

# Atlanta Prosecutor Fani Willis Sent Black Educators to Jail

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*Atlanta is no mecca for Black people. It is a political plantation where the white overseers rule. Fani Willis' prosecution of Black teachers was an awful example of the power dynamic in that city.*

"Our children have been cheated by those who have willfully torn apart black communities through displacement and gentrification, underfunded and privatized public schools, and then have criminalized black educators for a dysfunctional system that was designed to fail." - [Shani Robinson](#), Atlanta teacher prosecuted by Fani Willis

"So if what I am being criticized for is doing something to protect people that did not have a voice for themselves, I sit in that criticism, and y'all can put it in my obituary."  
- District Attorney [Fani Willis](#) defending the prosecution and jailing of Black educators

Who was Fani Willis protecting when she used Georgia's Racketeer Influenced and Corrupt Organization (RICO) statute to put twelve Black educators on trial in 2015? Atlanta, like other major cities, was not caught up in the corrupt influence of racketeers, but of school test score mania. The No Child Left Behind Act punished school districts with low scores, putting them at risk of state takeovers, or of schools being closed. Educators in [Georgia, 38 other states and the District of Columbia](#), succumbed to these pressures and changed test scores to give the appearance that children had reached educational attainment levels when they hadn't.

The education prosecutions are but one example of Georgia's style of politics, wherein white people put Black people in prominent positions but pull strings behind the scenes. Powerful white people demanded the police training center, Cop City, and the Black mayor and city council members go along despite the fact that their constituents don't want 85-acres of militarized policing that will destroy an old growth forest.

The right wing segregationists in the state government call the shots too, and the fate of the twelve people was sealed after republican Governor Sonny Perdue sent Georgia Bureau of Investigation agents into the schools to investigate problematic test results. Perdue himself applied for a \$400 million grant awarded to states that improved test scores. Perdue simultaneously claimed fraud but also got money for his state for improvements that he was investigating as crimes.

Paul Howard, District Attorney at the time of the indictments, is Black, as was his Assistant District Attorney Fani Willis, but they did what Black leadership in Atlanta do now. They ask, "How high?," when they are told to jump and in this instance the lives of 12 people were ruined.

Eleven of the twelve were convicted and two of those went to jail after a trial which lasted for eight months. Despite intense pressure to plead guilty, six others did not, but years later Fani Willis is still insisting on sending them to jail too.

The charges against Donald Trump have elevated Willis to demigoddess status as a fighter for democracy, slayer of old racist presidents, and as the old saying goes, a credit to her race. But in reality she is a typical prosecutor, taking orders from the powerful and throwing the prosecutorial book at people who deserve punishment that fits the crime or who may even be innocent.

[Shani Robinson](#) is one of those still waiting for vindication. She was a first grade teacher accused by someone else who received immunity from prosecution. Yet she was caught up in the dragnet and has yet to emerge. She refused to plead guilty and is free on appeal but Willis still wants to see her behind bars. She and others were accused of being part of a criminal enterprise because they all received salaries as school district employees. RICO was created to catch mobsters but now is being applied to anyone who is caught up in the criminal injustice system.

Ambitious prosecutors, scapegoated Black defendants, and racist media attention combined to make a tawdry spectacle and a gross injustice. Now Fani Willis has been turned into a hero when she is the latest iteration of the traitorous Black face in a high place, doing the bidding of powerful white people.

The so-called test cheating scandal was actually a prosecutorial scandal. The Atlanta educators could have lost their jobs and licenses or been sentenced to community service or probation. But Fani Willis and her boss insisted upon the most draconian charges and sentencing. The ongoing scandal is that prosecutors anywhere in this country can make names for themselves by treating anyone they want to prosecute as if they are organized crime bosses, ruining their lives, and putting them in jail.

Willis is now in the news as the person who charged Donald Trump and 18 other people in a 41-count indictment charging them with a conspiracy meant to overturn the 2020 election. But she and other prosecutors must be scrutinized. One must always assume that defendants are being overcharged, and that the RICO statute is being misused so that the state can act with nefarious intent. All skin folk aren't kinfolk, and the prosecution of Black Atlanta educators is Exhibit A which proves the case.

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