



# Sensationalized Journalism!



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Why is the reporting of the letter written by State Senator Ernie Chambers on the Nikko Jenkins case to the Nebraska Supreme Court Justice Michael Heavican news?

As we all know by now, Jenkins was awaiting trial for the 2013 murders of Curtis Bradford, Andrea Krueger, Juan Uribe-Pena and Jorge Cajiga-Ruiz. Jenkins claimed he did not kill them because voices ordered him to commit the murders. Prosecutors will seek the death penalty. Jenkins has pled no contest, which is the same as a guilty plea in court, to the murders before District Court Judge Peter Bataillon last week.

The reporting of the Jenkins murder trial has been the most sensationalized news story in Omaha in my lifetime. It has all the elements of a made for television movie drama (or in this case a media horror nightmare!). Should the court allow a suspected killer, who may be mentally ill, to plead no contest to murders and face the death penalty?

It has race – a black man kills a white woman. It has racial stereotypes – black men are killers. It has mental health issues – is Jenkins insane? It has four murders.

For the local media the Jenkins murder trial is a juicy, easy, lazy, sensationalized news story. Sensational news can be defined as presenting newsworthy topics in a trivial or tabloid manner or appealing to emotions of the viewers. For example, the media lines up outside the courtroom at every hearing like a pack of wolves and Jenkins, who is a street smart criminal, is playing the media like a piano. Whether you believe Jenkins is mentally ill or not, every time he calls the media they come. This case is not national or international news. It is overkill!

So that brings us to the definition of community activists and news?

A black “community activist” in Omaha can be defined as follows: anyone who gives an interview to the media; anyone who has started a non-profit; anyone who has appointed themselves a leader; anyone who has lost a loved one to violence or any other definition. The title of “community activist” by the media gives them instant credibility.

For example, the media talks to the same old black “community activists” whenever any black issue, which is usually a murder, occurs in this city. Recently, when the media needed a quote on the civilian review board they spoke to the same old black “community activists.”

Years ago, Chicago blacks complained the predominantly white media interviewed Jesse Jackson for a statement or “sound bite” on every issue in the black

community. Only after complaints did the media talk to other qualified black experts.

Although a politician does not speak for all voters, the “community activists” in Omaha somehow speak for all black people. The “community activists” do not have to take a test or get a license and the only requirement is that you give an interview.

The “community activists” in other cities produce positive results such as holding a successful march or protest or lowering the crime rate in an area filled with crime. In Omaha, “community activists” hold a lot of meetings and they do not have to produce results.

In my community, the predominantly white media is racist because they sensationalize the Jenkins case, blacks who commit murder and black criminals. The media is lazy because they use the same old black “community activists” or “leaders” for any and all comments on black issues. The predominantly white media lacks credibility because they have an unknown definition of news and they use almost anybody as a “community activists” or “leader” as a spokesperson for blacks.

Also, news has a lot of definitions but the one I prefer is a “matter that is newsworthy.”

Senator Chambers, who has a law degree and is not licensed to practice law, is similar to an unlicensed driver who has studied for the drivers’ license exam but who has not taken the test or driven a car.

The experience of driving a car is similar to the experience of practicing law. In order to fully understand driving a car, a person must study the driving manual, drive on the streets to become a competent driver and pass the driving exam. In order to fully understand the criminal law process, a person must study law and actually practice law by appearing in court and representing clients.

Although Senator Chambers is an elected politician and a watchdog of the judicial system according to the media, he is not a licensed attorney practicing law and representing Jenkins in this case so why should the Nebraska Supreme Court review the letter of a non-licensed non-practicing attorney? In this case he may be a back seat driver.

Over his more than 42 years Senator Chambers, who represents legislative district 13, has probably written thousands of letters, so was the Jenkins letter newsworthy? No! However, if the Nebraska Supreme Court responds to the letter, that is newsworthy. If the Court does not appoint a three judge panel to decide if Jenkins should receive the death penalty that is newsworthy. Writing a letter, unless you are the president of the United States writing to Russia, is not newsworthy.

The media covered the letter written by Senator Chambers to continue to sensationalize the Jenkins case.

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