

NO "trustee" takeover of the DFT
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The only way to restore confidence in the union is to restore democracy, to reinstate Steve Conn, and to end the crimes that have put the union on its knees.

Those crimes are expansive. With only the brief exception of Steve Conn, the DFT leadership for many years has worked as a docile servant at the whim of school takeover authorities. This political servitude was most prominent under the leadership of a particular faction in the local union, named "United for Teacher Rights" (UTR). The members of this small faction earned special status in the AFT leadership—while betraying the members in Detroit.

Ivy Bailey is the current figurehead of UTR. While Steve Conn was in office, Ivy Bailey sought to undermine his Presidency and the teachers' campaign against the state takeover. Bailey held

secret meetings with the Emergency Manager, behind the backs of the members, while Conn and the membership were organizing to defend against the EM's attacks. When Snyder unveiled his plan in April to split the district, UTR declared the plan to be "good for teachers," and Bailey did nothing to prevent Snyder from later imposing severe health care cuts.

Terrence Martin was appointed Executive Vice President by Ivy Bailey after the coup against Conn. This was in complete disregard to the DFT constitution and bylaws—not only was Terrence Martin never elected, but in fact he was not even a member of the union.

Keith Johnson, former President of the DFT and leader of the UTR faction, decimated the union during his years in office. He openly colluded with the state takeover against the interests of the members, and became one of the most hated presidents in the history of the union. But the AFT leadership rewarded

Keith Johnson with a new position as AFT Vice President.

Randi Weingarten, long-standing AFT President, shares numerous allies with the takeover of the Detroit schools: namely, charter school companies and their political supporters. She has maintained a Stalin-like regime of silencing any real opposition, particularly when the opposition is trying to save public education from the schemes of her rich allies.

These are some of the individuals who are behind the plan to "trustee" the DFT. They all share at least one thing in common with Governor Snyder: when the democratic will of the people is against them, *they just get rid of democracy*. That is the regime that they have planned.

The betrayals must end. The DFT will cease to exist unless membership control is restored. A takeover will not solve the problem—the takeover *is* the problem.

Detroit demands DEMOCRACY
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And in reality, not only are the promises broken, but the exact problems that were supposed to be "solved" actually end up growing much worse. (When the first school takeover began in 1999, Detroit Public Schools had nearly a \$100 million surplus—twelve years of takeover regimes, however, created a \$468 million deficit.) Not only that, but the very people who created the problems are the same ones who enforce the dictatorial regimes for supposedly "solving" them.

But there is a second lie, much bigger than the first, that underpins the whole attack on democratic rights. The politicians are usually careful not to say it in public, but in their private milieu among the rich, they believe in this lie more strongly than they believe in any religion. It is the big, *racist* lie: that the black, Latino, immigrant, and poor communities of the nation cannot be trusted with any real power or democratic rights.

The racists believe, and have always believed, that placing any real power in the hands of minority communities will only result in chaos and degeneration. They believe that the popular will of the

oppressed could only be backwards and misguided. It is one of the oldest lies in the history of all politics. It is bitterly ironic, therefore, that the racists' takeover regimes have been the true source of chaos and degeneration, the true source of backwardness and misguidance in Detroit.

Of all the countless problems that Detroit has suffered, "too much democracy" has not been one of them. And of all the possible solutions to those problems, ending democracy does not belong on the list. The common link between all of Detroit's problems is the racist lie that the people of Detroit must never have any real power.

There will be no peace and no progress in Detroit so long as this racist lie is the basis for the city's governance. Today, this lie has become so entrenched, so categorically presumed, that it is not possible to save *anything* in Detroit without making a fight against the *entire*, undemocratic takeover of the city. To save any school, any neighborhood, or any union, it is necessary to fight for the democratic rights of all of Detroit.

That is the imperative nature of BAMN's petition to **Restore the Democratic Rights of the People of Detroit Now**. It is not simply an abstract, "good idea"—it

is the way to save *your* school, *your* neighborhood, *your* union. It is a campaign to challenge every dictator who seeks to impose his will against you. The real answer: impose *your* will, assert your democratic rights, and fight for the power to realize your own vision for the future of the city.

Join BAMN. Today, BAMN is the only organization truly fighting for your democratic rights—not just for token "elected" officials with no power, not just for rights that only exist on paper, but for *your* democratic control and authority. BAMN is dedicated to the building of a new civil rights movement. Organized on the basis of youth leadership and community activism, BAMN has no agenda other than the advancement of your power. Unlike the takeover leaders who falsely claim to be the city's saviors, BAMN presents to the people of Detroit the only honest alternative: *you* must lead, *you* must have power.

Circulate the petition and begin an organizing campaign in your school, union, workplace, or neighborhood. Spread and popularize the movement to restore democracy in our city. Motivate others to become activist leaders, as well, always setting the example yourself. Together, we can win.



DAY OF ACTION

Thursday, December 10, 2015

- ▶ Defeat the Snyder "Old Co./New Co." Plan
- ▶ NO to the proposed chartering of 31 Detroit schools
- ▶ Return EAA schools to DPS, with returning DPS teachers to their proper pay step
- ▶ Restore all pay steps, reverse the 10% pay cut
- ▶ Restore democracy to the DFT and to the people of Detroit: no DFT takeover by the AFT; reinstate President Steve Conn; no more Emergency Manager; restore full power to the elected school board NOW

Representatives from over twenty schools voted for a new Day of Action to be held December 10, following the success of the Rosa Parks anniversary protest. These representatives are members of the **Strike-to-Win Committee**, an organization created by EON/BAMN to build the fight to save democracy and public education in Detroit.

The Snyder plan for DPS is making people sick, and caused three schools to shut down on December 1st while other schools were simply non-functional. This "Snyder sickness" is very contagious—from lead poisoning in Flint to charter poisoning in Detroit, there is no way to predict how much sickness will spread if the Governor's takeover regimes continue.

Now, two new outbreaks threaten to spread more sickness than ever before: (1) Governor Snyder announced plans to sell out thirty-one Detroit schools to charter companies, and (2) the DFT Executive Board voted to authorize the takeover of the DFT by the AFT leadership. These developments further dramatize the absence of any real democracy in the city of Detroit. As Snyder seeks to destroy public education and impose measures that no one would ever vote for, the union leadership seeks to paralyze the teachers' ability to fight back.

These outbreaks from Snyder and the AFT leadership could lead to an epidemic.

As one student told the news on December 1st, "Students are tired of back of the bus treatment and not being given the resources we need. We're ready to stand in solidarity with teachers taking action."

Now is the time to take action.

Equal Opportunity Now/By Any Means Necessary (EON/BAMN)

A Caucus Fighting for Civil Rights and Public Education in the National Education Association and the American Federation of Teachers
Contact: (313) 980-7075 or (313) 806-1485 email@bamn.com www.bamn.com Join our EON/BAMN Facebook group

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Reprinted below is EON/BAMN's call for the successful December 1st action. This sparked growing enthusiasm among students and teachers, leading to the current call for a Day of Action on Thursday, December 10.



Picture: Rosa Parks in 1955, with Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

ON DECEMBER 1, 2015 Honor the brave legacy of Rosa Parks

Sixty years ago, on December 1, 1955, a woman named Rosa Parks changed history by initiating one of the greatest civil rights protests against the old Jim Crow system: the Montgomery Bus Boycott. This year, honor her brave legacy by taking a stand of your own. Take a stand against the New Jim Crow—empty your school and make clear that, like Rosa Parks, *we will not accept the back of the bus* for our schools and our community.

There is an often-repeated myth about Rosa Parks: that she refused to give up her seat on the bus simply because she was “tired” or that her “feet hurt.” Nothing could be further from the truth.

Rosa Parks was an activist, and was specifically frustrated by the lack of activity against the segregated buses following the arrest of 15-year old Claudette Colvin for the same “crime” that Rosa Parks would later commit. When Claudette Colvin—a member of the NAACP Youth Council—refused to give her seat to a white man, the adult leaders of her organization decided against organizing a protest or boycott related to Colvin’s case, fearing that the pregnant teen was not a sufficiently “respectable” hero for the movement.

Rosa Parks, the secretary of the Montgomery NAACP chapter, had heard enough excuses. She took action, herself. Following Rosa Parks’ arrest, the Women’s Political Council circulated a flyer calling for a boycott of the buses. With mass agitation growing, the male leaders finally conceded to taking action, as well. There followed the founding of the Montgomery Improvement Association, which selected Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. as its president, and the rest is history.

Rosa Parks’ legacy is her decisive initiative, her willingness to take action while others hesitated and made excuses. That great legacy must come alive in Detroit, the city that Rosa Parks later made her home, and a city that desperately needs such bold initiative for civil rights struggle today.

No more hesitation, no more excuses! Let’s honor Rosa Parks by following her example. Let’s take action on December 1st with a “boycott” against the injustice in our schools: *“DPS belongs to us! We won’t go to the back of the bus!”*

“People always say that I didn’t give up my seat because I was tired, but that isn’t true. I was not tired physically, or no more tired than I usually was at the end of a working day. I was not old, although some people have an image of me as being old then. I was forty-two. **No, the only tired I was, was tired of giving in.**”

EON/BAMN originally printed the following two articles on November 16, 2015. At the time, the DFT Executive Board had not yet officially decided for the union takeover; its members were denying that any such plans were underway.

NØ “trustee” takeover of the DFT

Reinstate Steve Conn as the elected President of the Detroit Federation of Teachers;
Abolish the undemocratic takeovers of our union, our schools, and our city

Two months ago, Ivy Bailey led a right-wing coup to overthrow the elected President of the DFT. Now, Bailey is arguing that the union must submit to a takeover by the American Federation of Teachers—stamping out any remaining pretense of local control and democracy altogether.

These developments in our union serve the exact same purpose as the state takeover of our public schools: to impose a regime of destruction, and to take away the democratic rights of anyone who would speak out against it. That is why

Ivy Bailey led a coup against President Conn—because Steve Conn fought to save public education and restore democracy in Detroit. That is why the AFT seeks to impose a takeover against our union—because the clear majority of the members still support Steve Conn.

Don’t be fooled by the takeover’s false advertising. Bailey argued that the takeover of our union would allow the AFT to devote more resources to the “battle in Lansing.” If the AFT really intends to devote its resources to a battle, they could begin by reinstating Steve

Conn as DFT President. But this is not the “battle” that the AFT has in mind. The AFT leadership expects that they will need to do some posturing if they want members to keep paying dues. This could be a challenge, as Governor Snyder intends to end automatic dues check-off at the union’s most vulnerable moment—now, after a coup has usurped the democratic will of the members, there is no real confidence in the DFT as a union.

But a “trustee” takeover will not restore members’ confidence in the DFT.

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Detroit demands DEMOCRACY

Democracy—a government “*of the people, by the people, and for the people*”—does not exist in the city of Detroit.

For twelve of the past sixteen years, the Detroit Public Schools have suffered under the rule of hostile dictatorships. During that time, much of the education system has been destroyed. The takeover regimes shut down over 100 schools, purged over 100,000 students from the district, and created a blight of abandoned buildings and neighborhoods that now resemble the afflictions of war.

The right to vote has become a fiction: the elected school board has no power, and if Governor Snyder’s current plan is approved by the state legislature, then the elected school board will *never* have any power. According to the Snyder plan, the state would gain permanent

control over school finances, closures, and the sale of school property to charter companies. The “elected” board, in spite of its impotence, would only be phased in gradually.

Even the Detroit city government has been reduced to a mere puppet. The city finances are completely under the control of a nine-member Financial Review Commission—seven members are appointed by the Governor, while the remaining two votes belong to the Mayor and the City Council President. Long after the conclusion of the city’s bankruptcy proceedings, Detroit remains under a state takeover.

There is a New Jim Crow in Detroit. Here, the democratic rights of the people are simply a game of make-believe. Votes do not really count for anything, elections are a sham, and yet the routine

Sign and circulate the petition to **Restore the Democratic Rights of the People of Detroit Now**. Contact BAMN for more information.

continues, providing only the thinnest possible illusion of a democratic process. In large part, the people of Detroit have stopped believing in that illusion—in the last mayoral election, only a quarter of Detroit’s registered voters actually turned out to vote. No matter who would win the election, the people were certain to lose.

This new culture of despotism has been promoted on the basis of two falsehoods. The first lie, the one that receives constant media attention, is the standard “public relations” nonsense that every politician and corporate executive learned how to say in graduate school: the purpose of the takeover is “to help the people ... to fix the schools ... to balance the budget ... to revitalize the city ... to save the union,” etc., etc. Of course, these promises never come true.

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