



**Testimony of Rev. Brian L. Moran,  
Pastor of the Antioch Baptist Church,  
Coordinator of the NAACP, Jena, Louisiana Branch**

**House Committee on the Judiciary  
Jena 6 and the Role of Federal Intervention in Hate Crimes and Racial  
Violence in Public Schools  
October 16, 2007**

First I must express my gratitude for this opportunity to serve as a witness to shed light on the issues surrounding the Jena 6 controversy. I am here to share my impressions of the tensions that existed in our tiny community leading up to the unfortunate incidences which resulted in six young black students being arrested for a school fight.

In Jena, everyone knows everyone. Unfortunately, there is a great deal of racial indifference that seems to have festered for many years. This indifference has caused a good many of our citizens, both black and white, to have harsh and mixed emotions toward each other. The noose hanging did not help things. But Jena has a strong sense to get past this episode in our history. However, I believe, as a minister and citizen, that "will" alone will not suffice. The injustice dealt by Judge J. P. Mauffray and District Attorney Walters over the past year must be atoned. Justice must be done, for our community to heal. Even our school board has a double standard for blacks and this whirlwind of events merely touched the surface.

I know the facts of Jena have been retold a thousand times over, and there are those who question whether any of it actually happened. I'm here to tell you, it did. But there are people in this room who probably don't know that before sitting under the "whites only" tree, one of the black students actually went to the principal and asked if he could sit under the tree. He was told he could. We all know that soon after that, nooses were hung from the tree as a sign of threats and hate. More than that, many white students began yelling nigger across the school yard whenever black students would pass. These students felt verbally abused, but did not know they could do anything about it.

Most of you know that District Attorney Reed Walters said "with the stroke of a pen, I can erase your lives." But what you don't know is how helpless the families of these children felt at that, or how hurt they were that someone would use his job to take away a child's life when all he was trying to do was get an education.

Throughout Jena's history, there has always been two systems of justice, one for blacks and one for whites. The stories have been passed down in my family of individuals like Bobbie Ray Smith, who was killed and thrown into an oil pit by a group of young white men, but there was no investigation, no matter how loudly the blacks in the community protested. And Billy Hunter, who was stomped to death by a white man, who received only two years in prison. Can you imagine the outrage, the hurt, the shame that our families felt? When we think about what happened to the 6 boys last year at Jena High, these stories are always at the back of our minds. We know what can be done, and we know what hasn't been done. Justice.

I am grateful for the opportunity to tell my brief story, which is actually a much longer story, but I'm hoping you will get the point. That Jena can be a great town, but right now it is a town where two systems of justice exist, and that is simply un-American, and we believe it is no longer acceptable. Thank you.