

DETROIT NATIVE SUN

We must teach our history truthfully

By John Telford, PhD.
SUN COLUMNIST



Were we to regard the 1455 Papal Bull authorizing European colonizations that suppressed and oppressed indigenous peoples throughout the "new world" as the dawn of the "Doctrine of Discovery," this would make 2022 the 567th year of that imperial white-male-domination system. Within it, many of us who number among the majority-"proletariat of Detroit" languish in anguish and workaday subjugation. Detroit throughout the past three centuries has participated and continues to collude in the process, which might now be termed a malevolently elite and urbanized corporate capitalism.

In the Winter/Spring issue of the marvelous community-based 'Riverwise Magazine', prominent local activist Frank Joyce reviewed Roxanne Dunbar Ortiz' book 'An Indigenous People's History of the United States.' He wrote in his review, "As part of what became the Northwest Territories,

Teach the truth
To our youth!

Detroit's legacy derives from free and enslaved black people, French as well as British colonizers, and the brutality required to displace Chief Pontiac and other indigenous people. This history connects directly to Detroit's more recent emergency management, so-called bankruptcy, access to clean water and clean air, sweetheart land deals, policing that is violently racialized, unequal wealth, and more."

I submit that the "more" includes an unwarranted 1999 state takeover of DPS; then two disastrous decades later a majority of our school board who inexplicably (or collusively) stood by for four years and allowed DPSCD students' reading and math scores to become and remain the worst in the country, while knowing the consequences of their inaction to our students' future--particularly to the future of our young male students.

DPSCD Poet-in-Residence John Telford was a school-board candidate in the Nov. 8 election. His home school is the all-male Frederick Douglass Academy (formerly Murray-Wright High School).

Telford Telescope: DPSCD is in academic crisis

By Dr. John Telford
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By the time you read this column, we will know whether I was elected to the Detroit Board of Education on Nov. 8. Given my 66 years as an educator at all levels from teacher to college professor to superintendent in and out of DPS, I was far and away the best candidate for our board of education--and because of the reading crisis in Detroit, my platform was LITERACY. Our children deserve the same level of education that I received when I was a DPS student between January of 1941 and January of 1954--when I was graduated with an education equivalent to that of a college sophomore. Our recent student-achievement scores are devastating. The first sets of complete state and federal K - 12 student assessment scores since the pandemic are now public, and the results for DPSCD are catastrophic. Nine out of ten DPSCD 3rd-graders are far below state reading and math standards.

The news got even worse in late October when the NAEP scores were released: in DPSCD, only 6% of our 4th -graders are proficient in reading, and only 3% are proficient in math; only 5% of our 8th-graders are proficient in reading, and only 4% are proficient in math. Only 8% of DPSCD high-school

students can read!

If I've been elected to the board, I'll declare an academic emergency and form a task force that will include my successor as superintendent--Dr. Nikolai Vitti--to focus on addressing this crisis. Our students' failing reading and math scores--which are now the nation's worst--must become DPSCD's number-one priority until we bring them back above the state midpoint. If public education is to survive and thrive in Detroit, this crisis must be dealt with immediately!

Dr. John Telford--a world-ranked sprinter at WSU in th 1950s--serves now as DPSCD's Poet-in-Residence. He was and remains unbought and unbossed--he sought no endorsements from organizations, and he took no donations for his Board of Education campaign. He financed his campaign via his book sales. Tune him in on WCHB AM1340 Saturdays at 9:30 a.m. and Mondays at 6:30 p.m.--and on WJZZ Internet television on Wednesdays at 10:00 a.m. Contact him at DrJohnTelfordEdD@aol.com or at (313) 460-8272.

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Dr. John Telford on the campaign trail



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