

ACTION ReUnion 2007

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Re: A Commentary or Open Letter: My Old Friend Donald on Contexts

My old friend **Donald M. Suggs** seems to have the facts out of context. I have confronted the St. Louis Board of Education on issues as far back as 1969, which is much longer than Donald has been owner of the St. Louis American weekly newspaper. So, that does not make me a “Johnny-come-lately” on tackling issues pertaining to the St. Louis Board of education.

The reason that my old friend Donald gave for publicly attacking me is that I said some bad things about a **state committee** he was appointed to. I merely stated the truth. The **state committee** was obviously designed to take away the authority of the new school board majority given by the voters, and give the authority back to **Mayor Francis Slay**. As busy as Donald claims to be in running a newspaper, he did not have to serve on the **state committee**. Two questions: 1.) Why did Donald find time from his busy schedule to work with a questionable committee against the will of the African-American majority on the public school issue? 2.) Like Slay’s old school board majority, did my old friend Donald take an oath to be loyal to an appointed state committee, rather than to the community he serves?

Mayor Slay with Donald, as a team member, lost two straight school board elections, year 2005 and 2006. After the last election, “like me and my shadow”, Slay and Donald begin advocating a state take-over of the public school system. State commissioner of education **D. Kent King**, a supporter of Mayor Slay’s failed experimental programs, created a state committee to “**study**” the St. Louis public education system with “**recommendations.**” King appointed all the members. The five-member state committee was called the **Danforth-Freeman Advisory Committee**. **William Danforth**, former chancellor, Washington University and **Frankie M. Freeman**, an attorney, both co-chaired the committee. All five members were either friends or close associates. They all supported the Slay failed **experimental school practices** that lost many accreditation points over the past three years. This scheme was like putting the wolf in charge of the hen house to say the least.

None of the **appearances of impropriety** seems to have mattered to my old friend Donald. On **December 12, 2006**, I issued a statement condemning the committee calling it fraudulent and gave supporting information. Regarding the state’s hearing on **January 30, 2007**, I encouraged the community-at-large to “**Kick ass for our kids, again**” by filling up Harris-Stowe University to show that the Danforth-Freeman Committee did NOT speak for the St. Louis community. The other request was to vote for **Katie Wessling** and **David Lee Jackson** in the upcoming **April 3, 2007** school board election.

I am sure, my old friend Donald had good intentions when he first engaged Mayor Slay about him teaming up with the Black Roundtable. The plan was to develop a majority school board slate for **year 2003**. **Good intentions and a proven quality school program that parents, teachers, administrators, and taxpayers could all support are two different items. And, just having a desire to close an academic gap between black and white students in public schools, without first closing the economic gap between these parents seems a bit odd.** It is not a rational practice to engage the entire St. Louis public school system into an unproven experiment program. The school system was only two points from full accreditation in 2003. Whether it was done by Donald alone or in concert with Mayor Slay, it was a bad notion. Some form of opposition from others and me in the St. Louis community will certainly confront any such deviant or incompetent behavior. Our kids deserve better treatment than these political experimental schemes.

Now, in context, Donald’s good intentions got lost, when his two inexperienced school board members could not dance effectively with Slay’s two experienced, deviate members elected in year 2003. The four member majority of the Suggs-Slay school board of seven members were **Ronald Jackson**, black,; **Darnetta Clickscale**, black; **Vincent Schoemehl**, white; and **Robert Archibald**, white. Slay’s board members were

NOT politically threatened the least by making Donald's board members "leaders" of the school board. They knew that they could still direct their agenda by manipulating the leadership with ease. An example was previous board member Schoemehl's manipulation of the **Waring Middle School** give-away to St. Louis University for its basketball stadium. In essence, Donald and the Roundtable were out maneuvered, out-matched and used to serve Slay's interest, which was to destroy the current public school board system to favorably market vouchers and the charter school program.

Mayor Slay and Donald's "how-to" intentions of fixing the public schools became obvious after three years and the accreditation points slipped downwardly from 2 to 25 points from full accreditation. Purposely done or not, it happened. My old friend Donald has made it worse than what it was before he and Slay intervened. However, for his assistance, Mayor Slay and/or **Governor Matt Blunt** are likely to consider him for one of their two appointments to the three-member **transitional board**. After all, Slay has to pacify Donald to some extent because he wants to continue marketing him self to the Black community using the American newspaper. Reporting an observation from another vantage point sometimes hurt the feeling of long time friends.

Some Problematic Events under the Donald, Black Roundtable and Slay Team Effort of 2003 thru 2006.

Public School Board announcement monthly meeting change to 7 a. m. mornings from the regular time of 7 p. m.

The announcement of William Roberti , and his New York consultant firm hired and appointed superintendent for an annual salary of five million dollars plus. He was to clean up a questionable 90 million deficit.

The closure of 16 schools with no community input, of which 14 were located in North St. Louis.

1500 hundred jobs, maintenance, custodian, food service workers, etc. were outsourced.

The Waring School give-away to St. Louis University for basketball stadium.

Accreditation issues not addressed.

The Rudy Crew negotiation debacle for superintendent, casting aside 8 other potentials.

The Floyd Crew and Pamela Hugh short superintendent sagas.

A questionable reading program that was not supported by most of the teachers.

The six seasoned superintendent with experience and certification passed over to hire to Creg Williams, an intern.

Creg Williams lost of confidence among the teachers et al.

The letting of no bid contracts et al.

Endless budgetary problems.

Respectfully,



Percy Green, II
Chair