

# NATION

## College chooses killer to address graduates

By Andrea Billups  
THE WASHINGTON TIMES

A Washington state liberal arts college is bracing itself today for protests over its unusual choice of a commencement speaker — a convicted cop killer whose speech was recorded from prison.

The 1,000 students graduating from Evergreen State College in Olympia, Wash., will hear taped remarks this afternoon from Mumia Abu-Jamal, a onetime radio journalist who was convicted in the slaying of Philadelphia police Officer Daniel Faulkner in 1981.

Abu-Jamal's selection by a student committee at the school has prompted an outcry from law enforcement officers around the nation and others, including the slain officer's widow, Maureen Faulkner. She plans to attend the ceremony to protest Abu-Jamal's remarks.

"I'm going to stand outside with a picture of my dead husband,"

### Policeman's widow to protest today's recorded remarks

said Mrs. Faulkner, who hopes students will walk out when the tape is played. "I think it's a travesty that this is happening. I don't think he should be heard. My husband can't be heard."

Washington Gov. Gary Locke, a Democrat and death penalty supporter who was invited to give the ceremony's keynote address, backed out last month in the wake of the flap. He said he understood the university's position, but supported the state's law enforcement officers who were angered by the choice of a speaker.

The graduation uproar also has found its way to Congress, where House Majority Whip Tom DeLay, Texas Republican, says he's shocked by the college's decision. "A college graduation should be a day of celebration, encouragement commitment and integrity, not an opportunity to give a free platform

for a convicted criminal on death row," he said.

Mr. DeLay said he will call for a moment of silence on the House floor today to show his solidarity with Mrs. Faulkner and the students at Evergreen who do not support the choice of speaker.

Abu-Jamal, despite his incarceration, has continued his social activism, publishing books and offering radio commentaries for Pacifica Radio Network and National Public Radio, which ended his segments in 1995, following intense police opposition.

Over the years, his case has mobilized a vocal phalanx of death penalty protesters from around the world, including Jesse Jackson and such other outspoken liberal celebrities as Whoopi Goldberg and Ed Asner. Abu-Jamal's supporters have organized massive marches and benefit concerts to

publicize his plight.

They argue that he was wrongly convicted because he was an outspoken critic of government who launched his own investigations of police probes into the activities of the Black Panther Party and other radical blacks.

Mr. Faulkner, who was 25 when he died, was shot while arresting Abu-Jamal's brother. Abu-Jamal, then named Wesley Cook, was wounded by Mr. Faulkner and was found at the scene of the shooting by police. Neither brother testified in the 1982 trial, and Abu-Jamal has yet to offer his version of the killing.

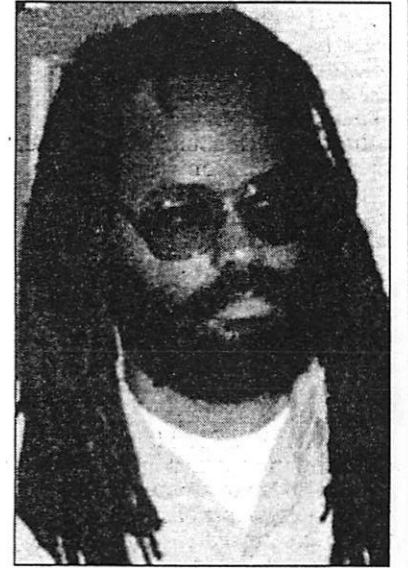
He received the death penalty and remains on Pennsylvania's death row. The Pennsylvania Supreme Court has twice upheld his conviction; his death warrant could be signed soon.

Evergreen State College spokes-

man Craig McLaughlin said his 4,000-student college was not prepared for the onslaught of media attention the selection of Abu-Jamal has caused. The school has been barraged with more than 1,000 letters, electronic messages and phone calls, most in protest of the felon's speech, he said.

Fearing a mass of protesters, including supporters of Abu-Jamal, the college is beefing up security for commencement, he said. School officials have no plans to cut the taped message, which they say is important to social discourse and key to the school's mission of providing a forum for the discussion of many points of view, including those that are controversial. Abu-Jamal's speech does not talk about his case, proclaim his innocence or advocate violence against police, Mr. Laughlin said.

"Mumia was asked to speak because he's become, for better or worse, a major participant in an important conversation in this so-



Mumia Abu-Jamal

ciety about race and justice," Mr. Laughlin said. "His message resonates with many of our students. Given recent news events, that's not completely surprising."