

A Speech by the Honorable Cynthia McKinney

**"Democracy Is Under Attack -
Let's Take it Back"**

Harlem, USA - July 31, 2003

How proud I am to stand at Abyssinian Baptist Church in Harlem USA!

Thank you Reverend Butts, Bob, Ruby Dee, Ossie Davis, Sonia Sanchez, Ralph Carter, Hakim, the Coalition of Artists and Activists, and all who worked hard to put this rally together. And thank you for inviting me.

How appropriate that we gather here at this Church, with all its rich history of proud resistance and indignant defiance of a social order that relegated the giants of their day to second class citizenship.

And what an honor for me, to stand among the giants of our day, if only for a moment, and see America's landscape from their gaze.

What this rally means, is that America's vista has now become as ravaged in its pristine hillside villas as it has always been for those of us who muddle behind the cities' shadows.

Our people are dying.

On the streets of America our people are dying.

Gathered tonight in this room are people from all walks of life; and for that reason, this is a very dangerous meeting for the powers that be.

They would like to see us divided.

I'm not just saying that. They wrote that in their COINTELPRO papers; about how they would keep blacks separated from each other, and separated from Africans, and separated from other people of color, and most importantly, separated from progressive activist whites. They wrote that they would discredit black activists so they would lose favor within their community and within our American community. They also wrote that they would replace authentic black leaders with what they called "clean Negroes" whom they had groomed to be more loyal to them than to us. Those aren't my words, they're their words.

Well, they were silly enough to write it down, and we were smart enough to read it. So we're not fooled.

But the Coalition of Artists and Activists has come together to show us that now is the time for us to get busy. And take our country back.

I, for one, can say that I am tired of burying innocent black and Latino people who die at the hands of this unjust system.

New Yorkers have buried too many loved ones and shed too many tears.

But sadly, every major city in America can probably call a roll: Ousmane Zongo, Alberta Spruill, Patrick Dorismond, Amadou Diallo; and those are just the names I know.

Not too far from here, the streets of Benton Harbor, Michigan exploded because they got tired of adding names to their roll. It wasn't enough that Terrance Shurn and Arthur Patterson, young adults, were on the list, but those names only topped off 16-year old Eric McGinnis and 7-year old Trent Patterson, who had also made the list.

I read that the NAACP called for calm and dialogue.

I'm sorry, but I can't be calm if my baby is going to be shot or hurt by out-of-control police.

I can't be calm when I drive through sections of Atlanta that look more like Kinshasa, Democratic Republic of Congo than America.

I cannot be calm.

Dialogue must be followed by swift and deliberate action to root out racism at its very core. From a California gas station to a Mississippi Lockheed plant; from Cincinnati, Ohio to Benton Harbor, Michigan; to New York City, New York. And in Belle Glade, Florida where a young black man was found hanging from a tree, with his hands tied behind his back and the authorities call it suicide. In the 21st Century, America's trees still bear Strange Fruit.

How much injustice can any community absorb before an eruption of extraordinary proportions occurs?

And yes, we have our list in Georgia, too.

And so, placing troops in Cincinnati Ohio or in Benton Harbor to restore calm and "protect property" is about as helpful for the resolution of the problems of Ohio, or Michigan, or for that matter Black America as it is to place US troops in Liberia to resolve the problems on West Africa's oil-rich shore.

Or, for that matter, in the hot, oil-rich desert sands of Iraq.

And while the South Bend Tribune blared on its editorial page that Benton Harbor rioters must be held accountable, who will blare, if not us, that America must be held accountable for the sick and depraved conditions under which millions of our people now live.

Moreover, since that newspaper called for "accountability," I wonder, have I ever seen that word in the corporate press when describing the Bush Administration?

Now it is a fact that it was the Ashcroft Justice Department that gave law enforcement officials authority to use the no-knock warrant, like the one that resulted in the death of Mrs. Spruill.

But, I'm wondering where are the no-knock warrants for the Carlyle Group, Enron, DynCorp, Halliburton, Worldcom, HealthSouth, all the off-shore companies that fled our country to avoid paying taxes yet continue to get billions in federal contracts?

Where are their no-knock warrants?

And further, on this matter of accountability.

George Tenet recently "fell on the sword" as they say and took responsibility for the 16 untrue words that happened to find their way into George Bush's State of the Union Address.

But who among this Administration will take responsibility for the tragic events of September 11th and the tremendous "intelligence failures" that cost the lives of thousands of people who live and work in New York City?

Interestingly, I was the one who called for an investigation of September 11th asking the fully appropriate question, What did the Bush Administration know and when did it know it, about the tragic events of September 11th?

Both President Bush and Vice President Cheney asked Tom Daschle not to investigate what went wrong on September 11th. An Australian newspaper ran the headline, "Bosses so lax, agents felt they were spies." They were describing our FBI.

"Bosses so lax, agents felt they were spies."

To this day that I know of no one in any decision-making position in the whole of this Administration has accepted responsibility for failing the American people. Instead, from this Administration we have obstruction, obfuscation, dissembling, and deception.

And yet, the one who did her homework, and told the truth to the American people, that our investment of trillions of dollars in the defense and intelligence infrastructures of our country should not have all failed simultaneously four times on a single day and since they did, we deserve to know why they did. . .

Well, that's the person who got fired.

Meanwhile, George Bush and Dick Cheney, who remain in office, have the nerve to launch two simultaneous wars, at least one that is against international law; award no bid contracts to their friends in the defense industry; erode our Constitution and our Bill of Rights; put Paul Wolfowitz in charge of military tribunals (that same travesty of justice that we have excoriated other countries for in the past); put a felon, convicted of lying to Congress, in charge of our privacy; and lie about the rescue of Jessica Lynch, as well as the landing of America's top gun—George W.--on the deck of the USS Abraham Lincoln, which supposedly was out at sea, but that was really in San Diego harbor.

And this all comes after they stole the Presidency on the uncounted chads of black and Latino voters in a scheme that was orchestrated at the top.

Republicans rewarded Katherine Harris with a Congressional seat.

In Georgia, 48,000 Republicans crossed over and voted in the Democratic Primary for the black woman Republican that they had drafted to run in my Democratic Primary. Georgia and national Democrats failed to protect the integrity of their own primary. Terry McAuliffe crows today about protecting Gray Davis from any Democratic challenge in a primary, but where was he when he could have protected this black loyal Democratic woman from a known Republican shill acting for the Bush Administration?

And it's not enough for this Administration to accept responsibility for failing the American people. So too must the corporate media. Including the New York Times.

As you may know, I'm involved with Mike Ruppert of *From the Wilderness* in a national campaign that is placing anti-Bush ads in newspapers all across the country. Sadly, many newspapers are saying no to the paid ad or are giving us a hard time after they've accepted the money. The *New York Times* is no exception.

At the top of the ad is a cartoon. It features the big corporate media being "played" from behind the curtain by the great big, huge, Wizard. Like in the Wizard of Oz. But there, ever so small, at the bottom of the cartoon, is Toto, the little dog, pulling open the curtain and exposing the truth about the big, corporate media—kinda like BAI does here. And the alternative media do all over our country. Well, in the cartoon, Toto is the alternative media--getting the truth out to the people.

The text mentions oil, missing money from DoD and HUD accounts, the impeachment clause of the Constitution, the lawsuit that has been filed against the crossover voting in my election, and a special message from me.

My special message in the ad is this:

"Beware the Land of Oz. For it is only in the land of Oz that a handful of vainglorious men could send hundreds of thousands of young soldiers off to fight in an illegal war. And only in the Land of Oz can The Grand Wizard erode basic civil rights and call it enhanced security. And where but in Oz could a felon, convicted of lying in public, be put in charge of Total Information Awareness? 75 million Americans had no health insurance in 2001 or 2002. Unemployment is at an 8-year high. Meanwhile, at the Wizard's court, men of dubious reputation gorge themselves at the people's expense. Expose the Grand Wizard; this is our America, not Oz."

Now, just a few days ago, I received a message through the ad agency placing the ad that before The *New York Times* will run it, I need to prove that what I say about Oz is true. Can you believe. . . The *New York Times* is fact-checking cartoons now?

Or is it just this cartoon?

They didn't bother to fact-check their story about me that's recounted in Greg Palast's book, "The Best Democracy Money Can Buy." They just printed lies about me in an effort to make sure that a black Republican woman from New York City who is anti-affirmative action and anti-reparations would sit at the table of the Congressional Black Caucus and represent you in Washington, DC.

In 1776, it was King George III who drove the titans of the American colony to write our Declaration of Independence. They wrote that there are certain unalienable rights and that it is the responsibility of government to protect, preserve, and promote these rights. However, in the words of its signers,

"when a long train of abuses and usurpations, . . . evinces a design to reduce [a people to life] under absolute Despotism, it is their right, it is their duty, to throw off such Government, and to provide new Guards for their future security."

And with that, a rebellion became a revolution.

My mother didn't want me to give this speech tonight. I'm sure it's hard for her to read the terrible things the corporate press and right-wing activists write about me.

In today's America, she's right. I will probably get in trouble for what I've said to you tonight. But it won't be the first time I get in trouble for telling the truth. And I'll continue to tell the truth. As I have said before, I won't sit down and I won't shut up.

I agree with Dead Prez: We need a revolution!

And it needs to start with us. Thank you so much for inviting me to be with you tonight.
