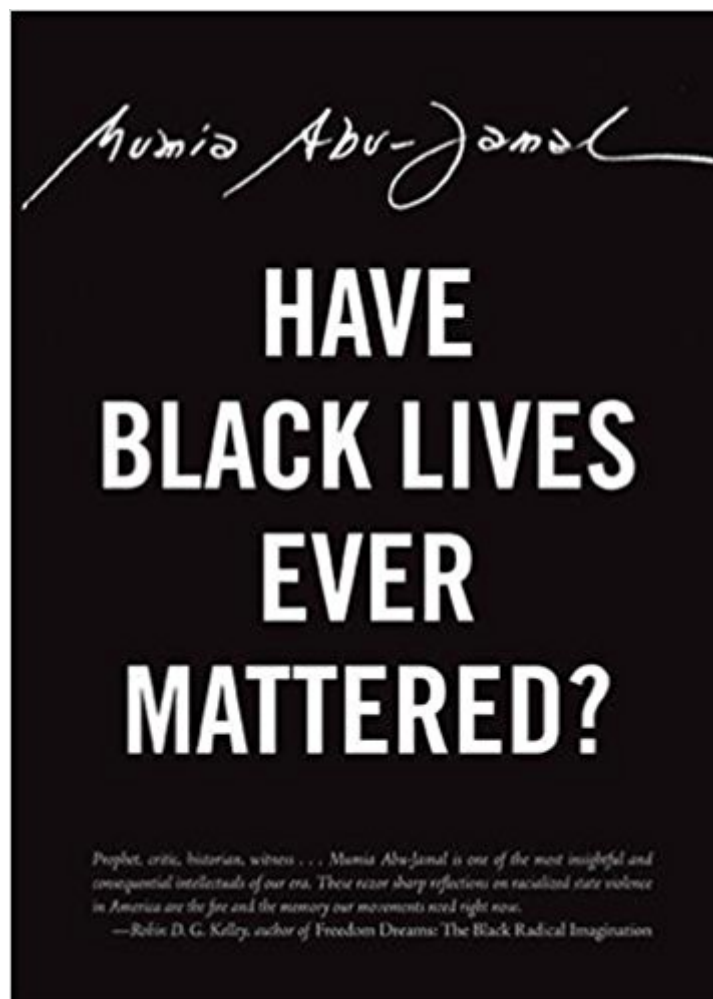


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# Have Black Lives Ever Mattered? (City Lights Open Media)



## Synopsis

"A must-read for anyone interested in social justice and inequalities, social movements, the criminal justice system, and African American history. An excellent companion to Michelle Alexander's *The New Jim Crow* and Ava DuVernay's documentary *13th*." — *Library Journal*, Starred review

"I was fortunate to grow up in a community in which it was apparent that our lives mattered. This memory is the antidote to the despair that seizes one of my generation when we hear the words 'Black Lives Matter.' We want to shout: Of course they do! To you, especially. In this brilliant, painful, factual and useful book, we see to whom our lives have not mattered: the profit driven Euro-Americans who enslaved and worked our ancestors to death within a few years, then murdered them and bought replacements. Many of these ancestors are buried beneath Wall Street. Mumia Abu-Jamal's painstaking courage, truth-telling, and disinterest in avoiding the reality of American racial life is, as always, honorable." — *Alice Walker*

"Prophet, critic, historian, witness . . . Mumia Abu-Jamal is one of the most insightful and consequential intellectuals of our era. These razor sharp reflections on racialized state violence in America are the fire and the memory our movements need right now." — *Robin D. G. Kelley*, author of *Freedom Dreams: The Black Radical Imagination*

"Mumia Abu Jamal's clarion call for justice and defiance of state oppression has never dimmed, despite his decades of being shackled and caged. He is one of our nation's most valiant revolutionaries and courageous intellectuals." — *Chris Hedges*, Pulitzer-prize winning journalist and author of *Wages of Rebellion: The Moral Imperative of Revolt*

"This collection of short meditations, written from a prison cell, captures the past two decades of police violence that gave rise to Black Lives Matter while digging deeply into the history of the United States. This is the book we need right now to find our bearings in the chaos." — *Roxanne Dunbar-Ortiz*, author of *An Indigenous Peoples' History of the United States*

In December 1981, Mumia Abu-Jamal was shot and beaten into unconsciousness by Philadelphia police. He awoke to find himself shackled to a hospital bed, accused of killing a cop. He was convicted and sentenced to death in a trial that Amnesty International has denounced as failing to meet the minimum standards of judicial fairness. In *Have Black Lives Ever Mattered?*, Mumia gives voice to the many people of color who have fallen to police bullets or racist abuse, and offers the post-Ferguson generation advice on how to address police abuse in the United States. This collection of his radio commentaries on the topic features an in-depth essay written especially for this book to examine the history of policing in America, with its origins in the white slave patrols of the antebellum South and an explicit mission to terrorize the country's black population. Applying a personal, historical, and political lens, Mumia provides a righteously angry and calmly principled radical black perspective on how racist violence

is tearing our country apart and what must be done to turn things around. Mumia Abu-Jamal is author of many books, including *Death Blossoms*, *Live from Death Row*, *All Things Censored*, *Writing on the Wall*, and *Jailhouse Lawyers*. "[Mumia's] writings are a wake-up call. He is a voice from our prophetic tradition, speaking to us here, now, lovingly, urgently." — Cornel West "He allows us to reflect upon the fact that transformational possibilities often emerge where we least expect them." — Angela Y. Davis "These writings date from the late 1990s and often show prescience on the part of the author, who was writing well before the Black Lives Matter movement that 'when the system kills Blacks, there is no outrage, for it has been normalized by centuries of white enslavement, terrorism, and injustice. Such violence is simply the accepted way of how things are.' Also included is a series of articles on the killing of Trayvon Martin, accurately anticipating the acquittal of the white man who shot him, and another series on Ferguson and its aftermath — how 'Ferguson may prove a wake-up call that Black lives matter. A call for youth to build social, radical, revolutionary movements for change.' The last piece is the longest, a pamphlet on how to build such a movement with a historical perspective on why this is necessary." — Kirkus Reviews "While the author does reflect on the widely reported cases of police violence against African Americans, as well as on the role of the media in determining what gets attention, the strength of the book rests in the essays that draw attention to lesser-known victims of police violence, particularly women of color whose stories never reached the mainstream media. Over the course of nearly four decades in prison, Abu-Jamal . . . has become an astute student of the justice system as well as a particularly cogent opponent of the death penalty." — Publishers Weekly

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

"When enough time has passed, as in when what was staring us in the face can actually be acknowledged, it will be significant that one of the clearest voices on the injustice of our justice system has spent much of his life in prison, and by many accounts, wrongfully. Here Jamal directs his attention at other people who have suffered at the hands of justice, and tells their stories. What a remarkable thing to be doing from the heart of one's own ongoing travesty." [•John Freeman, Literary Hub](#) "The columns list the roll call of victims in real time, from Abner Louima to Trayvon Martin and beyond. This is a book containing examples of, as one column called it, 'legalized police violence,' killings and abuse 'you pay for . . . every time you pay taxes, endur[ing] this every time you vote for politicians who sell out in an instant.' To Abu-Jamal, 'Americans are blind to everything but color' because 'United States history is a history of denial.' [•Todd Burroughs, Ã](#) [Ã](#) "Drums in the Global Village" [Ã](#) [Ã](#) "Capsulizing the history of white slave patrols, their relationship to today's police departments and a justice system that preserves immunity for officers who kill, Abu-Jamal goes on to suggest how and why we've arrived at such a horrific place in American history." [•Denise Sullivan, Down With Tyranny](#) "With the recent acquittal of two more police officers in the deaths of unarmed black men, the question posed by the title of this book is as relevant as it ever was. Through a series of concise, clear essays, Mumia Abu-Jamal details the racism against blacks, comparing today's behaviors with the lynchings that were common in the south prior to the decade of the sixties. . . . Have Black Lives Ever Mattered? is powerful, disturbing, well-written, and an important book for our day." [•Robert Fantina, New York Journal of Books](#) "In Have Black Lives Ever Mattered?, a recently published book by Abu-Jamal, he writes from his prison cell, taking readers on a journey from slavery's traumatizing past to the brutality of today's police state." [•Roqayah Chamseddine, Ã](#) [Ã](#) "Shadowproof" [•](#)

MUMIA ABU-JAMAL is an award-winning journalist and author of two best-selling books, *Live From Death Row* and *Death Blossoms*, which address prison life from a critical and spiritual perspective. In 1981 he was elected president of the Association of Black Journalists (Philadelphia chapter). That

same year he was arrested for allegedly killing a white police officer in Philadelphia. He was convicted and sentenced to death in 1982, in a process that has been described as an epic miscarriage of justice. In 2011, after spending more than 28 years on death row, his death sentence was vacated when the Supreme Court allowed to stand the decisions of four federal judges who had earlier declared his death sentence unconstitutional. He is now serving a life sentence without the possibility of parole. In spite of his three-decade-long imprisonment, most of which was spent in solitary confinement on Death Row, Abu-Jamal has relentlessly fought for his freedom and for his profession. From prison he has written seven books and thousands of radio commentaries. He holds a BA from Goddard College and an MA from California State University, Dominguez Hills. His books have sold more than 100,000 copies and have been translated into seven languages.

Excellent, timely book, with historical background necessary for understanding why the Black Lives Matter movement developed and is needed.

Well the title of the book is the question that is being presented to readers and after reading through this collection of short essays, ruminations and meditations all dealing with the results of police brutality or state-sanctioned racist acts, the answer is indisputable, a capital NO. Mumia is clear eyed on these pages and takes no prisoners. "United States history is a study in denial, for much of what is taught as history in the schools of the nation bears little relationship to the lives lived by millions of men, women and children on the land we now call America." Many of the commentaries may ring familiar, Oscar Grant, Trayvon Martin. Michael Brown, Tamir Rice and others. But there are some cases that he speaks of that have flown under the radar. The common denominator throughout is the callousness that these victims and their families have received from their government. The essays are not only contemporary, but Mumia also put the reality of racist violence in history clearly in his scope. Page after page the reading of unnecessary killings certainly makes the book question almost laughable. "It has taken a while to reach this conclusion, but upon reflection, it is inescapable. Why, after over half a century of Black voting, and the election of more Black political leaders than at any time since Reconstruction are the lives, fortunes, prospects, and hopes of Black people so grim?" Mumia closes the book with an extended essay that was originally published as a pamphlet and has been updated for this book release, titled "To Protect And Serve Whom? Given everything the reader will have absorbed prior, this question is highly legitimate. In this concluding essay he talks about the emergence of movements, the opposing of movements, failure of Black politicians and what's next. What will become abundantly clear as one peruses these

pages, is just how entrenched the status quo is that allows for such horrific outcomes with police encounters that far too often and with increasingly regularity leave men, women and children dead. As Mumia writes, "When the state permits its servants to take the life of living, breathing, growing, wondrous children, it ceases to have a reason to exist in the world. It has failed utterly." Clearly it will take the masses of good change-oriented people to address this failure. Thanks to Consortium Books and Edelweiss for an advanced ebook. The book is available for sale now.

This review is from Demico Boothe, author of WHY ARE SO MANY BLACK MEN IN PRISON? and GETTING OUT & STAYING OUT: A BLACK MAN'S GUIDE TO SUCCESS AFTER PRISON: A great book! Good information, and very truthful. In America, black lives have never mattered. Black people need to wake up, but I doubt that will ever happen, judging by history and what I am continuing to see with our deeply embedded Stockholm Syndrome. I recommend this book for all truth tellers and truth seekers.

Mumia Abu-Jamal does it again! His book, Have Black Lives Ever Mattered, examines cases of police terror and racism in this country from the 90's up until this year. Ranging from Rodney King & Emmett Till to Tamir Rice & Philando Castile, Mumia Abu-Jamal examines these acts of terror from the four walls that make up his jail cell, with a common solution for them all--- a revolution. Being from Baltimore, I was disappointed to not have seen anything pertaining to Freddie Gray, but nevertheless, in this book he analyzes & critiques a multitude of cases that help you draw the conclusion that we are all either A) learning to draw or B) have already drawn many, many years ago--- that Black lives do not matter in this country.

Essential reading by one of our most important voices.

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