



## Official Press Statement

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### **Detroit Is Better Than That**

**Detroit, Michigan, August 6, 2013**-The recent comments made by Detroit's Emergency Manager, Kevyn Orr, in an interview with the Wall Street Journal strike at the very heart and soul of that which clearly demonstrates two different world views of the same condition. Mr. Orr's comments were callous, insensitive, disrespectful, stereotypical, and most disdainful of not only the African American citizens in the City of Detroit but in particular thousands of blue collar workers who have given their sweat and blood in building this city. He said to one of America's foremost conservative and socially indifferent news outlets, "Much of Detroit's dysfunction is also due to simple complacency. For a long time the city was dumb, lazy, happy and rich." Mr. Orr, neither the citizens of Detroit nor its leaders are dumb, lazy, happy with current circumstances and very few, if any, are rich.

Further, Mr. Orr's attempt to explain his characterizations of the City of Detroit and its people is even more arrogant and callous. It is without apology, possessing no sensitivity or a concern for the very people he has been "selected" to so-called manage. One has to wonder if these comments are also the sentiments of the man who appointed Mr. Orr in the first place, Michigan Governor Rick Snyder, who said he accepts Mr. Orr's comments and the intent behind them.

The question must be asked, how can one effectively restructure Detroit when he does not respect Detroit? How can the Emergency Manager effectively manage the City of Detroit and its image around the world when he tears it down, disrespects the people and uses language couched in the appearance of concern that is really what one expects from the likes of a Rush Limbaugh or George Will. Shame on you Mr. Orr! Many of us have attempted to avoid name calling and personal denigration of you and your office. We find that you have now crossed the line reflecting a historical demonization while demonstrating the most base and vile contempt for citizens in the City of Detroit.

Lest we forget, Detroit workers have built the nation's middle class. Detroiters have taxed themselves to build schools, stadiums, to hire police officers and fire fighters, and to improve city services for the past 50 years. Can Mr. Orr say the same thing about his friends on Wall Street?

Our leaders have unfortunately been given the task to raise cities and communities up from the ashes after years of neglect and economic disenfranchisement from previous leaders who occupied public office. Detroit's economic downturn did not begin with Mayor Coleman Young. Further it has not increased absent the negative economic depression within our nation.

Mr. Orr, as a *so-called* turn around expert brought in to carry the City of Detroit through the process of bankruptcy, did not use the terms "dumb, lazy, happy and rich" when he was working to restructure Chrysler or GM. Mr. Orr has not used those terms to describe the cities of New York, Pittsburgh or Miami. Moody's investors services has even downgraded the State of Illinois' credit quality. Moody's stated that Illinois' fragile finances could translate into less money for cities, villages and towns. Illinois has the worst credit rating of any state in the nation. An overall pension debt of nearly \$97 billion and a backlog of unpaid bills nearing \$10 billion. The City of Chicago recently saw its credit rating downgraded because of a \$19 billion unfunded pension liability that Moody's puts closer to \$36 billion. The City of Los Angeles could also be facing a liability of more than \$30 billion. Yet no one, including Mr. Orr, has referred to these cities as dumb, lazy, happy and rich. Mr. Orr has only seen fit to castigate and denigrate the people inside the City of Detroit. Mr. Orr, Detroit is better than that. Our workers are better than that. Our leaders are better than that and the people who live here are better than that! As a matter of fact, it is these same people who now, after federal loans to GM and Chrysler, have worked to see the US auto industry back on top where it properly belongs. This does not sound like lazy nor complacent workers.

It is unfortunate that a man given such responsibility and unlimited power by a governor who disregarded the will of 2.3 million Michiganders by circumventing the NO vote to this entire process, can be so out of touch with reality. Mr. Orr just got to Detroit five months ago. He has no stake in this city. He does not live in this City. He will be leaving this city in a matter of months. This is a dramatic indication of what happens when an unelected, not responsible to the people in the community, so-called "benevolent dictator" (in his own words) is left to run loose among the people he is supposed to serve. We who remain here will be forced to pick up, clean up and fix up after Mr. Orr is long gone. It must be said that the real culprit in all of this is the governor of the state, Rick Snyder who made this ill-conceived appointment. For it is the governor who is allowing Mr. Orr to disrespect an entire city. The governor has turned a deaf ear to the name calling, throwing dirt on past accomplishments of a great city and thus negating our coming together as one community. Is this what he considers a Pure Michigan? Quite frankly these actions are in fact polluting the entire great lakes region.

It is these types of comments that make it most difficult for Detroit and this region to come together as one. It is tantamount to throwing gasoline on an already inflamed community. Yet I am reminded of the very motto of the City of Detroit which is *Speramus Meliora; Resurget Cineribus* (Latin for We Hope For Better Things; It Shall Rise From the Ashes). Mr. Orr, we hope and pray that through a sincere apology to the people of Detroit (which you have not given) and by stepping away from your current responsibilities (which you need to do) that the City of Detroit can once again rise up from the dirt and the ashes thrown against it by these most thoughtless and slanderous remarks.

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