

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.

www.BlackCommentator.com

January 8, 2009 - Issue 306

[Contents of Issue Menu](#)

[Click Here](#)

[Home](#)

Shackles: Made in the U.S.A Represent Our Resistance By Dr. Lenore J. Daniels, PhD BlackCommentator.com Editorial Board

Click on the back button of your browser to return to non printer friendly page of this article

[Click here](#) to get helpful hints for viewing and printing this printer friendly plain text page

Now when I say questioning the whole society, it means ultimately coming to see that the problem of racism, the problem of economic exploitation, and the problem of war are all tied together. These are the triple evils that are interrelated.

-Martin Luther King, Jr., [*Where Do We Go from Here: Chaos or Community?*](#)

We measure the distance between our bodies
And mortar shells...with the sixth sense.

-Mahmoud Darwish, *A State of Siege*

Now, in the interests of the public peace, it is the Black Panthers who are being murdered in their beds, by the dutiful and zealous police. But, for a policeman, all Black men, especially young Black men, are probably Black Panthers and all black women and children are probably allied with them: just as, in a Vietnam village, the entire population, men women, children, are considered as probable Vietcong.

-James Baldwin, [*No Name in the Street*](#)

It's Hamas and it's the zealous well-armed Israeli military now that see all Palestinian men as Hamas and all the women and children as allied with them. Hamas is the hated people and the hated people are Hamas. The hated people *voted* for Hamas. Together, they are among the "wretched of the Earth." They are among the abused and despised. 1948. 1948. Shackles!

The Congolese who proudly acclaimed Lumumba their president, the Chilean people who rallied around Allende, the Angolans, the Sandinistas, the Black Americans who worked along with Malcolm, Ella Baker, Kwame Ture, Huey P. Newton, Fred Hampton, and the people of Gaza - do we have the right as human beings to determine a political and economic agenda that values our humanity? To the shackled land of Palestinian, to the people of Gaza - we know. Over and over again, we have seen the blood and felt the aftermath of words still twisting in the air from the mouths of Caesars screaming, *democracy and freedom - or die, "terrorists, criminals!"*

... An acquaintance with shame is not to be expected from an Imperialist State that funds the bombs while maintaining the embargo.

Buck-naked fish

To hold a responsible position in an underdeveloped country is to know that in the end everything depends on the education of the masses, on raising the level of thought...to try, relentlessly and passionately, to teach the masses that everything depends on them.

-Frantz Fanon, [*The Wretched of the Earth*](#)

"When I first got off the bus, everybody was expecting me. [This was at Hiawatha Correctional Facility in Michigan]. I guess they were expecting big things from me. So I went to meet with all the leaders. I wanted to get them to think on a different level."

"They break you down to your lowest level. Then they never try to build you back up. When you get back into the world - you can't adjust to the world."

"That's what I saw."

(Rev. Edward Pinkney, granted an interview with the *Black Commentator* on December 30, 2008).

"I wanted to get with people so we could start building each other up. I was only there about three weeks. They shot me out of there so fast. They shot me over to Ojibway [Correctional Facility in Michigan. This is the same prison where, according to Rev. Pinkney, the washrooms, filthy and dirty, didn't have soap or tissue]. I was about 5 miles from Wisconsin. But when I got off the bus there, I had an idea to meet with some of the leaders and decide on some of the things that need to be done."

"The Aryan Nation and the Muslims never worked together until I got there. I told them that this thing is bigger than you, way bigger than you. When you fight among each other, you help out these people. You help the warden out; you help the COs (correctional officers) out because they don't have to do any work."

"I made the Mexicans and Puerto Ricans, who never really spoke together in prison, come together. I got the Indians together. I got the GDs [Gangster Disciples] and two other gangs together. I told them we had a common goal here."

"The first thing we did was to decide to boycott the kitchen. We decided that we were not going to eat that buck-naked fish."

"This is a fish that is old, really old. They give it to the prisoners because other people don't want to sell it to customers. But they force us to eat it twice a month. We decided that we were going to do that."

"They only make about 100 [buck-naked fish] because nobody ever come on this day. One this particular day, we decided that everybody was going to go in and get a submarine sandwich. Out of 1400 people [in the chow hall] we had 900 people asking for the sub. It was such an incredible thing. Even the warden, the assistant warden, everybody that was there could not believe that this had happened. It had never happened before."

One day, Rev. Pinkney was the last person to enter the chow hall for dinner. As he approached the counter, he heard, "there he is." It was the warden, assistant warden, and the head of the kitchen detail.

"The next time, they [the prison officials] decided they were going to fix us. They made 800 submarine sandwiches. Nobody showed up. [The prisoners held a meeting among themselves]. They had to throw that stuff away. It was garbage anyway. It was so tremendous that they had to get me out of there. They decided that nobody could put something together this good."

During his time at Ojibway, Rev. Pinkney's control area was under scrutiny. "They read all my legal papers, my notes, my mail."

That wasn't enough. "They [] planted a knife inside my locker." The prison officials came looking for the knife. In the meantime, Rev. Pinkney noticing the knife the night before, removed it from his locker and threw it away. "I didn't even know what it was. A guy in my area said, 'that's a knife.' I looked at him like he was crazy. I asked, 'this is a knife?' So I threw it away. But the prison officials tore up my area. They broke my radio. They took my headphones. They took everything and read all my notes. Everything I had in the locker was all over the floor. They couldn't find the knife, so now they mad. Three days later, they accused me of calling this guard a MF, knowing I don't use that language. Not once, but twice! And they wrote me a ticket for that. So now I have a ticket on my record, knowing that I would never get a ticket. Then he made the threat that he was going to get me. He said, 'we gonna get you.'"

"I got a little concerned because I know that those guys [prison administration] believe everything these guys [prison guards] say." Rev. Pinkney had already notified the warden about this particular guard who hated Rev. Pinkney. As Pinkney surmises, it was probably this guard who made the "shank," the homemade knife that Rev. Pinkney found planted in his locker.

"Whatever these guards say, the public believes them and everybody else believes these people, even though they are lying. That's why the people have to understand - they are not here to protect the public, the people. Who's going to protect the public against them?"

"But I don't have to worry about the Muslim brothers fighting with the Aryan Nation. Don't think that will ever happen as long as the leaders are there. I don't see the Mexicans fighting with the Puerto Ricans. I don't see the GDs fighting with the other gang members. I think right now, they [the prisoners] see what we accomplished. They were giving each other high-fives on the day that we didn't go to the cafeteria. That's when they [the prisoners] felt we accomplished something."

"When it was time for me to leave, an Aryan Nation member came up and gave me a hug. He said, 'Man, I'm goin' to miss you.' I told him to let someone know that he met someone who you felt comfortable with and he was a Black man. It's not important that you like me - as long as we can come to a common goal."

Crimes against Humanity

And to have to deal with such people can be unutterably exhausting, for they...are perpetually defending themselves against charges...The record is there for all to read. It resounds all over the world.

-James Baldwin, "The White Man's Guilt"

"What people don't understand is that they are closing prisons down now and they are going to make them into concentration camps. People say, 'well I'm an around-American white person. The chances of me ever being in a concentration camp are one out of a million.' But in reality, they could be in next year."

"I didn't go in because I committed a crime. I didn't commit any crime. But they accused me of committing a crime, and when they accuse you, and they have all the power being them, and the people remain silent, that's when they can do all this stuff."

"It's the same thing you saw during the Nazi era. The people were silent then. 'Oh, it's going to end shortly.' In reality, I can see the same thing building up here [in the U.S., in the city of Benton Harbor]. All the jobs are gone. The only place you can work for is Whirlpool or a fast food service or Wal-Mart. You make minimum wage. I see a person who has established themselves, been to college three or four years, coming home to work at Burger King. Or come home and work at Wal-Mart. And they are setting you up to either drive you out of this community, maybe even out of this state, or get you ready for the concentration camps. That's what is going on right now. But the average person is saying it doesn't affect me. It doesn't affect my family. It doesn't affect my children. It affects *them*."

"But then you are going to be shocked when you find out it affects you also."

Here, in the United States, Rev. Edward Pinkney is at "home" in shackles, but he isn't soft on crimes committed in the name of the "American people" against humanity. It has been a week since Rev. Pinkney was released from prison for quoting a passage from the Bible before Judge Alfred Butzbaugh in Berrien County, Michigan (2007). Then Judge Dennis Wiley, no doubt, feeling the sting of truth, proclaimed a violation of the terms of Rev. Pinkney's probation. Judge Wiley hears in the recitation of the Bible passage a *threat!* Truth can kill. It certainly seemed to *injure* the judge: He sentenced Rev. Pinkney to 3-10 years in prison.

Let's not forget, Rev. Pinkney is an activist, along with his wife, Dorothy Pinkney, and community members. This community of humanity has long fought Whirlpool corporation's agenda of "ethnic cleansing" in Benton Harbor, where the majority of the residents were Black and unemployed. Consequently, among a marked community of humanity resisting the American Empire and its corporate men, Rev. Pinkney is a "criminal" and, therefore, legitimately, in its ideology, a target for aggressive action.

"On December 11, 2008, the Appeal Court overturned Berrien County Courthouse's hearing to deny my appeal. Once they overturned it, I was to have a hearing."

Rev. Pinkney was to be present at the Berrien County Courthouse.

"They didn't want me to be released." The warden, eager to "get rid" of Rev. Pinkney, set up a video feed to the Berrien County Courthouse. At the hearing, Rev. Pinkney's attorney informed Judge Wiley that he was only "to give an amount" for the bond "not set conditions because conditions had already been set. But during the course of the hearing, he [Judge Wiley] set out 17 conditions."

"He wanted the prosecutor to file a brief to delay me getting out. 'I will give you time to file a brief,'" Judge Wiley told the prosecutor - not once but three times! "'What's the rush to get Pinkney out of here?'"

"The prosecutor stated 'I just want to get this over with. There's no reason for him to be in prison at this stage.'"

The judge was not pleased. [He announced that he could set the bond at 150,000 dollars! A threat?]. He settled finally on a 10,000 dollar bond, and Rev. Pinkney "put up 1,000 dollars."

Silence

Over 2 million people are incarcerated in the U.S. Five percent of the world's population holds a quarter of humanity in prison. The War on Terror shackles and silences the people who struggle below the wealthy, ruling class. The practice of justice represents a crafting of language to guarantee the shackling of "them." This is what happens behind the shouting of the word "democracy." The "victim" is the judge, the powerful representative of the State, and the criminal is the people, the excess surplus of humanity.

Rev. Pinkney's incarceration benefited Whirlpool's development plans in Benton Harbor, Michigan. His "freedom" outside the walls of prison will benefit the prison industrial complex.

Rev. Pinkney continues:

"I can't go to church or speak at a church or speak anywhere in reference to anything."

He can't use any electronic or media device, including the internet. "I am saying is unconstitutional."

"I am not to come within 100 feet of Judge Alfred Butzbaugh, including but not limited to his residence or office. He stated him as a victim. That's where the problem comes in because basically - he wasn't a victim!"

"I'm to have no contact with Berrien County Courthouse. I can't enter into their property, unless required by court hearing to which you are a party to. This I'm saying is also unconstitutional."

Rev. Pinkney is under 24/7 house arrest. "I can't even come out for fresh air."

I must "comply with the Berrien County jail chief's electronic monitoring system - called the tether program in which you are monitored 24 hours a day by satellite." His phone calls are monitored by this system.

He must not be in possession of any weapons of any kind. The conditions also required Rev. Pinkney to surrender his passport or visa, and driver's license.

He must not participate in any campaign in any capacity. He must not run for office or "even be around a person running for office which is also unconstitutional."

He must not have contact with anyone with a felony record.

He must not be in possession of "paging device or cell phone or two-way radio or any similar device."

He must not be in possession of alcohol or drugs and he must not be "around anyone with drugs."

He must allow the sheriff to come in his home at any time.

"So basically these are the conditions they drew up. I think he [Judge Wiley] was way out of line. His job was to give an amount. That's why I have to question these conditions. Because, once again, we are allowing these people to do the same identical things they've been doing and getting away with. We the people have failed to step up to the plate to do anything in reference to it."

"It's designed to silence people. I can't go into a church. I can't go in there and speak. We have so many people with a felony that would be hard to not be around someone with a felony."

"What they are attempting to do is illegal, against the law. It's unconstitutional."

Action

...We must honestly face the fact that the movement must address itself to the question of restructuring the whole American society...When you ask the question, [where do we go from here?], you begin to question the capitalistic economy...We are called upon to help the discouraged beggars in life's marketplace. But one day we must come to see that an edifice which produces beggars [prisoners] needs restructuring.

-Martin Luther King, Jr., "Where Do We Go From Here?"

The ACLU will file another brief "to show, once again, that they do not follow the constitution. Most Blacks don't have the money to fight." Rev. Pinkney is thankful for the ACLU and attorney Michael Steinberg who has "stepped in and decided he's going to fight this to the end." Both the ACLU and Rev. Pinkney's lawyers have put in "over 100 thousand dollars each team."

"But my thing is this - we the people have to take a stand. We have to take a stand and determine what we need to do. It's time to stand up and do things in an orderly fashion because if we don't stand up, we will fall for anything."

"We need to find a way to unify all across the country - the people themselves because there's more of us than them. Even while I was in jail, that was my message to the people - there are more of us than them. But we must stand up and we must do the right thing. We must continue to stand tall and let people know what we stand for. Because if you are in Germany or in China, I am pretty sure you are having some of these same problems. But right now, we need to show that we can put together things. We need resources."

"People have a history of believing that it can never happen to me. But let me tell you right now, if it can happen to me, a man who you would never dream would be in a prison system, it can happen to you."

"When you go to these courts, they have you thinking that they are there to protect the public. Not true. It's all about money. It's a money-making business - the prison industrial complex. The prison system is about to be taken over by private corporations. It's just a matter of time because people have sat back and allowed them to do exactly what they wanted to do. You never used to hear about a person going to prison for a misdemeanor. But, here in Berrien County, you go to prison for a

misdemeanor charge.”

“I don’t blame the legal system for what they are doing. I blame the people. People sit back and wait until something happens to them and then they want to do something. You can’t wait until something happens to you.”

“When you know about a system, it’s easy to combat them when you have the numbers.”

“People have been silent for so long. They don’t ever speak up. They sit back and let other people do it. They let other people do the fighting. And then when the other guy goes to jail for it, they say, ‘oh, I’m glad it wasn’t me’. But you don’t have to do nothing. You can be sitting in your living room, and they can come and pull you out of your home, put handcuffs on you and shackle you.”

“You have to prepare yourself for this. You have to get out here and do what you need to do. And the first thing to do is to get educated on what’s going on, on what’s going on in your community, in the state, in the country. You get out and see what is happening.”

“The key word is unification. We have to take the time out and make a decision.”

“Government is supposed to be run by the people. But government is run by government. We the people are supposed to be running government. We are the ones who are supposed to be making the decisions around here. They took the ball right out of our hands now. They are controlling everything. They are milking you for everything and we don’t have representation. We have guys running for office who don’t represent us. The only people they represent are the corporations.”

In the meantime, “the people are down here doing the holy dance” as a result of President-elect Obama’s win. Who will serve time for the murder of the Iraqi and the Afghani people? Who will take responsibility for the incarceration of the poor here in the U.S.?

“We have to speak out. We have to say that we are here. We have to say things that we never said before.”

“It’s about the people. It’s not about me. Me and my wife could have rode off into the sunset. It is time to stand up.”

“Humble” letters reveal a fearful writer. “We need to start writing letters. Start writing letters to Berrien County. Let these people know that you know there’s a problem here.”

“Write,” Rev. Pinkney suggests - straightforward letters to the Berrien County Courthouse: “We know you’re doing this, and we the people are taking a stance now.”

Black Commentator readers are encouraged to contact the department of corrections to protest the terms of the release.

**Honorable Jennifer Granholm
Michigan Department of Corrections
Office of the Parole Board
Pardons and Commutations Coordinator
P.O. Box 30003
Lansing, Michigan, 48909**

Include your name and address.

To assist with Rev. Pinkney's bond or for more information please visit the Black Autonomy Network Community Organization ([BANCO](#)).

[Click here to comment on any article in this issue or see what others are saying in the](#)

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.

[Contents of Issue Menu](#)

Click Here

[Home](#)

Click Here To

CONTRIBUTE TO  NOW

Click Here To

CONTACT 

Your comments are always welcome.

e-Mail re-print notice

If you send us an e-Mail message we may publish all or part of it, unless you tell us it is not for publication. You may also request that we withhold your name.

Thank you very much for your readership.

Website Design and Hosting provided by



Copyright © 2002 - 2008
www.BlackCommentator.com
All Rights Reserved