

DETROIT NATIVE SUN

Enlightening the Community

Telford Telescope: Am I on the school board? Did Trump lose?

By Dr. John Telford
SUN COLUMNIST



By the time you read this, I hopefully will have been elected to the Detroit school board so I can convince members and the administration to adopt my research-based reading & math reforms, Dr. Sunanda Corrado's and my school-

safety plan, and our plan to teach students a trade.

I also pray that Trump will have lost--and I've decried his crimes repeatedly on my radio shows. Whether or not I've won a DPSCD board seat, I want to thank my supporters Helen Moore of the Dexter-Elmhurst Community Center, Rev. Charles Williams and Sam Riddle of NAN, my old Southeastern quarter-miler Rev. Arkles Brooks of Detroit Gospel Chapel, Rev. Horace Sheffield of DABO, Larry Hightower of the E-Mail Group (EMG), Police Commissioners Willie Burton and Bill Davis, Chief Anthony Holt of WSU's Campus Police, Maurice Badgett of Men of Wisdom, former councilwoman Sharon McPhail, Valerie Clark, Valerie Lockhart of the Native Sun, D Etta Wilcoxon of the Renaissance Times, the Highland Park Chamber of Commerce, Agnes Hitchcock of Call'em Out, my late great Detroit Track Club sprint-relay teammate Pete Petross' daughter Candice and my late great WSU relay teammate Cliff Hatcher's widow Barbara and my goddaughter Joy, Greg Dunmore of Pulsebeat Media, former County Executive Robert Ficano, Former Pershing/U-M/NFL star Glenn Doughty and former Pershing/U-M All-American sprinter Reggie Bradford, former NFL star Blane Smith, Val Monroe, Vito Faletti, and Dr. Demetrius Ford of WCHB, Keith King of WGPR, Joe and Dr. Sunanda Corrado, riverboat racer Jerry Bell, and my old DPS students Willie Spivey, Beverly Kindle-Walker, Tom Cleveland, Emmett Muckles, Keith Stephens, and many more from multiple decades.

Others endorsing and/or voting for me were former DPS board member Juvette Hawkins-Williams, artists Robert Landry and Angelo Sherman, retired Detroit Fire Chief Hugh Gersch and Yoonsil Chogersch, Boxing Commissioner Emeritas Dr. Stuart Kirschenbaum, Dr. Steven Korotkin, Dr. Ellen Stephens, Dr. Myron Wahls, Dr. Claude Tiller, Dr. Joseph Preville, Habibah Sheikh of Extinction Rebellion (XR--militating to combat climate change), Doc Holbrook of HUMANS (Humans United Movement Advancing Nations & Society), Randy Williams, Al Tellis, George Gaines, Ed Kozloff and Tommy Sledge of the Detroit Track Old-Timers, Elisa Grubbs, Candace Crawford, Donna Harper, Lorraine Martin, Michelle Rhea-Greene, former DPS Parent-Community Liaison Monica Johnson, attorneys Anthony Adams, Robert Plumpe, John Chase III, and the late State Rep. Isaac Robinson (my campaign manager until the virus tragically got him), Gabrielle Hatcher and Virginia Starkey of Vee's Boutique, my old SEHS half-miler Tim Moore of Detroit Internet Television, many current and retired OSAS and DFT members, and kindred spirits Gloria, Abby, Pinky, Sheila, Erlene, Enid, Tommie, Dorian, Zakina, London, Cheryl, Dajuann, Daryl, Kimmi, Audrey, Yomi, Demeeko, Barry, Dqualls, Shawn, and Regina My union, the DFT, curiously declined to endorse me. So did the 14th Congressional District Democrats' executive board whereof I'm a member. Its chairman told me I'm too old, as did the chairman of the DPS Sports Hall of Fame whereof I'm also a member--I'll be 85 in January. I countered that my long experience and educational knowledge neutralize their age-objections. As you read this, you now know if I've been elected to the DPSCD board, to the blessed benefit of our schoolchildren--and you now also know if Trump has been defeated, to the blessed salvation of our democracy.

Hear former world-ranked sprinter John Telford Mondays at 6:30 p.m. and Saturdays at 9:30 a.m. on WCHB AM1340. Contact him at (313) 460-8272, DrJohnTelfordEd@aol.com, or 8900 E. Jefferson, Detroit MI 48214 to get signed copies of his Detroit-oriented books. His website is www.AlifeontheRUN.com.

Ka'Mauri Harrison, 9, takes fight to stay in school to Louisiana Legislature

By Candace J Semien,
SPECIAL TO THE SUN

Sitting on Governor John Bel Edwards' desk is a historic act that creates school policies for virtual learning in Louisiana and allows students who have been punished by their schools to appeal their school's decision. The Act, which was written by State Rep. Troy Romero (R-District 57) and co-authored by 70 legislators, earned unprecedented unanimous support across the House and Senate during this second extraordinary session. And it all began with the parents and supporters of Ka'Mauri Harrison fighting to appeal an elementary school's decision to expel him.

When the Nyrone Harrison and Thelma Williams of Harvey, La., made the decision to keep their five children in virtual learning throughout the coronavirus pandemic, they did not realize that they were opening their home to the review of the Jefferson Parish School System.

Nine-year-old Ka'Mauri Harrison was expelled for having a BB gun visible in his bedroom while he attended virtual classes. According to his teacher's report, Harrison was completing a test during a virtual class when his younger brother tripped over the toy near him. He picked it up and placed it near his laptop and the teacher saw the barrel of the toy gun. She reported it to school officials who suspended the boy and recommended him for expulsion. Louisiana has a zero-tolerance law for weapons on school grounds and the Jefferson Parish School System upholds a "Weapons on Campus" policy.

At his school hearing, an official declined to expel Harrison but still upheld his six-day suspension. Harrison was upset.

"They are treating it as if he brought a weapon to school," said his father.

His parents said the school violated their privacy rights and denied them due process. They are suing the school system and is seeking damages for "mental pain, suffering, anguish and embarrassment, humiliation and loss of self-esteem, future counseling and tutoring and lost income," according to the suit.

The incident has garnered national and international attention from mainstream media, gun association magazines, legal blogs, and Black media.

On the day the story was published in the New Orleans Advocate newspaper, Dillard University president Walter Kimbrough PhD penned a letter to the school district and media. He questioned if the school system had adequate policies to address incidents like this to determine where school functions or school grounds end during virtual learning. He admonished the Jefferson Parish public schools superintendent to revoke the punishment, update school policies to reflect changes to virtual environments, and apologize to Harris. School Board member Simeon Dickerson said the punishment didn't fit the offense and also urged the superintendent to reconsider. As of today, Superintendent James Gray has not reconsidered.

Kimbrough often speaks against the over criminalization of Black boys, so it is consistent of this HBCU leader to spot this situation and proactively attempt to prevent a long-term effect on the fourth grader and his family.

Attorney General Jeff Landry launched an investigation into the situation on the same day of the story. "I have begun investigating this matter and plan to take action in defense of this young man and his family and all families who could suffer the same invasion of their homes and constitutional rights..." "It is ludicrous for this All-American kid to be punished for taking responsible actions," wrote Landry.

Likewise, The ACLU of Louisiana also condemned the school system's decision.

State Rep Jason Hughes (D-New Orleans) shared Harrison's story on Facebook and posted, "During the 2020 Regular Leg-

islative Session, I filed a bill that would

completely overhaul Louisiana's School Discipline Code... The bottom line is we suspend and expel far too many kids in the State of Louisiana, including students in Pre-K and Kindergarten. This is not accomplishing anything meaningful. Rather, these actions are causing our kids to fall further behind and placing them on a destructive path, rather than a path to prosperity. Louisiana MUST do better! I invite any parents, teachers, students, and members of the public to join me in addressing this problem and working toward a meaningful solution!" The Harrison family has done just that.

Last month, a judge signed a temporary restraining order enjoining the Jefferson Parish School System from performing a social work assessment on Harrison or any other acts of retaliation, his family stated on their GoFundMe page. The Harrison Family said they hope raise enough money for Ka'Mauri's legal defense to appeal the school's decision, clear his record of an "on-campus weapons violation, and support the family as needed.

Because of an over-reactive school expulsion, the Harrison family has become active advocates for fair education policies even in the midst of their own financial challenges. They have been caught in a whirlwind of rules and policies, even while KaMauri returns to virtual instruction.

With the help of New Orleans attorney Chelsea Berner Cusimano, the Harrison family went to the State Legislature on October 7 to encourage the Louisiana House Education Committee to pass House Bill 83 and review student disciplinary laws and policies especially considering the new virtual learning environment. Representatives applauded Harrison before unanimously voting to advance the bill which they renamed the "The Ka'Mauri Harrison Act."

In an open letter to legislators, the Jefferson Parish School superintendent and board members urged legislators to reject the bill stating that the bill will have serious and wide-reaching implications for school districts. They said school boards statewide would be overwhelmed with suspension appeals.

"From what I'm looking at -- just by reading and what I know -- it seems like this was way overboard and this thing should have never even gotten to this point. "This kid should have never been recommended for expulsion over something like this with a BB gun," said Sen. Kirk Talbot.

The Senate Education Committee also unanimously voted to advance the Act to the full Senate for final passage which it received with 35 votes, unanimously.

"We have the legislature on our side... Had this not happened these children would have been left with no recourse," Cusimano said.

If signed by the Governor, the Ka'Mauri Harrison Act will become a law in Louisiana and school districts will have to write policies specifically for online learning.

The law would allow Ka'Mauri Harrison, and every student punished since schools shut down in March, to appeal all the way to District Court. It gives families more options to appeal disciplinary decisions, including a secondary review if they're recommended for expulsion. This will allow students the opportunities to clear their school records as a result of a second appeal.

"He (Ka'Mauri) doesn't understand the seriousness of what's going on right now, but he's making history and I'm a very proud father," Nyrone Harrison told WDSU news.



Detroit Native Sun Newspaper Group LLC

17800 E. Warren Ave. Detroit, Mich. 48224

(313)457-5944 ~ www.detroitnativesunonline.com

Email: editor@detroitnativesunonline.com

Sales@detroitnativesunonline.com

Detroitnativesunnews@gmail.com

Valerie D. Lockhart, Publisher & Executive Editor
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