

The PEOPLE'S Voice

WWW.PEOPLESVOICEWEB.COM

ISSUE NUMBER 102

© 2005-2007 The People's Voice

P. O. BOX 514, ROANOKE, AL 36274

June 29, 2007 \$.50 Cents

TV One Commentator Roland Martin To Interview Senator Barack Obama



TV ONE Premieres Special One-Hour Interview With Democratic Presidential Candidate, Senator Barack Obama, Monday, July 2, at 10:00 pm E.T. Read Story on A6

Mount Pisgah Honors Heflins On 50th Pastor's Anniversary



Thomases Celebrate Golden Wedding Anniversary



Reverend and Mrs. Frank Thomas, Sr., of Anniston, Alabama, celebrated their Golden Wedding Anniversary by renewing their vows on Saturday, June 16, 2007, in the beautiful sanctuary of Macedonia Baptist Church, 2604 Church Street in Anniston, Alabama.

As a momento of their 50th Wedding Anniversary Ceremony, all guests attending the ceremony received an exquisitely prepared wedding programme detailing the ceremony and participants. The theme was "Our Love Forever" with a scripture, "Love One Another Deeply, From The Heart." (1 Peter 1:22)

The sanctuary of Macedonia Baptist Church was tastefully decorated with floral arrangements. The centerpiece for the ceremony was a golden bridal arch

CONTINUED ON PAGE A7

Cuffed, Detained, Pepper-Sprayed, Hit, and Tazed

Publicly Humiliated ... Local Man Alleges Police Abuse

30-year-old Larry Atkinson says he was illegally held in the Randolph County jail, and does not appreciate the physical and mental abuse he suffered at the hands of a Randolph County Officer. Atkinson says, "When I'm wrong, I'll admit I'm wrong. But, when I'm right, I'll do whatever I have to do to get justice." Atkins paints a disturbing portrait of his Monday morning arrest and detention.

Atkinson was born and raised in Roanoke, Alabama. For the past year and a half, he has resided in Roanoke with his grandmother, Emily Watts, after a short stay in Clay County, and Alexander City.

Atkinson works at Georgia Pacific in Talladega, Alabama, where he has been employed for almost seven years. He has no criminal history. Atkinson told The People's Voice "I don't do anything but go to work and go home."

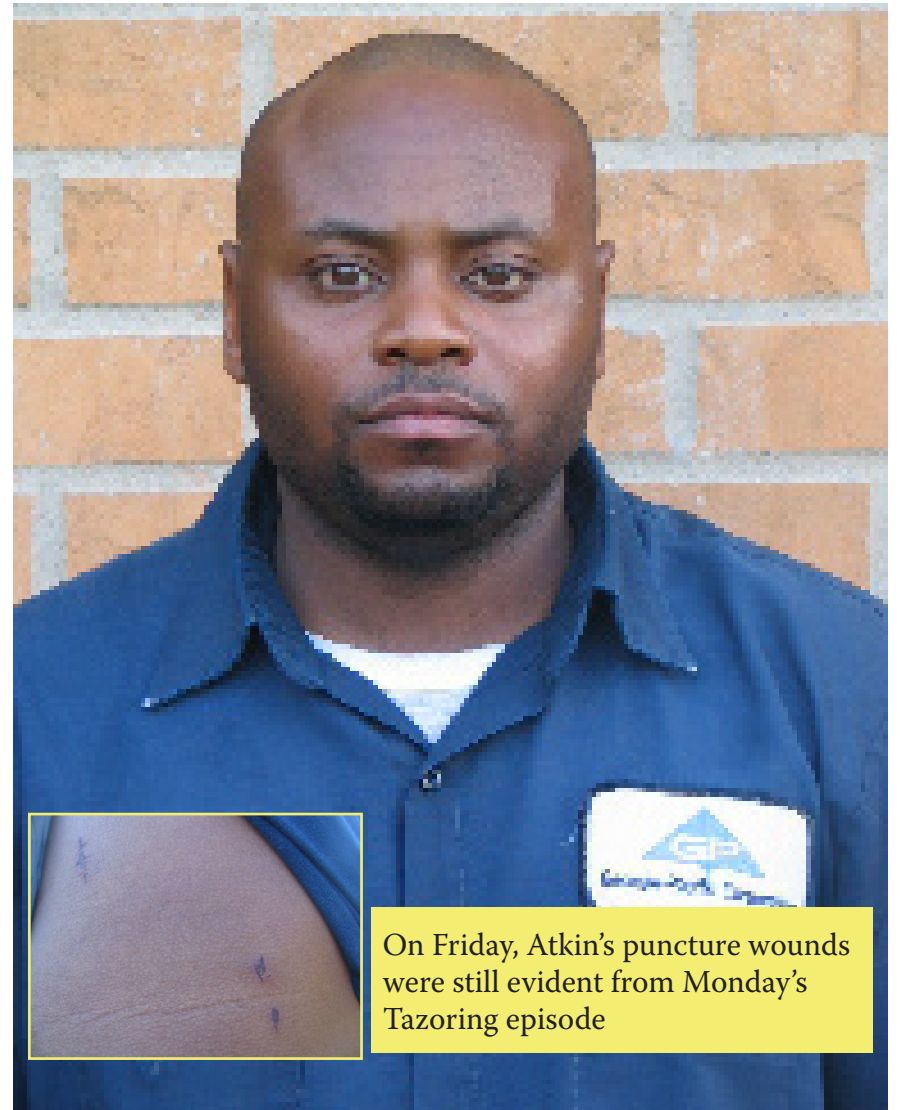
Atkinson has child support cases for each of his two daughters. He told The People's Voice that for the last six years, he has had to report to DHR every three months to sign papers, merely saying that he appeared in court and that he is in compliance with DHR guidelines.

"In order to get to Randolph County DHR, I have to get off my job and drive from Talladega to Randolph County to sign the papers, before they close."

Atkinson stated that "If I don't sign that paper, I have to come to court, which means I have to lose a whole day off work."

Monday, June 25, 2007, was one of those days, when Atkinson had missed his prior DHR appointment, so he had to appear before Judge Whaley for a routine child support review.

But, Atkinson stated, "What should have been a routine review no more than five minutes, turned into a "Tale



On Friday, Atkin's puncture wounds were still evident from Monday's Tazoring episode

Larry Atkinson says he was abused by a Randolph County Jailer for no reason, following a routine child-support hearing

From The Crypt?

On that day, Atkinson told us, without ever being placed under arrest or told why he was being held, he was taken into custody by a Randolph County Officer, roughed and jerked around,

pepper sprayed, tazed, had to be taken to Wedowee Hospital, taken back to jail, back to court, and finally let go.

Recalling the events of that day, Atkinson stated, "I was dressed in black

CONTINUED ON PAGE A2

Five Points Alum Reminesces About Good Old Days At Phillips High



Inspired by R.C.T.S. Bulldog Edition of The People's Voice (June 1), Randolph Slay reminisces about his Alma Mata, Phillips High School, Five Points, Alabama. Full Story On Page A11

Five Points Councilman Returns Home From Iraq



Councilman Michael Woody recently returned home on leave from Iraq.

See Page A10

"Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the government for a redress of grievances."

—The United States Constitution



Opelika Educator Patsy Boyd Parker (Left) Retires after 27 years on ASU Board Of Trustees, Expresses "Thanks For The Memories"

INDEX...

News.....	A1, A2
Biz, Econ & Finance.....	A3
Op/Ed.....	A4
Police/Crime.....	A5
Religion.....	A8
Entertainment.....	A9
Brain Teasers.....	A10
Education.....	A11
Health Concerns.....	A12

Presorted Standard U.S. POSTAGE PAID PERMIT NO. 362740001 Roanoke, AL 36274

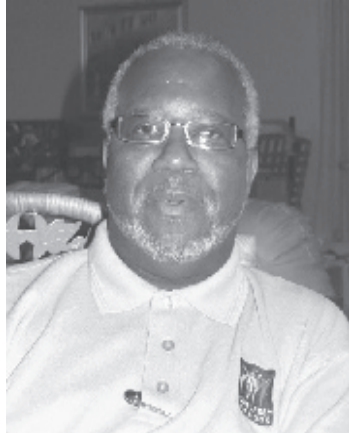
Authoritative, Informative, Engaging, Entertaining, Culturally Relevant & FULL OF SURPRISES!

Featured News

Cuffed, Detained, Pepper-Sprayed Continued from A1



Larry Atkinson



Bishop Lathonia Wright

shorts and a gray tee-shirt, with a pair of white shoes. About 9:25, I was called to appear in front of Judge Pat Whaley. Judge Whaley and the District Attorney did their standard update. Everything was fine, then Judge Whaley told the court to look at me, that this is not a party and anybody in there with shorts on and a shirt hanging out was going to jail. He told me that I was going to jail, and instructed me to go to the side room. I walked in. Captain Craig Davidson, the Assistant Chief Jailer came in, took my information. I asked him "What am I charged with?"

He said, "I don't know."

I asked "How can you take me to jail with no charge?" I went on to explain to him that I wore shorts because when I left court, I had to go to the doctor

about my knee. I was trying to dress comfortably. He said for me to sit out on the front row with the other guys going to jail. I followed his instructions.

Atkinson explained that when it looked like he was going to be placed in jail, he became concerned, first for his employment, secondly for his family, and wanted someone to know that he was being held. He further explained that it is a requirement of his employer that if an employee is jailed for any reason, the company has to be notified, or the employee runs the risk of termination. So, he explained that when he got to the front row, he asked "When can I make a phone call?"

Davidson then said "I'm tired of you!" He then, grabbed me, took the cuffs on, left arm first, then he grabbed my right arm

and shoved me into the rail in front of the front bench. I told him he was hurting my arm.

He said "Quit trying to resist!" Everyone in there saw what happened. I told him the cuffs were too tight. When we got on the elevator, my right hand was numb with sharp, throbbing pains shooting through it. He continued to push and jerk me all the way to the jail.

When we got inside, I asked if someone would loosen the cuffs. Everyone just looked at me like I was crazy, and acted like they hadn't heard a word I said.

He took me to the booking area. I sat down. He took the cuffs off. My wrists had rings around them. Another older guy came in; he stood beside Davidson. I asked for my phone call.

Davidson said "Shut Up! Keep on talking, and I'm going to taze you!"

I asked "What am I being charged with?"

He pointed the tazor at my chest, and said, "Shut Up!"

I looked at the other guy and said, "You going to let him do that to me?"

He said, "He's the boss."

Davidson said, "Shut Up!"

I said, "You're not talking to a child."

He took out his tazor again and said "Keep on."

I said, "This is not right." I extended my arms and said to the older guy, "Can I make a phone

call?"

Next thing I know, Davidson sprayed my face with pepper spray. Then he grabbed my left arm, put it behind me; hit me on the back of my neck with a forearm, and drove me into the table. Then he grabbed me and shoved me into the wall. He took me outside; the minute my feet hit the concrete walk, he tazed me.

Atkinson explained to us how the tazor gun releases "probes" which pierce the skin, before the actual current is released. He said one of these "probes" had actually "hooked" into his skin and was lodged in his side.

"I immediately fell to the ground. When I fell down, he came and put his knee on my back and cuffed me again."

Grabbing my arms, and pulling me up, Davidson said, "Get Up." As he pulled me up, my left knee was skinned. Then, they took me to the water hose, told me to get on my knees. Then, they started to hose me down. Davidson took me back inside and took one of the probes out. One was lodged in my side. So, he took me to the hospital in Wedowee. I told him my nose needed blowing.

He said, "I don't care."

My face, eyes, and nose and neck was on fire.

But, he didn't care. So, there I was in the waiting area of the hospital, with people looking at me like I'm a hardened criminal. I looked like I just got dragged through a mud puddle. I just felt real low.

Davidson was telling people in the hospital that I acted like I

wanted to hit him, so he used the tazor on me. I never got close to him, other than when he was grabbing on me. He was real arrogant about the while thing. He even had the audacity to tell me he knew how I felt.

I looked at him and said, "You have no idea how I feel."

He said that he had been sprayed and tazed before.

I said, "It's not even about that."

He gave me a puzzled look.

I said, "when the police jump on you, then you'll know how I feel. So finally, the probe got removed around 11:30. I was still covered in pepper spray, skin still on fire."

On the way back to jail, I asked, "What am I being charged with?"

Davidson said, "I'll find something."

So we arrived back at the jail, and I was put in the holding cell. About 12:00 someone came and took me to the judge. I went back before Judge Whaley and the District Attorney. He said "I heard you were over at the jail starting trouble."

I told him what happened. He released me. Davidson asked, "You releasing him?" Judge Whaley said, "Yes, give him his stuff."

Davidson then took the cuffs off. I asked about my belongings, and he replied "I don't know that he didn't want it. He brought me back to jail, took my picture and asked if I was hurting anywhere? I said, my knee, which was skinned up.

He took a picture of my knee and I was finally allowed to leave the jail.

Atkinson stated "I finally arrived to my doctor's appointment —late. I signed in, but I was unable to stay long enough to see the doctor, because my face and neck was burning from the pepper spray. I had to go home and take a bath, and the burning still didn't stop until much later that evening."

The People's Voice spoke to Commissioner Lathonia Wright who stated "If his account is true (and I'm not saying it's not true), but, if his account is true, Davidson was totally wrong ... You can rest assured that we don't condone any inhumane treatment of any citizens. But the County Commission has no authority over the Sheriff Department. The Sheriff is a Constitutional State Officer; and as a State officer, he is responsible for his department, which includes the jail. The County Commission appropriates him money. He works within his budget, and he hires and fires his own staff. We aren't even involved in the process. A police officer should be trained in knowing how to deal with people. If Davidson mistreated that young man like he says he did, he should be dealt with. Because if what happened to Mr. Atkinson was true, that was wrong. I could see if he was out of control, or endangering folks' lives..."

The People's Voice did not contact Sheriff Fuller, as a matter of regard for his duty to keep personnel matters confidential.

Letter Writer Pleads For Help, Shares Graphic Details of Confinement

Editor's Note: *The People's Voice received a lengthy "Letter To The Editors" from an inmate currently incarcerated in Randolph County's Jail. The length of the letter makes it impractical for us to publish it in its entirety. However, we are including an abridged version of the correspondence.*

Dear Editors Of The People's Voice:

My name is Jeffery L. Fanning. I grew up in the West Point Lanett area as a youngster, but now I am residing in Atlanta.

The reasons for me writing you all are concerning the conditions and policies of the Randolph County Court System and the Randolph County Jail and the powers that be.

Last year, I was coming from Anniston, Alabama, heading to LaGrange. On Highway 431, there was a roadblock by the Randolph County Sheriff's Department. As I approached the roadblock, I noticed they had split the traffic into two lanes because they were checking licenses and insurance and the traffic was starting to back up. One lane was being waved through, so since I had my license and insurance, I tried to go to the lane that was being waved through by the deputies. Upon seeing me, a young black man riding alone at approximately 11:00 O'Clock at night, they immediately told me to pull into the other lane so they could check my license and insurance, so I did as they said.

Upon showing them my license and insurance they asked me to pull off to the side of the road so I complied with their orders. While sitting on side

of the road, I was asked did I have anything in the car that might be a danger to the deputy himself or the other officers, and I replied, "No I don't."

After that, I was asked if I minded stepping out of the car, and I said, "Yes," as in "Yes, I do mind stepping out of the car," because I had not done anything, so I pulled off because it made me mad that I was being harassed by them, and I already knew first hand they were the type that profile young black men and abuse their power as officers of the law. After I pulled off, I realized that I made a mistake by pulling off on them but the damage had been done, right there, I was guilty of attempting to elude, so I immediately slammed on the brakes and pulled over again. In their report, they stated that I wrecked my vehicle, which was not the case. My heart was racing and I was scared, so scared that I was about to urinate on myself, so I immediately jumped out of the car and ran to the tree line on the side of the road and started to relieve myself. The Sheriff's deputies pulled up seconds later, and ran deep into the woods. While they were in the woods looking for me, I crossed the road, and walked back to Roanoke, alongside the road in the tree line. I had to hid because as I was relieving myself, I heard some of the deputies screaming racial remarks and threatening to sick their dogs on me, so I was not going to subject myself to that kind of torture and humiliation.

It took me all night long and part of the morning to make it to Roanoke. I got to see first hand what a runaway slave felt like with a pack of angry slave drivers hot on his trail. I prayed

to the Lord the whole way, that they did not catch up to me, because I would have been surely beaten and half-eaten by them and their dogs. The Lord saved me that night because I am a humble and vigilant servant to him. He gave me the strength to walk at least 11 miles through thick brush and briars, spider webs and snake infested creeks and streams.

I finally made it to Roanoke, where I could try to get someone to help me because I was exhausted by this time. I knew it was not over yet, though because they still had my license and insurance. The car I was driving belonged to my aunt and we had just got it running the week before the incident. The car still had some of my cousin's clothes in the trunk in some book bags, where they found a tobacco grinder with what they suspected was marijuana residue in it. They also claimed they found a small amount of marijuana that they say was all over the car, but only weighed 0.18 grams. I'm thinking, "If you looked hard enough in any used car, under the seat, down in the back seat and any nook and cranny, you could find that much, no matter who's car it was. This car was a 1987 Nissan Maxima and my cousin had driven it back and forth to college. Needless to say, that college kids are at the partying stage in their life, and might be where the residue came from if it was really in there in the first place.

After all was said and done, I was charged with

1. Attempting to elude
2. Wreckless endangerment of an officer
3. Paraphenalia, and
4. Possession of marijuana.

go to higher education. As a result, they said, colleges and universities have had to raise tuition and fewer dollars have been available for student aid, which has meant lower black enrollment. They also argued that the system was linked to the racist goals of those who drafted the state's constitution in 1901.

Attorneys for the state argued that the tax issue was properly reviewed by lower courts and that the state's limits on property tax revenues have not been shown to cause segregation in

Note: *In this part of the letter, the inmate described in great detail, the court proceedings that resulted in his being jailed. He indicated that his attorney pled for probation on his behalf, which was granted, then denied in a matter of ten minutes, based on his failing a urine test, which was administered after his attorney left the courtroom.*

Inside the Randolph County Jail, I am made to sleep on the floor in the day-room of one cell-block on two mats that are less than an inch thick. We have 16 men in a 6-man cell. No lights in the cells, only three of the six toilets work in C-block. None of the sinks work and the shower only runs scalding hot water.

There are feces and urine in the broken toilets that have been standing in the bowls for months. The inmates are instructed to pour bleach on them and to wrap the feces filled toilets with trash bags to muffle the smell. The blankets they give us have so many holes in them they look more like nets than blankets. It is very cold inside the cell blocks, so cold that they have tried to cover the A.C. vent with a trash bag so it won't get any colder. We are denied law books because they say it is a fire hazard to have law books in the cell blocks. The sprinkler systems have broken heads throughout the cell block and raw electrical wires hanging out of the walls and ceiling. None of the cells have doors on them. We only get about 30 minutes a week to go outside and walk around and get fresh air. They have put an inmate in our cell block that they think has T.B. They made him wear a blue doctor's mask over his face when he

was downstairs with them but when they moved him upstairs with us. He just keeps his mouth covered. He coughs all the time with his mouth buried in his blanket as he lies on the floor of the day room in our cell block as do I. There are numerous violations to our civil rights in here, but few inmates ever report what is going on for fear they will be locked down in isolation for weeks on end.

Inmates are denied proper medical care. The doctor only comes once a month. When inmates ask to see a dentist, they are denied because they say, not enough inmates need dental care to call a dentist to the jail or to take the inmates to the dentist.

There are roaches frozen in our ice cubes that we use for drinking water, which is a bio-hazard, like the feces and urine that lay stagnant in the toilets. We are exposed to mold on a daily basis, because our shower leaks through the cracks in the concrete and has set up mold. I have my family talking to Amesty International (to see if anything can be done about this place, that is a hell on earth). I call it that, because sleep is supposed to be peaceful, not painful. You have to roll over and alternate sides because your hips and shoulders hurt so bad from sleeping on the floor. I am in the process of filing a 1983 Civil Rights Action against the Randolph County Jail as other inmates have also done. In addition to that, I am notifying all news stations and papers of what has happened to me in these past weeks. I have filed numerous grievances with the jail about how I am treated along with the other inmates. One white inmate was beaten by another for almost 15 min-

utes before a jailer came to help and the matter seemed to be covered up because they mopped the blood up first, then took the pictures.

Even if you cannot help me or want to have anything to do with this, please respond to me in a letter so I will know you got this letter because I have heard rumors that mail like this does not make it out of the jail to the places where it is to be sent, which is a violation of rights, too.

I do not know what is to become of me really, because I have no way of contacting my lawyer. My wife is sick with cancer. She just had her entire stomach removed because of stomach cancer. We have two kids aged 15 and 11; both are straight A students. My wife, who I am separated with at this time, was to start chemotherapy and radiation therapy on June 18. Even though we are not together, I was still there to help her through these next six months that she has to have treatment through at Emory Hospital five times a week, Monday through Friday for the next six months, but the way things are looking she will have to go through that all alone.

Note: *The inmate concluded his letter by requesting help from us, by speaking to someone who might be able to assist him. He stated his belief that there were mitigating circumstances that would justify reinstatement of his probation, if he could merely speak with someone about his case.*

Sincerely Yours,
Jeffery Fanning

U.S. Supreme Court turns away tax challenge in Ala. deseg case

Associated Press
Jun 27, 2007
11:39 Eastern Time

BIRMINGHAM, Ala. (AP) — The U.S. Supreme Court has declined to hear a challenge to Alabama's property tax system that was filed by plaintiffs in the state's long-running higher education desegregation case. The plaintiffs in the 25-year-old case, which was settled in December, filed a challenge in 2004 to the state's lowest-in-the-nation property tax system and its

revenue-restricting measures. U.S. District Judge Harold Murphy, who was presiding over the higher education case, held a hearing on the challenge and rejected it, and the 11th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals did the same. The plaintiffs asked the nation's highest court to hear their challenge, but the court declined without comment Monday.

The plaintiffs had argued that Alabama's limits on property tax revenues do not sufficiently fund K-12 schools, forcing the state to use money that should

go to higher education. As a result, they said, colleges and universities have had to raise tuition and fewer dollars have been available for student aid, which has meant lower black enrollment. They also argued that the system was linked to the racist goals of those who drafted the state's constitution in 1901. Attorneys for the state argued that the tax issue was properly reviewed by lower courts and that the state's limits on property tax revenues have not been shown to cause segregation in

higher education. Plaintiffs' attorney Jim Blacksher told The Birmingham News in a Thursday story that the situation needs to be studied before a decision about filing a new lawsuit is made. Such a suit would require "a broader base of support," he said. Robert Hunter, one of the attorneys who represented the state against the tax challenge, said a federal court decision declaring the property tax system unconstitutional would have put Alabama "in a tremendous bind."

"Depending on how it came down, we could have been in a position of having to make up for lost property tax revenues this tax year, or at the very least in the position of having to come up with a new tax system that would meet with the court's approval," Hunter said. That undertaking, he added, "would have been a difficult battle for all parties."

Black People
Who Read Black
Newspapers

IT ALL

MAKE BETTER
ELECTED
OFFICIALS

STARTS WITH
NEWSPAPERS