

CounterPunch

September 18, 2002

Goodbye to All That

by Rep. Cynthia McKinney

[This is a transcript of Rep. McKinney's remarks on September 14 at the reception for the Congressional Black Caucus.]

This is an important week for all of us, although it is a particularly important week for me. This week we had three very successful Braintrusts: Afro-Latinos and their rising tide of political empowerment all over Latin America; Hip Hop Power and the importance of Hip Hop as a communications medium in the absence of a real communications industry other than Radio One now, inside our community, owned by our community spreading the good news about our community;

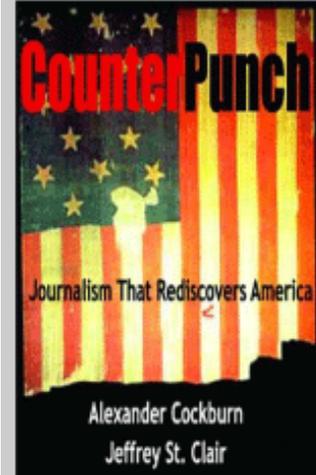
And finally, COINTELPRO II: The Murder of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. where we learned that there really are linkages between the murders of JFK, MLK, and RFK. And that the COINTELPRO process was "to neutralize" the black leader-- in the words of the CIA--assassinate, and then replace that leader with someone whose skin color was black, but whose loyalty was to their plan and not us. Yesterday, Judge Joe Brown told us unequivocally that the so-called murder rifle was NOT the weapon that killed Dr. King.

So, I think we did some very important work in these three braintrusts, connecting, communicating, and educating. And at least for the next two years, I will not be at the CBC Weekend as a Member of the House of Representatives. As everybody probably knows by now, I didn't cross the finish line first this time. Despite the fact that I easily won the Democratic vote, 40,000 Republicans maliciously crossed over and overtook the Democratic Primary. And because AIPAC had telegraphed in newspaper articles that they were going to target both Earl Hilliard and me, the Democratic Party was paralyzed.

Therefore, if Alabama represents the heart of the civil rights

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movement and Georgia represents its brain, the black body politic has sustained a mortal blow.

What does this portend for the future of independent black leadership in this country, particularly given what we learned really happened during the COINTELPRO period, and what will happen soon now that the USA Patriot Act, Homeland Security, and the Funding for the War on Terrorism Act have significantly changed the legal landscape.

The Operation TIPS program of John Ashcroft, by the way, is nothing new in the annals of the FBI, but executive authority always seemed to be there to override such ambitions. That's not the case now. And so, I'm proud of the votes I cast against those bills and I'm proud of the legislation I've authored that really does seek to move our country forward.

For instance, the legislation to override the President's executive Order denying our troops their rightfully earned overtime pay. George Bush has asked our young men and women to make the ultimate sacrifice, but he doesn't want to pay them for it.

And the legislation I authored to stop the use of weapons with depleted uranium which seems to be causing health effects and abnormal births and even deaths among the troops of our allies and maybe even our own.

I'm proud of the bill to stop the importation of coltan into the United States, the source of so much pain and suffering in eastern Congo because it's a key ingredient in our computers, palm pilots, Sony Playstations, and Oneboxes that people are willing to kill to get their hands on it.

I'm proud that we extended the benefits for our veterans who are suffering from Agent Orange because those benefits were about to expire and I authored the legislation that was passed into law to help them. But I'm most proud of my work to hold this Administration accountable to the American people.

And after I've asked the tough questions, here's what we now know:

- That President Bush was warned that terrorists were planning to hijack commercial aircraft and crash them into buildings in the US;
- That in the weeks prior to September 11, 24-hour fighter cover was placed over the President's ranch in Crawford, Texas;
- That in the weeks prior to September 11, Attorney General Ashcroft stopped flying commercial aircraft and

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instead flew Government aircraft;

- That the US received numerous high level warnings from a wide range of foreign intelligence services warning of impending hijackings and terrorist attacks;
- That a number of FBI agents were pleading with their superiors to conduct intensive investigations into the suspicious activities of various men in US flight schools;
- That in the days prior to September 11, highly suspicious stock market activity in aviation and insurance stocks took place indicating that certain well-placed people had advance knowledge of the attacks.

And now this week we learn that the FBI had an informant living with two of the actual 9-1-1 hijackers. All of this has become public knowledge since I asked the simple question: What did the Bush Administration know and when did it know it.

Now against this backdrop of so many unanswered questions, President Bush wants us to pledge our blind support to him. First, for his war on terrorism and now for his war in Iraq. How can we, in good conscience, prepare to send our young men and women back to Iraq to fight yet another war, when we have tens of thousands of our service men and women poisoned and still suffering from the first war?

And what of those veterans who are sleeping on our streets? Within five minutes of where we are today, you can walk there, and see them, and talk to them: Vietnam Veterans, Gulf War veterans, veterans of our wars. George Bush can count me out of his war-making plans.

Throughout my career, we have proudly brought blacks and whites, Asians, and Latinos together. I'm proud that everywhere around me the human rainbow has been represented. And I know that as we continue to speak out on behalf of the poor and the marginalized in this country, my supporters across the spectrum, and across America will be right there with me.

And that as we continue to speak out on behalf of those who are sick and tired of greed being more important than human needs, my supporters will be right there.

And finally, as I ponder the future of America where voices of dissent are snuffed out by selfishness and intolerance, I'm reminded of the words of Bobby Kennedy, who we learned yesterday, was considering Martin Luther King, Jr. as his Vice Presidential running mate. Bobby Kennedy, truly a great man who selflessly lived and died for his country, shaped an entire generation with his thoughts, his words, and his deeds.

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And it was Bobby Kennedy who reminded us that: "The task of leadership, the first task of concerned people, is not to condemn or castigate, or deplore: it is to search out the reason for disillusionment and alienation, the rationale of protest and dissent*"perhaps, indeed, to learn from it. And we may find, that we learn most of all from those political and social dissenters whose differences with us are most grave: for among the young, as among adults, the sharpest criticism often goes hand in hand with the deepest idealism and love of country."

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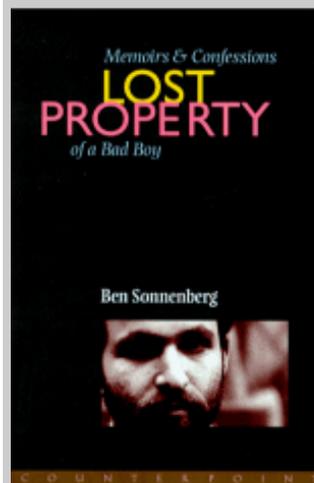
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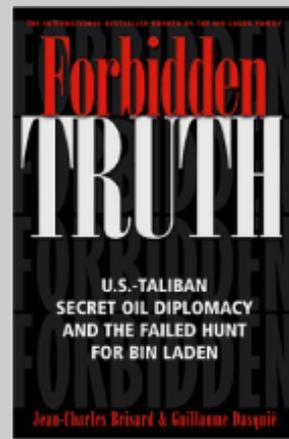
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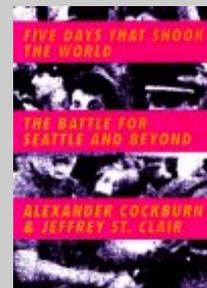
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