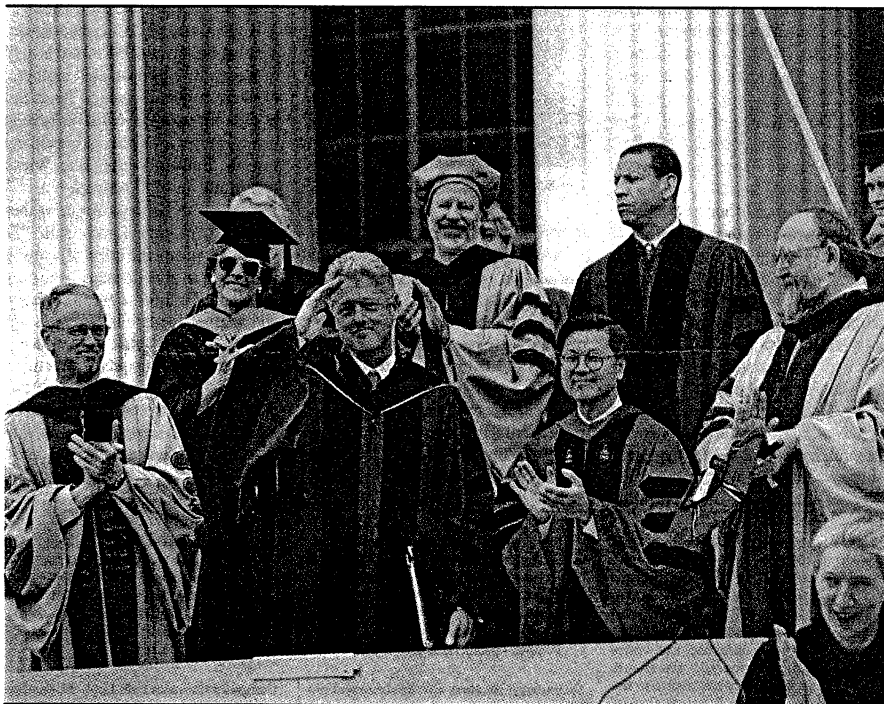




Berenson parents campaign for help

■ By Sarah H. Wright
News Office

Members of the MIT community, including Institute Professor Noam Chomsky, Institute Professor Emeritus Philip Morrison and Episco-

pal Chaplain Jane Gould, have signed an appeal to President Clinton on behalf of Lori Berenson (class of '91). The appeal was initiated by Ms. Berenson's parents, Mark and Rhoda Berenson of New York City.

The letter was delivered to the office of President Charles M. Vest last Thursday afternoon. It was handed to a member of President Clinton's immediate staff a few hours later.

Two events, a press conference and a silent vigil, both organized by Ms. Berenson's parents, were also held on the MIT campus at the end of last week.

Ms. Berenson, an American citizen working in Peru, was arrested, convicted of "treason against the fatherland" and jailed in Peru in 1995. She has been kept inside Yanamayo, a military prison, since then. Amnesty International has declared that she is a political prisoner and that Peru has acted in violation of international treaty obligations by imprisoning her.

At the press conference on June 4, Ms. Berenson's parents, who have visited Yanamayo, described the prison as the "Andean refrigerator." Their daughter spends 23 hours a day in a 6-by-10-foot cell; she has neither heat nor running water, and her health is deteriorating, they reported. Ms. Berenson has repeatedly asserted her innocence and has requested a fair and open trial.

Human rights activist and former US Attorney General Ramsey Clark spoke at MIT in support of the Berensons, declaring, "This is the most important liberty issue in the Western hemisphere. President Clinton has simply not done his duty."

The Berensons' letter asks President Clinton to intervene in Ms. Berenson's case and "to right this injustice—either by winning Lori's release or by requiring Peru to respect its treaty obligations."

The letter also notes, "Fifty-five Senators and 180 Representatives have written to Secretary of State Madeleine Albright calling on our government to help... to ensure that Lori is granted a fair trial or is immediately released."

On Commencement day, MIT community members wore white ribbons printed with the words, "Mr. President: Act now to free Lori Berenson MIT '91" in support of the former student and her family.

"President Vest has been very supportive of our situation," said Mrs. Berenson. She and her husband came to MIT last week "to remind President Clinton that MIT is Lori's home ground," she said.

Thursday, June 11, 1998

Dear Honorable Members of the City Council,

I thought members of the Cambridge City Council and the public at large would be interested to see this article from the official MIT publication, TECH TALK, regarding our activities on behalf of Joni Berenson (MIT '91) at MIT Commencement this past Friday.

I greatly appreciate the fine job done by Mrs. Sarah Wright, and would like to call your attention to the second sentence of the second paragraph in her article for TECH TALK.

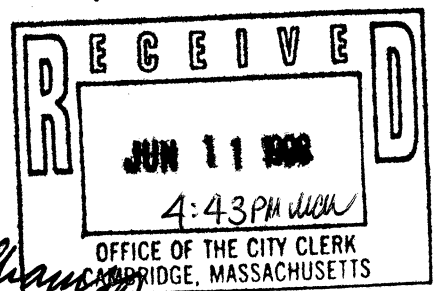
From this and other evidence from our activities at MIT with Joni's parents, there is every reason to believe that our message has been heard loud and clear by President Clinton. If we all continue to work together on this matter, there is every reason to hope that Joni Berenson may well be released in the not-to-distant future.

Let us all hope and pray - and work hard - that this will be the case.

With thanks again to the people of Cambridge and the City Council for their help and support,

Sincerely,

James M. Williamson



Consent Communication #91 4425

A communication was received
from James M. Williamson,
transmitting an article from
the official MIT publication,
TECH TALK, regarding activities
on behalf of Lori Berenson at the
MIT commencement.

In City Council June 15, 1998

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