

# Prison Radio

A project of the Redwood Justice Fund

## Mumia Abu-Jamal's Radio Broadcasts

### Essay for German Conference Honoring Rosa Luxemburg

Long version: [mp3, 3.88 MBs, 4:46](#)

On the MOVE, greetings to the gathering at this latest conference on the extraordinary life of Rosa Luxemburg. I thank you all for your kind invitation. We're all, I'm sure impressed and moved by the courage and resolve of Rosa Luxemburg and when we remember her contributions, we're renewed and inspired by her militance.

She continues to inspire us generations after her passing. When I think about her, I re-read her letters to Sophie Liebkentz, the young wife of her comrade Carl, and find in there not Rosa the militant, nor even Rosa the martyr; we find Rosa the humanist, Rosa the environmentalist, even Rosa the human being yearning for freedom from the dungeons of her captivity.

I often surprise myself when I find a passage that touches me deeply as it is often one that I hadn't expected would do so. It was the end of May 1917, while she was interned at Ronqui prison. When last we spoke, I think I quoted her letter where she felt more animal than human (not surprising, as she was locked in a cage). Yet I was moved by her experience of seeing a butterfly trapped in her cell, as she wrote to Sophie whom she endearingly called "Sonia" or "Sonyesha"

"I had such an experience yesterday, I must tell you what happened. In the bathroom, before dinner I found a great peacock butterfly on the window. It must have been shut up there for two or three days, for it had almost worn itself out fluttering against the hard window panes so that there was now nothing more than a slight movement of the wings to show that it was still alive. Directly, I noticed it. I dressed myself, trimly with impatience, climbed up to the window and took it cautiously in my hand. It had now ceased a move and I thought it must be dead. But I took it to my own room and put it on the outside window sill to see if it would revive. There was again a gentle fluttering for a while, but after that the insect did not move. I laid a few flowers in front of the antenna so that it might have something to eat. At that moment the black cat sang in front of the window so lustfully that the echoes rang. Involuntarily, I spoke out loud to the butterfly saying "just listen how merrily the bird is singing. You must take heart too and come to life again." I could not help laughing at myself for speaking like this to a half-dead butterfly and I thought, you are wasting your breath. But I was not, for in about half of an hour, the little creature really revived. After moving about for a while it was able to flutter softly away.

Isn't this the very essence of her love of life? If this were shared with many of the environmentalist movement, how many might be drawn to socialist ideas and radicalists?

We learn much about the real Rosa Luxemburg from this exchange. We also learn a lot about prison conditions at the beginning of the 20th century. At Ronqua, Rosa spent over six hours outside in the open air daily. How far we've come when prison officials grudgingly grant one or two hours a day- these days? Yet what touches us all over a span of almost a century, is a deep humanism, her lust for life, her loving nature. She teaches us how to deepen and broaden our feelings for others- And we learn that much of this is the fountainhead of our political viewpoints. We are all at the dawn of the 21st century, imprisoned, in need of freedom, in the cage of capitalism and neo-liberalism. Like the people of Iraq, we're occupied. Our media is occupied territory, our schools are occupied territory, we live in silence imposed by martial/neoliberal/globalist law, and we all need a hand getting some fresh air.

Let us learn from Rosa and care for all of us

From Death Row, this is Mumia Abu-Jamal (Spoken in German)

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