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**Where is Reverend Edward Pinkney?
Represent Our Resistance
By Dr. Lenore J. Daniels, PhD
BlackCommentator.com Editorial Board**

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Where is Reverend Edward Pinkney?

We must speak with all the humility that is appropriate to our limited vision, but we must speak. And we must rejoice as well, for surely this is the first time in our nation's history that a significant number of its religious leaders have chosen to move beyond the prophesying of smooth patriotism to the high grounds of a firm dissent based upon the mandates of conscience and the reading of history.

-Martin Luther King, "Riverside Church Address: Beyond Vietnam" (April 4, 1967)

The Ojibwa Correctional Facility. Yes, Rev. Edward Pinkney has been moved once again!

Why? Well, the Reverend is still has too much influence!

It seems the authorities in Michigan are scared of Rev. Pinkney. On Friday, September 5, 2008, Rev. Pinkney, community activist, was transported from the Hiawatha Correctional Facility in Kincheloe, Michigan to the Ojibway Correctional Facility in Marenisco, Michigan - high above and to the west of the state! Rev. Pinkney is far from

his home and family in Benton Harbor, Michigan.

Get the picture? They need to silence support for Rev. Pinkney and subsequently kill his spirit!

I am fine and I know my purpose for being here. I am paraphrasing because, stunned, I stopped writing. I wanted to know how he felt, and I expected to hear he's eager to get out of dodge! But I am not Rev. Pinkney! *I am fine!* He was reaching others incarcerated at Hiawatha Correctional Facility. His conversations with others about the battle to save the Black community in Benton Harbor were reaching open ears. On Thursday, September 4, 2008, I listened to a strong-spirited Rev. Pinkney, speaking about his work, his calling, literally by the people themselves, to fight the local and state government sanction of Whirlpool's invasion into the Black community.

It's just a hello, but the voice reached across the space to me and he is there. I told him how honored I was to speak to him, finally after all this time of reading and writing about his case. I hear his voice and return greeting: *I am honored to speak to you*, and I immediately recognize we are engaging our shared African heritage - the kola nut or watermelon or cookies aside.

We have fifteen minutes.

After two weeks of calls to and messages left with the Hiawatha Correctional Facility, they are only allowing us to speak for fifteen minutes.

Rev. Pinkney talks quickly. He speaks about how he began his activism. In 1999, a young man is shot by the sheriff's department. The courts rule the killing a justifiable homicide. Soon after, residents take note of an increasing number of young Black men found dead across Michigan. In total, Rev. Pinkney, said, the deaths of some sixteen young Black men are declared "suicides." In 2000, Rev. Pinkney begins to monitor the court system, particularly in Benton Harbor, located in Berrien County, an area hit by the downsizing and outsourcing within the auto industry. He keeps files of these and other cases from 2000 to 2005. His files attract the attention of the ACLU, and eventually the ACLU files a lawsuit against Berrien County.

"I started in 2000 when people asked me to come in and become involved," said Rev. Pinkney. "My first thought was 'no.' That's when we started to work to find jobs for those recently left without employment."

"I had an opportunity to bring in 100 to 200 jobs. I had contact with people to bring in the jobs."

Eventually, the community "welcomed" the work of Rev. Pinkney. When he called for a re-call of the city commissioner, Glenn Yarbrough, again the people of Benton Harbor came through. They nominated Rev. Pinkney who ultimately won the city commissioner seat.

Politicians and their partners in the corporate world went to work, scheming to remove Rev. Pinkney and the Black community from Benton Harbor. Rev. Pinkney is being held hostage! At his trial, he recited a Biblical quote before the cold heart of Judge Alfred Butzbaugh, who heard in the quote a threat to his life! Butzbaugh's god is money, and

he stands to fill his bank account with millions of dollars from the Harbor Shores Project (a gang of cutthroats in cahoots with Whirlpool and others to re-make Benton Harbor into a resort for the white residents of neighboring town, St. Joseph).

Rev. Pinkney is the Green Party nominee for the 6th Congressional District in Michigan. The people's candidate, heir to the tradition of resistance on behalf of human rights is challenging the corporate world in the person of Fred Upton, heir to Whirlpool. This month, Rev. Pinkney called for a debate with Upton, but it seems that like most politicians/corporate crooks, he's *running* - scared!

I'm fine. I know there's a reason for being here.

In the world we live in, the world run by the insane, "normal" is to see anyone who actually serves the people as "mad." And so the local and state officials take note of Rev. Pinkney and his commitment to organize the people and to coordinate efforts to address the issue of unemployment. The authorities go ballistic!

There's something disturbing about a nation that calls its citizens to serve the needs of others and when they answer that call, the citizens find themselves tagged a "militant" and even a "terrorist." It's disturbing to see government-sanctioned terrorism against the activists and the people, and the subsequent repression of these people and activists open the door for corporations like Whirlpool in Benton Harbor to stomp on human rights. It's "Columbia" dear, up to her old tricks. "You're getting a little too old/Columbia/tTo be so naïve, and so coy./Being the world's big vampires/Why don't you come out and say so" (Langston Hughes). In the case of Rev. Pinkney vs. this government, there's no concealing the trickery to remove him and move him again and again, as if this would finally dampen the spirit of resistance!

Now follow this:

"People make the difference. It's a simple reality, but one that we have difficulty recognizing. I'll say it again. PEOPLE MAKE THE DIFFERENCE. People who choose to make a difference each day care about others. They value those around them. They give others the chance to succeed and grow. They mentor, educate, nurture, reassure, and support. They step up when others step back. They run into the fray, while others turn away. They listen. They lead when necessary and follow when required."

No. These are not the words of Rev. Pinkney. These are the words of one of his gatekeepers at Ojibway Correctional Facility, the new location where Rev. Pinkney is held hostage. It's an opening statement by the Public Information Specialist (Public Information and Communications) John C. Cordell from his article titled, "[A Different Perspective](#)," appearing on in the July 2, 2008, *F.Y.I.*, Vol. 20, Issue 15, published at the Michigan Department of Correction website.

I am afraid that there's no difficulty recognizing that people make the difference. The authorities recognize this, alright. And they take action to camouflage fear of people who make a difference! We have seen them substitute themselves for the people and then proceed to mimic the people they have repressed! These folks are not the real thing!

"You're getting a little too old...To be so naïve... Columbia." The people see through your tactics.

The ACLU is ready to proceed with this case. The representatives should have received the transcripts from the bogus trial, August 18, 2008. But it's a world in which the ACLU is waiting and waiting. The court system is coy; it's stalling. So cute and childish!

I told Rev. Pinkney that I had sent him a list of questions to continue our interview. In fact, I had mailed those questions to the Hiawatha Correctional Facility on Tuesday, September 2, 2008. When I spoke to Dorothy Pinkney, Rev. Pinkney's wife, on Saturday evening, I was sure the letter had reached the Reverend. But that was not the case.

Mrs. Pinkney gave me the name and phone number of the Ojibway Correctional Facility on the day following Rev. Pinkney's "transfer" there. I called the "correctional facility" the following day or the following Monday only to be told I had called before. I could I have called before? I identified myself as a writer/columnist for the *Black Commentator*, and I asked to speak with Rev. Pinkney. The woman who answered informed me that I had called before. Really? I heard some sounds in the background and finally she informed me that Larry Pinkney, my colleague columnist with the BC had called already. So? I am calling now. Do I sound like Larry Pinkney?

Well, in the world of the insane... I am told that I first have to speak with a Micki Sorensen, Administrative Assistant to the Warden. Then, no. No. I need to talk with John C. Cordell, with the public information office. Yes, now I need to be approved to speak with Rev. Pinkney. Cordell must approve me. What about Sorensen. No, Cordell. Okay, Cordell.

I left a voice message with a woman in central office. I am not sure if it was Sorensen or not. I also left a voice message with John C. Cordell. Finally, I receive a voice message from him. By now, this is Thursday, September 11, 2008.

Cordell's message runs about three minutes in which he states that *they* (Ojibway Correctional, the state of Michigan, local authorities in Benton Harbor - or all of the above) want to "limit" the number of press contacts with Rev. Pinkney! Only one writer from the *Black Commentator* will be allowed to speak with the Reverend!

How crazy is this?

Who is this Cordell following now? Certainly he recognizes a true leader of people in Rev. Pinkney. Certainly he's been told to silence the leader of the people; the leader, who mentors, educates, nurtures, reassures, and supports his people. Cordell may be one among the gate keepers, but he's certainly isn't a leader! And he should know that! You honor a true leader of the people! People who follow old Columbia's rhetoric about terrorists will never recognize the honor we reserve for Rev. Pinkney.

The followers at Ojibway Correctional intend to keep Rev. Pinkney from us. Call them. Write the Warden, Michael Curley. Insist on speaking with Rev. Pinkney. Insist on his release!

But even more, rally around the movement begun by Rev. Pinkney! Tell everyone you

know about the breach of justice his case reveals and his candidacy for the seat in the 6th Congressional District in Michigan. Support the Black Autonomy Network Community Organization (BANCO) at bhbancoblogspot.com, and hold information sessions in your living room or local café. Above all, stand up for what you honor in Rev. Pinkney! Fight alongside Rev. Edward Pinkney! Now is the time!

Meanwhile, Reverend Pinkney has issued an appeal in the form of the following statement:

Dear Supporters:

We have gained the right to not be terrorized by the Klan but the court system and the correctional department are now bigger more widespread and just as deadly. Michigan's incarceration rate of 489 prisoners per 100,000 residents far exceeds that of Illinois (351), Indiana (388), Minnesota (180), New York (326), Ohio (340), Pennsylvania (340) and Wisconsin (380) all under the watch of Governor Jennifer Granholm.

Michigan's rate is higher because it sends more people to prison for petty reasons and keeps them there longer for comparable offenses. If the prisoner population were reduced to the 1996 level of 42,000, the incarceration rate would still be roughly 421 and that is still too many.

The relationship between the higher incarceration rates is not apparent, if Michigan had an incarceration rate equal to the average of those seven neighbors general funds spending for correctional programs in the Michigan budget might be reduced by as much as 500 million. More prison growth is not required for public safety. Michigan prison population has grown from under 15,000 to nearly 60,000 since 1984. Prison expansion is the product of sentencing and release policies that often have more to do with being tough on Black crime and Black people than with actually controlling it.

The major issue prisoners are facing right now involves placement in A.O.P. (Assault Offenders Program Class). A.O.P. is a six-month class recommended by the Psychology department of Health Services. Several inmates were put into A.O.P. at Ojibway Correctional Facility merely three weeks before their parole board hearing and five months before their release date. The class was subsequently canceled when the social worker that facilitated it took a leave of absence. At the Parole Board hearing two of the inmates were flopped (given 24 months) because the Parole Board said they couldn't be assured that they won't become a menace to society. They made this determination without having a report from A.O.P. because the class was canceled. The Parole Board made a decision without all the pertinent information (A.O.P. report). This is unfair, discriminatory and an egregious failure on behalf of the M.D.O.C. to provide classes in a timely manner. When asked when the class will resume the administration from counselors to the Warden have failed to provide an answer. This is not only at Ojibway Correctional Facility but also at every correctional facility in Michigan. We need everybody to call and write the Department of Corrections about this very serious matter.

James White #219184 in July of 2008 started his 18th year of incarceration. During his incarceration it was recommended that he take the Assaultive Offender Program (A.O.P.) before his release. He has been trying to get into this class since 2004. Each time he sent a Kite requesting placement he was told that he would be added to the class when his name reached the top of the list. Finally in July 2008 five months from his release date, he was placed in A.O.P. One week later his class was canceled. We need people to write a letter to Governor Granholm, The Department of Corrections and the Ojibway Correctional Facility as soon as possible.

Here at Ojibway Correctional we have no soap to wash our hands, no tissue in the wash-rooms, no bleach for our clothes, the food is the lowest grade of garbage you can eat and no washer and dryer in the unit. We need the help of the public to call Ojibway Correctional Facility. They have cut off my media connection, call and ask why; also call Lansing - MY LIFE IS AT STAKE.

Ojibway Correctional Facility
N 5705 Ojibway Road
Marenisco, Michigan 49947-9771

General number: 906-787-2217
For John C. Cordell: 517-373-0287
Gov. Granholm: 517-335-7858

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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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