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Op-Ed Contributor

Judge Thomas Porteous and the Judicial 'Devil's Den' from Whence He Came

By Barbara Ann Jackson

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The impeachment trial of federal Judge Thomas Porteous, is a once in a lifetime chance for urgently-needed judicial reforms to happen in Louisiana.



Barbara Ann Jackson

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There is massive, inherent legal corruption in the judicial system, taking place in Louisiana, in what I call the "Devil's Den." This corruption has terrible consequences for citizens, and for the legal system itself.

continue because Porteous is not the only problem - just the most conspicuous culprit.

The sustained Louisiana judicial decadence is now acutely displayed at this historical Congressional hearing, which the entire world can see for itself on C-Span. Facts, evidence, and testimonies therein solidify my convictions that the purpose of Louisiana courtrooms has very little to do with delivering justice.

This OpEd is not to rant about what I believe. It underscores how the facts, evidence, and the testimonies presented at the impeachment proceedings exhibit the legal crisis here. Louisiana's judicial chasm must not continue in light of such concrete revelations.

Precisely, that trial supplies prima facie proof that the courts of Louisiana serve the purpose of unfair enrichment, at the disadvantage of some people; and for certain politically-connected people, the courts serve as an avenue to 'the good life'. Additionally, anyone who hinders Louisiana 'good life' pursuits becomes subjected to the vilest treatment by jurists who disguise themselves as upholders and enforcers of laws.

Judge Porteous' vices, which he committed almost 5 years ago, pale in comparison to this incessant Louisiana judicial horror. Because the conduct of certain people in Louisiana is as bad or worse than Porteous, there is urgent cause for alarm, and judicial reform is a dire need.

As a matter of fact, corresponding with my beliefs about the court, the United States Fifth Circuit Chief Judge, Edith Jones, said "The American legal system has been corrupted almost beyond recognition," in a speech Judge Jones made in 2003, prior to Judge Porteous' wrongful conduct.

Our Judicial system is a devil's den, that is a home to evil, corruption, wickedness, depravity, vexation, malignance, and decadence.

In calling our judicial system a "devil's den," I am saying that there is resident evil, corruption, wickedness, depravity, vexation, malignance, and decadence here. And 'evil' in the judicial arena has become camouflaged by something equally sinister, namely, 'confusion'; or in legal terms, 'obfuscation.' The matter is exacerbated by things like deliberate harm, viciousness, and deceptive - as well as disregard for responsibility for disastrous results. Further, obfuscation is often masterminded by rational people, but they subsequently become confused by the very confusion they manufacture.

Here in our State, corruption is often in the mix, and corruption is easy to accomplish because of confusion or obfuscation. Corruption traps and ruins people and everything and everyone it encounters unless they break free. *Examples of how corruption lures people in the legal field are NOW SHOWING at the impeachment trial of Judge Thomas Porteous, on the nearest viewing screen.

Sadly, as manifest from the testimonies the legal professionals are proud of how they operate. They are proud about

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things like status, one-upmanship, acclaim, and obtaining the highest personal gratification. Such things are part of the "Louisiana way." In fact, the impeachment committee was informed about this "way" in no uncertain terms.

However, there was a time when professional conduct meant something to the legal profession. Lawyers, judges, and politicians had pride about having served justice instead of themselves and their cronies. Therefore, what makes this all so much worse, is that the self-dealing legal system is irreparably harming defenseless people.

Depravity in Action

The devil's den in the form of depravity and corruption, is comfortable within New Orleans' infamous judicial and political corruption. Exchanges of quid pro quo deeds, hunting trips, judicial junkets, various 'gifts' to judges and their offspring, cronyism, and various other things which appear harmless, often became inroads to this degenerate legal community.

To clarify, the witness statements and evidence presented at the trial unabashedly explained the routine of lawyers giving gifts and doing favors for Porteous. That routine is a component of the commonly known "Louisiana way." But even though this is a trial of Judge Porteous, it is not possible for any reasonable person to imagine that the "Louisiana way" of lawyers giving gifts and doing favors is confined to only one judge, namely Porteous. Moreover, a reasonable person would be bereft of intelligence to believe that the only judicial friend those lawyers have is Porteous.

Further specifically, it is not likely that lawyers other than the ones who testified at Judge Porteous' trial, don't also have friends who are judges - and like Porteous, gifts and favors very plausibly influence judicial rulings. It is equally very likely, that gifts to other judges have had similar unlawful, improper outcomes as what occurred with Judge Porteous. For litigants who have unfairly been deprived of justice, the "Louisiana way" is utterly unacceptable.

Another thing about the impeachment trial and revelations of perks to Judge Porteous, it is perplexing for us who know about ongoing judicial improprieties which have nothing to do with Porteous, to see him being impeached, yet other miscreants - including lawyers and corporations who paid Porteous bribes, are continuing their business-as-usual offenses.

If gifts and favors are not causing judicial bias and unfair rulings, various unscrupulous legal tactics certainly cause unfair outcomes. Unscrupulous ways of litigating, as well as blatant unfair, contrary-to-law judicial rulings, are reasons why far too many people become deprived of justice.

Here are examples:

- In the judicial devil's den, up is down
- fraud on opposing parties is admirable
- luxurious lavishment on one's family after deceptively causing opponents to go out of business is acceptable
- foreclosing on homes and then bidding on the homes is a, 'your loss, my gain' - don't take it personal reality
- mailing a 5-paragraph pleading to opponents, but filing in the record a 25-paragraph pleading containing statements and information completely oblivious to opponents, who prepare completely different "memorandums in opposition", is something to have gut-busting belly laughs over cocktails
- pro se opponents destroyed for even attempting to litigate their cases due to inability to afford a lawyer
- litigants fortunate enough to obtain lawyers encounter the misfortune of the judge prescribing to lawyers how the judges want the lawyers to manage the cases - including what motions the judges want filed!!

Localities for setting up the Den

The den, located in New Orleans, has eight courts: Louisiana's supreme court; 4th Circuit Appeal Court; Orleans Parish Civil District Court; Municipal Court; Criminal Court; the Eastern District Federal Court; Bankruptcy Court; and the Federal 5th Circuit Court of Appeals.

The New Orleans Federal 5th Circuit Court of Appeals is the highest federal court - other than the United States Supreme Court. Its appellate authority encompasses Texas, Mississippi, and Louisiana. The Chief Justice for the 5th Circuit is Edith Jones.

New Orleans' notoriety for corruption, as well as its location for so many courts, makes what occurs or does not occur in this legal system vitally significant to the entire Southern region of the United States. Corruption here must be vigorously tackled.

The devil I have met!

This is a mere sketch of what I experienced, as it pertains to horrors I know of, concerning federal court. In my follow up piece, I will provide more facts and details. To me, the federal court system is a devil's den because of racism, oppression, injustice, and persecution to which I was repeatedly subjected by more than one federal court judge in New Orleans.

The backdrop for presenting what happened to me, is a repeat of what I stated:

The courts of Louisiana serve purposes of unfair enrichment, at the disadvantage of certain people; and

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for certain politically-connected people, the court systems are for no other purpose than an avenue to 'the good life'.

Whatever, or whoever hinders those 'good life' pursuits, becomes subjected to the vilest treatment by jurists who disguise themselves as upholders and enforcers of established laws.

The fact of New Orleans federal court racism is hard to deny - particularly prior to Hurricane Katrina. It is basically unheard of for a Black person or minorities to receive justice at the New Orleans federal courts; it is even more unheard of for a Black attorney to initiate a civil case in federal court. Also, I am reasonably certain that roughly 90 percent of cases heard at the federal court did not originate from minority litigants; and if minorities are parties to such lawsuits, it is either through class actions, or because of being an "indispensable party" to a lawsuit.

Further, it is an understood, common reality that Black attorneys practice their professions at "Tulane and Broad" and Orleans Parish "CDC;" and that federal court is 'for White people'. (In a follow up, I will supply more definite facts and information about these things, and much more.) The majority of people who received some measure of federal court justice, did so because of courtroom publicity.

During my times of frequenting federal court, there was no such thing as a fair tribunal for me. Instead, there was the most egregious, blatant, repeated acts of malicious injustice - not only because of the color of my skin, but because I unwittingly interfered with white collar greed and political corruption. Further, the primary reason why the fact of federal court racial disparity is not so evident now, is because many pre-Katrina minorities have not returned to New Orleans.

Additionally, the few African-American attorneys brave enough to attempt representing minorities after their cases arrived at federal court - often because of reasons beyond African Americans' control, lived to regret it. Further, from 500 Poydras Street, New Orleans, African-American attorneys can find themselves "suspended" - sometimes without logical explanation, sometimes without any explanation at all - from practicing at that aggrandized federal location - especially if the client's case has merit.

I am recounting my virtual purgatory experiences prior to my being exiled from New Orleans due to Katrina and due to political corruption. And although I'm speaking from past judicial experiences, I do not believe things have changed, based upon my current sources. Even if some things have changed, past corruption must be addressed because many people have been harmed and the "long arm of the law" must extend to those within the judicial system. Furthermore, the existence of rampant political corruption makes improvement of Louisiana's judicial systems an impossibility.

It is necessary to expose judicial corruption which cripples and causes some people to be a burden to society as well as themselves; necessary to expose judicial unfairness that demoralizes and bankrupts people; and shuts down businesses. Judicial abuses and degeneracy that is directly linked to alcoholism, broken families, violence, homelessness, and so much more - including issues relative to Thomas Porteous.

Federal Chief Judge, Edith Jones and the judicial council must continue to clean up the judicial system after the Porteous hearing concludes. There can be no confidence in the judicial system while the corruption is known, but is not addressed. Again, Judge Jones' own words tell us there are major problems that need to be remedied.

The American legal system has been corrupted almost beyond recognition
- Judge Edith Jones of the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Fifth Circuit

The rampant judicial wrongdoings must be brought to light, the perpetrators removed, a message sent that it will not be tolerated; and the victims of the corruption given the justice they were denied.

The outcome, benefitting Louisiana's legal system, should be that all the evidence and facts about blatant judicial and lawyer improprieties be investigated, as well as lead to investigations of cases that received unlawful rulings because judges were influenced by bribes, "gifts" and "favors." A very easy area to discover rampant legal improprieties connected to Freddie Mac-related litigation in New Orleans federal civil and bankruptcy courts of which involved people other than Thomas Porteous.

Politics, Appointed Judges, and Bankruptcy Court

Unquestionably, the political and legal systems are intertwined. U. S. Senator David Vitter, involved in several high profile scandals involving impropriety and influence, has greatly influenced which judges make it to federal court benches. It will take a number of investigations for the truth to be revealed, so this proceeding against Porteous must not be the last.

Senator Vitter has been named in media stories, after he apparently held up judicial and U.S. attorney appointments in Baton Rouge until his political choices were granted. Vitter was also behind the appointment of Federal Judge, Kurt Engelhardt. Engelhardt's dishonest and unfair use of his judicial position should cause him to be seated before Congress. I have personal experience of unlawful things that Engelhardt has done.

The States of Louisiana, Mississippi, and Texas, all under the Federal 5th Circuit will benefit only if the judicial corruption is exposing and remedied. The corrupt judges are the root of many entrenched Louisiana problems, including the wrong message being sent to thugs on the street because the elite thugs in the legal profession flaunt their wrongdoings, but receive no meaningful punishment.

Of major concern is the apparent compartmentalized manner of scrutinizing Porteous, but ignoring people whose

actions also are clearly improper judicial conduct. I particularly refer to the matter of Bankruptcy Court and Attorney Claude Lightfoot, whose testimony of wrongdoing was heard by the Judge Porteous impeachment committee. The deposition that Lightfoot gave years ago concerning Lightfoot's representation of Porteous and Porteous now-deceased wife when the couple filed bankruptcy should also be brought into the open. It is not clear whether the impeachment committee reviewed that deposition.

In New Orleans there are TV and yellow page advertisements for filing bankruptcy. Attorney Lightfoot's ad for clients were concurrent with his being the Chapter 11 Bankruptcy Judge. Available information indicates he is currently referred to as a 'trustee'.

Astonishingly, it was Lightfoot who instructed Porteous to falsely file the very bankruptcy case which is now among the reasons Porteous is being impeached. Lightfoot also is among the participants in shady activities carried out in bankruptcy courts at 500 Poydras Street in New Orleans. Lightfoot is still operating in his normal fashion, and he has never received any backlash for his various questionable methods of practicing law, nor for instructing Porteous to violate Bankruptcy Laws!

Something is ethically wrong about the picture of a bankruptcy judge also luring bankruptcy clients, as Lightfoot has done for more than 10 years!

The foregoing is an overview the Louisiana judicial devil's den where Judge Thomas Porteous was a federal judge. A followup series will depict more about the alarming practices and irreparable harm being done to the people of Louisiana.

Barbara Ann Jackson, Law & Grace, Inc

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