

The BLACK C o M M e n t a t o r

An independent weekly internet magazine
dedicated to the movement for economic justice,
social justice and peace - Providing commentary,
analysis and investigations on issues affecting
African Americans and the African world.

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December 18 , 2008 - Issue 304

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The Hits Just Keep On Coming But the Brave Stand Strong! Represent Our Resistance By Dr. Lenore J. Daniels, PhD BlackCommentator.com Editorial Board

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"Let it never be forgotten, that our Negroes are freely the JACOBINS of the country; that they are the ANARCHISTS and the DOMESTIC ENEMY: the COMMON ENEMY OF CIVILIZED SOCIETY, and the BARBARIANS WHO WOULD, IF THEY COULD, BECOME THE DESTROYERS OF OUR RACE."

-Edwin C. Holland quoted in John Hope Franklin's [The Militant South, 1800-1861](#)

"The point of the exercise [torture] was getting prisoners to do irreparable damage to that part of themselves that believes in helping others above all else, that part of themselves that made them activists, replacing it with shame and humiliation."

-Naomi Klein, [The Shock Doctrine: The Rise of Disaster Capitalism](#)

You have heard by now the good news: The tireless activist Rev. Edward Pinkney of Benton Harbor, Michigan and "the only Preacher in the history of mankind, who was thrown into prison for Quoting the Bible" (Rev. Pinkney), will spend the holidays at home! For more than a year, no less than four of Michigan's "finest" prisons (extraordinary rendition?) have had the honor of fortifying the fighting spirit of Rev. Pinkney.

On Wednesday, December 10, 2008, a Court of Appeals granted a motion for bond on behalf of the minister. The "court properly recognized that serious constitutional questions are raised when a minister is thrown in prison for predicting what God might do," said Michael J. Steinberg, Michigan, ACLU. In other words, the walls of all four prisons and their guards couldn't restrain Rev. Pinkney from organizing against racist corporate destroyers, against unlawful local and state officials, and against an unjust judicial system. The bit about Rev. Pinkney's "predictions" is a smoke screen, a 10-second sound bite for the benefit of an American public accustomed to accepting the incarceration of Black Americans. These incarcerations, here and there, of the "criminal" elements of American society is part of the landscape. The influential community organizer challenged an anti-human prosecution and subjugation of Black auto-industry workers in the Benton Harbor. But who is listening beyond 10 second "news" bit?

Not so long ago, I co-chaired a small group of activists dedicated to bringing the troops home and the impeachment of King George and Darth Vader. I was living in a region known to many as the Upper South. I believed that impeachment hearings should commence for King George and Darth Vader - and soon. (Now that this is December, lets hope that prosecutions begin in this country - and soon). A dew of my articles for the local paper there and the *Black Commentator* addressed the issue of impeachment. War is war. It's no good. The invasion of Iraq (based on a lie) and the subsequent deaths of U.S. soldiers and Iraqi citizens are still evident of barbaric diplomacy and an even more criminal economic system that depends on death and destruction for survival. What part of that equation is hard to understand?

The members of this anti-war-impeach-the-King-and-his-court group were all white and male. I am *still* Black and a woman. Soon I recognized I was not in Dorothy's "Kansas" or the North for that matter: I was in the U.S. A.! The group couldn't fathom a Black woman's interest in dying soldiers and citizens in a far-off land and impeachment! Impeachment! *The* government in question looked like these guys and the King and Darth are *white* guys! It was more than a pinch of the nerves.

Not long after, I began to realize the dilemma my presence posed for them, the chair took to the road to gather signatures. I received the chair's written agenda for each meeting. But in the chair's absence, the members expressed their unease about the unwanted merger of *race*, *war*, and *impeachment* - not that race was even on the table. But it was in a chair seated at the table! Perhaps I was the embodiment of the "returned" native, staking a claim to bounty long absconded by my oppressors (since "militants" like me see whites as oppressors). But there was a "cleaner," easier sound bite for outsiders, should they hear about this business: I was perhaps planning (single-handedly) to usurp the chair, a long-time area activist and become chair of the group and present an agenda of my own! The sons and daughters of Black parents are in Iraq and Afghanistan and the King and his court's utter disregard for Katrina victims and for Black Americans in general has been abominable. But there was no room in their imaginations for recognizing Black as victims of this government's wedding to the corporate rulers.

In the absence of conscious Black, Latino/as, Native Americans, some white activists can imagine, if they imagine people of color at all, themselves as the leading "victims" of inequity with a sprinkling of some *imagined* "poor and helpless," usually at a safe

spatial distance. They can define themselves as "radical" in thought and deed and place themselves as members of and fighting spirits on behalf of the "hard working" American people. Who will challenge this conception of themselves and reality? And when challenged, it's better to believe I would *overthrow* the established order, no matter how unlikely or impossible, if I presented a threat to the status quo. Eventually, I left the group before talk of *change* in my constitution became an issue for an open discussion.

I didn't grow up in the South under Jim Crow, I used to say. Instead, I experienced Chicago's indirect segregation of Blacks and whites. But nothing ever dies. "Jim Crow" is more than a system of laws; it's an acceptance of social and economical order that feels comfort and less threatening. Fear of losing political and economic privilege has led to millions of deaths in sovereign lands such as Chile and Argentina, Nicaragua, Japan, Indochina, Iraq and Afghanistan. "Jim Crow in the U.S. and Operation Kill and Destroy abroad lays the narrative justification (ground work) for multinational corporate dominance in the world.

Rosa Parks tested the system's visceral signs and eventually Martin Luther King, Jr. brought them down. But what's alive in the man who stood quietly waiting for Parks to move - to give him *his* seat, the seat she *unfairly* occupied? She would have known. She would have seen with her eyes and felt with her heart the frightful cancerous growth standing above her, waiting. The cancer growing larger as its host became more and more indignant. Parks would have seen what no one in the front of that bus could see. Legal justifications and visible signs kept them safe from seeing.

A professor, a regular commentator on U.S. and world matters, (I am not sure if that's not redundant in some cases), wrote an article expressing anger at the silence or backpedaling of liberals and progressives. Where are the voices of concern about Obama's selection of centrists, old school Clintonites for his cabinet? Mmm. It is not a futile exercise, really, I told myself. So I sent the writer an email. I wrote that there are liberals and progressives - Black ones - who didn't throw their credibility away in support of Obama and who are at least critical of Obama's cabinet nominees. Some of us have remained consistent challengers of the Democratic Party as *lite*-corporatists as opposed to overt and heavy-handed Republican corporatists (not that this distinction makes a difference. Neither party represents the interests of workers). His response: You know who I meant!

No, I don't know, I wrote back. But then, of course, I do. He meant his fellow *white* visible-recognizable-look-alike-twins-liberals, mainstream or alternative - but white! See the "Whites" only sign?

I think it was a classic American failure to communicate. Is there a Black liberal or alternative press or not? If so, do white liberals bother to read these voices? Yes or No - it's a pinched nerve syndrome again. But that statement about the Black liberal or alternative press was *absent*. And because it was absent in print - it may well be absent in mind - and only an *unfair* request to include the voices of the Black press - liberal, progressive, or (heaven-forbid) radical would be akin to a disruption of order! Change, we can't believe in, yet! He meant the high profiled white liberal and progressive establishment, often highlighted by the corporate media to represent the Left in the U.S. to the exclusion of Black, Latino/a, Native American voices that don't capitulate to

the "polite" talk of politics.

The *Black Commentator* columnists and writers didn't spend those 18 months of the presidential campaign teaching its readers how to cook an omelet! They didn't spend their time chasing the "story" surrounding Brittany Spears or the Hilton girls or even interview experts to comment on Sen. Hilary Clinton's pantsuits! But the *Black Commentator* is perceived as a journal with a large, but not exclusively, Black readership and a majority Black columnists and writers. And regardless of how astute the readership and regardless of the columnists' and writers' academic credentials, their high level positions as community leaders and activists, and their expertise in being Black and Left's core activists, they are, after all, Black - and well, Black! A fringe element of that DOMESTIC ENEMY'S list (on the ledgers marked "sold" or "traded" for untoward behavior) long before McCarthy and Nixon made compiling "enemies" list popular.

In the *corporate* and sometimes liberal or alternative media, Blacks are relegated to the "Black issues." Crime, crime, and crime are the first three big news items for Black commentators. This past year saw the rise of a few new Black faces because there was (did you notice?) an African American running for president. Otherwise, they have their Juan Williams and their Shelby Steele or some young, elite, talented-tenth guy or gal praising in high-pitched tones the age of "race transcendence." (And these guys won't talk about re-distribution of the wealth or U.S. aggression, no!). All are allocated their five minutes to speak: "Black people 'too,' 'also,' and 'in addition' to the American people..." Beep! Over. Or turn the dial or click to the station - or whatever you do. The "is you" crowd of Black radio talk show hosts is brought to you by such and such corporation *without* conflict of interest! "Is you there?" "Is you with me?" Chuckle and a crack up because she or he is dating the best friend of the best girl friend - and it's all so hysterical. Black infotainment - with an emphasis on *entertainment*. Corporate sling shots enabling collectors of cash for dishing out trash and keeping up the much needed distraction that is anything but democratic and empowering. And I'd like to think there's shame or humiliation here because there's no memory of the terror in these voices! You have to stand "outside" this comfortable paradox to understand what is happening and to know you are experiencing something akin to torture.

This is how it begins.

It's a white woman standing and waiting. It's hard for you to maintain employment in "esoteric" literature, she tells me. It's a bolt out of the blue, uninvited and without warning. Move! Is that "esoteric" literature in general or Black literature or race, gender, class (troublesome) literature? Is "esoteric" literature the literature of the oppressor or the literature of people of color? Is this the "esoteric" writings of Euro-American "great" men, but not exclusively men, avoiding reality with endless meters describing a spring day or the fluttering eyelids of Lady so-and-so or pages if winding sentences to disguise the horror of the "returning" native or the torturous depiction of encroaching dark clouds over pastoral landscapes? Our heritage, beginning with the Ausetian Age (c.6000-4000), our stories, and our liberation narratives are withheld from our young and without this knowledge, they can't stand up!

You think? - and she looks at me, seriously. *You* think? Yes, *I* think because we think!

But I know what is happening.

This is how it began here.

Black Americans (descendants of the enslaved) and the Black Left in particular fell out of favor with white liberals and progressives. In the late 1960s and 70s, when this nation-state wrote the script for planned CIA-backed terror in Latin America, here in North American cities, Kwame Ture, Angela Davis, and the Black Panthers echoed Malcolm and King, and all - speaking in unison, cried out that the U.S. has a problem with equality with Blacks; the U.S. is an imperialist State that "colonizes" the people of color within and without its borders; and the imperialist State is the greatest purveyor of violence. These voices pinched nerves! Don't look for these voices on the commodity exchange in the free market; for, as long-time warnings about the disaster that is capitalism, they are not usable. Some of the best witnesses to disaster capitalism and Operation America are never called upon until they are killed! There is a market, however, for posters, t-shirts, and books in which these voices are linked to a *past*, in history, and today's warnings by Black Americans are described as the voices of heretics.

The "planned misery" slain Argentinean writer Rudolfo Walsh noted in the 1970s (*Shock Doctrine: The Rise of Disaster Capitalism*, Naomi Klein) took root here in genocide and in slavery. There was always an "enemy within" and they, as unpaid workers toiled in "planned misery." The urban unrest of the 1970s only served as an excuse to initiate, without social or moral "regulations," the beginnings of corporatism in the U.S. Whites only took on a new (but not unfamiliar) implications.

Democracy is not free to develop anywhere.

In Greece, the teens and young people are fed up with the way their government has tried to strangle students and workers, making it impossible for many to pursue an education and a livelihood. We witness the anger of those teens and young college students in Greece as they set fire to buildings and shops. I have listened to the National Public Radio and BBC among other news sources, interview Socialist student leaders and the adult leadership, reserving reverence for their cause. Yet, few Americans would see in these Greek students the anger of young Blacks of the 1970s in Watts as anger against a system for which they knew "planned misery" was the agenda established by the political and economic apparatus especially for them. Invisible on sunny days when capitalism seems to work for a few, these were the voices "disappeared" from the white liberal's radar.

For this collective disaster, I do feel a sense of shame and humiliation because I know who we were and who we could be as a people, if we were well in mind and in body. But the damage has been done and may not be undone.

And that is why, when I think of the courage and bravery of Rev. Edward Pinkney, I'm inspired to move - not backward but forward. I'm reminded of the determination of our ancestors, *the* unfree, who first cried and then organized for freedom and the abolishment of slavery. I'm reminded of Denmark Vesey's shout: "Die like a Man!" I'm reminded of Harriet Tubman and her warning to quaking "slaves." Democratic Socialism is the goal. Those of us alive and undamaged must remain steadfast for the whole

community of those who want and end to anti-human systems of "planned misery." We must renew our vow, once again, in the new year to keep hold of that part of ourselves that makes us activists.

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The BlackCommentator Readers' Corner Blog

BlackCommentator.com Editorial Board member, Lenore Jean Daniels, PhD, has been a writer, for over thirty years of commentary, resistance criticism and cultural theory, and short stories with a Marxist sensibility to the impact of cultural narrative violence and its antithesis, resistance narratives. With entrenched dedication to justice and equality, she has served as a coordinator of student and community resistance projects that encourage the Black Feminist idea of an equalitarian community and facilitator of student-teacher communities behind the walls of academia for the last twenty years. Dr. Daniels holds a PhD in Modern American Literatures, with a specialty in Cultural Theory (race, gender, class narratives) from Loyola University, Chicago. Click [here](#) to contact Dr. Daniels.

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