

Darnell Earley got sent home early

Student and teacher actions forced the resignation of the Emergency Manager. Now, we must **KEEP OUR EYES ON THE PRIZE**: end the state takeover altogether, restore the democratic rights of the people of Detroit, and save public education.

On January 25, 2016, Emergency Manager Earley was sitting in a courtroom, attempting to flex his legal muscle to get an injunction against the teacher sickouts.

Just eight days later, on February 2, Earley announced his resignation as Emergency Manager.

When Earley made this announcement—abdicating his all-powerful throne—he was still in the middle of a titanic lawsuit against the teachers, and ruling over a district that unquestionably remains in the same state of “emergency” that his dictatorship was claiming to resolve. Although Earley himself will likely never admit it, every honest person in Detroit knows that Earley has been forced out: Darnell Earley got sent home early due to a bad case of the “Snyder flu.”

The “Snyder flu” teacher sickouts were the beginning of the end for the outgoing Emergency Manager—but the *student walkouts* dealt the decisive blow. Those walkouts emerged, in force, on January 25, corresponding to the first court date of Earley’s lawsuit against the teachers. At the time, Earley could only hope that his threat of legal punishment would silence the teachers from taking further action, and would return the schools to business as usual. However, at the very moment when students successfully walked out of their schools, Earley’s desperate legal effort against the teachers became an instant failure. Instead of cooling down the struggle, his attempt at legal repression only added fuel to the fire for new and more powerful actions to emerge.

In the same manner, the attempts to enforce heavy-handed punishment of student walkouts also backfired. Following an initial round of suspensions, the walkouts only grew in size and spread to more schools. And when school administrators tried to enlist the help of parents to enforce discipline against the students, the administrators learned the hard way that the parents only had harsh words for the takeover and were furious about the threats to punish their children. The take-

over was only making new enemies—while the student and teacher movement was winning new allies—with every attempt by the takeover to stop the growing surge of civil rights activism.

This fight-within-a-fight, the battle over whether the power of the movement will grow or diminish, is a critical factor that all students, teachers, and community activists must learn. The movement won that battle against Darnell Earley. In order to win our demands—to save our public schools and to restore our democratic rights—we must continue to win that same battle against Governor Snyder, against his allies, and against an array of misleaders who present themselves as being “for the struggle” only in order to shut that struggle down.

By understanding how we won this battle, we can prepare ourselves to win the war.

Keep Your Eyes on the Prize

The resignation of Darnell Earley was a victory for our movement, and it exposes the weakness of the Snyder takeover regime. But that same resignation is nonetheless also a ploy: it is a political maneuver with the purpose of *saving* the Governor’s takeover rather than *ending* it. In reality, Darnell Earley has been set up from the beginning to take the fall for all of the Governor’s disastrous plans—from poisoning the water in Flint to destroying public education in Detroit. He essentially took a job as the Governor’s hitman, and hitmen are hired so that their employers can avoid punishment.

At this point, however, Snyder cannot possibly hope to rescue his abysmal approval ratings; the blood is on his hands. Rather, the departure of Earley is intended to serve a more specific purpose: to dupe the student and teacher struggle into passivity.

Snyder, like the two Governors who preceded him, has replaced his takeover czars whenever it has been politically expedient for him to do so. The real aim, in each case, is for the change in personnel to serve as a “refresh” button for the

D-DAY

ACTION IN DETROIT Wednesday, February 10, 2016

The great wave of “sickout/walkout/stay-out” civil rights actions has created a crisis for Governor Snyder’s takeover regime. Detroit is standing up, and everyone can feel that the balance of power is shifting in favor of the new movement in our city. Now is the time to topple the scales completely. Now is the time for students, teachers, and community members to join in action together.

On February 10, which is simultaneously count day and Ash Wednesday, it is time to take a religious holiday. We have been seeking treatment for the “Snyder flu,” and now we need to exorcise those Snyder demons!

takeover, to renew its lease on life as it inevitably creates one scandal after another. Snyder announced that he will appoint a new “transition leader” by the end of February. Two things must be understood in this: (1) “transition leader” is just another way of saying Emergency Manager—the evasive jargon is only intended to deceive the public, and (2) the “transition” that the Governor eludes to is *not* a transition to ending the takeover, it is a transition to his own Snyder Plan for the permanent state management of the district and the wholesale destruction of public education in our city. Do not be deceived—the Governor’s maneuver is meant to prey upon false hopes and delude the students and teachers into a “wait-and-see” passive attitude. That would be a terrible mistake.

We have no use for a “wait-and-see” attitude. Exactly the opposite: we entered this struggle with concrete demands, and we are fighting until our demands are met. If our demands have not been fulfilled, then what are we “waiting” for? A

miracle? With the Governor's regime in disarray, we are in an even stronger position to assert our demands and win by standing up and taking action *now*.

Student Leadership is Essential

Our movement must combine many strengths into one—the united power of teachers, students, and the community fighting together. All of us have unique strengths and weaknesses. All of us bring something to the struggle that is urgently important, and all of us lack something that only others can give us.

Teachers, because they possess advanced education and skills, thankfully believe that they deserve respect and fair treatment, and they're right—but they can be consumed with the idea that their professional respectability would be tarnished by any real struggle, and their personal ambition for status has led a select few teachers (e.g. Ivy Bailey) to make corrupt deals with the Snyder regime.

Parents and other adult community members can have incredible knowledge about Detroit and its civil rights history, and many have developed an amazing resourcefulness for surviving in a city that is constantly under attack—but a long and hard life has convinced many adults to settle for the misery that they know rather than fight for a seemingly uncertain prospect of happiness.

Students and youth lack the same confidence and feelings of worth that their teachers have, and lack the experience of their parents and grandparents—and yet in spite of these deficits, they exhibit the most remarkable quality: young people are the strongest leaders in any struggle for progress, the most capable of dynamic thought, and the most determined to carry a fight all the way to victory.

Consider the whole history of Detroit's struggle against the state takeover, a regime that now dates back farther than most of the district's students have been alive. The teachers have been the best-organized element and, sporadically, the most assertive, but have also been the most easily manipulated by people with power. Teachers have often preferred even the most futile legal maneuvers over a straight fight, and have caved in to countless bad deals simply on the pretext that they were avoiding something worse.

The parents generally have had more than enough wisdom not to trust the takeover schemes, but the majority responded with their parental-style resourcefulness—they largely evacuated their children from the Detroit schools entirely, and many moved away from the

city. Due to the massive migration to escape the takeover's wrath, the student population of the Detroit Public Schools is now less than a third of what it was before the takeover regimes began.

Students, however, are not as invested as their parents in accommodating to “the way things are.” Young people are more concerned about the way things *should* be. Young people have dreams, have whole lives to live ahead of them, and have no good reason to give up on their goals without first trying to reach them. Young people believe that their futures should be better than the conditions in which they now live (whereas old people tend to regard their own futures as a gradual march towards death!).

Students are also much less likely than their teachers to be manipulated by the reward-and-punishment maneuvers of the district management and politicians. All young people are constantly bombarded with vast regimes based on reward-and-punishment dogma (their parents and teachers are the chief instigators, unfortunately), and an Emergency Manager can't dish out anything new that a student hasn't already seen twenty times in that same day. For Detroit students, in particular, the authorities offer very little reward but constant punishment. Principals may threaten suspensions against students who participate in walkouts or other civil rights actions—but students already get suspended for no good reason (trivial uniform violations) on a regular basis. Threatening a Detroit student with a suspension is like threatening a football player with having to do a single push-up.

The whole regime of disciplinary terror against students *needs to end now*. It is just one of countless examples of back-of-the-bus Jim Crow treatment against black and Latino students. The whole, disgusting regime must go. And student leadership is the key.

To every student: Do not despair if you lack confidence—always remember to *believe in yourself* and in time you will learn to trust what you can do. Do not despair that you lack the experience of your elders—there is only one way to gain experience, and that is to *learn by doing*. Your leadership can bring out the best qualities in your teachers and in many other adults. But even more importantly, your leadership will bring out the best in *you*, and will bring out the best in other students who are looking to stand up and step forward.

Join BAMN. Build the new civil rights movement. And together, let's make our shared future what it *ought* to be.

WE DEMAND:

(1) Restore the full, real democratic rights of the people of Detroit now. End all takeovers—over our schools, over our city government, and over the teachers' union, the Detroit Federation of Teachers. Abolish all Emergency Manager regimes; fire EM Earley. All real power in Detroit needs to be *of the people, by the people, for the people*.

(2) No more attacks on our public schools! No more school closings, no more charters, no more selling our schools to charter companies. *Our children are not for sale*.

(3) Reject the Snyder Plan, along with the mountain of lies told to sell it. The Snyder Plan is merely a lightly veiled scheme for the *mass closure of our public schools and the mass charterization of what is left*. Any “new money” will merely be a subsidy for more charter schools and an end to all but a token few real public schools. (See Steve Conn, “Address to the Third Mass Membership Meeting: Defeating the Snyder Plan,” May 3, 2015)

(4) *End the scapegoating of teachers*. Restore teachers' democratic and union rights. Reduce class sizes dramatically now. Smaller class sizes and the restoration of teachers' democratic and union rights are essential emergency measures to start repairing the terrible damage Snyder's attacks have inflicted on the education of Detroit's young people.

(5) Restore all the EAA schools to the Detroit Public Schools—no more EAA “Snyder schools.” The Governor's personal takeover of the EAA schools is a cruel scandal. The “Snyder schools” are among the worst in the country. They are an experiment that has failed brutally for our children. The disastrous EAA experiment must be ended.

(6) Get rid of tyrant, bully principals.

(7) End the physical and verbal abuse and harassment of students by security guards and police.

(8) Smaller class sizes, so that students can receive more individual attention from teachers.

(9) Preserve all Special Education programs—end the attacks on Special Education.

(10) Provide the materials necessary for all students to receive a good, quality education: new, up-to-date textbooks, computers, art supplies, musical instruments, sports equipment, etc.

(11) Full staffing of all schools with certified, union teachers, counselors, office staff, nurses, etc. End the attacks on school employees' working conditions, job security, and wages.