

Man Who Attacked COGIC Bishop Charles Blake Jailed

Bishop Charles E. Blake, pastor of West Angeles Church of God in Christ (COGIC), one of the largest congregations in America, was awarded yet another victory in his fight against the defamatory acts of Minister Earl Carter, a former preacher within the COGIC denomination. At a March 8 hearing in Orlando, Florida, Carter was held in contempt of court, remanded to the custody of the United States Marshal and sent to jail.

This case began on Dec. 11, 2015, when Blake filed a defamation lawsuit alleging that Carter created Youtube videos with the intent to, among other things, damage his internationally-respected reputation. Over the span of two years, Carter uploaded scores of videos attacking Blake.

In November 2016, Blake won his defamation lawsuit against Carter. In response to that victory, Blake's attorney, Ulysses Henderson, said, "We anticipate that the federal court in Orlando will shortly be issuing a final and formal permanent injunction that will require the take-down of all of Earl Carter's defamatory internet videos, and will perpetually prevent Mr. Carter from repeating any of the outrageously false, utterly baseless and despicable claims he has made about Bishop Blake." As anticipated, soon thereafter, Judge Dalton of the Orlando court issued a permanent injunction against Carter.

Despite losing the lawsuit, being ordered to remove the offending videos and to cease all malicious comments regarding Blake, Carter continued to upload defamatory videos and boast of his intention to defy the court order. In fact, in the videos, Carter called Judge Dalton disparaging names and accused Dalton of violating his First Amendment rights in

ordering the permanent injunction.

At the March 8 hearing, Dalton found Carter was in contempt of court. In the order appointing a Federal Defender, dated March 8, 2017, the court wrote, "After hearing argument from both parties, the Undersigned held Defendant in civil contempt based on the following findings by clear and convincing evidence: (1) that Defendant had violated a valid and lawful Order; (2) that such Order was clear and unambiguous; and (3) that Defendant had the ability to comply with the Order. Noting that monetary penalties would not suffice, the court remanded Defendant to the custody of the United States Marshal Service, until he removed the offending videos from online platforms set forth in the Permanent Injunction."

Carter remained in jail until the videos were removed. However, Carter's legal woes are far from over. Carter now faces the possibility of a criminal prosecution due to his continual and flagrant prior acts of contempt throughout this case.

Contempt has been defined by the Florida Supreme Court as "Any act which is calculated to embarrass, hinder or obstruct the court in the administration of justice, or which is calculated to lessen its authority or its dignity." Unlike civil contempt of court, criminal contempt of court is a crime punishable by the possibility incarceration.

An Order, signed by Dalton, from a Nov. 2016 hearing, noted, "[t]he Court is gravely concerned by Defendant's continual requests for leniency as a pro se litigant, disregard of Court Orders and instruction and failure to conduct himself in a professional manner." Therefore, the March 8 order, referring the matter to the United States Attorney's Office for criminal prosecution, is the consequence of Carter's actions.

The March 8 Order Appointing Federal Public Defender continued, "Given the gravity of potential criminal

proceedings, the Court finds that the present circumstances warrant the appointment of counsel. Indeed, at the conclusion of the March 8 Hearing, Defendant commented about his inability to employ counsel. Having found that Defendant does not wish to waive counsel, and because the interests of justice so require, the Court appoints the Federal Public Defender to represent Defendant Earl W. Carter, Sr. in connection with potential criminal contempt proceedings.”

Carter is no stranger to arrest and incarceration. Public documents show that Carter was arrested and charged with Aggravated Assault with a Deadly Weapon in 1994; battery in 1995 and as recently as 2008, was charged with Battery (Domestic Violence). As reported in the *Daily Mail*, Carter was sentenced to prison as a result of a plea deal reducing the Aggravated Assault charge. Additionally, throughout his Youtube videos, Carter has often confessed of his frequent incarceration during his youth.

Bishop Charles Blake has yet to publicly speak to this matter. In the past, a spokesperson stated, “Bishop Blake would have preferred not to file a lawsuit against Mr. Carter, but the only way to have his defamatory, untruthful and hurtful videos removed is by court order.” {eoa}