

# All Things Cynthia McKinney

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Cynthia McKinney

"Make Gentle Our Country in This World"

Antioch College Graduation

April 28, 2007

Good morning friends, families, parents, administration, faculty, and graduates in the Class of 2007, Antioch College!

As a proud citizen of the United States of America, and one who has had the good fortune to travel the length and breadth of this great land, I can say to you that the most fundamental set of questions today that we must ponder includes "Who are we as Americans?" "What values do we stand for?" and "Whose country is this?"

As a mother of a son who will soon be graduating, and as your self-appointed political mother, I say to you that I wish I could send you into a better America and into a better world.

But something strange has happened to our Dream. The American Dream. Coretta and Martin's Dream for our beloved country is now contorted. Distorted. Twisted. Disfigured. And what are you prepared to do about it?

This is your country. Made rich by the grace and bounty of God and by the sweat of your grandparents' labors. Made strong by your parents' sacrifices. Made honest by a movement that recognized our weaknesses. And made free by the sacrifices of this nation's Greatest Generation.

The American people deserve the best and so do you.

The American people need jobs. We have long ago settled the issue of work and dignity. All work has dignity. But now, the American people find it increasingly difficult to have any work at all.

As more and more U.S. corporations make their profit by shipping highly-skilled jobs overseas, the American jobscape is increasingly tenuous. This transfer of capacity outside of our country, sadly too often with the assistance of federal subsidies, makes us all less secure.

Part of the answer is a jobs program that makes much-needed investments in both our infrastructure and our workers. Along with a tax code that rewards companies that hire and train America's un-and under-employed. And corporations must pay a living wage. The current situation of people risking death to get into the U.S. takes advantage of the fact that we don't have an international labor policy that uplifts and protects the rights of all the world's workers wherever they are employed. There should be no race to the bottom.

President John F. Kennedy reminded us that a rising tide lifts all boats. The American people need a rising tide.

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## Upcoming Events

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Instead, our country is in debt. The United States has become the greatest debtor nation in the world. In just four years, our country's economic condition deteriorated by over \$22 trillion. The U.S. national debt is estimated to be a whopping \$53 trillion, not counting ongoing war costs. The situation is growing worse steadily because instead of making investments in the things our country needs, our "leaders" pour billions down a pipedream rooted in the war machine.

And incredibly, alongside our nation's military industrial complex is its prison the Innocence Project, just this week, announced its 200th innocent, released after spending 25 years in prison for a crime he didn't commit. Upon reaching this milestone, Project lawyer Barry Scheck said that the "typical" DNA exoneration case has not changed much over the years. It often involves a sex crime allegedly committed by a black man in which the white victim is often the only witness."

And as if this wasn't enough, Americans are growing poorer. Sadly, 36 cents out of every dollar we pay in taxes goes spending. And at the very moment that the Pentagon receives record budgets, extreme poverty reached its highest point in 30 years, according to a McClatchy study. It found that in 2005, 16 million Americans were living in severe poverty, with 37 million people living below the poverty line, including 13 million children. Severely poor Americans now can be seen across the urban, suburban, and rural landscape. They walk among us, are in our midst. Globalization's gift to us is that now, poverty is not just confined to the South where I come from, but severe poverty exists even in the Northeast and the Midwest. And the seat of U.S. power projection int he world . . . Washington, DC . . . holds the greatest concentration of severe poverty in our country, exceeding even post-Katrina Mississippi and Louisiana. The New York Times calculated that 60 million Americans now live on less than \$7 a day.

Without a living wage, the average health care premium for a family of four exceeds the annual gross income of a full-time minimum wage worker. Americans rank 21st for life expectancy among the 30 most industrialized countries in the world. No wonder the American people have deeply-rooted feeling of unease and insecurity.

Excuse me, but taking off our clothes at the airport isn't going to solve this problem. Neither is a beauty pageant Presidential election.

You've seen the film American Blackout and the electoral deceptions that took place in 2000. You, here in Ohio, were at the center of what happened in 2004. And thanks to the work of Green party activists including Ohio's own Bob Fitrakis, we all now know that on Election Night 2004, a political party not only controlled the vote-counting process in Ohio through a Secretary of State who was a co-chair of a Presidential campaign, but that a political party also controlled the technology that tallied the vote.

Isn't it strange that the apparent victims of this deception didn't even fight for themselves? Nor did they fight for the truth. That valiant fight was left to young activists in a minor party who had nothing to gain but the truth.

And so, elections have got to mean something now. And it's up to us to make it better.

And that's where you, the 2007 graduates of Antioch College come in. I have faith in you.

Look at the credentials that Antioch has given you. first of all, Antioch prepares you for citizenship. Citizenship means participation. And Antioch has taught you that your opinions are important and that every voice counts. And when you raise your voice, your argument must be incisive, well-reasoned, committed, impassioned, and yet--tempered. Tempered by respect for other views. But then Antioch has prepared you to debate your views. To go into the intellectual arena; the community is richer for you having been there.

Americas Against  
"Free Trade" and  
Privatizations

(22 hours) (event)

- Explosivo Verde: Six Band Fundraiser for McKinney Campaign (9 days) (event)
- Cynthia speaks to California State at Northridge (12 days) (event)



more

## Recent Audio

- Cynthia on Radio Town Hall on Race and Gender in 2008 Presidential Race, excerpts
- Cynthia on Radio Town Hall on Race and Gender in 2008 Presidential Race
- Mumia Abu Jamal: McKinney offers "not just the illusion, but the reality of 'change'"
- Rich Whitney Interviewed about Illinois Primary
- Cynthia in Portland, Nov 12th, 2007

more

AMERICAN CASUALTIES OF IRAQ AND AFGHANISTAN	
Dead:	4,503
Wounded:	31,187
Injured:	9,984
Ill:	27,890

DoD and VA via Veterans for Common Sense (Apr 02 2008)

warcomeshome.org  
a project of KPFA Radio

## Select Language

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Antioch College is a community dedicated to the search for truth, the development of individual potential, and the pursuit of social justice. Antioch give you knowledge. And were there is knowledge, there is responsibility. Antioch has shown you that there is no greater leadership than service.

In short, Antioch has given you preparation for life. A life of service (and that means leadership), dedicated to justice, solving a community's problems with commitment, passion, reason, and truth.

So I ask you again: "Who are we as American?" "What values do we stand for?" and "Whose country is this?"

You, my young graduates, will contemplate these answers as you go out into the world and you will make a better community of our country and our planet. Your moral compass, rooted in your Antioch experience, will take you to many places.

It will take some of you into media rooms as journalists--but you will inform the public with your heart. It will take others of you into the courtroom where you will protect our Constitution--with your heart. Some of you will go into the classroom where you will wrap your loving arms around our country's children--with all your heart. While others of you will heal our bodies and our minds--with your heart. Into corporate boardrooms some you will go, but it won't be business-as-usual, because you'll make a difference with your heart. Maybe some of you will go to Congress--where you'll gain a reputation of being intelligent, risk-taking, spunky, and passionate--because you'll make public policy with your heart. And one of you might even become the President of the United States--unlike any other President this country has ever had--because you'll govern with your heart.

No matter what twists or turns your life may take, walk that path with all your heart. And finally, as one who has been called a lot of terrible names, don't ever let other people's failure to understand you get you down, because as long as you remain rooted in the pursuit of justice in service to others, rooted in the truth--in the end the one name they'll be forced to call you--is right.

Go out there and make gentle the life of our beloved country in this world.

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