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**Reverend Edward Pinkney: A Champion of the People
Keeping It Real
By Larry Pinkney
BlackCommentator.com Editorial Board**

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"...We believe that every community has the right to define, determine and control institutions, so that they reflect the integrity of the people."

-Huey P. Newton

For well over five years now, Reverend Edward Pinkney (no relation), living in the depths of the de facto apartheid-type township of Benton Harbor, Michigan, has been waging a relentless struggle on behalf of the people of Benton Harbor (Berrien County) against the avaricious, blood sucking, wily Whirlpool Corporation and its mentally-somniferous lackeys. This is a struggle not only on behalf of the majority Black municipality of Benton Harbor, Michigan, but it is for *all* justice-loving people be they Black, White, Brown, Red, or Yellow. It has been and remains, a real *people's* struggle to "determine and control institutions, so that they reflect the integrity of the people;" in this case Benton Harbor.

Among other machinations, including the so-called 'Harbor Shores Project', the Cornerstone Alliance on behalf of Whirlpool Corporation appears determined to disenfranchise and gentrify [i.e. ethnically / economically cleanse] Benton Harbor of its Black population and expropriate the land in the majority Black township for an elite, *environmentally devastating* and poor people *unfriendly golf course*. Reverend Pinkney, back in the years 2007 and 2008, played a pivotal leadership role in organizing *against* the disenfranchisement of the Benton Harbor community. For this Rev. Pinkney was targeted by Berrien County authorities, wrongfully charged with voter fraud, in March, 2007 convicted by an all white jury of said charge, and placed on probation (which included being under *house arrest*) by Berrien County Judge Alfred Butzbaugh who had presided over Rev. Pinkney's trial and his subsequent conviction by the all white jury. Nevertheless, Rev. Pinkney *refused* to shut up, wrote articles, and continued speaking truth to power about the corruption and disenfranchisement in Benton Harbor, Michigan. (Reference *The Black Commentator* articles titled, 'Benton Harbor 2007: A Case Study of State Sanctioned Suppression of Black Voting Rights', dated [March 10, 2007](#), and 'Reverend Pinkney Jailed for Exercising Free Speech, dated [December 20, 2007](#)).

As a result of this, as Pinkney's wife Dorothy so poignantly described it: "On June 26, 2008, [Berrien County] Judge Dennis Wiley sentenced my husband to three to ten years in prison for writing an article against injustice, corporate power, racism, and a call to repentance. [Berrien County] Judge Alfred Butzbaugh claimed the article was threatening him because it included a quote from Biblical Scripture, Deuteronomy 28:15.

Reverend William Wylie-Kellerman testified as a Biblical expert, stating that such a *quotation* could not be considered a threat. But Judge Wiley ruled in favor of Judge Butzbaugh, who *refused* to

testify.”

Due to this outrage, Reverend Edward Pinkney spent over a year in *eight* different Michigan prisons, thanks to the [ongoing] Berrien County corporate and judicial collusion to disenfranchise him and the people of Benton Harbor, Michigan, as a whole.

Nevertheless, and even as a prisoner in confined in horrid conditions, Reverend Pinkney garnered over 3,500 votes as the Green Party’s U.S. Congressional candidate for Michigan’s 6th district.

In December of 2008, the Michigan appeals court released Rev. Pinkney while considering his free speech case. However, his apartheid-like conditions of house arrest continued. Rev. Pinkney would not relent, and continued writing and giving telephone interviews from his home under house arrest.

Then, as reported by the Associated Press in an article dated July 15, 2009 entitled, ‘Michigan Minister Wins Appeal on Free Speech Grounds,’ the Michigan Appeals Court *finally* decided in a “3-0 ruling” that Reverend Pinkney’s free speech rights had indeed been violated by the actions of Berrien County Judge Dennis Wiley to imprison Rev. Pinkney for having had the audacity to *speak truth to power* as a representative of his community.

This recent ruling is, as Reverend Edward Pinkney correctly put it, an immensely important and an enormous “*victory for the people.*” It is but a *beginning* victory.

Nevertheless, there is so *much* more work to be done. The original wrongful and absurd Berrien County conviction on voter fraud charges have yet to be overturned (despite what the Michigan Appeals Court itself) found were reportedly 13 [that’s right **thirteen**] so-called “harmless” errors committed by Berrien County court authorities in Reverend Pinkney’s original and outrageous conviction. Moreover, he remains under house arrest with an electronic tether on his ankle as if he is some dangerous criminal. These are intolerable affronts not only to Rev. Pinkney but just as importantly to *the people* of Benton Harbor collectively, and to *all* justice-loving peoples of *all* colors and ethnicities - to all of us! Thus, the struggle continues, even as **the wily Judge Wiley** of Berrien County, *and* his judicial and corporate cohorts, must be held accountable for their continuing ravages against the everyday people of Benton Harbor, Michigan.

And so my sisters and brothers, the beginning victory of Reverend Edward Pinkney belongs to *all of us*, but so does the *ongoing* struggle.

Onward, as we refuse to be distracted and disempowered by the slimy, opportunist corporate media. Onward, as we choose the course of *real systemic* “change” over the continuation of business as usual disguised under fake rhetoric, platitudes, and inverted insult. Onward, my Black, White, Brown, Red, and Yellow brothers and sisters - for we are *all* in this struggle *together*.

Onward....


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BlackCommentator.com Editorial Board Member, Larry Pinkney, is a veteran of the Black Panther Party, the former Minister of Interior of the Republic of New Africa, a former political prisoner and the only American to have successfully self-authored his civil/political rights case to the United Nations under the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. In connection with his political organizing activities in opposition to voter suppression, etc., Pinkney was interviewed in 1988 on the nationally televised PBS NewsHour, formerly known as The MacNeil/Lehrer NewsHour. For more about Larry Pinkney see the book, [Saying No to Power: Autobiography of a 20th Century Activist and Thinker](#), by William Mandel [Introduction by Howard Zinn]. (Click [here](#) to read excerpts from the book). Click [here](#) to contact Mr. Pinkney.

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