

## Poverty Stricken

This article caught my attention because this lady is telling the truth about Bainbridge, GA Court system.

Poor offenders pay high price when probation is turned on profit  
A Georgia woman's story

Vena Cheeks failed to stop fully at a stop sign. She pleaded guilty after being ticketed in Bainbridge, GA. In court in late 2014, she says she told the judge she couldn't afford the \$135 ticket. She explained she was living part time in Florida and not working while she cared for a terminally ill father. The judge placed her on three months probation.

Cheeks 55, says a Red Hills community Probation officer at the courthouse that day told her she'd have to raise \$50 to leave or face a 30-day jail sentence. Her fiance who was with her, pawned Cheeks engagement ring. While waiting for him, she says, she watched a steady stream of probationers filing in from the courtroom, handing over cash or making calls desperately trying to raise money. I kept telling people this is a sham she says.

Later after reading about similar cases, she called the Southern Center Human Rights. Cheeks was part of a lawsuit filed by the center that claimed among other things, that Red Hills was illegally detaining people. The company which closed last year, has denied any wrongdoing. I just knew in my gut - you're going to put me in jail for 30 days because I'm poor and I don't have \$50.00. That's the part that I said was wrong and unfair. Cheeks says. That means you'd put half the doggone community in jail.

I thank God for Bold People like Vera Cheeks. Bainbridge, GA (Magistrate, Probate and Superior Court Judges and Courts has been taking advantage of the poor for decades. Nobody has been brave enough to speak up. I can relate to Vera Cheeks.

Everything she is saying is absolutely true. I was charged with two felonies. One day I was sitting in the court room waiting on the judge to come in for my hearing. All the lawyers that had clients that they represent that day was present. Next thing I know they had formed a circle. They had heatedly discuss about which one of them was going to make the most money that day. I was shocked. I was saying to myself, what about these people that are at risk. Till this day I kept a mental note because I said I would never ~~forget~~ forget how they was letting each other.

I bail out twice on my criminal case. I wasn't for sure but it seems like all they was after was money. I was told numerous time. We don't think you guilty but we think you know who did it, which was I lie. I never witness the crime happened. The evidence in my case was very sloppy and throw together. Everything they said had people scratchy their heads whether everything was true. The first I bail out when we arrested. The second time was after the juror ~~the~~ trial. My appeal was filed. I got out on supersedeas bonds.

Every other day I was running my lawyer down to find out about the case. For him only to tell me he haven't heard nothing. Which end up being false. Cause my foster mom who bail me out jail came looking for me, saying you was suppose to be in court yesterday. I said I was in my lawyer office yesterday and today. He said he hadn't heard nothing. You see these are the type of games. The judicial systems plays in Bainbridge, GA.

So my foster mom took me back to the jail. The book me on bench warrant and my appeal was denied. ~~So~~ When I got a chance, I called my dad. My dad said who do I need to call I said my attorney because he lied to me. My dad said what can I do to get my daughter home. My attorney said if you have some more bail money. We can put another appeal in for her. My dad became ~~so~~ very suspicious because it was obvious that all they wanted was money. At that time he didn't know who to report this suspicious activity to.

The next time a suspicious activity happen with the Sheriff Department in Bainbridge, GA. When my grandmother died three years ago. When your in prison if approved by County to come get you when a person die for a certain fee. your family pays this. My grandma died. The Sheriff told my family to get me to funeral. They would have to pay them \$5,000. Bainbridge is only about 2hr away from Pulaski State Prison, Hawkinsville, GA.

There has been a longevity of this county making profit off of the poor people in court system. For Bainbridge, GA. majority of the people that are poor and they have to go before Judge Cato. I am good as gone. They don't care about my freedom or whether I am innocent. all they want is money.

Because poor defendants know they don't stand a chance. They are coerced into plea bargains. Force to stay in jail because of the excessive bail fees. Things gone on such as witnesses been paid off to lie. A lot of deception goes on behind the scene to get a person convicted.

Bainbridge judicial is arena for political gain, status quo gain and personal gain. I have even heard about certain people in the judicial system taking Bribes. All lives matter no matter if you rich, poor or middle class. Justice is suppose to be equal for everyone. Everyone suppose to be treated equal. The rich is not no more superior than the poor. This judicial system was not created for their employees to deceive citizens into a jail or prison. Are to take advantage of the poor citizen(s)

I personally feel that Bainbridge, GA employees that work in the judicial should have been under investigation just like DeHalo has been. They find all that deception is going on. Well some of that same deception is going on in Bainbridge, GA. But nobody speaks up. you have law enforcement who has committed a crime but what swept under the rug still holds high position in this county. I am proud of this young lady Vera. Plenty of more people need to begin to speak up for what is right. Get the deception out of that county.

Written by

Jennifer Johnson