

Judge Benjamin Miller  
Criminal Courts Building  
2600 South California Avenue  
Chicago, Illinois 60608

Dear Judge Miller:

I protest the injustice being done in your courtroom in the current trial of the Pontiac Brothers. In any case in which life and death are at stake, the highest standards of justice must be given to those whose lives are at stake. Your actions--notably the denial of over 400 defense motions even before the trial began--do not meet this test.

And in this case, because the State of Illinois is seeking to put 16 Black men to death for one incident in which three white men were killed, an even higher test ought to be met. This case, on its face, reminds the world of what it has known for decades--that under U.S. justice, white life is more valuable than Black life. Its outcome may determine whether or not the death penalty can be used to continue this infamous tradition on a new, mass scale.

Your conduct of the trial ignores the reality of racism in order to perpetuate it. You refuse to answer the question raised by the defense as to whether or not you admit that covert racism may affect white jurors, and you refuse to allow the kind of questioning necessary to reveal it. You constantly interrupt the Black defense attorneys and deny their motions without allowing them to present their full arguments. You frequently threaten them with contempt-of-court findings--and sometimes carry out the threat--when they attempt to protest your dictatorial and contemptuous actions. You refuse to allow the defendants to speak.

The Pontiac Brothers are answering indictments brought down by a massive State prosecution which has included the full-time work of scores of State employees, the payment of tens of thousands of dollars--as well as the precious gift of freedom--to dozens of State witnesses, and the massive, free publicity given to the statements of State officials by the media. They are facing the largest death penalty trial in the United States in over sixty years. It is your responsibility to assure that they receive the fullest measure of justice, the fullest possible opportunity to defend themselves--not to carry out a legal lynching. You have not met this responsibility.

cc: Governor James Thompson  
State House, Room 207, Springfield, Illinois 62706

Pontiac Prisoners Support Coalition  
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