

Joanne's lawyer told to explain statements

By Pam Roberts
AFRO Staff Writer

NEW BRUNSWICK, N.J. — Lenox Hinds, executive director of the National Conference of Black Lawyers (NCBL) has been ordered to appear before a legal ethics committee to explain statements he made during a press conference in which he chided proceedings in the Joanne Chesimard trial.

In a letter addressed to

Lenox Hinds by David Foley, a member of the Middlesex County legal ethics committee, the NCBL head was informed that he may be disciplined for violating rules which govern attorneys' conduct.

At the Jan. 20 press conference, Hinds, who is representing Ms. Chesimard in a federal civil suit against the conditions of

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—Statements

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her confinement in the otherwise all male Middlesex County jailhouse, called her criminal trial a "travesty" and legalize lynching." The presiding judge in Ms. Chesimard's criminal trial is Superior Court Judge Theodore Appleby.

Ms. Chesimard is facing murder and attempted murder charges stemming from allegations that she took part in a May 2, 1973 shoot-out on the N.J. Turpike. Killed in the incident were James Costan, a passenger in the car with Ms. Chesimard and N.J. State Trooper Werner Foerster.

Another trooper, James Harper, and the defendant were wounded.

Hinds disclosed the contents of Foley's letter to an audience at a fund-raising affair for Ms. Chesimard's defense fees at the Rutgers University Student Center in Feb. 23.

"I told the group of about 175 largely college students, 'I would not be able to live with myself if I could see injustice and turn my back.'"

Hinds said the hearing

before the committee was the first step in the state's "attempt to intimidate lawyers who stand up for the truth."

Hinds is not representing Ms. Chesimard in the criminal trial.

Lewis Myers, an NCBL general counsel, will represent Hinds at the ethics committee hearing. Myers is also one of the four attorneys defending Ms. Chesimard in her murder trial.

Myers said he takes the charges seriously because they may have led to Hinds' disbarment. The ordered appearance before the 10-member committee, he said, is an "attempt to censor" Hinds and deny him of his "first amendment rights," freedom of speech. The attorney said he wants a "speedy hearing" but did not know when it would be held.

The NCBL attorney said that because Hinds is not directly involved with the murder trial he "felt free to make opinions." Myers said the committee's action may affect Ms. Chesimard's trial because Hinds is a principal fund-raiser for the Assata Shakur Defense Committee (Assata-Shakur is Ms. Chesimard's religious name. She is a muslim).

The fund-raisers that have been held have not grossed enough money to pay for expert witnesses, office space and a secretary, according to Myers.

The Feb. 23 event raised less than \$200 and a previous affair held on Rutgers University's Livingston College campus, featuring poetry by Ossie Davis and Ruby Dee, produced a similar figure.

Myers said that he is in the process of "pulling together a nationwide steering committee of lawyers." Depending on the outcome of Hinds' hearing this steering committee will consider filing a federal action in the U.S. District Court. Myers said

When Ms. Chesimard's Defense Counsel, William Kunstler, informed Judge Appleby of the ethics committee hearing the judge said it was "great."

The committee became aware of Hinds' statements after they received newspaper articles in which the statements appeared.

Foley said no formal complaint has been lodged against Myers and the matter was just something the committee was in-

front page article

