed to those capable of acting upon and expressing solidarity with the victims, even though those activated might belong to other strata within the system.” This might foster a co-responsibility and even “militant collaboration.”<sup>8</sup> But the “first solidarity” and the “second solidarity” are both phases of what Dussel terms “interpellation,” a variegated process of a critical liberating consciousness that is always vigorously intersubjective, involving affective lament and announced outrage (el grito as “the cry that emerges as a roar of pain of the victims”<sup>9</sup>). Interpellation is also a calling together, a calling to account, a co-summoning of victims and then of those in the prevailing system. He refers to the first solidarity as the “originary intersubjective interpellation,”<sup>10</sup> while the second co-solidarity he terms a “subsequent interpellation.”<sup>11</sup>

This subsequent interpellation is most pertinent to my work as a White male scholar in neoliberal (theological) academe, who for twenty-six years has struggled to be part of the Black radical struggle and movement for and with Mumia Abu-Jamal. This essay explores the

6 → “Victims” for Dussel are far from being passive sufferers, but they do suffer “inequalities that are undeserved;” they “have an undeserved disadvantage.” Dussel, *Ethics*, 118.

7 → Dussel, *Ethics*, 351.

8 → Dussel, *Ethics*, 213-14.

9 → Dussel, *Ethics*, 557 n36.

10 → Dussel, *Ethics*, 213.

11 → Dussel, *Ethics*, 214. For perhaps the best single article by Dussel on interpellation, see Enrique Dussel, “The Reason of the Other: ‘Interpellation’ as a Speech-Act,” in Enrique Dussel, *The Underside of Modernity: Apel, Ricoeur, Rorty, Taylor and the Philosophy of Liberation*, Trans. and ed. Eduardo Mendieta (Highlands, NJ: Humanities Press, 1996), 19-48. See especially page 36.

origins, forms, and limits of my being interpellated by the voices of Mumia and others in that movement.

To employ another feature of Dussel's thinking, interpellation may be understood as part of a "pedagogics of liberation." This is especially true for such a one as this writer whose professional teaching, research, and writing, as well as my economic livelihood, have all taken place in a theological center of neoliberal academe, Princeton Theological Seminary. Here is my "locus of enunciation,"<sup>12</sup> as it were, where I have taught now for nearly 40 years. To view my participation in the struggle for a renowned U.S. political prisoner like Mumia as a "pedagogics of liberation" recalls the way Dussel contrasted his "pedagogics" with "the pedagogy of domination" in neoliberal academe. With admirable crispness, Dussel wrote in a 2016 lecture:

Against [a] pedagogy of domination, what would a pedagogics of liberation be like? The Other, which could be the people, the child or the youth, or popular culture, interpellates the system. The Other must then be given a space to speak. . .

The teacher should not say to an [Amer]Indian student: "You do not know how to speak. Learn how to speak Spanish [castellano]." The student in this instance goes home and lets her parents know the teacher is telling her she must learn to speak [Spanish], because she does not know how to. Her mother says: "But we speak our language." "Yes," the student replies, "but my teacher says that does not count." That is domination! But if the teacher tells the student: "You speak Quechua, Aymara, Maya, Otomi! I do not speak that language. You are bilingual, you are wiser than I am." Then the student goes back home to let her mother know the teacher thought she was wise.

12 → Walter D. Mignolo and Catherine B. Walsh, *On Decoloniality: Concepts, Analytics, Praxis* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2018), 21 and 163.

Thus, we must give strength to the new generation, the teacher must be a disciple of the disciple, therefore putting the system of domination in question so that a new system can be organized. The object of critique in liberation philosophy is a fetishized system that the oppressed questions with their interpellation, rupturing such a system so as to pass to a new one.<sup>13</sup>

Dussel's passage could be read as only animating a limited and liberal notion of liberation wherein a generous teacher here encourages the student to use her own language. But if one takes seriously Dussel's complex notion of interpellation as it occurs across his *Ethics of Liberation* and elsewhere, that would be a misreading of his pedagogics. Even within the lecture I've quoted here, Dussel notes that "the oppressed questions" the system, the same system that might pretend to be a generous benefactor of the poor.

Whether deploying here Dussel's notion of interpellation or his pedagogics of liberation, I am aware of several criticisms of Dussel, by feminists from the peripheries internal to Europe and the United States, and from Latin America, as well as by other philosophers and theorists.<sup>14</sup> But Dussel's notion of interpellation is rich in meanings, for describing and explaining the power of dispossessed and repressed communities as themselves being generators of liberating change *before* members of the prevailing system seek to be generous toward "them" or even before trying to strike some authentic "solidarity" with them.

By all rights—the "rights" of black peoples' own thinkers to be interpreters of their own histories of struggle—this essay's

13 → Enrique Dussel, "A Brief Note on Pedagogics," *LÁPIZ*, No. 3 (2016): 95-103. For his more extensive theories on a pedagogics of liberation, see Enrique Dussel, *Pedagogics of Liberation: A Latin American Philosophy of Liberation*, trans. David I. Backer and Cecilia Diego (Santa Barbara, CA: Punctum Press, 2019). The latter text, while not deploying the notion of interpellation, is still a rich resource for developing many of the themes of this essay on interpellation. See especially, Dussel, *Pedagogics*, 51-61, 165-89.

14 → See Linda Martín Alcoff and Eduardo Mendieta, eds., *Thinking from the Underside of History: Enrique Dussel's Philosophy of Liberation*, 2nd edition (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2000). See especially the excellent challenge by Elina Vuola, "Thinking Otherwise: Dussel, Liberation Theology and Feminism," in Alcoff and Mendieta, *Thinking from the Underside of History*, 149-80.

problematizing of my relation to a figure in the Black radical tradition might be informed not by Dussel's theories, but by others usually seen as closer to the Black radical tradition,<sup>15</sup> those who have traced the expropriation and exploitation of enslaved Africans to European and U.S. capitalism and imperial domination: Eric Williams, Walter Rodney, Frantz Fanon, W. E. B. Du Bois, C. L. R. James, Cedric Robinson, Angela Y. Davis and others. Writing here for *LÁPIZ*, though, I want to draw on Dussel because of his influence in Latin American decolonial thought. More substantively, I think Dussel's notion of interpellation and his pedagogics of liberation have something unique to offer to the Black radical tradition and to those of us who engage it. Moreover, as many published collections about Black radicalism have emphasized, the "Black" in that phrase can be used capaciously, gathering up many peoples struggles against European and U.S. imperialism, colonialism, and white supremacy. George Lipsitz writes, for example, that "the 'Black' in the Black Radical Tradition is a politics rather than a pigment, a culture rather than a color." Commenting on Cedric Robinson's notion of the Black radical tradition, Lipsitz stresses that such a radical culture was birthed primarily "from the lower rungs of Black society from the plantations and debt peonage and the living conditions in ghettos of northern and western cities."<sup>16</sup> Emerging from these sites, the Black diaspora, as Robin D. G. Kelley emphasizes, featured a "full-range of Black transnational political, cultural, and international links." This, he writes in the same essay, can "broaden our understanding of black identities and political movements by exploring other streams of internationalism not limited to the black world."<sup>17</sup> This is not to discount the politics of race or to slight the centrality, even primacy of Blacks in transnational radical struggle. It does open the way for thinking about the relationship between a radical Black intellectual like Abu-Jamal

15 → On the Black radical tradition more generally and its historical development, see Cedric J. Robinson, *Black Marxism: The Making of the Black Radical Tradition*. Revised and updated third edition (Chapel Hill: North Carolina University Press, 2021).

16 → George Lipsitz, "What Is This Black in the Black Radical Tradition?" in *Futures of Black Radicalism*, eds. Gaye Theresa Johnston and Alex Lubin (New York: Verso, 2017), 109.

17 → Robin D. G. Kelley, "How the West Was One: African Diaspora and the Remapping of U.S. History," in *Rethinking American History in a Global Age*, ed. Thomas Bender (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002), 124.

with an international project like Dussel's radical "critical liberation consciousness."<sup>18</sup>

Angela Y. Davis, at a 2016 conference on the Black radical tradition ended her keynote by emphasizing: "The black radical tradition is not a tradition that is owned like property by African Americans. . . . I want again to open up, at the conclusion of my talk—to call for a much more capacious notion of what counts as the black radical tradition, because it has to include Betita Martínez<sup>19</sup> in SNCC; it has to include Yuri Kochiyama—it has to, and Yuri's work extends from Malcolm X to Mumia.<sup>20</sup> And Grace Lee Boggs<sup>21</sup> [of] Detroit and the black labor movement there. And [radical white allies] Anne and Carl Braden<sup>22</sup> who challenged segregation—and Carl went to Federal Prison as a result."<sup>23</sup> We might recall too that political prisoner Russell Maroon Shoatz, writing amidst thirty years in "the hole" (the torturous isolation of solitary confinement<sup>24</sup>) reminds us that "white maroons" were historically part of what he terms "the real resistance to slavery in North America."<sup>25</sup>

18 → Dussel, *Ethics*, 212.

19 → Elizabeth "Betita" Martínez, Chicana feminist and long-time community organizer. See Elizabeth Martínez, *De Colores Means All of Us: Latina Views for a Multi-Colored Century* (New York: Verso, 2017).

20 → A radical human rights advocate of Japanese-American descent bridging African-American and Asian-American activism. See Yuri Kochiyama, *Passing it On: A Memoir* (Los Angeles: UCLA Asian American Studies Center, 2004).

21 → Chinese-American radical activist and scholar, located primarily in Detroit. See Grace Lee Boggs, *Living For Change* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2016).

22 → On these radical white allies of the civil rights movement, see Catherine Fosi, *Subversive Southerner: Anne Braden and the Struggle for Racial Justice in the Cold War South* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2006).

23 → Angela Y. Davis, "Reclaiming Our Future: The Black Radical Tradition for Our Time," People's Assembly 3, Temple University, Philadelphia, January 9, 2016 (video beginning at 2:02:2), <http://www.rifuture.org/reclaiming-our-future-peoples-assembly-3-police-prisons-and-the-neoliberal-state> (accessed August 19, 2021).

24 → Russell Maroon Shoatz, *Maroon the Implacable: The Collected Writings of Russell Maroon Shoatz*, eds. Fred Ho and Quincy Saul (Oakland, CA: PM Press, 2013).

25 → Shoatz, 143. See here Shoatz's section on the Dismal Swamp in southern Virginia and northern North Carolina, pages 136-56. On maroon communities, the imprisoned Shoatz seems to draw from Mavis C. Campbell, *The Maroons of Jamaica from 1655-1796: A History of Resistance, Collaboration and Betrayal* (Trenton, NJ: Africa World Press, 1990), Hugo Prosper Learning, *Hidden Americans: Maroons of Virginia and the Carolinas* (New York: Routledge, 1995).



By no means can a professor in Princeton claim “White Maroon status” or even some comparable faithfulness to the non-Black activists and white allies like Anne and Carl Braden. But the variegated complexity of the Black radical tradition, as elaborated by Lipsitz, Kelley, Davis and Shoatz means that White activists who are challenged through interpellation should not sidestep or evade historical precedents for White co-solidarity in Black struggle.

## **WHO IS MUMIA ABU-JAMAL?**

Who is this Mumia Abu-Jamal whose movement I consider as “interpellating” this writer? He is a former Black Panther, an award-winning, print and radio journalist whose revolutionary writing and reporting included regular challenges to Frank Rizzo’s repression of black communities in Philadelphia of the 1960 and 1970s. Mumia was wrongfully arrested and convicted in 1982 for the shooting death of Philadelphia police officer, Daniel Faulkner.<sup>26</sup> He served over twenty-eight years on death row. That death sentence was ruled unconstitutional in 2011, after he had escaped two, perhaps three execution dates. That “escape” is the fruit of vigorous international and national movements in the U.S., Europe, and the Global South. The many actions of support included the 12,000 who showed up at Philadelphia’s City Hall against the impending August 1996 execution, the Longshoremen shutting down Western U.S. docks that year too, the several direct actions of civil disobedience we performed in Philadelphia, Washington, D.C. and elsewhere.<sup>27</sup> Off death row, Mumia now serves a life sentence without possibility of parole in a Pennsylvania prison, a “slow death row” he terms it. Today, after nearly thirty-eight years in prison, he is the recipient of the Fanon Prize, an honorary citizen of numerous cities, and has himself authored thousands of audio and print essays and nine books. He has become “the voice of

26 → For a fine introduction to Abu-Jamal’s case and summary of evidence for his innocence, see Johanna Fernández, “Ten Reasons Why Mumia Should Be Free,” in Mumia Abu-Jamal, *Writing on the Wall: Selected Prison Writings of Mumia Abu-Jamal*, ed. Johanna Fernández (San Francisco: City Lights, 2015), 314-22.

27 → “Dock Crews to Halt Work in Support of Death Row Inmate,” *The Los Angeles Times*, April 24, 1999.

the voiceless” for many repressed others across the nation and world. I have seen flyers and posters and have met activists for him in the mountains of Haiti and Chiapas. His humanity, courage, power of pen and mind, as well as the flagrant injustice of his own treatment during trial and appeals, have drawn human rights activists’ attention. Amnesty International declared that his 1982 trial “clearly failed to meet minimum international standards safeguarding the fairness of legal procedures.”<sup>28</sup> South Africa’s Archbishop Desmond Tutu has demanded, “Drop this case now and allow Mumia Abu-Jamal to be released immediately.”<sup>29</sup> Within my own academic world, I organized in 1995 *Educators for Mumia Abu-Jamal* (EMAJ), an organization of approximately 700-1000 members nationally and globally. It was a group with some impressive showings, mostly on paper through newspaper ads, petitions and legal proceedings. Cadres of us as teachers and students, however, also spoke at numerous movement events, marched with larger movements, organized untold numbers of press conferences, and also numerous on-campus events as well. I have been working at a varying pace in this capacity for twenty-six years, since 1995. I have maintained since that time a constant correspondence by letter or phone, and over the last five years been designated by Mumia as his “religious advisor,” a Department of Corrections technical title. The title as applied to me masks the greater political and spiritual power of the man himself and the movement behind him.

What does it mean to identify with and participate in this struggle from within neoliberal academe? What does it mean for me to so identify with and participate from within the theological “belly of the beast”—or one of the bellies at Princeton Theological Seminary—of neoliberal academia or of “the imperial university?”<sup>30</sup> One might say

28 → Amnesty International, *A Life in the Balance: The Case of Mumia Abu-Jamal* (New York: Seven Stories Press, 2000), 55.

29 → Desmond Tutu, “South African Archbishop Desmond Tutu Calls for Release of Mumia Abu-Jamal.” *Democracy Now!* December 8, 2011. [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=di5xZ-8hgwU&ab\\_channel=DemocracyNow%21](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=di5xZ-8hgwU&ab_channel=DemocracyNow%21), (3:36 - 3:47 min. segment). Accessed August 8, 2021.

30 → On the role of Christian colleges and schools for training ministers in white supremacist U.S. culture, see Craig Steven Wilder, *Ebony and Ivy: Race, Slavery and the Troubled*

that I am exploring a relationship named by Bret Leraul in his introduction to another volume of the *LÁPIZ* journal, when he asked, “What is the relationship between movement knowledge and academic ones?” And even more pointedly he follows with this question: “What would be the tenor of an equal encounter between their epistemologies and temporalities?”<sup>31</sup> The response necessary to this last question, and perhaps suggested by Leraul, is that, really, there is no such “equal encounter.” But precisely this inequality, this exclusion of many from the production of knowledge by a colonizing elite, or their marginalization and subordination to that elite production is the problem addressed by the notion of interpellation.

In the following sections of this essay I will sketch four key features of interpellation, illustrating them by reference to my own participation in that struggle as a White academician. As the following narrative unfolds it will be clear that being interpellated is far from being created as a heroic figure in solidarity. I am left in fact often with a sense of the limitations, and even failure to manifest necessary political effectivity and to make what Terry Eagleton has called “radical sacrifice.”<sup>32</sup> Dussel’s theory of interpellation can help elucidate some of the lineaments of this challenging process of interpellation. I offer the following four aspects of interpellation.

## **INTERPELLATION 1—A “HAILING”**

As I introduce this first feature of interpellation, it is appropriate to offer here a few further words on the complexity of Dussel’s notion of interpellation.<sup>33</sup> Etymologically, any dictionary will signal its complexity. This is evident from its multiple usages in Dussel’s *Ethics* and also in

*History of America’s Universities* (New York: Bloomsbury, 2013), 15-46. On the notion of the “imperial university” in North America, see Piya Chatterjee and Sunaina Maira, editors, *The Imperial University: Academic Repression and Scholarly Dissent*. (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2014).

31→ Bret Leraul, “Introduction: Movement Rhythms, Motley Knowledges,” in *Pedagogies of Social Movements in the Americas*, *LÁPIZ* no. 3 (2018): 95-102.

32→ Terry Eagleton, *Radical Sacrifice* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2018), 1-29. My thanks to Peter Linebaugh for calling my attention to this source.

33→ Dussel, *Ethics*, 557 n37.

his article on interpellation as a speech-act.

In his essay “The Reason of the Other,” Dussel develops many of the etymological senses of the Latin *interpellare* and the Spanish *interpelar*: notions of “appeal,” so as “to confront someone asking them to give account of a responsibility or a contracted duty.” Ultimately, Dussel emphasizes that it is an active “call” that is not just one of recrimination but one that “demands a reparation, a change.”<sup>34</sup> For Dussel such “interpellation” is the “ethical moment *par excellence*,”<sup>35</sup> and at several points he uses forms of the term in a full sentence in order to sum up the kind of appeal/demand he has in mind. For example, at one point in his *Ethics*, he has this Other, who carries the power of its “corporeal vulnerability,”<sup>36</sup> utter against those in the prevailing system: “I *interpellate* you on the basis of the justice that you should have accomplished for us!”<sup>37</sup> Because of the singularity and often apparent abstractness of this term, “the Other” (especially in Levinas), Dussel gives the notion of the Other a more intensely communal, intersubjective, I would say also geopolitical, dynamism. The victims’ cries are uniquely from colonized worlds of the global South, and also from the zones of the colonized within the metropole of the global North. Recall, though, that the interpellating cry is the first fruit of a community of victims who have cried out to one another, developed their own resolute awareness of their suffering and often in forms of “militant organization.” It is in *that collective organized way* that they later offer up their cry, “*el grito* that emerges as a roar of pain,” and so make their demands for justice to those who may not be in that victim position, those who make up “the prevailing system.”<sup>38</sup>

This gives rise to that second solidarity of those in the prevailing system. These now are challenged to respond creatively to the victims to produce what Dussel terms a “theoretical co-solidarity” or a “theoretical-practical *conscientización*”<sup>39</sup> as the interpellated ones

34 → Dussel, “The Reason of the Other,” 39 n25.

35 → Dussel, *Ethics*, 639.

36 → Dussel, *Ethics*, 272.

37 → *Ethics*, 303.

38 → *Ethics*, 231.

39 → *Ethics*, 214 and 351, respectively. “The acceptance of the ‘interpellation’ of the victim in

attempt to work within the regimes of knowledge production in the prevailing system. Dussel views his own work from Latin America, even his book, *Ethics of Liberation*, as a text that “also ‘interpellates’ the citizens (and philosophers) of Europe and the United States, and tries to stimulate in them a sense of co-responsibility for the liberation of all of humanity.”<sup>40</sup> This he proposes is for a collaboration, a “co-[!]laboring” with the communities of victims, making available scholars’ labor in the prevailing system for those outside of it, in the form of knowledge, expertise and maybe also as a power to subvert that system. The aim of this subversion is viewed by Dussel as one of critical liberatory “transformation.” Such transformation is not a mere “reformism” that accepts the formal hegemonies of the present system (say, of capital), but nor is it always revolutionary. “Revolutions, real and historic . . . are the paroxysm of the transforming act,” meaning that revolutions are occasionally necessary, intense and comprehensive changes against the prevailing system but ones that are but a part of a larger continuing and subversive liberating critical transformation. What is key for Dussel is that a praxis of comprehensive liberation continually takes its cue from the dynamism of interpellation at work, first in the everyday material living of victims’ communities and, second, continuing in the subsequent interpellation victims make of those who are called and pressed into a co-solidarity with them.<sup>41</sup> So, how are we in prevailing systems “hailed” into such co-labor?

With the notion of “hailing” I am naming and elaborating on the force of that which Dussel terms “the cry/*el grito*.” The term “hailing” to my knowledge does not occur in Dussel. It is appropriate to use, though, given the use of “to hail” in another theory of interpellation, that of Louis Althusser’s theory of ideology as interpellation. There interpellation is a kind of calling out usually by an authoritative official—like a policeman who shouts out “Hey you!”—in a way that constitutes a subject in a system of domination. Dussel has little positive to say

the scientists’ ordinary world precedes and orients this moment of theoretical co-solidarity” (351).

40 → *Ethics*, 569 n154.

41 → On his view of “reform” and “revolution” through engagement with Rosa Luxemburg’s thought, see Dussel, *Ethics*, 388-96.

about Althusser and is silent, to my knowledge, about Althusser's notion of "interpellation" at work in apparatuses of state power. This is not the place to compare and contrast at length Dussel and Althusser on interpellation. It can be noted here, though, that Dussel stands Althusser's notion of interpellation on its head in two ways: first, it is, as we have seen, a process inaugurated by *the victims* of structural suffering rather than by a repressive state official, and second, it is a process that inaugurates *a liberative subjectivity and intersubjectivity* and not, as in Althusser, a repressive constitution of subjugation. What the two notions of interpellation do have in common, however, is that both Althusser and Dussel acknowledge that a call, a cry, or shout from one body to another constitutes a new material (inter)subjectivity.<sup>42</sup>

In my own case, the hailing is not a single event. I would say, though, that I was first "hailed" by Mumia and the movement for him in the early 1990s. This was in the context of the increasing deployment of the death penalty in the U.S, as the number of annual executions rose across the 1980s and 1990s to a national high of 98 in the year 1999. I had been opposed to capital punishment, speaking at various movement-based and state legislative venues against the death penalty in New Jersey, working against it in various ways across the 1970s and 1980s, largely impacted by my experience of the brutality of the criminal justice system when working as an intern during the mid-1970s in the Virginia State Penitentiary and State Office of the Attorney General. There, I had felt the rage of racialized and caged human flesh, the death penalty being a further enraging mode of that caging system. The death penalty throughout colonization has been integral to capitalism's "thanatocracy."<sup>43</sup> You could say that my own corporeal vulnerability had already been appealed to, forcefully engaged by the cry of the encaged.<sup>44</sup> It wasn't until the 1990s, though, that I began reading essays by Mumia, who had by then been imprisoned for about

42 → See Louis Althusser, "Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses (1969)," in Louis Althusser, *Lenin and Philosophy and Other Essays*, trans. Ben Brewster (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1971), 127-186.

43 → Peter Linebaugh, *The London Hanged: Crime and Civil Society in the Eighteenth Century* (New York: Verso, 2003), 53-4, 330-31.

44 → For one example from that time, see Mark Lewis Taylor, *The Theological and the Political: On the Weight of the World* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2011), 35-8.

fifteen years. When outside a New York City coffee shop, I purchased a *Street News* pamphlet sold by the homeless and there found another essay by Mumia, one titled “The War on the Poor.”<sup>45</sup> Others of his essays impressed me among his hundreds and now his thousands. These have appeared not just in less renowned venues like *Street News*, but also in the *Yale Law Review* and *Forbes* magazine. At the time of this writing he has authored nine books, and co-written four more. I started setting Mumia’s brief essays and books before my doctoral seminars, and then in various Masters courses in theology (and not just in those on “liberation theology”). Even if students did not agree with Abu-Jamal, I and students appreciated the ways his essays and audio recordings “threw the fat in the fire” by speaking with conviction and yet made powerful appeals to reason, compassion, and a sense of justice. Mumia’s words broke upon me, and often upon my students, as in that sentence of interpellation crafted by Dussel: “I interpellate you on the basis of the justice that you should have accomplished for us!”

I felt hailed as the interpellated “you” here. The interpellator, the “I” is at first blush Mumia, the author of the essay(s). But who is the “us” for whom justice should have been accomplished, the us that is invoked by the “I”? That “us” in large part was the community that enabled Mumia to be a resistant subject, an “I.” That community, made of several movement groups, militant communities, literally had organized to keep him alive, to convey his voice and perspective. Many other modes of communal support were crucial to guard Mumia’s voice such that it could hail me or anyone else. The novelist John Edgar Wideman, who wrote the Introduction to Mumia’s first book, *Live from Death Row*, points out that it was one of the impressive gifts of Mumia’s writing that any references by him to his own needs for personal liberation bring almost immediately and simultaneously a sense of collective struggle, that of a whole people and his own dependence upon that collective struggle.<sup>46</sup>

45 → Mumia Abu-Jamal, “The War on the Poor,” in *Mumia Abu-Jamal, All Things Censored*, ed. Noelle Hanrahan (New York: Seven Stories Press, 2000), 205-6.

46 → John Edgar Wideman, “Introduction,” in *Mumia Abu-Jamal, Live from Death Row* (New York: Addison-Wesley, 1995), xxxi-xxxv.

I would later learn of Mumia's life-long engagement with such movement groups, and his being carried by them. There were the times of his youth in the projects of black urban North Philadelphia where he as a student worked with others to try to change the name of his school from Ben Franklin to Malcolm X High School. There was the collective of friends with whom he went to a 1968 fundraiser being held for Alabama Governor George Wallace's presidential campaign, only for Mumia and his teen friends to be beaten into unrecognizable form by undercover cops who didn't like their protests. Mumia later wrote that they beat him right into the Black Panther Party in Philadelphia. He served there as writer and "Minister of Information," thus enabled to work with chapters in New York City, Oakland, and also Chicago, where he visited the site of the Chicago Police's murder of Fred Hampton and Mark Clark in December of 1969. Even when he left the Panthers he remained a politically engaged movement-based journalist, writing against police brutality in the years that Frank Rizzo wielded his power and police billy clubs as police commissioner and mayor. In this capacity Mumia engaged the MOVE Organization—an urban community that combines a street-savvy emancipatory politics for poor, predominantly black members with what Waskar Ari has termed an "earth politics"<sup>47</sup> that respects care of the environment and even a "Mother/Mama Earth" spirituality.<sup>48</sup> He wrote about and for MOVE as it often suffered police brutality.<sup>49</sup> He also wrote for other movement groups that had little or no voice. Through his own investigative work and reporting in print and radio media his subject was intersubjective, and his individuality was collective, as suggested by the very name given him and used to this day, "the voice of the voiceless."<sup>50</sup> In fact,

47 → MOVE's politics of "Mama Nature" bears some striking resemblances to indigenous groups that "used religion to express their earth-based politics." See Waskar Ari, *Earth Politics: Religion, Decolonization and Bolivia's Indigenous Intellectuals* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2014), 52.

48 → Richard Kent Evans, *MOVE: An American Religion* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2020), 42-3, 53, 166.

49 → Mumia Abu-Jamal, "MOVE: A Collective Biography of the Imprisoned MOVE Members," in *Hauling Up the Morning/Isando la Mañana: Writings & Art by Political Prisoners & Prisoners of War*, eds. Tim Blunk and Raymond Luc Levasseur (Trenton: The Red Sea Press, 1990), 385-406.

50 → On these key events in Mumia's biography, see Terry Bisson, *On the Move: The Story of*



these collectives continued to be crucial when he was found at the site of police officer Faulkner's murder, there brutally beaten by the police—again beyond recognition according to his wife, sister and attending doctors—before being railroaded through the trial that found him guilty and sentenced him to death. This was done under the investigative and prosecutorial staff in Frank Rizzo's Philadelphia. Some one-third of police officers involved in Mumia's case were later charged with various forms of corruption.<sup>51</sup> These charges occurred *after* the entire Philadelphia police force had become the first in U.S. history to be written up for comprehensive corruption charges by the U.S. Department of Justice, and this by none other than the administration of President Ronald Reagan.<sup>52</sup> The MOVE Organization, often rendered voiceless, may have been the predominant collective force that kept Mumia alive and free from the first death penalties sought against him. Its Ministers of Confrontation and Information, Pam and Ramona Africa respectively, were instrumental in organizing the International Concerned Family and Friends of Mumia Abu-Jamal (ICFFMAJ), within which the group I founded, Educators for Mumia Abu-Jamal (EMAJ), struggled to find its place.<sup>53</sup> I mention the import of all these collectives because they are the "us" in Mumia's "I," the intersubjective formation that enables Mumia to say, "I interpellate you." It was this collective force that met me in the interpellation.

As I was reading Mumia's essays, I said to myself—still amidst my being hailed—that *if* they really tried to execute Mumia, I just couldn't live my life doing academic business as usual. It would be a kind of "deal-breaker" for me, a kind of ending of my finding and pursuing a comfortable place in my career, one that then was entering its fifteenth year of teaching at the age of forty-five. So when Republican Governor Tom Ridge signed a death warrant in the summer of 1996, readying Mumia for execution in August of 1996, I went into an unusual mode of

*Mumia Abu-Jamal* (New York: Litmus Books, 2000).

51 → Dave Lindorff, *Killing Time: An Investigation into the Death Row Case of Mumia Abu-Jamal* (Monroe, ME: Common Courage Press, 2003), 35.

52 → Lindorff, *Killing*, 35-6.

53 → On the birth and role of EMAJ (originally "Academics for Mumia Abu-Jamal (AMAJ), see *Let Freedom Ring: A Collection of Documents from the Movements to Free U.S. Political Prisoners*, ed. Matt Meyer (Oakland, CA: PM Press, 2008), 405, 408, 409, 434.

performance. My actions were a curious mix of deliberation and compulsion. I had been observing at that time how many academics in New York City were donning their academic robes for street marches to protest the slashing of tuition aid for college students in Manhattan. That looked like good performative drama, and a remarkable deployment of academic regalia, this time for a good purpose! So, when hearing of the death warrant, I donned my own University of Chicago doctoral robe, and wore it into the protests organized by MOVE at the Philadelphia City Hall against Governor Ridge's death warrant. I then wore it again after driving later the same day to a mass rally that also marched around Madison Square Garden. Some at these events saw the robe-wearing as a kind of elitist move. I was uncomfortable about the robe's message, too, but decided the desperate hour meant risking that drama. To both events I took a stack of hastily photocopied flyers asking if there were others who had been teaching Mumia's writings, who couldn't stand for this, and who wanted to fight Mumia's execution and for a new trial. The response to these flyers and to my later follow-ups by email was overwhelming and soon I had my rough-and-ready organization of Educators for Mumia, and our work of press conferencing, newspaper petitioning, and campus organizing began. EMAJ's first newsletters were sent out in hardcopy, folded by volunteer students, stuffed in envelopes and mailed out after extensive licking of stamps and placement on envelopes by hand. Today, though, my work has been taken on—transformed really—by younger colleagues more adept at organizing in this digital, social media age, and they work now primarily in the Campaign to Bring Mumia Home, coordinated by historian Dr. Johanna Fernández with others in New York, and in conjunction with the ICFFMAJ.<sup>54</sup>

I welcomed this hailing for another reason. Mumia rarely spoke on his own legal case and more on those of other prisoners. He also linked his struggle against the death penalty to national and worldwide struggles against racial killings by police, neoliberalism, US wars and empire, and the whole history of Western colonization. For me, this meant that advocacy for Mumia linked to thought and action on

54 → *Campaign to Bring Mumia Home* at <https://bringmumiahome.com/> (accessed March 15, 2021).

multiple liberatory fronts. I saw that as a boon since I couldn't "be there" for each prisoner. Every prisoner presents a near abyss of need, and Mumia as a person behind bars was no exception. But to enter that abyss with him also meant working for the others and on the larger, simultaneous issues. Along the way of fighting for Mumia, for example, I worked with EMAJ to turn out a pamphlet of Mumia's writings on US wars, empire-building, and colonization.<sup>55</sup> This too was part of my interpellation as "hailing."

## INTERPELLATION 2—A "HAUNTING"

Just as I borrowed the term "hailing" from Althusser to accentuate an important feature of interpellation in Dussel's work, I now render interpellation as "haunting" borrowing this term from spectral theory ("hauntology" is Derrida's well-known neologism in his *Specters of Marx*).<sup>56</sup> I have used spectral theory and notions of haunting across a number of my writings.<sup>57</sup> But with this borrowing, I am more closely following Enrique Dussel's understanding of the process of interpellation. In his essay on "The Reason of the Other," Dussel writes that "the realm from which interpellation comes, from a victim's realm, is a realm of exteriority, vis-à-vis the totality of the current *Lebenswelt*/"Life-world" and the larger systems in which those life-worlds' are embedded.<sup>58</sup> Dussel is interacting here with Marx whose attempt to treat the lives of excluded and exploited workers, in their "hidden abode of production," finds himself dealing with "nebulous

55 → For an example of EMAJ's work, see *Wayback Machine*, an internet archive <https://web.archive.org/web/20171129114902/http://www.emajonline.com/>. One of EMAJ's key efforts occurred on May 1, 2000, with fundraising for a full-page ad that eventually appeared in the Week-in-Review section of the Sunday *New York Times*. <https://web.archive.org/web/20161229164820/http://www.emajonline.com/wp-content/uploads/2013/11/NYAd.pdf> (accessed March 5, 2021).

56 → Jacques Derrida, *Specters of Marx: The State of the Debt, the Work of Mourning, & the New International*. Trans. Peggy Kamuf (New York: Routledge, 1994), 10.

57 → On "specters of empire," see Mark Lewis Taylor, *Religion, Politics and the Christian Right: Post-9/11 Powers and American Empire* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2015), 13-14, and *The Theological and the Political: On the Weight of the World* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2011), 31-5, 196-99.

58 → Dussel, "The Reason of the Other," 24.

figures [specters] which *do not belong within the province of political economy.*" These nebulous, spectral figures are "living labor[ers]" outside the work relationship of the visible economy. They may be viewed "as swindlers and cheats, beggars and paupers, the unemployed, the starving or the criminal." They exist for use in the main political economy, but they and especially their other accomplishments and suffering are visible mainly, if not only, to "the gazes of doctors, judges, and grave-diggers."<sup>59</sup> Nevertheless, there is from such as these and more a haunting, a spectral sense registering uncomfortably the presence of an absence. Such hauntings, as I have explored in other writings, aided by Avery Gordon's *Ghostly Matters*, Toni Morrison's *Playing in the Dark*, and Derrida's *Specters of Marx*, and many others, come rife with certain other sensibilities: haunting as seething (especially if the absent presence is one unjustly slain), of threatening and promising.<sup>60</sup> When Marx opened *The Communist Manifesto* with the words "A specter is haunting Europe . . .", he meant many things, but surely a seething of exploited people, a threat of a coming overthrow, a promise of a revolutionized order and so on.

The imprisoned in the USA, especially political prisoners, dwell in "a prison within the prison,"<sup>61</sup> often in "segregated" or "administrative" housing, i.e. solitary confinement. They are a very spectral group. Not only are they criminalized and demonized, they are rendered invisible, indeed a kind of absent presence or a present absence. Nevertheless, in this mode and as they write and organize, as they do, they become a spectral force.

So, given this spectral force, and as the experience of hailing continues for those of us who are interpellated, we also know a certain haunting. Over my work in this struggle, the sense of haunting grows into a kind of demand, a demand which though exterior—exterior to me and to the prevailing system in which I work—takes up residence in me

59 → Dussel is here citing Karl Marx, *The Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts*. See Dussel, "The Reason of the Other," 40 n31.

60 → Taylor, *The Theological and the Political*, 34-5.

61 → Rachel Kamel and Bonnie Kerness, *The Prison Inside the Prison: Control Units, Supermax Prisons and Devices of Torture* (Philadelphia: American Friends Service Committee, 2003), 4-5.

as the one hailed, constituting a new or at least altered subjectivity. This is not always comfortable. In fact it can provoke a rupture, perhaps a creative one. The rupture and interruption I will treat in the final section “Rupture for Reorganizing?” Here allow me only to identify several different forms the haunting can take.

First, there is a felt pressure to expand the domain of my work-worlds. My regular space of work was haunted by exterior spaces that called me out. By train and by car, multiple excursions had to be built into my professional life: South from Princeton to Philadelphia, or North to New York; often further, by both car and plane. All of these travels were ways to be in interaction with the community that moved with and for Mumia. His recorded words would be heard at our meetings, even by phone breaking into our own conferencing. Mumia was “absented” from us, confined on death row until 2011 and now still in the general prison population up in the coal and fracking fields of Pennsylvania’s mountainous north country. However, he was still very much present in our organizing. The haunting for me abided in the sense that I could not just dwell in the halls of academe to network as a scholar. There was a pressure to be moving toward other sites. This felt need to be moving always carried a certain tension, because the political order of neoliberal academe, and its routinized demands often left little room for such work. (Later I organized several events in the neoliberal citadels themselves, but that was a very hard struggle, and several such events were even cancelled by university administrators who grew nervous about their venues being used for a “cop-killer.”)

Second, the haunting took the form of a pressure that caused me often to wonder if and how Mumia’s voice, writings, and larger struggle can and should impact my classroom activity. Many were the times when I had other activists in my classroom or on campus. At least two visits were made to my classes by members of the MOVE family, Pam and Ramona Africa and more. As often as I could, I included Mumia in the classroom world by having him phone-in for the permitted time of 15 minutes, his voice played on a conference speaker phone. Sometimes he would take questions about an essay of his already written, sometimes he’d phone in to speak on a freshly written essay

just for our class. Even in an introductory class on systematic theology, I had Mumia phone into the class, with the result being that at least three members, according to their recounting, were put on paths toward doctoral work, often not in theology, but in other fields that enabled them to engage political struggle and thought relating to today's U.S. carceral state. As I was haunted, experimenting with ways to keep Mumia's voice and presence in the space of neoliberal classrooms, these students were also hailed, perhaps also haunted by Mumia's voice. Let me give voice to one of these students, Nyle Fort, an activist from Newark, NJ, who completed his doctoral studies in 2021 and immediately thereafter began a postdoc appointment at Columbia University. Throughout his studies he was active as writer and organizer in various Movement4BlackLives events and more. Dr. Fort wrote the following in a special issue of the journal of *Socialism and Democracy*. You'll note here both the hailing and the haunting elements of "interpellation:"

I first heard Mumia's voice while sitting in Dr. Mark Taylor's "Systematic Theology" class my first semester at Princeton Theological Seminary. Mumia was sitting on death row. He had been for nearly thirty years—longer than I had been alive. Having heard about his story, I expected to hear a man scarred by brutality and bitterness. To my surprise, Mumia's voice radiated with a beauty and brilliance that arrested my attention and captured my conscience. Soaking in every word, I somehow knew my life would never be the same. Less than two weeks later I was standing in the heart of Mumia's hometown alongside an eclectic group of activists, students, grandmas, organizers, scholars and children, chanting "Brick by brick, wall by wall, we're gonna free Mumia Abu-Jamal!" That was my first rally. It has been over two years since that windy winter evening outside of Philadelphia's Constitution Center where we gathered to celebrate Mumia's release from death row

as well as challenge the slow-death (“life”) sentence the State put in its place. In the spirit of that revolutionary motley, of troublemakers and freedom-fighters . . . standing in solidarity . . . speaking truth to power, I write.<sup>62</sup>

Mumia’s absence was of course real in all these classroom encounters, but as this recollection by Fort shows, there was a haunting and hailing experienced by students, registered in the life-long impact his words could have on them.

Third, the haunting and the “present absence” can ripple outward even further, beyond classroom and campus to engage more distant public groups, even some of those who were committed to organizing for the execution of Abu-Jamal. This includes members of the Fraternal Order of Police (FOP), which to this day continually foregrounds Officer Faulkner’s widow to support their calls for Mumia’s execution or for continuance of his “slow death row” in prison. The FOP and its supporters feel his presence through our movements, often through the airwaves as activists promoted the airing of his audio recordings. Not only do Mumia’s opponents sense his spectrality, they also tend to magnify the ominous character of Mumia in a way that grafts a kind of metaphysical threat onto the demonization frequently attached to prisoners’ lives. Officer Faulkner’s widow wrote about this in her 2007 book, *Murdered by Mumia*, in full cooperation with political commentator Michael Smerconish and the Fraternal Order of Police in Philadelphia. She writes in her book, “Now I cannot live in peace, when I get in the car and turn on the radio. I hear the voice of Mr. Jamal. I see supporters having fundraisers for him. I see posters on walls for him. He’s on the TV. He’s in the newspapers. And it’s haunting me.”<sup>63</sup> Neither I, nor anyone else in the movement, have taken any delight in tormenting Ms. Faulkner over her loss. To the contrary, Mumia’s family and movement participants have reached out to express our concern to find the real killer of her husband. Maureen Faulkner, though, has continued to view

62 → Nyle Fort, “Insurgent Intellectual: Mumia Abu-Jamal in the Age of Mass Incarceration,” *Socialism and Democracy* 28, no. 3 (November 2014): 140. Ellipses in the original.

63 → Maureen Faulkner and Michael Smerconish, *Murdered by Mumia: A Life Sentence of Loss, Pain and Injustice* (Guilford CT: Lyons Press, 2007), 96.

all through the police lens, refusing to consider any of the potentially exculpatory evidence for Mumia. She combines a demonized portrait of Mumia with a nearly unceasing praise of a romanticized image of all Philadelphia police whom she deems laudable in every way. She seems unable to embrace any ambiguity at all about her husband's actions as a police officer or about the Philadelphia police department as a whole.<sup>64</sup> So disturbed was she about Mumia that she, with FOP and its politicians' support, even prevailed upon the Pennsylvania legislature to pass a law that prevented Mumia and other Pennsylvania prisoners from releasing further recorded speeches to the public. My institution at Princeton told me to cease and desist from playing Mumia's voice in my classes until our institutional lawyers finally determined that it was my academic freedom to do so. Indeed, I entered testimony by affidavit into a lawsuit by Mumia's attorneys, arguing against the punitive legislation that Faulkner's wife had helped launch. Soon a Federal District Judge struck down the law as "blatantly unconstitutional."<sup>65</sup> Her sense of being "haunted" had provoked a reactive move by her and her police supporters which then enabled our movement to organize to support the rights of the incarcerated to communicate with the public. The dimension of haunting here enabled the process of interpellation to challenge not only me or other activists to undertake specific actions, it also created public awareness and so "interpellated" certain sectors of the wider society that became aware of these actions.

A fourth and final sense of haunting is notable. It is that kind of haunting of self which could prompt, in my own case, a questioning of my own "freedom." This questioning comes in the form of unsettling senses that my freedom is unearned, and also that my freedom is structured by, indeed mounted upon, others' unfreedom—as is much of neoliberal academe and other U.S. institutions.<sup>66</sup> Simply my

64 → See my full review of Faulkner and Smerconish's book, Mark Lewis Taylor, "The New Book by Maureen Faulkner and Michael Smerconish: How *Not* to Build One's Case for Justice," in *Pan African News Wire*, December 21, 2007.

65 → Eugene Volokh, "Court Strikes Down Law Aimed at Mumia Abu-Jamal and Other Criminals Who Speak Publicly After Being Convicted," *The Washington Post*, April 28, 2015.

66 → Chandan Reddy, *Freedom with Violence: Race, Sexuality and the U.S. State* (Duke



receiving of a phone call or a letter from incarcerated men and women can prompt this haunting of my own sense of freedom. The contrast between my casual phone use and prisoners' labor and expense to phone outside is noteworthy.<sup>67</sup> My students are often unsettled when Mumia phones in for his fifteen-minute call and yet is interrupted two to three times by recorded messages from the prison, seeming to warn hearers that the call is from an inmate in the Pennsylvania DOC, as if we already did not know this. Under these conditions, if the caller is resonant with full voice and with discerning analysis, as Mumia usually is, the warning message only accents the sense of a strong presence despite his absence, his being kept at a distance from us. One student gave expression to the sense of spectral presence amid absence, muttering aloud, "What just happened here?"

A particularly striking example of this haunting of self lies in a certain affective tone that never leaves me. I myself develop an exterior sensibility, if only a very weak one, within my connectedness to neoliberal academe. Certainly, I remain very much a part of the prevailing system even *after and in spite of* being interpellated by Mumia and the movement. His interpellation of me is from the realm external to neoliberal academe, even if his exteriority is marked by a confinement to space that is interior to the neoliberal system, in prison, in a "prison within the prison" as a political prisoner. Here again I note how Dussel's notion of interpellation is different from Althusser's. For the latter interpellation marks someone as brought under a dominant ideology. In contrast, the exterior "pull" by Mumia's haunting helps interpellated ones out from under such an ideology, here that of neoliberalism. There is no way that the exteriority into which the interpellation takes me is comparable, or even analogous, to Mumia's onerous exteriority from within the system's imprisoning space. Yet I am pulled into an at least liminal zone of academe, with an affective consciousness that can become chronic. I use the notion of "chronic" for my affect here to connote a persistent dis-ease in me which never

University Press, 2011), 143-81.

67 → Peter Wagner and Alexi Jones, "Local Jails, State Prisons and Private Phone Providers, *Prison Policy Initiative*, February 2019. [https://www.prisonpolicy.org/phones/state\\_of\\_phone\\_justice.html](https://www.prisonpolicy.org/phones/state_of_phone_justice.html) (accessed March 15, 2021).

quite dissipates. It is there when I drive freely everywhere and cannot avoid the memory and knowing that the confined cannot so drive. To visit him, I drive the green mountains around Mumia's prison, knowing that over almost forty years of incarceration he's never had the chance to do so, except for quick glances at the landscapes on the way to occasional medical appointments while under heavy guard and in chains. I shower. I eat fine meals. I can make sure I get a healthy green salad.

Such experiences of freedom, in contrast to Mumia's and others' situations of imprisonment—and there are many more examples of such experiences—are noted by Mumia himself. At the end of the first time we visited, and occasionally at the end of our continuing visits over the years, he will separate his plastic ID card from my paper visitor pass that gets folded around his ID card to be kept on the visiting room supervisor's desk while we visit. As I prepare to leave the visitors room, the supervisor gives to Mumia both his own ID and my visitor's pass. Mumia then separates the two, keeps his ID card and then hands the visitor's pass to me intoning, "So, here's your freedom pass." We both chuckle, sort of, lips pursed to show something between a wry smile and a grimace. In taking the position of "granting" the freedom pass he signals what I know to be true about his presence in prison: he has not only suffered imprisonment, a denial of freedom, but he has also forged some kind of freedom where he is. It is probably a freedom that I have yet to forge in prison's "outer" world. Who can leave a prison undisturbed by foreboding thoughts like these? Just the visit to Mumia's (and other long-term prisoners) leaves me often haunted. At times that haunting also can lead me to think that I share some kind of space with the imprisoned, a space in the world that as Foucault observed "is created *not* to be a prison" but is in fact an "entire parapenitentiary institution."<sup>68</sup> Recall too that it was Foucault who observed about the "carceral archipelago" of society, "there is no outside."<sup>69</sup> I live then amid tensions of a most troubled freedom. I can even find myself anxious over whether my very organizing and writing about Mumia is not itself

68 → Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, trans. Alan Sheridan (New York: Pantheon, 1977), 294.

69 → Foucault, *Discipline*, 301.

somehow part of the very apparatus that leaves him confined inside the hell of prison. Professor Joy James has explored the contradictions awaiting the so-called “scholar activist.”<sup>70</sup> If I write directly about him, as I do repeatedly, I have another publication (even if it and Mumia’s plight is ignored) and Mumia still experiences incarceration—pending some organizing praxis of activists and liberating forces outside academe. Part of my troubled freedom is this question: How can any “freedom” that I think I have in neoliberal academe actually function as some contribution toward the concrete freedoms and release that Mumia and so many others need? For now, I don’t think the angst in that question should ever go away. The *angst* itself is part of what I’ll later term a “wound” worked also by interpellation.

Haunting now emergent from the hailing, is perhaps an experience full of meanings pertinent to educational theory. Exploring those meanings must remain outside the scope of this project. Suffice it to suggest here that being hailed and haunted, and especially with the unresolvable *angst* I broached, can enable teachers and learners to have new experiences of their bodies-in-space and on site. I know colleagues who have taught (and learned) in prisons, particularly those who are on the faculties of Vanderbilt and Rutgers Universities, whose later speaking and writing show signs of the *angst* arising with being hailed and haunted. So let me turn to this re-situating of academic bodies that is a further result.

### **INTERPELLATION 3—A RE-SITUATING**

Again, by identifying these features of interpellation, I am trying to give greater complexity and specificity to what a created “theoretical-practical co-solidarity” might be, as it could exist between those of the “prevailing system” and the interpellators usually external to that system. If we turn to a third feature of this interpellation, I want to foreground now a certain “re-situating” of both the interpellator and

70 → Joy James, “Academia, Activism, and Imprisoned Intellectuals,” in *Social Justice*, Volume 30 No. 2(2003): 3-7; and Joy James and Edmund T. Gordon, “Afterward: Activist Scholar or Radical Subjects? In *Engaging Contradictions: Theory, Politics and Methods of Activist Scholarship*, ed. Charles R. Hale (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2008), 367-73.

the interpellated. There is a re-situating of Mumia's own persona and work within the worlds of some interlocutors in neoliberal academe. I have already mentioned the appearance of Mumia's writing in *The Yale Law Journal*.<sup>71</sup> Marc Lamont Hill, anthropologist and communications scholar at Temple University, co-published a book on education after several interviews and visits with Mumia.<sup>72</sup> I have to say, however, that most scholars, even working on issues related to his case and to Mumia's voluminous writings have been hesitant actually to cite him, to position themselves in serious intellectual dialogue with his work. There are continuing and important exceptions. Scholars Joy James and Dylan Rodríguez have presented and analyzed the importance of imprisoned intellectuals, including Mumia.<sup>73</sup> Activist and filmmaker Stephen Vittoria, for example, has co-authored with Mumia a massive three-volume work on European colonialism, neocolonialism, and U.S. wars and imperialism, entitled *Murder Incorporated: Empire, Genocide and Manifest Destiny*.<sup>74</sup> I have tried to set Mumia Abu-Jamal in relation to some of the current discussions of leading figures such as Derrida (who in fact supported Mumia<sup>75</sup>), and also Giorgio Agamben, Abdul JanMohamed, Walter Benjamin and others.<sup>76</sup> A still more promising development, perhaps, has been the entry of Mumia into a doctoral program, The History of Consciousness Program at the University of

71 → Mumia Abu-Jamal, "Teetering on the Brink: Between Death and Life." *The Yale Law Review* 100, no. 2/3 (1991): 993-1003.

72 → Mumia Abu-Jamal and Marc Lamont Hill, *The Classroom and the Cell: Conversations on Black Life in America* (Chicago: Third World Press, 2012).

73 → Joy James, *Imprisoned Intellectuals: America's Political Prisoners Write on Life, Liberation, and Rebellion* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2003), and Dylan Rodríguez, *Forced Passages: Imprisoned Racial Intellectuals and the U.S. Prison Regime* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2001).

74 → See Mumia Abu-Jamal and Stephen Vittoria, *Murder Incorporated: Empire, Genocide, Manifest Destiny*. Three volumes (San Francisco: Prison Radio, 2018-2020).

75 → Jacques Derrida, "For Mumia Abu-Jamal" and "Open Letter to Bill Clinton," in Jacques Derrida, *Negotiations: Interventions and Interviews, 1971-2000* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2002), 125-9, 130-2.

76 → Mark Lewis Taylor, "Today's State of Exception: Abu-Jamal, Agamben, JanMohamed and the Crisis of Democracy," *Political Theology* Vol. 10 No. 2 (April 2010): 305-24. In another book of mine, I also presented the movement for Abu-Jamal as a critical resource for fomenting constructive resistance to the U.S. "state that kills." See Taylor, *The Executed God: The Way of the Cross in Lockdown America* (Fortress Press, 2015), 416-449.

California, Santa Cruz. This has the potential of challenging young scholars in higher education to reforge connections between academic and political struggle.

But for scholars in neoliberal academe to engage such a work, and other works in Mumia Abu-Jamal's growing theoretical-practical writings, entails allowing ourselves to be re-situated in relation to the Black radical tradition and hence to accustom ourselves more to work in the shadows of neoliberal academe. To be sure, the Black radical tradition is already represented in the academy.<sup>77</sup> Many of these scholars, however, as they are re-situated in spaces beyond the usual concerns of neoliberal academe, often find little support from today's major universities. Being so re-situated is surely not a pathway to success in neoliberal academe. But what does such a scholar's re-situating look like? I can give two examples from amidst my own interpellation, without claiming that these are the only possible examples or even ideal ones.

The first is a discursive re-situating. This involves my published works in critical theological and religious studies about the figure of Jesus of Nazareth. Long before my work with Mumia, and ever more so now, my framing of discourse about Jesus of Nazareth is strongly historical and political. My discourse in the main is not constrained either by biblical, doctrinal or ecclesial credal formulas of the church. Historically, I have emphasized that the most verifiable event in the life of this figure is only that he was crucified by Rome, and that the most important ways of studying Jesus movements and its later adherents' emancipatory and liberating praxis is through historical, social, and political methods.<sup>78</sup> This method can unveil political and spiritual practices in movements of "crucified peoples" (Ignacio Ellacuría),<sup>79</sup> and such practices are still discernible on the decolonizing underside of systems of imperial domination today.<sup>80</sup> Most Christianity in the U.S.

77 → See above, notes 14, 15, 16, and 22.

78 → The fullest treatment of this argument is in Taylor, *The Executed God*, 203-320.

79 → Ignacio Ellacuría, "The Crucified People: An Essay in Historical Soteriology, trans. Phillip Berryman and Robert R. Barr, in *Ignacio Ellacuría: Essays on History, Liberation and Salvation*, ed. Michael E. Lee (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2013), 195-224.

80 → Raimundo Barreto and Roberto Sirvent, editors. *Decolonial Christianities: Latinx and Latin American Perspectives* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2019), 1-21.

has sold out this historically and politically unveiled Jesus, as did the church when it assumed its own imperial positioning in the fourth century with Constantinian rule. Mumia himself captured this and other betrayals by Christendom in his own slyly-penned, questioning paragraph. I have cited it, placing it on the first page of the Preface to both editions of my book, *The Executed God*. “Isn’t it odd,” Mumia writes,

that Christendom—that huge body of humankind that claims spiritual descent from the Jewish carpenter of Nazareth—claims to pray to and adore a being who was prisoner of Roman power, an inmate of the empire’s death row? That the one it considers the personification of the Creator of the Universe was tortured, humiliated, beaten and crucified on a barren scrap of land on the imperial periphery, at Golgotha, the place of the skull? That the majority of its adherents strenuously support the state’s execution of thousands of imprisoned citizens? That the overwhelming majority of its judges, prosecutors and lawyers—those who condemn, prosecute, and sell out the condemned—claim to be followers of the fettered, spat-upon naked God?<sup>81</sup>

A radio interview about my book, *The Executed God*, planned for early 2002 was cancelled by the prospective interviewer when he noted the above passage, which he referred to as “heretical, socialist” and my “callous embrace of a cop-killer.” Indeed, Mumia is not himself a Christian. He is more an adherent of the MOVE Organization following the teachings of John Africa and others.<sup>82</sup> MOVE shares much in common with the indigenous cosmovision and spirituality that Sylvia Marcos has been exploring, wherein the political and the spiritual are

81 → Mumia Abu-Jamal, *Death Blossoms: Reflections from a Prisoner of Conscience*. Expanded edition (San Francisco: City Lights Books, 2020), 39.

82 → Michael Boyette, Randi Boyette, *Let It Burn: MOVE, the Philadelphia Police Department, and the Confrontation that Changed a City* (San Diego, CA: Quadrant Press, 2013). See also *On A Move: Website of the MOVE Organization*. [www.onamove.com](http://www.onamove.com) (accessed March 15, 2021). See also notes 44 and 45 above.

inseparable, live from one another, as do “spirit” and “matter” so long split asunder by a Christianized coloniality of power that sets spirit in tyrannical rule over all bodies and lands deemed “material.”<sup>83</sup>

Indeed, Mumia can claim his own version of allegiance to the figure of Jesus, as when in criticizing most of the abstract and doctrinal messages of the cross, he states in a poem, taking on the persona of “Rufus, a Slave” that he still loves the Jesus of the cross because he “went through the same hell as we [“we” blacks who endure slavery and its legacy] still do.”<sup>84</sup> When visiting about the poem with Mumia a couple of years ago, I remarked that, for most of my Princeton theologian colleagues and our graduated ministers, Mumia’s poem ending in that kind of declared love for the crucified figure would be dismissed and demeaned as a weak and minimalist Christology. But then we both uttered with our voices in an unplanned unison: “that’s everything right there!” So, what I am emphasizing here is that to believe this, as I do, about a historicized and politicized cosmivision of Jesus of Nazareth and crucified peoples, and to find such grounded belief and thinking to thrive in the U.S. gulag has reinforced in my work a kind of discursive, conceptual re-situating of my life and work. This, in turn, has involved a certain consignment of my work to the peripheries of theological centers of neoliberal academe. This is one part of interpellation as “re-situating.”

This *discursive* consignment, at the level of questioning and departing from Christian colonizing beliefs, often leads to an *extra-discursive* marginalization, i.e., more practical and organizational isolation in the academy. This is another part of the re-situating of being interpellated. One need not adopt a kind of heroic martyr complex here, but there are real restrictions experienced when, and because some of us scholars have made our political and even spiritual home in the movement for Mumia Abu-Jamal and the Black radical struggle of which he is a part, attempting to forge our thinking in ways consonant with it. The alienation often comes in the form of suffering accusations of being judged “politically reductionist” or “ideological.”

83 → Sylvia Marcos, “Mesoamerican Women’s Indigenous Spirituality: Decolonizing Religious Belief,” in Barreto and Sirvent, *Decolonial*, 63-87.

84 → Abu-Jamal, *Death Blossoms*, 107-9.

This is mainly because Western Eurocentric Christendom's thinkers rarely treat political consciousness in scholarship as anything but "reductionist" or "ideological." Moreover, a lived practice for the Black radical tradition, when involving a figure like Mumia, can lead scholars to being aligned with "enemies of the U.S. state." Even if Mumia states "I reject the tools and weapons of violence," as he clearly has in his short essay on violence,<sup>85</sup> he is still, against all the exculpatory evidence for him, deemed one who must die—if not on death row, then as an elder in prison. Especially amid the COVID-19 pandemic, long-term mass incarceration can become a death sentence. In fact as I write now in March 2021, Mumia has just been diagnosed with COVID-19, thus catalyzing other health problems that put him at risk.

In sum, advocates hailed and haunted by those in Black radical struggle will usually also be re-situated in some way—discursively, with changes taking place in the ways we write and think in our disciplines, and extra-discursively, with changes that usually work forms of alienation, silent neglect or even denial of tenure and promotion.

What does this feature mean about interpellation? It means those of us who are interpellated will need to embrace a certain exclusion in the academy. For scholars like me, our white maleness will gain us some respite when we are interpellated to work with those of Black radical traditions. Scholars of color will of course pay a higher cost for any solidarity they might strike with those deemed "enemies of the state." But still Black scholars can be joined by White and other non-Black scholars, and from a wide array of backgrounds. Recall the advocates who headlined the Sunday full-page ad that EMAJ took out in *The New York Times*; it included Black scholar-activists like Cornel West, James Cone, Joy James, Toni Morrison, Angela Y. Davis, but also others like Vijay Prashad, Rudolfo Anaya, Leslie Marmon Silko, Sonia Sanchez, Howard Zinn, and Noam Chomsky.<sup>86</sup> Through displays of public solidarity of this sort, scholars re-situate themselves, reposition themselves in at least some slight way in both society and academe. But this usually leads to something more. And so the final feature of

85 → Abu-Jamal, *Death Blossoms*, 100.

86 → For *The New York Times* ad, see footnote 52 above.



interpellation.

#### **INTERPELLATION 4—RUPTURE FOR REORGANIZING?**

Dussel offers another point about interpellation which is the final one I wish to emphasize in the essay. For the process of interpellation of scholars working within the prevailing system, Dussel often writes of the “eruption” of the interpellator into the world(s) of the prevailing system. This eruption of the interpellator does not bring just appeal and demand. As the word “erupt” connotes, it ruptures and tears the structures of the prevailing system. It comes from a ruptured world after all, one kept in place by domination. It thus often works to bring a “wound,” the wounds of anguish that the colonized endure.<sup>87</sup> This is consonant with the discourse of “the founding colonial wound” that Western modernity rests upon and reinforces, a wound that decolonizing thought seeks to “think across” as Walter Mignolo has proposed.<sup>88</sup> Mignolo of course draws the notion of this wound from Gloria Anzaldúa’s notion of the “open wound” (*una herida abierta*) found at the brutal colonial border between the U.S and Mexico.<sup>89</sup>

My point is, and I am not sure Dussel stresses this sufficiently in his discourse on interpellation in his *Ethics* or elsewhere, that there will be on the side of the interpellated some experience of the wound, some form of entry into or experience of the colonial wound. It will be disorienting, painful. That is what a wound is. As long as neoliberal academe maintains itself in its current form, and as long as we try to keep working within its regime and ethos, those of us who are interpellated from within it, no matter the degree of our “theoretical co-solidarity” will remain wounded. We will be living in a rupture. The interpellator who ruptures the worlds of those in the prevailing system works a wound not unlike what Anzaldúa described as occurring at the U.S./Mexican border, where “the Third World grates against the First and bleeds.” She adds, “And before a scab forms it hemorrhages

87 → Dussel, “The Reason of the Other,” 36.

88 → Walter D. Mignolo, *The Idea of Latin America* (Malden MA: Blackwell, 2005), 53.

89 → Gloria Anzaldúa, *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza*. Third edition (San Francisco: Aunt Lute Books, 2007), 25.

again, the lifeblood of two worlds merging to form a third country—a border culture.”<sup>90</sup> Perhaps the wounds of the enslaved, by manacle, chain, and the coffle collar, are tools of wounding that must be remembered. Any such wounds are first and primarily those of the interpellator; but the interpellated also is impacted by the interpellator’s eruption. S/he too enters the border regions of neoliberal academia *if* they manage to endure and remain within it. One of the best accounts of those not enduring U.S. academe due to their political commitments is still offered by Michael Parenti in his chapter “The Empire in the Academy.”<sup>91</sup> Living and experiencing rupture—sometimes surviving it, sometimes not—is part of being interpellated.

To grapple with this I have often written on and deployed another notion of Derrida’s, also picked up by Gayatri Spivak in her well-known essay, “Can the Subaltern Speak?”<sup>92</sup> Derrida spoke of a certain need “to make the inner voice delirious, the inner voice that is the voice of the other in us.”<sup>93</sup> Derrida does not examine the many political modes of organizing that are part of being interpellated by the colonized and repressed, and so he does not connect this delirium to political struggle. Spivak, though, I think is right in suggesting that acknowledging this delirium is crucial to a practice of struggle and advocacy with subaltern peoples against colonialism and imperialism. It is especially crucial to own if we wish to reduce the danger of what she terms the “benevolent Western intellectuals” who thrive in neoliberal academe and often only serve to reconstitute the poor in their otherness by ever more refined references to them as “the poor” or even as “the other.” Such a delirium can be owned.<sup>94</sup> I suggest that we who are so interpellated do well to own the delirium as part of a life amidst

90 → Anzaldúa, *Borderlands*, 25.

91 → Michael Parenti, *After Empire*, (San Francisco: City Lights Books, 1995), 115-196.

92 → Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, “Can the Subaltern Speak? Speculations on Widow Sacrifice.” *Wedge* 7/8 (1985): 120-30.

93 → Jacques Derrida, “Of an Apocalyptic Tone Recently Adopted in Philosophy,” trans. John P. Leavey Jr. *Oxford Literary Review*. Volume 6, No 2 (1984): 3-37, page 11.

94 → On my own treatment of this “delirium” in relation to Spivak’s analysis of Derrida with further citations, see Mark Lewis Taylor, “Subalternity and Advocacy as *Kairos* in Theology,” in *Opting for the Margins: Postmodernity and Liberation in Christian Theology*, ed. Joerg Rieger (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003), 23-47.

rupture—a rupture caused (and here I switch theorists) by what Foucault termed “the insurrection of subjugated knowledges.”<sup>95</sup> Perhaps the delirium needs to be owned if one is to avoid the fate of re-constituting a liberalism within neoliberalism that establishes ever new versions of the great White paternal/maternal figures who would think themselves benefactors of the colonized and imprisoned. Being interpellated requires more than defending the shibboleths of neoliberals’ academic culture, for example the “multicultural diversity” that often is little more than academic administrators’ attempt at a bureaucratic management of difference. Defending those liberal notions is not what being interpellated looks like. Rather, it is to live in rupture, to find one’s balance amidst the delirium created by the wounds of rupture, by engaging in a continuous work between cry and response, receiving the cries of the interpellator then living into the movements and rupture of response, which *el grito*’s “roar of pain” provokes and demands, a cry that neoliberal academe does not want to hear.

In conclusion, it may seem that I end this essay by endorsing delirium and rupture, perhaps thereby rationalizing that “Left melancholy” which Walter Benjamin faulted as “left-wing radicalism . . . to which there is no longer, in general, any corresponding political action.”<sup>96</sup> In contrast, I suggest that the many moments of Dussel’s pedagogics of liberation, and as I have distilled them into interpellation’s key aspects for this essay, offer routes toward liberating transformation beyond such melancholy. To be sure, there persists what Cornel West describes as a Chekhovian penchant for despair. But this is not inimical to resolute, willed and hopeful action.<sup>97</sup> Perhaps the Chekhovian spirit is part of the delirium known in the wound, a disoriented spirit in us who are being interpellated while working in the system. Part of the power of Mumia’s voice and demand has been this: that from the hell and despair of death row USA and “Prison Nation” he dares to trace a rising

95 → Michel Foucault, “*Society Must Be Defended: Lectures at the Collège de France 1975-1976*,” trans. David Macey (New York: Picador, 1997), 6-11.

96 → Walter Benjamin, “Left-Wing Melancholy,” in *Walter Benjamin: Selected Writings 1931-1934*. Volume 2, Part 2. Ed. Michael W. Jennings, Howard Eiland and Gary Smith (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2005), 425.

97 → Cornel West, *Cornel West Reader* (New York: Basic Civitas Books, 2000), 556-67.

event of liberation in peoples' everyday lives as well as on a grander, often worldwide scale. He calls for a critical liberatory transformation of the everyday (revolutionary when it needs and can be) that emerges from the material lives of those relentlessly negated by dominative systems. At times, the interpellating call can be a severe pedagogics, whether emergent in neighborhoods, streets, or in classrooms of academe. But when the call comes—hailing us, haunting and re-situating us, rupturing us for the work of reorganizing—then all this comes with something more, a spirit of defiance that keeps the future open.

The time is ripe for a new, brighter, life-affirming vision that liberates, not represses, the poor, who after all are the vast majority of this Earth's people. Neither serpentine politics, nor sterile economic theory that treats them—people—as mere economic units offers much hope. For the very politicians they vote for spit in their faces, while economists write them off as “nonpersons.”

It must come from the poor, a rebellion of the spirit that reaffirms their intrinsic human worth, based upon who they are rather than what they possess. *From death row, this is Mumia Abu-Jamal.*<sup>98</sup> ■

98 → Abu-Jamal, *All Things Censored*, 206.