

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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March 5, 2009 - Issue 314

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Afghanistan and the Financial Crisis: Learning Lessons from the Past Carnival of Folly? Represent Our Resistance By Dr. Lenore J. Daniels, PhD BlackCommentator.com Editorial Board

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I knew that America would never invest the necessary funds or energies in rehabilitation of its poor so long as adventures like Vietnam continued to draw men and skills and money like some demonic destructive suction tube.

-Martin Luther King, Jr. "Beyond Vietnam"

A published list of the wealthiest entertainers (film stars and athletes), was fine. A published list of the wealthiest politicians was fine. A published list of the wealthiest Americans was fine. A published list of the wealthiest corporations, the Fortune 500, was "priceless." The lists were signs of the American Empire's growth and prosperity. Then some names appeared on more than one list. The number of zeros beside some names *grew* and *grew*. It was transparent! In the evenings, U.S. citizens and citizens anywhere in the world sat in awe as television showed "estates" (mc-mansions) with multilayered homes with an unimaginable number of rooms, maids and caretakers. Oprah came along and made it even more acceptable to more people to visit a bathroom the size of an average U.S. home. Airports made space for "private" jets. The number of zeros attached to "bonuses" exceeded the zeros of the up and coming millionaire. Multi-billionaires with multi-million dollar bonuses - too much for just a few!

What's the U.S. to do when the CEOs and "hot shot" consultants of Wall Street reflect back to North Americans its own creed: money is all that matters?

Senators Patrick Leahy and Sheldon Whitehouse claim they want to change the creed. They now want to know the truth! Senators Leahy and Whitehouse are calling for a truth and Reconciliation Hearing in the U.S.

Leahy: "The citizens of this country have said we should have change. And we should. But we also know the past can be prologue for the future unless we set things right."

His proposal for a commission to examine the previous administration would come to "understand how...policies were formed and exercised. I do this to make sure the mistakes are not repeated," said Leahy.

I hear the moans of my ancestors!

Whitehouse: "We have to learn the lessons from this past carnival of folly, greed, lies, and wrongdoings so that the damage can, under democratic process, be pointed out and corrected. If we blind ourselves to this history, we deny ourselves its lessons - lessons that came at too painful a cost to ignore. THOSE lessons merit disclosure and discussion... We may have to face the prospect at looking with horror at our own country's deeds."

They want hearings to reveal the "wrongdoings" and the wrong doers. They want to look into the *past* to understand how the U.S. came to this *financial* crisis. Senators Leahy and Whitehouse, beyond the average American citizens themselves, see in the previous administration and in the former CEOs of Wall Street culprits of the *financial* collapse of the Empire's growth. How did these seemingly decent *white* American men do this to the U.S. *modus operandi*, to capitalism!

Well, senators, these guys simply did what they were encouraged to do. Their climb to the stratosphere of wealth was cheered, awarded, and legislated as the standard business goal for Americans long before King Bush's reign. The senators, however, see "scapegoats" for American policies and lifestyles of greed. Scapegoats, Senators Leahy and Whitehouse, help Americans deny themselves the lessons of history. Scapegoats allow *individuals* to disengage themselves from the *collective*.

In the meantime, two-thirds of *Americans* support President Obama's decision to send 17,000 additional troops to Afghanistan! The fight for *freedom* and *democracy* must continue *in* Afghanistan.

Capitalism *funds* imperialist ventures such as regime change, torture, rendition, and wars to bring freedom and democracy to others. The individual taxpayer has an institutional stake in violence and this collective violence is evident of a *moral* crisis. Senators Leahy and Whitehouse want to "understand" the "wrongdoings" that brought about the *financial* crisis. Think there's any connection?

Look again:

There's a woman in her burqa, sitting on the ground, surrounded by men, agitated and angry. One man picks up a stone and throws it toward the woman's head. She leans forward. The other men pick up stones, large chunks of stones. The woman falls flat on the ground. She is dead.

Thanks to a CIA *funded* campaign in support of the mujahideen against Russia, writes Michael Parenti, the Taliban ("an extremist strain of Sunni Islam") took over most of the country. Until 1999, "the U.S. government was paying the entire annual salary of every single Taliban government official." A CIA *funded* campaign allowed the Taliban to unleash a "religious reign of terror," condemning "forms of 'immorality'" particularly devastating to the pursuit of freedom by women and girls. Afghani women must wear the burqa now. Despite Laura Bush's claim that the U.S. is committed to the freedom of Afghani women, oppression continues. "Outlawed from social life, deprived of most

forms of medical care, barred from all levels of education, and any opportunity to work outside the home," women and girls in Afghanistan are between a rock and a hard place: the U.S. war doctrine to rid Afghan of "terrorists" and the Taliban's strict interpretation of Muslim law.

According to Kathleen Foster, documentary filmmaker, *Afghan Women: A History of Struggle*, before the rise of the CIA funded Taliban, "Afghanistan... had a very progressive movement."

There was a big movement of communist people, various Marxists, socialists, and eventually a takeover by the communists. And women's rights at that point were one of the major - one of the major thrusts. And women were becoming - were getting educated. They were deciding their own destiny, no more forced marriages, and so on and so forth.

Under the mujahideen, who were "allied with the wealthy landowners" and funded by the CIA, a class struggle began. "Women started to lose their rights totally," Foster explained. "Schools were bombed. People who had any contact with the government, like government officials, like teachers, and so on and so forth, were killed. Women were raped."

The history of the U.S. is such that any hint of a "progressive movement," any hint that the oppressed and excluded is determined to correct "wrongdoings" under a "democratic process," sends the capitalists in Washington to confer with the bankers on Wall Street. A hat is passed around and money flows to the wrong side of freedom. Politicians supply the rhetoric: The U.S. takes the moral highroad! Communist "terrorists" then; Taliban "terrorists" now!

What lessons can Americans learn from this mess of "wrongdoings"? What lessons has this nation ever learned about its "past carnival of folly"?

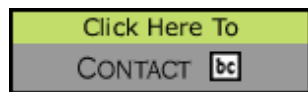
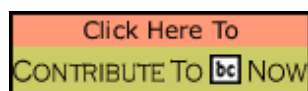
A young U.S. soldier dressed in desert camouflage speaks to the camera. "We try to help them out with little projects," he tells *Frontline*. "But they don't want our help." The *they* are the Afghans. They are - the Afghans - "so backward."

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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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