

Coard: Jay-Z right about Meek Mill's judge

Michael Coard Nov 11, 2017



In reaction to Judge Genece Brinkley's November 6 draconian sentencing of Robert Rihmeek Williams, better known as Meek Mill, Jay-Z, the greatest rapper of all time, recently wrote, "The sentence handed down by the Judge — against the recommendation of the Assistant District Attorney and Probation Officer — is unjust and heavy-handed ..."

And way back in 2004 in “99 Problems” on “The Black Album,” Jay rapped in a fictional debate with a racist white cop on the highway:

“I heard ‘Son, do you know why I’m stopping you for?’

Cause I’m young and I’m Black and my hat’s real low

Or do I look like a mind reader, sir? I don’t know

Am I under arrest or should I guess some mo’...

Aren’t you sharp as a tack?

You some type of lawyer or something?

Child, I ain’t passed the bar but I know a lil bit

Enough that you won’t illegally search my sht”

Despite not having passed or even taken the bar exam, Jay is also sharp enough to know that Judge Brinkley’s sentence is outrageously unwarranted. The idea of sending a nonviolent probation violator to state prison for two-to-four years with murderers, rapists, armed robbers, and kidnappers is arbitrary and capricious and it shocks the conscience.

Among many lawyers, one in particular, i.e., the prominent and well-respected Joe Tacopina who represents Meek in New York, strongly agrees with Jay’s assessment about Judge Brinkley. He stated, “It was an enormously grave miscarriage of justice. A really despicable version of what the justice system is supposed to be ...”

Tacopina added that Judge Brinkley is “enamored with ... (Meek). She showed up at his community service (site) for the homeless people (at Philly’s Broad Street Ministry) ... You can pull any judge in America and ask them how many times they’ve shown up at a community service (site) for a probation and the answer is zero.”

He continued by alleging that Judge Brinkley on February 5, 2016 asked Meek to record a Boyz II Men song with a part that gives her a shout-out but Meek (and his girlfriend Nicki Minaj) simply laughed and refused, to which, as Tacopina claims, the judge supposedly replied, “OK, suit yourself.”

But Tacopina wasn't finished. He also contends Judge Brinkley suggested that Meek leave his Jay-Z owned Roc Nation label and sign with a Philly area-based agent “who ... (the judge) had a relationship with.” If all that — or any of that — is true, the only thing I can say is “Wow!” And as they say in the hood, “Where dey do dat at?”

Let's get back to Meek. As a trial lawyer for more than 20 years and as a Black person during my entire life, I'm not gonna make excuses for him. He messed up. Bad. Following his 2007 arrest, he was convicted in 2009 of seven drug and weapon-related charges, although five were mere misdemeanors. He received an 11 ½ – 23 month county jail sentence followed by three years probation. But he violated probation in 2011, 2013, 2014, and 2015. However, they weren't for killing, robbing, shooting, or otherwise hurting anyone. They were for technical violations involving drug use and performances at concerts without Judge Brinkley's permission. Although what he did was wrong, did it warrant state prison with murderers, rapists, armed robbers, kidnappers, and the like?

Judge Brinkley's irrational state prison sentence not only excessively punishes Meek; it also leaves his five-year-old son Rihmeek (who just started kindergarten last year) and his six-year-old son Murad (who already aspires to be a rapper) without a father during their formative years. Being fatherless is a potential recipe for disaster for Black boys.

Also, that crazily counterproductive state prison sentence punishes society at a cost of \$42,000 yearly. Instead of locking Meek up, the judge could have saved Pennsylvania taxpayers a whole lotta money by foregoing prison (as the D.A.'s Office, the Probation Department, and the defense attorney all requested) and ordering extensive community service of about 500 hours involving numerous obligations including several educational rap concerts with all the proceeds going to the Philadelphia School District and a hefty agreed upon fine of about \$50,000-

\$100,000 dollars payable to the Pennsylvania Crime Victims Compensation Assistance Program from his three million dollar bank account.

As opposed to making things better for anyone, Judge Brinkley made them worse for everyone. Now, 30-year-old Robert Rihmeek Williams is Inmate No. ND8400 awaiting processing at the State Correctional Institution at Camp Hill near Harrisburg before being transferred to another state prison to carry out his sentence.

So what should Meek's fans do? Should they sign the #FreeMeekMill petition at change.org? Yes, they should.

But first, they should help those who are victimized by racist mass incarceration much worse than Meek is. Therefore, before doing anything else, make a donation to the Pennsylvania Prison Society (PPS), which is in the process of trying to raise \$23,000 based on \$100 for each of its 230 years of essential services for inmates and their families.

The PPS's motto is "Bringing light to the inside and bringing the darkness on the inside to light." And the PPS does just that by fighting for humane prisons, providing much-needed transportation for poor families to visit their loved ones at Pennsylvania's long distance prisons, and by offering counseling services to inmates as well as their families.

If you can't join me in donating \$1,000, at least you can volunteer at PPS. For more info, log on to prisonsociety.org or call (215) 564-4775.

Meek's top-notch Philly lawyer, Brian McMonagle, intends to appeal to the Superior Court where he'll probably seek an expedited hearing and argue that Judge Brinkley abused her discretion. He might even pursue Meek's release through an expedited clemency request in the form of a pardon or a commutation via the Board of Pardons.

McMonagle, one of the city's greatest trial lawyers with about three decades of experience, has a good shot at winning because he's basically going not against the

D.A.'s Office but against Judge Brinkley who, with a mere five or six years of private practice trial experience, is by no means Johnnie Cochran or Thurgood Marshall.

By the way, Judge Brinkley was reelected in a 2013 citywide retention vote. But her term expires in six years when she's up for retention again. Remember 2023. I'm jus sayin'.

Michael Coard, Esquire can be followed on Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram. His "Radio Courtroom" show can be heard on WURD96.1-FM. And his "TV Courtroom" show can be seen on PhillyCam/Verizon/Comcast.