

# Dan Rather Reports

**Episode Number:** 627

**Episode Title:** What Happened Next: A National Disgrace

**Description:** Problems with one of America's most broken school systems, Detroit Public Schools, through the eyes of students. An update to our investigation looks at what happened to one graduate in her first year out of high school.

**TEASE:**

DAN RATHER (ON CAMERA)

HELLO, I'M DAN RATHER. EARLIER THIS YEAR WE BROUGHT YOU A SPECIAL EXTENDED DOCUMENTARY ABOUT DETROIT'S PUBLIC SCHOOLS. THE THOUGHTFUL RESPONSE WE RECEIVED FROM YOU, OUR VIEWERS, WAS UNPRECEDENTED IN ITS VOLUME. SO TONIGHT, AS THE LAST IN OUR "WHAT HAPPENED NEXT" SERIES FOR THIS YEAR, WE ARE GOING TO REPLAY THE ENTIRE FILM, FOLLOWED BY A NEW INTERVIEW WITH DEANNA WILLIAMS, THE YOUNG GIRL FROM DETROIT WHO INSPIRED US WITH THE STORY YOU'RE ABOUT TO SEE AND HEAR.

**A NATIONAL DISGRACE ACT 1:**

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

THE FIRST THING THAT STRIKES YOU WHEN YOU DRIVE AROUND DETROIT IS THE NUMBER OF ABANDONED BUILDINGS. THE GHOSTS OF A CITY THAT WAS.

TITLE CARD: HDNET AND DAN RATHER REPORTS PRESENT

EARLY IN 2009, I CAME HERE TO INVESTIGATE THE CITY'S FAILING PUBLIC SCHOOLS FOR MY WEEKLY TELEVISION NEWS PROGRAM. BUT WHEN MY TEAM AND I STARTED DIGGING, WE FOUND A STORY THAT WAS MUCH MORE COMPLEX THAN WE HAD IMAGINED.

TITLE CARD: A FILM By STEVE TYLER, SARI AVIV AND ELLIOT KIRSCHNER

SO WE DECIDED TO SPEND A YEAR DOCUMENTING A SCHOOL DISTRICT IN CRISIS

-- AND THE STUDENTS WHO ARE TRAPPED IN THE SYSTEM WITH NOWHERE ELSE TO GO.

SECURITY GUARD

You get back in the school. Everybody back in Mr. Warren's office.

MALE STUDENT 1

We can't go.

MALE STUDENT 2

What did we do?

SECURITY GUARD

Because you should be in school or goin' home, that's what.

MALE STUDENT 1

What the...

TITLE CARD: A NATIONAL DISGRACE

MALE STUDENT 2

Man...

MALE STUDENT 1

Hey, we was goin' back to the school. You see how they treat me?

SECURITY GUARD

You get back to the school.

ON SCREEN: EXECUTIVE PRODUCERS DAN RATHER, WAYNE NELSON

DR. CONNIE CALLOWAY, FMR. DPS SUPERINTENDENT

At Osborne School, 8 or 900 students come in as 9th graders. By the time they're 10th graders, it's down to 545 students. By the time they reach 11th grade, it's down to 345 students. When the same cohort reach 12th grade, it's 245 students to graduate – and by then they've had to take

the high stakes test, the MEAP test – in the 4 main areas, and remember, it's minimum competencies, 11 students, 11 passed the MEAP test. (Bell)

SECURITY GUARD

Go to class! Hey! Put on that shirt! Let's go!

CALLOWAY

What are the other 780 students going to do for employment. The economics of poverty have devastated Detroit and without a successful public education system, like most of the urban centers, they're not going to make it.

KIMBERLY BISHOP, PARENT-ACTIVIST

The children is not first when it comes to Detroit Public Schools. Some of them when they graduate from high school they can't - they still can't read, they still can't add, subtract.

DENBY HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT

They don't care if you don't learn. They will not show you how to do it or nothing.

FINNEY STUDENT

'Cause one of my teachers told me that if I come to his class, he said he would just pass me if I just show up and shut up. They say they make their money whether we learn or not.

MICHAEL WILLIAMS

And if the teachers don't care because they feel like you don't care, you know, you feel like what's the point? You know, why should I come here every single day and waste my time and waste your time.

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

OUR COUNTRY'S EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM IS BROKEN. THAT'S PROBABLY NOT NEWS TO YOU. SCAN THE HEADLINES IN THE PAPER, MAGAZINE COVERS, TELEVISION NEWS REPORTS...

GEORGE STEPHANOPOULOS

Falling behind...

BRIAN WILLIAMS

The failure in American education...

STEVE PERRY

We cannot allow it to continue...

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

AND IF THERE'S A STORY ABOUT AMERICAN PUBLIC EDUCATION, YOU'RE LIKELY TO HEAR THE WORD "CRISIS."

PAT BUCHANAN

These test score seem to be going down every year...

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

TEST SCORES ARE LOW...

CHRISTIANE AMANPOUR

Students returning to class this week are less likely to finish high school than their parents...

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

DROP OUT RATES ARE HIGH...

DPS TEACHER

We can't teach with 50 students in a class...

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

CLASSROOMS ARE OVERCROWDED...

CNN REPORTER

There's a major difference between the graduation rates of white students and black students...

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

THE GAP BETWEEN THE EDUCATIONAL HAVES AND THE HAVE NOTS IS GROWING.

ARNE DUNCAN, U.S. SECRETARY OF EDUCATION

We feel this huge sense of urgency. In this country we have a 25 percent drop out rate...

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

THOSE WHO URGE REFORM SEE THE STATUS QUO AND SAY IT'S THE PRODUCT OF DECADES OF NEGLECT AND THAT WE AS AMERICANS CAN NO LONGER AFFORD TO LOOK THE OTHER WAY, THAT WE MUST DO A FAR BETTER JOB OF EDUCATING OUR YOUTH IF WE WANT TO BE COMPETITIVE IN THE WORLD ECONOMY, IF WE WANT TO MAKE SURE OUR CHILDREN AND OUR CHILDREN'S CHILDREN CONTINUE TO ENJOY A STANDARD OF LIVING WE HAVE COME TO TAKE FOR GRANTED.

DUNCAN

So I'd like to just open it up and have a bit of a conversation...

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

IN MAY 2009, PRESIDENT OBAMA'S NEWLY APPOINTED SECRETARY OF EDUCATION, ARNE DUNCAN, TOOK THIS MESSAGE TO DETROIT TO DIRECT NATIONAL ATTENTION TO A CITY WHOSE VERY NAME HAS BECOME SYNONYMOUS WITH ECONOMIC BLIGHT, URBAN DECAY, FAILED SCHOOLS...

HUGH LAURIE (CLIP FROM *HOUSE, M.D.*)

God I am tired of that argument! I don't have to go to Detroit to know that it smells...

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

THE CITY'S BECOME A PUNCHLINE IN THE POPULAR CULTURE FOR JOKES ABOUT THE WORST OF THE WORST...

BONG SOO HAN (CLIP FROM KENTUCKY FRIED MOVIE)

Take him to Detroit!

TONY GAZNICK

No! No, not Detroit! No! No, please!

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

MANY JOURNALISTS HAVE COME TO DETROIT TO TAKE PICTURES OF ABANDONED BUILDINGS AND TO WRITE EARNEST ESSAYS ABOUT WHAT'S WRONG HERE. THEY OFTEN CALL THE CITY A GHOST TOWN.

DETROITERS ARE UNDERSTANDABLY DEFENSIVE OVER OUTSIDERS COMING HERE AND CRITICIZING THEIR CITY.

DUNCAN

You could make a pretty good case, unfortunately, that Detroit is 'ground zero' education in this country.

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

ARNE DUNCAN HAD A LOT TO SAY ABOUT DETROIT'S FAILING SCHOOLS, BUT ONE PHRASE HE USED DROWNED OUT ALL THE OTHERS.

DUNCAN

What is going on in Detroit is an educational disgrace.

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

HE CALLED THE DETROIT PUBLIC SCHOOLS A "NATIONAL DISGRACE." MANY PEOPLE HERE WERE OFFENDED THAT THEIR CITY WAS SINGLED OUT. BUT PERHAPS SECRETARY DUNCAN WASN'T SO MUCH POINTING THE FINGER AT THEM. MAYBE HE WAS POINTING AT ALL OF US FOR ALLOWING SOMETHING LIKE THIS TO HAPPEN.

NOLAN FINLEY

I mean, if we'd have been wiped out by a hurricane here, everybody'd be flocking here to tell the story of Detroit and how bad things are, and how children are being cheated. Because this has been sort of a self-inflicted, rolling disaster over the last 20 years, you know, nobody-- nobody really seems to care about us here anymore.

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

NOLAN FINLEY WRITES A BI-WEEKLY COLUMN AND RUNS THE EDITORIAL PAGE AT THE DETROIT NEWS. FOR YEARS, HE HAS BEEN A SHARP CRITIC OF DETROIT'S

PUBLIC SCHOOLS, KNOWN LOCALLY AS DPS.

FINLEY

Dropout rates have gone up. Student achievement rates have gone down. Detroit schools in a nutshell are not doing the job they're assigned to do, which is educating the children of this city.

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

IN 2009, DETROIT PUBLIC SCHOOL STUDENTS SCORED THE WORST RESULTS EVER RECORDED ON THE NAEP TEST. THE NATIONAL ASSESSMENT OF EDUCATIONAL PROGRESS SERVES AS THE NATION'S REPORT CARD FOR STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT. DETROIT WAS AT THE BOTTOM OF THE LIST OF BIG CITY SCHOOLS, WITH 73 PERCENT OF FOURTH GRADERS BELOW BASIC SKILL LEVEL. NO STUDENTS HAD ADVANCED SCORES.

AND THE SAME YEAR, EDUCATION WEEK MAGAZINE CREATED A STIR WHEN IT SAID DETROIT'S HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATION RATE WAS ONLY 26 PERCENT. THE DISTRICT CHALLENGED THAT FINDING, SAYING THE TRUE RATE WAS MUCH HIGHER. BUT NO MATTER HOW YOU PARSE THE DATA, THE LEGACY OF FAILURE IS CLEAR. NEARLY HALF OF THE ADULTS IN DETROIT ARE FUNCTIONALLY ILLITERATE.

FINLEY

With that high a dropout rate, and that high a failure rate. I don't understand why the civil rights lawyers aren't lined up over here on the steps of the federal courthouse, demanding these kids get their right to a quality education.

REVEREND SMITH

Any system that is only graduating 25% of its students, and half of those cannot read, is a failed system.

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

WE OFTEN HEARD LOCAL ADVOCATES FOR EDUCATION REFER TO THE PLIGHT OF THEIR SCHOOLS AS AN UNFINISHED CIVIL RIGHTS STRUGGLE.

CHOIR

This is the word, we praise Him! Clap your hands!

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

BUT WHERE THE CIVIL RIGHTS STRUGGLES OF DECADES PAST GALVANIZED ENTIRE CITIES, COMMUNITY EVENTS LIKE THIS ONE AT THE NEW BETHEL BAPTIST CHURCH ON DETROIT'S WEST SIDE, WERE SPARSELY ATTENDED -- BUT THOSE WHO DID SHOW UP WERE PASSIONATE.

DEBORAH FRANKLIN

We don't have to fill this church in order to make changes in the lives of our children. So it's OK. We're Freedom Riders! That's what we are tonight. So join with me as we start talking about solutions and resolutions to some of the issues that are impacting our children and impacting our community. This is our community! These are our children! And as they say, "It does take a village," but we also know we need to watch who's in the village as well.

MOTHER AT CHURCH MEETING

I feel that I have a right to go to that school and complain about the way my kids are being educated.

SCHOOL SOCIAL WORKER AT CHURCH MEETING

They're missing critical thinking skills. They're missing communication skills.

MAN 1 AT CHURCH MEETING

My objective is to blow up the system, and start over, cause the system in place does not work.

MAN 2 AT CHURCH MEETING

And I live in this community and as I looked around as a father I was very dissatisfied because I thought Detroit would be a different community than what it is now. And it's not. For me as a child it was a beacon of hope for African Americans to demonstrate to the world that we could raise out of slavery and run something for ourselves in our own way and ... and it's not happening.

STREET GAMBLER 1

You first though.



STREET GAMBLER 2

What's the bank, dawg?

STREET GAMBLER 1

Bank 40.

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

TODAY, DETROIT IS ONE OF THE POOREST CITIES IN THE COUNTRY -- JOBS HERE ARE SCARCE. AND THE REAL UNEMPLOYMENT RATE MAY BE AS HIGH AS 50 PERCENT. MORE THAN THREE-QUARTERS OF DETROIT PUBLIC SCHOOL CHILDREN ARE SO POOR THEY QUALIFY FOR FREE OR REDUCED-PRICE LUNCHES. NEIGHBORHOODS ARE EMPTY. AND MOST BUSINESSES HAVE LONG SINCE FOLDED -- OR MOVED TO THE SUBURBS.

POLICEMAN

You know, if you guys are shootin' the area, we got one of our closed schools right here that's really tore up. Literally, the back side's open and people are stripping it and everything.

CAMERAMAN

Okay.

POLICEMAN

Just be safe, okay?

CAMERAMAN

Thanks, we'll try.

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

MORE THAN HALF THE CITY'S SCHOOLS HAVE BEEN CLOSED, ABANDONED, AND FORGOTTEN. MANY ARE BEAUTIFUL, HARDY BRICK STRUCTURES OFTEN STILL BURSTING WITH TEXTBOOKS AND SUPPLIES... THE FILES AND RECORDS OF STUDENTS LONG GONE STILL INTACT IN VANDALIZED CLASSROOMS.

MAYOR JEROME P. CAVANAGH (IN 1965 PROMOTIONAL FILM)

Detroit is unsurpassed for opportunity and growth. There is a renaissance, a rebirth, in the city. There is a newness in Detroit.

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

THERE WAS A TIME, NOT SO LONG AGO, THAT DETROIT SHOOK WITH OPTIMISM.

CAVANAGH

Detroit -- an exciting place to be, to live, to grow, to work shoulder to shoulder, regardless of national origin color or creed.

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

THE MOTOR CITY WAS ONCE THE FOURTH LARGEST IN THE UNITED STATES. IT BOASTED VIBRANT DEPARTMENT STORES AND WORLD CLASS ART MUSEUMS

CAVANAGH

The inner city is becoming an exciting place to live...

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

A BUSTLING, PROSPEROUS METROPOLIS

CAVANAGH

... convenient to shops, offices and the most modern of schools.

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

WITH A POPULATION OF 2 MILLION AND NEARLY 400,000 STUDENTS IN ITS SCHOOLS, THE CITY WAS MULTI-RACIAL AND MIDDLE CLASS.

BUT BY THE TIME THIS PROMOTIONAL FILM WAS MADE IN 1965, THE SEEDS FOR DETROIT'S DECLINE HAD ALREADY BEEN PLANTED.

NEWSREEL ANNOUNCER

Part of the lure of the suburb is in the greater elbow room it offers.

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

WHITE FLIGHT, WITH ITS MOVEMENT OF JOBS AND WEALTH TO THE SUBURBS, WAS WELL UNDERWAY.

NEWSREEL ANNOUNCER

Four days of rioting, looting and arson rocked the city of Detroit in the worst outbreak of urban racial violence this year.

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

JULY 1967 -- RACE RIOTS ENGULF THE CITY, 43 PEOPLE DEAD AND OVER A THOUSAND INJURED.

NEWSREEL ANNOUNCER

Entire blocks of homes become infernos and damage topped the half billion mark. Governor Romney declares a state of emergency. The city's industry and business are severely affected. Sniper groups use day and night hit and run tactics before tanks move in to curb their window and rooftop barrage.

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

BUT RACIAL MISTRUST HAD ALWAYS BEEN STRONG IN DETROIT.

H. RAP BROWN (BLACK PANTHER)

We built the country up and we'll burn it down, honkies and all.

REPORTER

Mr. Brown, did you tell them to burn down that school?

BROWN

Be serious, I ain't got to tell black folks what to burn.

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

FOR DECADES, BLACKS AND WHITES HAD LIVED IN DIFFERENT, SEGREGATED NEIGHBORHOODS AND GONE TO THEIR OWN SCHOOLS. IT WAS AN UNSPOKEN SEGREGATION.

BUT IN 1970, THE SCHOOL BOARD PASSED A BUSING PLAN TO DESEGREGATE THE HIGH SCHOOLS. DETROIT'S REMAINING WHITE POPULATION FOUGHT THE MEASURE -- HARD -- AND THEY WEREN'T ALONE.

THE ANTI-BUSING FERVOR ROCKED THE COUNTRY. IN THE DETROIT SUBURB OF

PONTIAC, MICHIGAN, 10 SCHOOL BUSES WERE TORCHED AND ANGER SPILLED OUT INTO THE STREETS. DETROIT'S BUSING PLAN WAS SHELVED, AND THE NAACP WENT TO COURT.

THEN CAME A DECISION THAT RATTLED THE CITY. A FEDERAL JUDGE RULED THAT THE ONLY WAY TO BREAK DOWN THE BARRIERS OF RACE IN DETROIT'S INCREASINGLY AFRICAN-AMERICAN SCHOOLS WAS TO USE BUSING TO INTEGRATE THEM WITH DOZENS OF WHITE SUBURBAN SCHOOL DISTRICTS. THE WHITE SUBURBS REVOLTED, PASSING RESOLUTIONS TO TRY TO STAVE OFF THE COURT ORDER... AND THE ISSUE BECAME NATIONAL.

CHIEF JUSTICE WARREN E. BURGER

Arguments next in #73-434, Milliken against Bradley...

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

THE LANDMARK CASE, KNOWN AS MILLIKEN V. BRADLEY REACHED THE SUPREME COURT IN 1974, AND IN A CONTENTIOUS 5-4 DECISION THE JUSTICES OVERTURNED THE LOWER COURT RULING. THERE WOULD BE NO BUSING BETWEEN DETROIT AND HER SUBURBS.

THE CITY LINE BECAME A LINE OF RACIAL DIVIDE, SEPARATING DETROIT'S PUBLIC SCHOOLS FROM THE MOSTLY WHITE SUBURBAN SCHOOLS.

SUPREME COURT JUSTICE THURGOOD MARSHALL

The court today takes a giant step backwards...

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

IN A STINGING DISSENT, JUSTICE THURGOOD MARSHALL RAILED AGAINST WHAT HE SAW AS SYSTEMATIC INJUSTICE.

JUSTICE MARSHALL

The Detroit School Board consciously drew school attendance zones along lines which maximized the segregation of races in their schools.

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

HE FELT THE RULING WAS A PERVERSION OF BROWN V. BOARD OF EDUCATION

IN WHICH THE U.S. SUPREME COURT RULED THAT SCHOOL SEGREGATION ON THE BASIS OF RACE WAS UNCONSTITUTIONAL.

JUSTICE MARSHALL

The very evil that Brown was aimed at will not be cured, but will be perpetuated.

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

AND TODAY, MORE THAN 50 YEARS AFTER BROWN, DETROIT'S PUBLIC SCHOOLS ARE 88 PERCENT AFRICAN AMERICAN AND ONLY 2 PERCENT WHITE.

BUT RACE IS ONLY PART OF THE STORY. AS DETROIT HAS BECOME POORER AND ITS SCHOOLS WORSE, MANY AFRICAN AMERICANS WHO HAVE THE MEANS TO MOVE ELSEWHERE OR SEND THEIR CHILDREN TO PRIVATE SCHOOL HAVE DONE EXACTLY THAT. AND THAT LINE AROUND DETROIT THAT USED TO SEPARATE BLACKS AND WHITES NOW SEGREGATES BY ECONOMIC CLASS AS WELL.

SHERRY GAY-DAGNOGO

So it's not just white flight. Blacks have left. Black professionals. That fear for their children's safety. That want police to come more timely. That want to just walk and enjoy their neighborhoods,

RATHER

And want to have a good school.

GAY-DAGNOGO

And want to have a good school! They've left!

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

AND THAT HAS MEANT THAT TEACHERS LIKE SHERRY GAY-DAGNOGO SEE MOSTLY STUDENTS FROM POOR HOMES, WHOSE PARENTS THEMSELVES HAVE A LIMITED EDUCATION.

GAY-DAGNOGO

It's disheartening because we know that everybody doesn't come from a perfect setting. Everyone doesn't have a support system in place that ensures their success.

RATHER

Well do you have parent teacher conferences?

GAY-DAGNOGO

Oh yes.

RATHER

Were they well attended?

GAY-DAGNOGO

Absolutely not. Absolutely not. I don't know. I just wish that parents could consider the impact that they have on their children when they're not there and not supporting them.

RATHER

Did your students by and large, did they read at grade level, or near grade level?

GAY-DAGNOGO

I would venture to say the majority of the class could not read. Thank God we do have audio CDs to let the students listen.

RATHER

Because they couldn't read the book.

GAY-DAGNOGO

Could not read.

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

IT'S ALL PART OF A VICIOUS CYCLE. CHILDREN WHO COME FROM HOMES WHERE THEY AREN'T PREPARED FOR EDUCATION... WHO THEN FAIL IN SCHOOL... AND THEN HAVE CHILDREN OF THEIR OWN -- DOOMED TO REPEAT THE PROCESS. THAT'S HOW YOU GET A CITY WHERE ROUGHLY HALF OF THE ADULT POPULATION IS FUNCTIONALLY ILLITERATE.

GAY-DAGNOGO

In our city, in our community, I don't know where people get this; they want to mask the truth. It's often stated, don't air out our dirty laundry in a public -- it's swinging. Swinging real high. So, dirty laundry is already out there. We have to change the conversation in such a way that it impacts change in our culture.

RATHER

Well, let's try starting what you would consider to be the necessary new conversation. How does it start?

GAY-DAGNOGO

Being honest about our dropout rate, being honest about our illiteracy rate, being honest about the support that needs to be in place. What mechanisms have to be put in place to make sure we bring a child that's at a third-grade reading level to their proper 8th-grade, 7th-grade reading level?

STUDENT

Oooh, that's irritatin.

FEMALE CHEMISTRY TEACHER

I know it is. But it works. I don't like screaming. That's my chime.

FEMALE SPANISH TEACHER

We've been working on some vocabulary, and nobody's here. So what am I supposed to do?

BRENDA GATLIN, SOUTHEASTERN PRINCIPAL

You got caught in a catch 22 because you didn't have a what?

STUDENT

A pass.

GATLIN

And you have to have a what?

STUDENT

A pass.

GATLIN

To be where?

STUDENT

In the hall.

GATLIN

Thank you ...

FINLEY

There's nothing wrong with the children. The children are okay. The children can learn. We just haven't put 'em in the right environment here. Even though we know the models that work. Even though we have models that work, we can look around us and see schools that are doing better.

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

FINLEY POINTS TO SCHOOLS LIKE UNIVERSITY PREP IN DOWNTOWN DETROIT RUN BY PEOPLE LIKE DOUG ROSS. ROSS IS A FORMER POLITICIAN WHO DECIDED HE WANTED TO TRY HIS HAND AT IMPROVING PUBLIC EDUCATION IN DETROIT.

DOUG ROSS

Have you been putting ACT time in?

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

THE OFFICIAL NAME OF UNIVERSITY PREP IS UNIVERSITY PREPARATORY ACADEMY, AND THAT'S HOW IT SEES ITS MISSION, PREPARING ITS STUDENTS FOR HIGHER EDUCATION...

LITTLE READER

No one knew who would be chosen to be the first person to set foot on the moon...

RATHER (VOICE OVER)



... WITH AN EARLY FOUNDATION IN READING. FOUNDED A DECADE AGO, IT NOW HAS STUDENTS FROM KINDERGARTEN THROUGH 12TH GRADE.

UNIV. PREP STUDENT

Just because you're older doesn't mean you're a man...

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

THEIR TEST SCORES ARE MANY POINTS HIGHER THAN THEIR PEERS IN OTHER DETROIT SCHOOLS AND MUCH CLOSER TO THE MICHIGAN STATE AVERAGE.

UNIV. PREP STUDENT

Number 11 -- sixty-one-thousand-two-hundred and eight...

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

UNIVERSITY PREP GRADUATES ALMOST ALL OF ITS STUDENTS EACH YEAR -- 95 PERCENT IN 2010. AND EVEN MORE IMPRESSIVE -- NEARLY ALL OF THEM GO ON TO COLLEGE.

BUT UNIVERSITY PREP ISN'T A TRADITIONAL PUBLIC SCHOOL. IT'S A CHARTER SCHOOL... WHICH PLACES IT AT THE CENTER OF AN EDUCATIONAL DEBATE THAT STRETCHES ACROSS THE UNITED STATES.

RATHER

What's the difference between a charter school and a public school?

DOUG ROSS, SUPERINTENDENT AND FOUNDER OF UNIVERSITY PREP

It's really just how they're governed. It's like saying, "What's better? A publicly held corporation or a privately held?" You'd say, "Well, I don't know, show me the company. I'll tell you if it's any good." It's not a education philosophy. It just means you are independently governed public school, which gives you the chance to innovate. And some chartered schools take advantage of it. A charter is just a contract to run a public school.

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

MANY CHARTER SCHOOL PROPONENTS WOULD HAVE YOU BELIEVE THAT THESE SCHOOLS ARE THE ULTIMATE SOLUTION TO OUR NATIONAL EDUCATION

CRISIS, BUT THE DATA DOESN'T REALLY SUPPORT THAT. NOT ALL CHARTER SCHOOLS PERFORM AS WELL AS UNIVERSITY PREP. A RECENT STANFORD UNIVERSITY STUDY FOUND THAT ONLY 17 PERCENT OF CHARTER SCHOOLS NATIONWIDE PROVIDE SUPERIOR EDUCATION OPPORTUNITIES FOR THEIR STUDENTS. 37 PERCENT DELIVER RESULTS THAT ARE SIGNIFICANTLY WORSE THAN THE TRADITIONAL PUBLIC SCHOOLS.

RATHER

What about the argument and I've heard this, that charter schools talk the good talk, but they don't actually walk the walk. That charters school don't do a better job.

ROSS

If you do the same thing that the failing public school down the street does in your chartered school you get exactly the same results. A chartered school's an opportunity to innovate.

ANTONIO, UNIVERSITY PREP SENIOR

It's a lot better because it challenges students whereas the Detroit Public Schools, you can pass with all D's.

AZA, UNIVERSITY PREP SENIOR

We don't have a lot of security guards; we don't have to go through metal detectors. We just come in and know what we're supposed to do.

KAYLYN, UNIVERSITY PREP SENIOR

If I was in like a Detroit Public School, like, I wouldn't have no focus. Like our teachers, like, they stay on us; make sure we're goin' on the right track in life and stuff like that.

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

IN 2003, A LOCAL PHILANTHROPIST, BOB THOMPSON, OFFERED 200 MILLION DOLLARS TO CREATE 15 MORE CHARTER SCHOOLS IN DETROIT LIKE UNIVERSITY PREP. SUPPORTERS OF THE PLAN SAW IT AS AN OPPORTUNITY TO GIVE SOME 6,000 ADDITIONAL DETROIT STUDENTS A CHANCE FOR A BETTER EDUCATION. THE SCHOOL DISTRICT FIRMLY SAID, "NO, THANK YOU."

CRITICS LIKE NOLAN FINLEY BLASTED THE DECISION

WHY WOULD A DISTRICT WITH SUCH PROBLEMS TURN DOWN AN OFFER TO

BUILD MORE SCHOOLS BASED ON A MODEL THAT SEEMED TO BE WORKING?

GRANTED, THE NATIONAL PICTURE FOR CHARTER SCHOOL PERFORMANCE MAY BE MURKY, BUT UNIVERSITY PREP *HAS* POSTED MUCH BETTER EDUCATIONAL RESULTS THAN THE MAJORITY OF DETROIT'S PUBLIC SCHOOLS

FINLEY

We can look to other cities where things are being done to address this crisis. And then, you come to Detroit, and we're so interested in protecting the--the status quo. So interested in protecting the parasites who feed off of these schools that we won't change a thing here.

RATHER

Who are those parasites?

FINLEY

Well, you can start with the teacher's unions. You can start with the contractors. You can start with the school board. The education performance of these children-- that's at the bottom of the priority list for these-- for this school board and for this-- for this city. The political structure of the city is all wrapped up in the school board. You know, they-- friends have jobs, their spouses have jobs. No one has an incentive to change.

CALLOWAY

Coming in I was not given a single document by the school board. Not a policy. Not a five-year plan. Not academic goals. Not a budget. I wasn't given any information so it meant I was starting at ground zero.

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

WE FIRST MET DR. CONNIE CALLOWAY WHEN SHE WAS NEARING THE END OF A TUMULTUOUS 18 MONTHS AS SUPERINTENDENT OF THE DETROIT PUBLIC SCHOOLS -- A TENURE MARKED BY FIERCE FIGHTS WITH DETROIT'S ELECTED SCHOOL BOARD.

DR. JIMMY WOMACK, FORMER SCHOOL BOARD MEMBER

Well, I heard the superintendent say that she said something about the - I did not hear her say. *I* call into question.

MARIE THORNTON, FORMER SCHOOL BOARD MEMBER

Today I don't know which side she's workin' for!

CALLOWAY

I raised the same question. *That* is what I said in the back room.

BOARD MEMBER

I didn't hear it that way.

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

FROM THE BEGINNING, DR. CALLOWAY SAYS SHE FOUND A DISTRICT OPERATING DISHONESTLY AND WITHOUT ACCOUNTABILITY.

RATHER

When you got there, what shocked you most about the Detroit schools?

CALLOWAY

The complete absence of any process or organization. For example, when I got there, the district was over-inflating its enrollment by between 5,000 and 10,000 students. And over the past years, Detroit has gone from 300,000 students to its current enrollment of 95,000. They lose between 5,000 and 10,000 students per year.

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

PUBLIC SCHOOLS ARE FUNDED BY YOUR TAX DOLLARS. IF A DISTRICT LIES ABOUT ITS NUMBERS, THEY GET MORE MONEY. SO INFLATING ENROLLMENT IS A FORM OF FRAUD... AND AN HONEST ACCOUNTING MEANT CALLOWAY WOULD HAVE TO MAKE CUTS.

CALLOWAY

And for at least two years, Detroit had not maintained a staff seniority list. So how does one know who should be the first to be laid off? And that complete absence of fundamental systems and organization was a shock to me.

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

CALLOWAY TOLD US SHE WAS DETERMINED TO CHANNEL THAT SHOCK INTO

ACTION. BUT FIRST SHE NEEDED A DETAILED PICTURE OF THE SCHOOL DISTRICT... ONE BASED ON HARD FACTS.

AND THE PICTURE SHE GOT BACK... WAS UGLY.

SHE FOUND THE DISTRICT WAS STILL PAYING EXPENSIVE UTILITY BILLS ON SHUTTERED SCHOOLS YEARS AFTER THEY'D BEEN CLOSED.

SHE DISCOVERED TEST SCORES IN WRITING HAD DECLINED BY AN ALARMING 23 PERCENT OVER A THREE-YEAR PERIOD.

AND SHE WAS SHOCKED TO FIND THAT THERE HAD BEEN NO EVALUATIONS OF DISTRICT EMPLOYEES FOR MORE THAN A DECADE. CALLOWAY'S FINDINGS TOTALED ALMOST FOURTEEN HUNDRED PAGES. SHE FELT SHE NOW HAD WHAT SHE NEEDED TO BEGIN TO MAKE A CHANGE IN DPS.

CALLOWAY

This notebook provides the baseline data that I never received. It is a building profile of every single school in the district, with the number of students, with the attendance. It is an evaluation form. All of the employees in the district were evaluated.

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

BUT WHEN SHE HANDED OUT COPIES TO MEMBERS OF THE SCHOOL BOARD, SHE SAYS MOST OF THEM DIDN'T SEEM TO CARE ABOUT WHAT SHE'D FOUND.

CALLOWAY

And looking in hindsight at the barriers, at the obstacles that were thrown in my path, I believe it was chaos by design.

RATHER

Chaos is one thing. Chaos by design is another thing.

CALLOWAY

Yes, indeed.

RATHER

Who designed this chaos and why?

CALLOWAY

It's been years in the making, Mr. Rather. I don't think that it happened just with this board. I think that-- this board carried on business the way that it had been done.

DR. CARLA SCOTT, DPS SCHOOL BOARD PRESIDENT

This meeting is to come to order. This meeting is being held pursuant to Section 5.2 of the employment contract between the board and Dr. Calloway.

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

CALLOWAY AND THE SCHOOL BOARD CLASHED FROM THE START AND IN DECEMBER 2008, THE BOARD VOTED TO TERMINATE HER CONTRACT. THIS PUBLIC HEARING WAS HELD TWO MONTHS LATER.

RATHER

Let's put this as directly as possible, in your judgment and based on your experience, why were you fired after only 18 months on the job in Detroit?

CALLOWAY

They bottom line said – she's changing too much. She's interfering with our money, and they said to me... "You interfered with our money, we'll interfere with yours."

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

HER TERMINATION HEARING WAS A FORMALITY, BUT IN FRONT OF A PACKED ROOM OF SUPPORTERS AND ACTIVISTS, DR. CALLOWAY WAS DETERMINED TO THROW ALL OF HER FRUSTRATIONS BACK AT THE SCHOOL BOARD.

CALLOWAY

I fought desperately for this district. 70% of my time was spent jumping through hoops with the board of education. The board approved this program when we are in deficit and we don't have funds and don't have textbooks? To this day I have no idea what the board's budget is and they shut me down. I was not allowed to speak in board meetings. They put their hands in my face, they gaveled me, they called me out of my name ... it's

LAWYER

Thank you, thank you.

BISHOP

When she came in I thought she was awesome. I thought she was the best thing that happened to this district since my children have started going to school. And you know when they got rid of her, I just lost, I lost all hope after that.

SCOTT

Now that the testimony has been concluded, that concludes this hearing. Thank you.

BISHOP

I feel like they didn't want her here because she had exposed some of the things going on, and especially when it came to that money.

FROM BOARD MEETING

It was you all; it was this district that robbed these kids of their education. The payroll person needs to be locked up, needs to be locked up. You can't tell me whoever it was didn't know 500 people was not budgeted? That's ridiculous.

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

BY THE TIME DR. CALLOWAY ARRIVED IN THE SUMMER OF 2007, THE PRESS AND THE PUBLIC WERE BECOMING ACUTELY AWARE OF SOME SERIOUS FINANCIAL MALFEASANCE PLAGUING THE DISTRICT.

IN PARTICULAR, THE FBI WAS INVESTIGATING A CONTRACT KICKBACK SCHEME RUN OUT OF THE DISTRICT'S CENTRAL OFFICES. AT LEAST 46 MILLION DOLLARS APPEAR TO HAVE VANISHED IN A SERIES OF MYSTERIOUS WIRE TRANSFERS.

BUT THAT WAS ONLY WHAT THE PUBLIC READ IN THE PAPERS. DISTRICT INSIDERS EXPERIENCED FRAUD AND MISMANAGEMENT ON A SCALE THAT DEFIED BELIEF.

LEKAN OGUNTOYINBO, FORMER DPS ADMINISTRATOR

I worked at DPS for four and a half years. The kids were never top priority. The kids were never top priority. Because if they were, then you wouldn't spend \$40 million moving into a facility that you can't justify and then pay rent on top of that.

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

SEPARATE AND APART FROM THE FBI'S INVESTIGATION, LEKAN OGUNTOYINBO IS TALKING ABOUT YET ANOTHER MULTI-MILLION DOLLAR SCANDAL, THE DETAILS OF WHICH HAVE ONLY RECENTLY COME TO LIGHT. IT ALL CENTERS AROUND THE 30-STORY FISHER BUILDING, ONE OF DETROIT'S MOST LUXURIOUS.

IN 2002, THE DISTRICT DECIDED ITS EXISTING HEADQUARTERS WERE INADEQUATE. BUT RATHER THAN STAY IN A BUILDING THEY ALREADY OWNED, THEY BOUGHT FIVE FLOORS HERE...AND GAVE A NO-BID CONTRACT FOR RENOVATIONS.

OGUNTOYINBO

You're spending \$40 million to move into this new, swank facilities, when you could have stayed at the older facility which you owned, and spent maybe five, ten or \$15 million to fix it up.

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

THE PRICE TAG IS ALL THE MORE SHOCKING WHEN YOU REALIZE THAT THE ENTIRE FISHER BUILDING HAD SOLD THE PREVIOUS YEAR FOR \$3 MILLION LESS THAN DPS PAID FOR JUST 5 FLOORS OF IT. BUT IT DOESN'T END THERE.

OGUNTOYINBO

They were spending money as a friend of mine used to put it like drunken sailors.

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

MUCH OF THE SPACE DPS BOUGHT WAS STILL OCCUPIED BY OTHER TENANTS, AND WOULD BE FOR YEARS TO COME. SO THE SCHOOL DISTRICT AGREED TO SPEND TWO MILLION DOLLARS PER YEAR TO RENT SPACE IN THE BUILDING NEXT DOOR.

OGUNTOYINBO

It's not a good thing when you work at a place that you're ashamed of. There are some things I could have done differently. One thing I could have done differently is I could have said, well-- I see a lot of things that are not right. Maybe I should make an appointment and talk to the feds, and blow the whistle a little bit. I didn't do that. And I regret that.

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

IN JUNE 2009, OGUNTOYINBO WROTE A FIERY WHISTLE-BLOWING EDITORIAL



FOR THE DETROIT NEWS. IN IT, HE LISTED SCAM AFTER SCAM HE SAID HE'D WITNESSED FIRST HAND... SUCH AS A PROMINENT LOCAL CRITIC OF DETROIT'S PUBLIC SCHOOLS WHO WAS PUT ON THE DISTRICT PAYROLL AT \$25,000 PER MONTH.

OGUNTOYIMBO

Vociferous critic of the district -- and the only thing I could conclude from that was that this was a payoff to keep him quiet. Because during that time, he did not criticize the school district.

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

WITH ALLEGATIONS OF FRAUD AND MISMANAGEMENT SWIRLING ABOUT, THE DISTRICT WAS EARNING A REPUTATION AS AN UNGOVERNABLE MESS. AND IT WAS HAVING A HARD TIME KEEPING SUPERINTENDENTS.

CALLOWAY

I was the 7th superintendent to be hired in 9 years and even more -- critical, there had been 4 Chief Financial Officers prior to the one that I brought in.

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

WHEN CONNIE CALLOWAY WAS HIRED IN 2007, THEY PRACTICALLY HAD TO BEG SOMEONE TO TAKE THE SUPERINTENDENT JOB, EVEN THOUGH IT PAID A QUARTER OF A MILLION DOLLARS A YEAR. A NATIONWIDE SEARCH HAD NETTED FEWER THAN 20 APPLICANTS.

RATHER

Did you know when you took the job, what you were getting into?

CALLOWAY

I read the news. I was aware that there was a federal investigation into the federal funds in the district -- \$47 million that was electronically wired out of the district over a three-month period. I was aware that they had gone from a state takeover to an elected board. Yes, I was aware of those problems that were common knowledge to the public at the time that I took over. There were other more insidious issues in terms of the politics that I wasn't fully aware of.

ELDER HARU, ACTIVIST

Good evening everyone.

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

ANY DISCUSSION OF POLITICS AND THE DETROIT SCHOOLS HAS TO START WITH THE ELECTED SCHOOL BOARD.

HARU

I'm not even-- I'm not even going to greet this board. They have completely and utterly failed us. 'Cause I came here to raise hell, do you hear me?!

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

IN MEETING AFTER MEETING, THE RESENTMENT AND DISSATISFACTION FROM THE PARENTS AND ACTIVISTS SURGES TO THE SURFACE.

BISHOP

Why don't you all get up, move out of that office downtown and move into one of these buildings that y'all got just sittin' there? I don't know how you sleep at night.

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

KIMBERLY BISHOP HAS PUT 5 CHILDREN THROUGH DPS. SHE SAYS SHE FINDS HERSELF APPALLED AT THE BOARD'S DYSFUNCTION.

BISHOP

Typical school board meeting usually lasts around maybe five to six hours, sometimes a little longer.

SCOTT

You know what, security, that's the last time. I'm asking you, please, to assist me. Elder needs to leave.

AUDIENCE

No! No!

SCOTT

We do not attack other members of the audience, it's rude and unnecessary.

BISHOP

I have seen some go to two in the morning.

HARU

But Granholm...

SCOTT

Your time is up Elder

HARU

But Granholm...

SCOTT

Elder, your time is up

HARU

I heard you the first time!

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

PUBLIC COMMENTS ARE LIMITED TO TWO MINUTES, SO PEOPLE TRY TO MAKE THE MOST OF IT.

MONICA SMITH, ACTIVIST

Brown vs. Board of Education said that separate can never ever be equal, yet our schools are just as segregated as they were a hundred years ago.

SCOTT

Ms. Smith that completes your time.

SMITH

We can change that.

SCOTT

Thank you.

SMITH

We can --

SCOTT

Ms. Smith, thank you.

BISHOP

There's usually a lot of arguing, bickering amongst the school board members.

SCOTT

A copier code to each assistant. I wanna...

THORNTON

How you gonna do that if you...

SCOTT

Member Thornton!

THORNTON

How are you gonna...

SCOTT

Let me finish!

THORNTON

This is a way of trying to control what I print and what I copy.

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

A LOT OF WHAT IS DISCUSSED HAS LITTLE TO DO WITH WHAT'S HAPPENING IN THE CLASSROOM.

SCOTT

We have reams and reams and reams of paper that has disappeared from the board office without any idea where it's going.

ANNIE CARTER, SCHOOL BOARD MEMBER

The majority of board do not use the copier in the board office...

MARGARET BETTS, SCHOOL BOARD MEMBER

It is certainly contradictory for her to work against the board...

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

ALL OF IT WHILE THE PUBLIC WAITS.

THORNTON

And we can't hear you anyway!

BETTS

What I - what I...

BISHOP

And you never come out of there with any solutions to any of the problems that Detroit Public School faces.

THORNTON

How is they gonna copy anything?

WOMAN 2 AT SCHOOL BOARD MEETING

When are we going to stop and think about our children and stop thinking about our damn selves!?

WOMAN 3 AT SCHOOL BOARD MEETING

You've got your own agendas, you don't care about the kids and you still haven't answered my question. Why?

CALLOWAY

Typically one thinks of a board as meeting once a month. When I was hired, the Detroit Board of Education was meeting 22 times a month.

RATHER

Wait a minute, wait a minute. 22 times a month the school board met?

CALLOWAY

Yes. They have committees. 11 committees. And these committees have closed sessions where they meet and discuss items for the agenda. Then each committee has an open session with the public.

REV. JAMES PERKINS

I showed up; there was no action.

DR. MARGARET BETTS, BOARD MEMBER

Who asked him to come here?

THORNTON

See that's workin' behind closed doors?

BETTS

Who asked him to come?

SCOTT

Oh, Jesus!

THORNTON

If you cut the deal behind closed doors and the rest of the board don't know about it, this is what you get.

SCOTT

Member Thornton, I gave you the chance to give your opinion, now I'm giving mine.

THORNTON

This is suicide...

SCOTT

But this - I have a right to my opinion Member Thornton.

THORNTON

Yeah, you do.

SCOTT

You spoke what you wanted to say; now it's my turn. And so I think that...

RATHER

Describe for me a typical school board meeting.

CALLOWAY

Lawlessness. They are not governed by anyone. We come in and board members go in a back room where they have ordered meals for themselves and they're back there while I'm sitting at the table with the public waiting.

MAN AT SCHOOL BOARD MEETING

I don't know what you're doin' in that back room with lawyers and whatever but the public is not very happy with what we see.

CALLOWAY

At one time the president of the board challenged someone in the audience to a fight. There's one member who turns to the public and says, "Did you hear what Mrs. Butterworth said?" That's the name they called me. But these members said whatever they wanted, and there is no one to govern them.

WAYNE BERNARD

I don't know what you're doing. You're selling our schools to -- who knows who. People coming up here making deals right in front of us.

SCOTT

Mr. Bernard, you're done.

BERNARD

No, I'm not done.

SCOTT

You're not reading any -- any --

BERNARD

I'm reading off here...

SCOTT

No, Mr. Bernard.

BERNARD

... because they got 13,000 and 16,000 dollars in overtime.

SCOTT

Security, please escort him out.

BERNARD

Get your hands off me. You're going to get sued. You're going to get sued. You're going to get sued. You're going to get sued.

SCOTT

Your time is up.

WOMAN AT SCHOOL BOARD MEETING

NO! You stepped in on my time

SCOTT

Your time is up.



WOMAN AT SCHOOL BOARD MEETING

But you can do somethin'. You stupid ho!

AUDIENCE

Oh!

SCOTT

Security.

WOMAN AT SCHOOL BOARD MEETING

And what? You gonna put me out?

SCOTT

Oh, yes, ma'am. Yes, ma'am.

WOMAN ST SCHOOL BOARD MEETING

I've been put out of better whore houses! She's full of shit! Keeping her sister with a damn job.

CALLOWAY

It was the most demeaning, unprofessional experience, Mr. Rather, but I look at it and I say, if this is how the adults are treated, it is a social justice issue, in that you very seldom heard board members mention children, or anything for children.

BISHOP

You know for so long things have been covered up in this district, and they wanted her out. They don't have the children's interest at heart. We know this because if they did, our children would be learning something in school today.

**A NATIONAL DISGRACE ACT 2:**

DEANNA WILLIAMS

The educational experience is not that great. I mean the kids don't come to class on time and like -- we use like 25 minutes out of the class to get the class to shut up anyway.

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

WE FIRST MET DEANNA WILLIAMS IN THE WINTER OF HER JUNIOR YEAR OUTSIDE HENRY FORD HIGH SCHOOL. SADLY, IN MANY WAYS, IT'S A TYPICAL SCHOOL IN DETROIT. ATTENDANCE IS SPOTTY, THE GRADUATION RATE IS LOW AND TEST SCORES SUGGEST ALMOST NO STUDENTS ARE PERFORMING ANYWHERE NEAR GRADE LEVEL.

DEANNA WILLIAMS

So I don't really see the point of being here but I'm here because I want to go to college and I don't see how this is going to prepare me for college.

RATHER

What is your dream? What do you want to do with your professional life?

DEANNA WILLIAMS

I want to be a librarian and a writer. That is all I have ever wanted to do since I was little. Something to do with books.

RATHER

Well, that's not so wild a dream

DEANNA WILLIAMS

To some it might not be, but it's my dream.

RATHER

Well, what are you doing to prepare yourself for that? You said you read a lot?

DEANNA WILLIAMS

I certainly do. Last year I helped out in the library on my free periods. I used to code and shelve books, check out books, and, like, search for lost books. It was, like, the most fun I had ever had in my life.

RATHER

And you like to write?

DEANNA WILLIAMS

Yes. I write all the time. It's like gettin' my thoughts down on paper so I don't have to think about 'em anymore.

RATHER

Right.

DEANNA WILLIAMS

It's like dredgin' up old memories is really -- tiring. It's like, "I just wrote it down. Do I really have to tell you again?"

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

DEANNA'S LIFE HASN'T BEEN EASY. LIKE MANY IN DETROIT, SHE HAS GROWN UP ON THE BRINK OF POVERTY.

KATINA WALKER

No! Put some -- vegetables on. Broccoli -- brussels sprouts.

DEANNA WILLIAMS

Brussels sprouts?

KATINA WALKER

Yeah.

DEANNA WILLIAMS

You want vegetables with it.

KATINA WALKER

I want -- I want some, y'all don't have to eat 'em, but I want some.

DEANNA WILLIAMS

You're weird, lady, that is not an American meal.

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

THEY'RE A FAMILY OF THREE. DEANNA, HER YOUNGER SISTER ISIS, AND THEIR MOTHER KATINA.

KATINA WALKER

Wait a minute! You have to be at school at 7:30?

ISIS WILLIAMS

No...

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

THEY'VE MOVED FROM RENTED HOUSE TO RENTED HOUSE IN ROUGH, DANGEROUS NEIGHBORHOODS.

KATINA WALKER

Y'all havin' burgers tonight. Tomorrow we're having onions-- liver and onions.

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

BUT HOME, THE GIRLS TOLD US, HAS MOSTLY BEEN A HAPPY PLACE. AND AS WE GOT TO KNOW THEM, WE FOUND A TIGHT KNIT FAMILY BOND.

KATINA WALKER

If you spent any time with both of them, you would just laugh. Deanna has a dry sense of humor. Isis would just crack you up. It's just ...I mean ...

DEANNA WILLIAMS

And then you put us in a room together and it's like, where in the world did that come from?

KATINA WALKER

Right, basically

DEANNA WILLIAM

Paul McCartney and Ringo Starr. Do you know what they did for the world?

ISIS WILLIAM

Play music and got high.

DEANNA WILLIAMS

Isis is the funny one. I'm the one that at least tries to keep up with what's going on in the world. My mom is the one who brings in the culture in the house.

KATINA WALKER

Brussels sprouts –

DEANNA WILLIAMS

Oh, yeah.

KATINA WALKER

I keep you on track sweetie.

DEANNA WILLIAMS

She took us to plays and stuff, and we used to go downtown and all this, and we never really had the money to do a lot of stuff...

KATINA WALKER

I don't know what that is...

DEANNA WILLIAMS

...but we have enough. And we take care of each other.

ISIS WILLIAMS

Are you burning something?

KATINA WALKER

Probably.

DEANNA WILLIAMS

That's the brussels sprouts. I took them off the heat. The smell should be coming in now.

KATINA WALKER

Ice? Up. Nanna? Nanna! Up up up up up up up.

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

ANY COMPREHENSIVE DISCUSSION OF OUR PUBLIC SCHOOLS WOULD BE INCOMPLETE IF IT ONLY EXAMINED WHAT HAPPENS IN THE CLASSROOM OR THE DISTRICT OFFICE.

KATINA WALKER

Come on...

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

WE ARE, AFTER ALL, TALKING ABOUT CHILDREN. AND A CHILD'S EDUCATION BEGINS AT HOME.

KATINA WALKER

Okay...

RATHER

Tell me how your day goes. Take me from the very beginning. What time do you get up? What do you do?

KATINA WALKER

Okay. I wake up at 4:45 AM -- every morning. Nanna are you up? Deanna?

ISIS WILLIAMS

She up.

KATINA WALKER

As soon as I get done with her hair and put those shoes on, we're gonna leave. It's 5:30, I'm walking out the door. Two blocks to the bus stop and to work. I get to work by 6:30.

RATHER

You don't have a car?

KATINA WALKER

No

RATHER

Have you ever had a car?

KATINA WALKER

No, no.

RATHER

How do they get to school?

KATINA WALKER

Bus. They're gonna catch the same bus I catch to work.

RATHER

That's a city bus?

KATINA WALKER

Yes, a city bus.

RATHER

There's no school bus?

KATINA WALKER

No, we are too far from Henry Ford now for the school bus to come and get them.

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

AS THE NUMBER OF STUDENTS HAS DROPPED IN DETROIT, THE DISTRICT HAS CLOSED OVER A HUNDRED SCHOOLS IN THE LAST DECADE. THIS MEANS MANY STUDENTS ARE FORCED TO ATTEND SCHOOLS THAT ARE FAR FROM THEIR

HOMES, TAKING MULTIPLE BUSES TO GET THERE.

DEANNA AND HER FAMILY USED TO LIVE CLOSER TO SCHOOL. BUT THAT HOUSE WAS SO SMALL, KATINA SLEPT IN THE BASEMENT SO HER DAUGHTERS COULD HAVE THEIR OWN ROOMS... THIS HOUSE IS BIGGER, BUT THERE'S ALWAYS A TRADE OFF.

RATHER

Is it a better neighborhood?

KATINA WALKER

Every neighborhood has some issues. Within this past week there was a shooting at the end of the block.

RATHER

That's an issue.

KATINA WALKER

Yeah.

RATHER

And this was pretty close?

KATINA WALKER

Oh right at the corner. Down the street from me. Pennies, singles and tens ...and you're good. Scan your thing again.

RATHER

What do you do at Target?

KATINA WALKER

I am the cash office specialist.

RATHER

You count money?



KATINA WALKER

I count money.

RATHER

I draw a deep breath and I hesitate to ask this question, but give me a range of your total income a year.

KATINA WALKER

On a good two weeks, is maybe four or five hundred dollars every two weeks.

RATHER

That's take home.

KATINA WALKER

Yes.

RATHER

After taxes and social security?

KATINA WALKER

That's after taxes and -- mm hmm. What bus is that?

MAN AT BUS STOP

Dexter Downtown? That's what I need

KATINA WALKER

Apparently they're saying that these are the bus routes that's gonna close -- no buses on Saturday after six and no buses at all on Sunday.

RATHER

That's part of the city's effort to reduce their costs?

KATINA WALKER

Right. And a cab is like almost \$30.

RATHER

You can't afford that, can you?

KATINA WALKER

No. Absolutely not.

RATHER

Are you aware of how much your mother has dreamed for you?

DEANNA WILLIAMS

Yes, I'm also aware of how much she gave up for me. She wanted to join the military and she wanted to go to college and do all that stuff, and before she it was time for her to graduate, she found out she was pregnant, and I saw her graduation picture, and under the red robe, you can see her belly. And it's like "Why in the world would you give that up for me? I have done some junk. And I asked her recently like, "What makes a parent love their child."

DEANNA WILLIAMS

So for the semester I have to have had a 2.0 and...

KATINA WALKER

Read the rest of it, it says you will be expected ...

DEANNA WILLIAMS

To provide 20 hours of service ...

KATINA WALKER

My dream changed. My time is to make sure their dreams come to fulfillment. That they become more. That no matter what happens that they know I'm there to help push them along.

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

BUT FOR ALL HER PUSHING AND PRODDING, KATINA TOLD US SHE KNOWS

THERE'S ONLY SO MUCH SHE CAN DO ALONE TO KEEP HER DAUGHTERS ON THE PATH TO SUCCESS.

RATHER

What would you say to a school board member if he or she were standing here in my place?

KATINA WALKER

As much as you care, what are you doing to make a change in the DPS system? What are *you* doing? And what are you trying to get the rest of the board members to do to help the DPS kids. Because right now, as much as you care, it's not working.

When they were in elementary school, they had projects for science. They - we did Mount Vesuvius and everything, when they were in elementary school. They had all these projects, it was like, get them, they were so excited to do these projects.

She get to middle school, there's no projects. There's no science fair. There's no-- none of that. And I asked the science teacher, why haven't there been any projects, he says that he can't get the kids to mind, so he canceled them.

She stayed in there that one year and I took her out of that school 'cause her grades went from straight A's when she was in elementary school, to D's and F's.

DEANNA WILLIAMS

Emerson had the worst reputation of a middle school, ever, anywhere. There were fights in the hallways, sex in the hallways, in middle school, with middle school children. For the better half of the year, I did not have a social studies teacher. We would go into the classroom, and the lights would be off and nobody was in there, for the better half of the year.

RATHER

It seems almost unbelievable.

DEANNA WILLIAMS

It might seem that way, but it's the truth.

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

DEANNA CONTINUED TO STRUGGLE ACADEMICALLY AT EMERSON MIDDLE SCHOOL... BUT EVEN THOUGH SHE WAS GETTING D'S AND F'S IN HER CLASSES,

SHE TESTED IN TO ONE OF DETROIT'S THREE HIGH SCHOOLS FOR HONORS STUDENTS. UNFORTUNATELY, SHE SAYS, MARTIN LUTHER KING HIGH SCHOOL WAS TOO FAR FROM HER HOME... IT WOULD BE ANOTHER SET BACK...

DEANNA SAYS SHE THINKS A LOT ABOUT HOW THE SCHOOLS HAVE FAILED HER, AND SAYS SHE'S STILL ANGRY ABOUT HER TIME BACK IN MIDDLE SCHOOL - WHEN EVERYTHING STARTED TO GO WRONG.

DEANNA WILLIAMS

My teacher would drink in the classroom, drink Smirnoff. He smelled like liquor and Black and Milds, which is a cigar.

RATHER

Right.

DEANNA WILLIAMS

My mom came up to the school for parent-teacher conference, and she thought he was a janitor or something, because he was wearing a dirty t-shirt and dirty jeans -- trying to talk to her about what I was doing in class.

RATHER

Wait, he was drinking vodka in class?

DEANNA WILLIAMS

Yes.

RATHER

Well you say, yes, but you're old enough to know that's not normal, not anywhere near normal.

DEANNA WILLIAMS

No it's not, and it's sad, because he didn't really care, he was just knocking them back in the classroom. Security guards would walk past the kids on the stairs having sex. I would walk past kids on the stairs having sex. There would be oral sex in the back of the classroom. Teacher didn't really care what was going on. She was just, you know, trying to get the class to shut up long enough for her to get two words out.

RATHER

You know there are going to be people watching and listening to this and saying well, this young woman she must have made this up, it didn't really happen.

DEANNA WILLIAMS

I don't have to make it up.

RATHER

It happened?

DEANNA WILLIAMS

It happened.

RATHER

It was real.

DEANNA WILLIAMS

Yes.

PRINCIPAL ALVIN WARD, FINNEY HIGH SCHOOL

We had a self-inflicted gun wound to a student. We had numerous locker fires, bomb threats; a gun went off in a classroom. I obtained a fractured jaw being hit with brass knuckles.

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

THIS IS THE PRINCIPAL OF FINNEY HIGH SCHOOL ADDRESSING THE GRADUATING CLASS OF 2009.

WARD

There was an in-school beating of a person that resulted in a death.

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

IF WE EVER DOUBTED THE TRUTHFULNESS OF STUDENT REPORTS ABOUT WHAT HAPPENS INSIDE DETROIT PUBLIC SCHOOLS, HIS MATTER-OF-FACT LIST OF

WHAT THESE GRADUATES HAD ENDURED DURING THEIR FOUR YEARS AT FINNEY CERTAINLY MADE US PAY ATTENTION.

WARD

Students have died tragically but we all stayed together, and we all made it through. I congratulate this senior class.

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

IN AN EFFORT TO KEEP STUDENTS IN AND VIOLENCE OUT, FINNEY HIGH SCHOOL HAD TAKEN THE DRASTIC STEP OF BUILDING A CHAIN-LINK FENCE AROUND THE ENTIRE SCHOOL BUILDING. THE SYMBOLISM WAS NOT LOST ON THE STUDENTS.

DARIUS CRAFT, FINNEY HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATE 2010

It's pointless 'cause I look at it like they lockin' us in. Like we have no type of freedom.

D'MARCO CRAFT, FINNEY HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATE 2009

It's like we're animals. You-- you cage us in like animals, they gonna act like animals, you know.

DARIUS CRAFT

But by puttin' a cage around Finney, it's makin' them think, "Well, that's a representation of how they feel about us."

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

WE MET BROTHERS DARIUS AND D'MARCO CRAFT WHEN THEY WERE STUDENTS AT FINNEY. THEY WERE BOTH STAR FOOTBALL PLAYERS AND THEY TOLD US IT WAS THEIR DEVOTION TO THE TEAM THAT KEPT THEM COMING TO SCHOOL EVERY DAY.

WARD

D'Marco Craft.

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

D'MARCO WAS ONE OF THE GRADUATES OF THIS CLASS. HE WENT ON TO ALABAMA STATE UNIVERSITY, BUT HE TOLD US HE WASN'T SURE HIS HIGH SCHOOL DIPLOMA TRULY SIGNIFIED ACADEMIC ACCOMPLISHMENT.

D'MARCO CRAFT

I don't feel that we're being prepared for colleges to the best of our abilities. I think there could be a lot more done. We could succeed higher if we were to get better education but -- it's mediocre. It'll get you by, you know.

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

THE BOYS TOLD US THAT MANY OF THEIR TEACHERS JUST RECITED LESSONS FROM WORKSHEETS AND TEXT BOOKS AND THAT THE STUDENTS HAD FEW CHANCES FOR ANY HANDS-ON LEARNING.

D'MARCO CRAFT

You might get that one teacher or English class, she might give you one essay but like at a lot of schools, you have essays for every class, like biology might have a science project or something -- no science -- I never done a science project since I been at Finney.

DARIUS CRAFT

There's certain stuff in the classroom we can't even touch and it's supposed to be for the class. But people steal like scissors or tweezers and we don't -- I done one experiment in chemistry and we didn't even finish.

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

A CHEMISTRY CLASS WITHOUT A SINGLE LAB... THAT WOULDN'T BE ALLOWED IN MOST HIGH SCHOOLS, BUT IN DETROIT THE STUDENTS WE TALKED TO SEEMED RESIGNED TO THE REALITY OF THE WAY THEIR SCHOOLS ARE RUN.

THEY DON'T HAVE TO TRAVEL A GREAT DISTANCE, JUST OVER THE DETROIT CITY LINES, TO SEE SUBURBAN SCHOOLS THAT ARE FAR DIFFERENT FROM THEIRS.

IT'S A LEGACY THAT STRETCHES BACK THE DECADES TO WHITE FLIGHT, TO THE MILIKEN SUPREME COURT CASE. THE STUDENTS IN DETROIT MAY NOT KNOW ALL OF THE HISTORY, BUT THEY HAVE A KEEN SENSE OF THE INJUSTICE.

DEANNA WILLIAMS

It's not fair that you see kids in Southfield and Waterford and all this, and they have computers in their classrooms, and they have new textbooks, textbooks I've never even seen before, and I

go to the biggest district.

And they can't even afford to give us a quality education, or the kind of education that other kids are getting. And it's frustrating to know that I could be learning all of these things, that I could be doing all of these things and I can't. And people think that people from -- that the children in the Detroit Public Schools are stupid and brutish because of what they see on television. And it's not true. We want to learn. We want to be able to do what the other children are doing. We want to have the same opportunities. But they keep taking them away from us. They keep -- it's like they're keeping us down! And then you find out that the people who are supposed to be looking after us, after our well-being, they're stealing from us! And every day I want to know why. Why is this happening?

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

TO EVEN BEGIN TO DEVELOP AN ANSWER TO DEANNA'S QUESTION, YOU HAVE TO STEP BACK AND LOOK AT THE ECONOMIC REALITIES OF DETROIT.

THE DECLINE OF THE AUTO INDUSTRY HAS FOREVER ALTERED THE CITY'S LANDSCAPE. FACTORIES THAT NOW SIT EMPTY ONCE BECKONED WITH THOUSANDS OF GOOD PAYING UNION JOBS.

FOR MUCH OF THE TWENTIETH CENTURY, YOU DIDN'T NEED A HIGH SCHOOL DIPLOMA TO LIVE THE AMERICAN DREAM. YOU COULD DROP OUT, HIT THE FACTORY FLOOR AND EARN ENOUGH MONEY TO SUPPORT YOUR FAMILY WELL.

THAT ERA HAS PASSED AND THERE AREN'T VERY MANY NEW JOBS TO FILL THE VOID.

BUT DESPITE THE DECLINE OF THE CITY, THE PUBLIC SCHOOLS *THEMSELVES* AREN'T EXACTLY POOR. WITH A BUDGET OF OVER A BILLION DOLLARS A YEAR, DPS IS THE LARGEST SINGLE EMPLOYER IN THE CITY -- WE'RE TALKING ABOUT TEACHERS, JANITORS, SECRETARIES IN THE CENTRAL OFFICE, NOT TO MENTION ALL THE MILLIONS OF DOLLARS IN CONTRACTS THE DISTRICT DOLES OUT TO VENDORS WHO PROVIDE SERVICES TO THE SCHOOLS.

FORMER SUPERINTENDENT CONNIE CALLOWAY SAYS IT'S BEEN A LUCRATIVE SYSTEM -- FOR THOSE WHO ARE CONNECTED.

CALLOWAY

You don't have to be competent. They called it the friends and family plan.



RATHER

Is that a well known phrase in the school district?

CALLOWAY

That's-- yes it is. They joke--

RATHER

That's what it's called.

CALLOWAY

--'cause that's what they said to me. One of the board members said to me, "Welcome to hell."

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

CALLOWAY BELIEVES THAT HER ATTEMPTS TO GAIN CONTROL OVER DISTRICT PERSONNEL AND VENDOR CONTRACTS WERE AT THE CENTER OF HER CLASHES WITH THE BOARD OF EDUCATION.

CALLOWAY

It was a raw and savage power struggle... Contract steering has been a problem. They've totally bypassed the administration and come straight to their committee meeting or the board meeting and introduced vendors from hundreds of thous-- thousands of dollars of contracts when we have no money.

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

BY THE TIME CALLOWAY WAS FIRED, THE DPS DEFICIT WAS NEARING 300 MILLION DOLLARS. JUST SEVEN YEARS EARLIER, THE DISTRICT HAD A 100 MILLION DOLLAR SURPLUS. SOMETHING WAS CLEARLY WRONG WITH THE DISTRICT'S FINANCES... AND CALLOWAY WASN'T THE ONLY ONE ASKING QUESTIONS.

CALLOWAY

Mr. Rather, how can you explain, \$47 million being electronically wired out of the district in a very short period of time and no board member have knowledge of that?

RATHER

Well how can that be?

CALLOWAY

How can that be? I believe that with a budget of \$1.2 billion a year, people simply can't resist looting if you will the school system's budget for the sake of employment, or for the sake of contracts, or it is seen as deep pockets. And therefore children are pushed to the background and the economic needs of adults become a priority.

**A NATIONAL DISGRACE ACT 3:**

ISIS WILLIAMS

My feet are hot. I should have worn flip flops.

KATINA WALKER

All that money, how many books that could have bought? I was buying tissue for the school. They would send home lists of what the kids need for school.

RATHER

You mean like toilet tissue?

KATINA WALKER

Mm-hmm. Tissue, we bought tissue for school, we bought Kleenex for -- so the runny nose or whatever, you know, crayons, paper, and all that. We did that! And I had no problem doing that. I sent extra. But why did I have to buy tissue for a school. They get this money. What are they doing with the money? I've never understood, where is this money going to?

MARIE THORNTON

I used to say the very same thing when my children was in the school system. And-- and I would come to every board meeting and I would stand up at that microphone and I would say, "The Board did it. The Board did it." And I would challenge them just like these particular parents challenge this particular board.

MAN AT SCHOOL BOARD MEETING

We're playing games. Okay? And stop playing games with the children!

WOMAN AT SCHOOL BOARD MEETING

Oh yeah I'm venting. Sure is venting. Yes I am venting. Yes I am mad!

THORNTON

But we don't teach in the classrooms. We're not in school buildings on a day to day basis. We are actually policy making body. We don't do the implementation. We set policies. But a lot of people believe when anything go wrong, it's that board that did it.

WOMAN AT SCHOOL BOARD MEETING

Those are the law! If you want No Child Left Behind, if you want that money for this and the money for that, you've got to follow those things to the letter!

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

IT'S CLEAR THAT THE SCHOOL BOARD TAKES A LOT OF HEAT... BUT MEMBERS SAY IT'S NOT FAIR TO PUT ALL THE BLAME ON THEM. AFTER ALL, THEY SAY, THE STATE OF MICHIGAN TOOK OVER THE SCHOOLS IN 1999 AND RAN UP HIGH BUDGET DEFICITS WITH NO IMPROVEMENT IN ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT.

SO WHEN THE ELECTED SCHOOL BOARD RETURNED TO POWER IN 2006, PUBLIC EXPECTATIONS WERE ESPECIALLY HIGH.

ANTHONY ADAMS, BOARD MEMBER

And so the fundamental question that most people raise here is whether or not we can govern ourselves. That really is the underlying question.

CARLA SCOTT, BOARD MEMBER

Nothing was passed.

TERESA GUEYSER, GENERAL SUPERINTENDENT

I don't think your board members understand that.

SCOTT

I want to make sure that the board -- there seems to be some -- there's a question of clarity about the first...

REV. DAVID MURRAY, BOARD MEMBER

Only 10% of that deficit occurred during the reign of this current board. And now everyone is trying to wash their hands, and put the blame on this board.

OTIS MATHIS, BOARD MEMBER

And that was when the state, Governor Granholm, controlled the district, and the mayor, so when they put us at high risk, it wasn't the elected school board.

SCOTT

I want everyone to be clear about what they're voting for. We're gonna redo the vote.

IDA SHORT

I thought we were voting on number one.

SCOTT

No.

ADAMS

Can we govern ourselves or do we need to have a different system of urban education from a governance standpoint that allows either a mayor or a strong CEO to -- to carry forth academic reform.

SHORT

Well didn't it -- didn't it pass?

SCOTT

It did not pass.

SHORT

What --

SCOTT

So --

SHORT

Which way did I vote? Did I vote yes?

SCOTT

Ok, I think since there's such unreadiness ...

ROBERT BOBB, EMERGENCY FINANCIAL MANAGER

This school system doesn't have time to tinker around the edges. It doesn't have time to plot.

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

IN MARCH 2009, A NEW PLAYER ARRIVED ON THE SCENE.

BOBB

You know when I came in I looked at everything.

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

THE STATE OF MICHIGAN HAD STEPPED IN ONCE AGAIN AND THEY CALLED IN THIS MAN, ROBERT BOBB, TO CLEAN UP THE MESS.

BOBB

I mean, we are in a crisis. Not only are we in a financial crisis, we're also in an academic crisis as well.

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

BOBB WAS GIVEN THE TITLE EMERGENCY FINANCIAL MANAGER.

BOBB

I have no tolerance for it. I have no tolerance for anyone who takes one red penny of public money. None. Zero. Zilch.

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

OVER THE COURSE OF THIRTY YEARS, ROBERT BOBB HAS SPECIALIZED IN TURNING AROUND THE FINANCES OF DEPRESSED URBAN AREAS ACROSS THE COUNTRY -- FROM OAKLAND, CALIFORNIA TO WASHINGTON, D.C.

BOBB

Now the world that I live in, you don't issue bonds to cover ongoing operating expenses.

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

HE HAD A NO-NONSENSE REPUTATION, HE WASN'T AFRAID TO MAKE ENEMIES AND CRITICS OF THE SCHOOL BOARD WERE STARTING TO TAKE NOTICE.

HELEN MOORE, ACTIVIST

We told you an emergency manager was coming when you kept us five and six hours and didn't take care of business. Now he's here, and you know what, I'm gonna tell you something, thank God!

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

THE BOARD OF EDUCATION NOW HAD A DIRECT THREAT TO ITS POWER AND MANY DETROITERS SAW BOBB AS THE LAST, BEST HOPE FOR BRINGING LONG OVERDUE ACCOUNTABILITY TO THE DISTRICT.

KIMBERLY BISHOP

So whoever was lining their pockets, I hope Mr. Bobb surely finds them because I want to stand in that court room and say, "Hey! You took our children's future away from them so yours should be taken away too." Thank you.

RATHER

Mr. Bobb, did you have any idea how bad the situation was before you took this job?

BOBB

No.

RATHER

You heard rumors - you must have heard rumors, or read reports.

BOBB

You know, when I reviewed the financials from prior years, I saw \$139.7 million budget deficit. The world that I come out of, piece of cake. We come in; we can take care of that. What I didn't

realize is that I would inherit almost another \$70-80 million in budget deficit on a budget that really was built on a house of cards....

BOBB (AT HIS DESK)

Okay, because it's a revenue producer that we're looking at.

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

BOBB TOLD US THAT, IN ALL HIS YEARS OF EXPERIENCE, HE HAD NEVER SEEN BOOKKEEPING IN SUCH SHAMBLES AS HE SAW IN DETROIT.

BOBB

When I came here we had over \$80 million in late payments. They didn't have the cash to pay many of these vendors. Our book companies, for example, had us on credit watch. When I arrived we had to go to the state to get an advance to make payroll in April. We took another advance to make payroll in May. We actually had over 500 employees on the payroll without a budget. We had vendor invoices stuck in desk drawers. We have employees with ineligible dependents receiving healthcare benefits, some individuals were actually deceased and we were still paying their healthcare benefits. I sent out almost 40 auditors to audit every school.

RATHER

That's an army of auditors.

BOBB

Correct. Across the entire school district -- to audit all of our bank reconciliations -- all of the cash that comes into these schools from athletic funds, from music funds, from -- bake sales and what we found is that we found individuals who were writing checks for themselves, using the school system as their own personal banker.

BOBB (AT THE AUDIT RESULTS PRESS CONFERENCE)

Let me just go to the results of these audits. Because they are disturbing. In many, many ways. Only 5 of the 194 schools had entirely proper bookkeeping, 5 of 194 schools.

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

WITH THE HELP OF HIS AUDITING TEAM, BOBB BORED DOWN INTO THE BOOKS OF ALL OF DETROIT'S PUBLIC SCHOOLS AND SURFACED WITH AN EMBARRASSING LAUNDRY LIST OF FINANCIAL MISSTEPS.

BOBB

Lack of documentation. Missing cash receipts. Improper and unauthorized disbursements. Missing series of checks. Untimely deposits. Financial records removed from the school premises. School funds that were diverted to individuals' personal accounts. Where did those records go? Incredible!

COURT CLERK

This is case number 0962475...

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

BUT BOBB WASN'T CONTENT WITH JUST *DOCUMENTING* FRAUD AND MISMANAGEMENT....

COURT CLERK

Count 1: embezzlement - public official over fifty dollars.

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

HE VOWED TO BRING PEOPLE TO JUSTICE. TO DATE, HE HAS LAUNCHED ABOUT 300 CRIMINAL INVESTIGATIONS. MANY HAVE BEEN REFERRED TO THE LOCAL PROSECUTOR AND A HANDFUL TO THE U.S. ATTORNEY.

BOBB

And these are individuals who were allowed to steal from the school system. But in one instance remain employed after three years of being videotaped removing computers from a city warehouse.

RATHER

And when you say from the school district, it's really from the kids.

BOBB

Oh it's totally from the kids. Absolutely. And so you know we are recovering everything that we can.

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

STOLEN COMPUTERS, HUNDREDS OF BLACKBERRIES, A WAREHOUSE OF



MOTORCYCLES -- BOBB TOLD US THEY COULD HAVE A SWAP MEET WITH ALL OF THE QUESTIONABLE MATERIALS THAT HAVE BEEN MYSTERIOUSLY PURCHASED ON THE SCHOOL SYSTEM'S DIME.

RATHER

In the end, somebody is responsible. Somebody was supposed to catch this stuff, long ago, long before you came in.

BOBB

I lay the responsibilities clearly on the shoulders of the school board. I was president of a school board. I understand what to do, what your fiduciary responsibilities are. You know they're the corporate board of a \$1.2 billion corporation. They cannot sit idly by. And somewhat dismiss the fact that we've had seven years of overspending. We've had waste, fraud and abuse. They are the ones who have to hold themselves accountable.

SCOTT

All those in favor stand adjourned.

RATHER

Well is it, or is it not the Board of Education's job to be responsible for keeping the financial house in order.

THORNTON

That is correct, but what we do is, as policy makers, we hire individuals to perform those duties for us. And keep in mind, the superintendent is the one that recommends who she would like to work with.

RATHER

Well, here's where this is going. Should or should not have the Board of Education done more to save the money for the children? Could you have done more?

THORNTON

See you sound like them. Could we have did more to save money for the children? If we do not handle the day to day operation and we hire a superintendent that we pay quite well, over 200 something thousand dollars. And they come to us; we expect them to give us the correct information. And if you have a chief financial officer that comes before you every day and they

say ‘the books are balanced’, then at some point you have to believe and trust your superintendent, trust your chief financial officer, trust your treasurer that the information they’re providing to the board is correct.

RATHER

Well at least one member of the school board, and I think it’s shared by others, takes the view when asked, “Where were you?” In effect that “You have to understand Mr. Rather, that it’s the superintendent’s job to catch these things and bring them to us.” Do you buy that?

BOBB

Well being from Louisiana I would say that’s alligator dung. This is not the case at all. You hire a CEO. You’re over that CEO. You give him or her a contract and you hold him accountable. You don’t just hire a CEO and say, “Just go out and do, you know, whatever.” And then there’s evidence that these superintendents actually brought strong recommendations to the board when the board has said, “No” to those recommendations as well.

CALLOWAY

I begged for a forensic audit because their annual audit was not complete when I arrived. I begged the state. I begged the school board. I begged the foundations. Everyone. And I was told it was too expensive. In lieu of that, I worked with Dr. Mike Casserly from the Council of the Great City Schools and he came in and audited the curriculum department, the finance department, the facilities and maintenance department, the IT department, and procurement.

RATHER

The audit says, and again I quote, “There is no indication that the budget is aligned with the district’s goals, priorities or actual practices. Tell me about those findings.

MICHAEL CASSERLY, COUNCIL OF THE GREAT CITY SCHOOLS

Well those are huge problems. The school district doesn’t have priorities and instructional goals, so there’s nothing that the finance system can actually align to. On top of that, there is no mechanism in the school district that actually lays out a long term plan. There is no forecasting, there is no projections about what the school system is likely to face in the coming years, and the school system was just not managing the tax payer resources in a competent fashion.

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

CASSERLY AND HIS TEAM SPENT SIX MONTHS LOOKING AT THE DISTRICT AND

COMPILED THEIR FINDINGS IN A DETAILED REPORT. THEY LISTED MANY EXAMPLES OF WASTED MONEY, SUCH AS A BLOATED CENTRAL OFFICE WITH TWICE AS MANY EMPLOYEES PER STUDENT AS THE AVERAGE URBAN DISTRICT. HE DISCOVERED SOME DEPARTMENTS HAD NEARLY ONE SUPERVISOR FOR EVERY WORKER.

CASSERLY

And it'd be one thing; maybe you could excuse it, if all of these people were producing a great product. And the overall attainment of the kids was getting higher and accelerating. But that's not the case here.

CALLOWAY

And the board was horrible to them at the meeting. They talked over Dr. Casserly. They shortened his time. Board members jumped up and slammed doors and all this ... they did all of that when Dr. Casserly tried to give that presentation.

BOBB

Council of Great City Schools issued a great report. Fantastic roadmap, blue print. They didn't follow that one. Prior audits identify all the financial weaknesses in the system. They didn't follow any of those reports. Had they followed three major reports, that were delivered to them, there would be no need for an emergency financial manager.

THORNTON

We got a revised school code...

SCOTT

Member Thornton, what is your vote?

MURRAY

Because they're not supposed to put our kids off the bus if they got ID...

THORNTON

This is being done because y'all mad at Robert Bobb. I don't know, this is dictatorial...

CALLOWAY

It had to have someone with the autonomy and the authority to report beyond the school board to

move things in Detroit. Please remember that every decision that I made, from anyone who was hired, fired, any building that was closed had to have their approval. I did not have the authority to do any of that.

BOBB

We're gonna build a new Mumford High School...

CALLOWAY

Mr. Bobb has that authority.

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

BUT JUST HOW FAR BOBB'S AUTHORITY WOULD REACH BECAME AN EXTREMELY CONTENTIOUS ISSUE. SCHOOL BOARD MEMBERS INSISTED *THEY* WERE STILL IN CONTROL OF ACADEMIC DECISIONS.

MURRAY

I would say that the academics in this district are second to none.

MATHIS

I mean out of all the schools in the state of Michigan, you know you want your child to go to a Detroit Public School and one of the best high schools in the country.

SHORT

We have developed our own academic plan, that Mr. Bobb is rejecting at this point, at least publicly he rejects it. Behind the scenes though, they take parts of the plan and implement them in terms of their plan. That's what's really going on here.

MURRAY

And the fact is, he has no experience or knowledge of academia. So he's taken over the superintendent's role, and not only that, he has fired most of our academic experts.

ADAMS

We're not going to be intimidated from our position, which is we believe we should be consulted on academic policy. You need to consult with us prior to taking action. You tell me that you don't have time? We got all our lives. We been here all our lives. We got as much time as it

takes to get it done right is what we want Mr. Bobb to understand. We want to do it the right way, not the fast way. 'Cause oftentimes being fast is not good.

THORNTON

His contract fully says, you must consult with the board of education, and he felt that he shouldn't have to.

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

IN AUGUST 2009, THE DETROIT SCHOOL BOARD SUED ROBERT BOBB FOR OVERSTEPPING HIS AUTHORITY. ACCORDING TO MEMBER MARIE THORNTON, BOBB WASN'T STAYING IN HIS OWN LANE. ON A LOCAL RADIO SHOW, BOBB HAD ALREADY MADE HIS FEELINGS ABOUT THORNTON AND THE REST OF THE SCHOOL BOARD VERY CLEAR.

BOBB

If they had done their job well, then I would still be in my office at 601 Pennsylvania Avenue in Northwest and I would not have had the phone call from the state of Michigan. We're here because they're the ones who receive a triple F for not doing what was right for the students of the Detroit Public School system. And this school system, this school board, Ms. Thornton is part of the failure as to why I'm here.

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

BOBB COUNTERSUED THE SCHOOL BOARD FOR SPENDING MONEY WITHOUT HIS APPROVAL. THE BOARD HAD TAKEN THE PROVOCATIVE STEP OF HIRING A NEW SUPERINTENDENT WITHOUT CONSULTING HIM. THEY HAD PROMOTED ONE OF THEIR OWN, THEIR FORMER GENERAL COUNSEL. BOBB SAID HE WOULDN'T FUND THE POSITION AND QUESTIONED THE WISDOM OF HIRING A NEW SUPERINTENDENT WITHOUT A NATIONWIDE SEARCH.

ADAMS

He shouldn't be spending a dime in countersuing this board. What he needs to do is sit down with this board and figure out the best mechanism for us to work together. We are not the enemy.

BOBB

The problem with the Detroit public schools and its leadership, particularly at the board level, is that we will-- w-- we just-- there's-- there's this non-recognition of reality. The reality is that we know Johnny is not reading but we're gonna pretend that Johnny is, in fact, reading.

RATHER

Well, some people call that denial.

BOBB

It's total denial. I mean, we can't deny the fact that we have kids coming in to the ninth grade reading at the fifth and sixth grade levels. We can't deny the fact that we have kids in the ninth grade that we expect to take pre-algebra, but they cannot read. And yet, we want them to perform at these high levels.

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

BOBB, OF COURSE, WASN'T THE FIRST TO MAKE THESE OBSERVATIONS. IT'S WHAT FORMER SUPERINTENDENT CONNIE CALLOWAY PUT IN HER NOTEBOOK. IT'S WHAT MICHAEL CASSERLY PUT IN THE REPORT OF HIS AUDIT. CHANGE IS HARD, ESPECIALLY WHEN THERE ARE NO EASY DECISIONS. BUT BOBB SAID MANY IN THE DISTRICT DIDN'T WANT TO FACE THE TOUGH REALITIES

BOBB

Because what has happened in the past is they've seen where they've had a declining enrollment. They know how many employees should be laid off, but they didn't pull the trigger. I've not been afraid to pull the trigger.

MALE TEACHER AT RALLY

We can't teach with 50 students in a class. We can't teach without books and supplies. We have a thousand teachers laid off and every single one is gonna come back.

FEMALE TEACHER

What do we want? Contracts! When do we want 'em? Now!

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

AS THE 2009-2010 SCHOOL YEAR APPROACHED, BOBB LAID OFF OVER A THOUSAND TEACHERS. HE SAID THE DISTRICT COULDN'T AFFORD THEIR SALARIES. THE TEACHERS UNION RALLIED IN PROTEST.

FEMALE TEACHER AT RALLY

You can't balance a \$400 million deficit on the backs of teachers. It's not going to happen. What other cuts are you willing to make?

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

THE UNION ARGUED THAT THEIR MEMBERS WERE BEING UNFAIRLY TARGETED, BUT BOBB WAS MAKING DRASTIC CUTS ACROSS THE BOARD. HE FIRED SCORES OF PRINCIPALS. HE GAVE PINK SLIPS TO NEARLY THREE QUARTERS OF THE DISTRICT'S CENTRAL OFFICE AND HE ANNOUNCED THAT THE PACE OF SCHOOL CLOSINGS IN DETROIT WOULD INCREASE - DOZENS MORE OVER THE NEXT FEW YEARS. ALL OF THIS IN AN EFFORT TO TURN THE SCHOOLS AROUND.

BOBB

We only have one objective, one goal, one mission and that is to do everything that's in our power to make sure that you get the very best education you deserve. And never let anyone tell you that you don't deserve the best education. So, are you in!?

CROWD

I'm in!

BOBB

Are you in??

CROWD

I'm in!

BOBB

Are you in???

CROWD

I'm in!

BOBB

DPS!

CROWD

DPS!

BOBB

We're all in!

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

BOBB LAUNCHED A GIANT PUBLIC RELATIONS CAMPAIGN CALLED "I'M IN," WHICH CULMINATED IN A HUGE PEP RALLY FOR PARENTS, TEACHERS AND STUDENTS A WEEK BEFORE THE START OF THE SCHOOL YEAR.

STUDENT REPORTER

Okay. Hi, this is Manuel Obar reporting live downtown at the DPS back-to-school parade. What is the importance of today? What is it symbolic of?

BOBB

Well it's symbolic of the fact that we have to keep our kids enrolled in the Detroit Public Schools. Everyone that's currently in the school - we want all of the children who are currently enrolled to return back to the Detroit Public Schools and we want new kids to re-enroll in Detroit Public Schools if they left the school system last year.

STUDENT REPORTER

Okay, thank you so much Mr. Bobb!

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

IT MIGHT SEEM ODD THAT A DISTRICT WITH SUCH FINANCIAL PROBLEMS WOULD SPEND HALF A MILLION DOLLARS ON A P.R. CAMPAIGN, BUT IT HIGHLIGHTED A PREDICAMENT THAT BOBB HAD TO CONFRONT.

MAN AT PARADE

You're doing a darn good job! Put 'em all in jail.

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

HE HAD SPENT MONTHS TALKING ABOUT HOW BAD THE DETROIT PUBLIC SCHOOLS WERE, HOW ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT WAS LOW AND HOW THE SYSTEM HAD FAILED. NOW HE HAD TO SELL THOSE SAME SCHOOLS TO



SKEPTICAL PARENTS WHO WERE LOOKING AT ALTERNATIVES -- CHARTER SCHOOLS, FOR EXAMPLE, OR MOVING TO ANOTHER DISTRICT.

MOTHER

And why should I have to pay, as a single parent, 94 dollars for registration to pull ‘em out of DPS and put them in an academy or a charter?

BOBB

You shouldn’t have to pay one nickel.

MOTHER

I shouldn’t but Detroit, DPS failed ‘em.

BOBB

Let me have your name and phone number...

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

BOBB APPROACHED THE TASK LIKE A POLITICIAN, CAMPAIGNING DOOR TO DOOR, MEDIA IN TOW...

BOBB

Is this Ms. Riley?

MS. RILEY

Yes, I am.

BOBB

How ya doin? I’m Robert Bobb.

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

AND LIKE MANY POLITICIANS, HE HAD GOTTEN A KEY CELEBRITY ENDORSEMENT --

BILL COSBY

This man means business.

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

ENTERTAINER AND EDUCATION ADVOCATE BILL COSBY WHO'D SEEN A NEWS STORY ABOUT ROBERT BOBB AND VOLUNTEERED TO COME TO DETROIT TO HELP HIM OUT.

COSBY

And we're going to talk to people and try and get them to understand the seriousness of a child left without a reason to understand math...

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

THE PRESS TOOK NOTICE, BUT THEY HAD MANY HARD QUESTIONS ABOUT WHAT BOBB AND COSBY WERE ACTUALLY SELLING.

REPORTER FROM LOCAL NBC STATION

Our station spoke with a woman yesterday who lives right near Henry Ford High School and her child does attend a charter school. She said it would take more than Bill Cosby; it would take Jesus himself, she is so afraid to send her child to the public schools.

COSBY

So if Jesus can't, what are you looking at me for? Now having said that, here's the point. I don't think I've signed on to yank people out of charter school. I've seen charter schools. They're magnificent. Some of them.

WOMAN IN CROWD

Some...

COSBY

Huh?

WOMAN IN CROWD

Some!

COSBY

Some. But I'll tell you what. We're not there to yank people away who don't believe. We're trying to get people whose children have to come to public school to begin to behave in a manner that they're bringing the children to the schools. That the truancy rate begins to fall. We want to build a relationship. That's why he's here.

BOBB

But now we need to enroll your daughter in the Detroit Public Schools...

RATHER

Well, if I'm a parent, why would I put my s-- child into that school system or back into that school system?" Why wouldn't I say, "You know, God bless Mr. Robert Bobb and his efforts. But these are my kids. They only get one shot. I'm gonna take 'em to a private school, charter school, or take 'em to the suburbs."

BOBB

That's a very excellent question. I mean, I hear it all the time and I don't blame 'em, I say to parents, "You do what's right for your kid." What *we're* gonna do is we're going to have a plan that gets-- move this legacy deficit out of your way. We're gonna make sure that the funds that needs to get to the classroom for your kids will get to the classroom. We're gonna make sure that you have great leaders in these school buildings and that there's enough rigor in those classrooms for your kids. And we're going to make sure that our school campuses are safe. I say, "Give us a chance with your child."

SINGER ON TAPE

Great things are happenin'! DPS!

SINGER

Let's go! Let's go! Everybody put your hands in the air. All around! Let's go! Let's go! Let's be a part of it! Let's go! Let's go! I'm in! Everybody scream!!

RATHER

Well, as you know-- this gentleman Mr. Robert Bobb has come in to help the school system. Have you heard about him?

DEANNA WILLIAMS

Yes.

RATHER

Well, what do you think? Can he do it?

DEANNA WILLIAMS

I think he's-- it is admirable that he is putting up the effort. Very good job for getting out to the media. But no. Nobody is goin' to come back to D.P.S. because nobody wants to send their child to a school where they're not learning anything. Nobody wants to sen-- would you send your child to a school where there are children in the hallway because they would rather not go to class, where there are fights, where the textbooks are tattered and torn? Nobody wants to send their children to somethin' like that. They want their children to have the best.

KATINA WALKER

Come on, peoples.

DEANNA WILLIAMS

You say, "Come back to D.P.S." Make D.P.S. better.

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

BUT THOUSANDS OF DETROIT PARENTS FEEL THEY HAVE LITTLE CHOICE BUT TO SEND THEIR CHILDREN TO THEIR LOCAL PUBLIC SCHOOL... EVEN THOUGH THEY KNOW IT MAY BE FAILING... THEY DON'T HAVE THE MEANS TO MOVE TO THE SUBURBS OR PAY FOR A PRIVATE SCHOOL... AND CHARTER SCHOOLS -- ALL QUESTION OF THEIR MERIT SET ASIDE -- HAVE A LIMITED NUMBER OF SPOTS, OFTEN RELEGATED TO HEARTBREAKING LOTTERIES.

ONE OF THE GRIM REALITIES OF OUR NATIONAL CRISIS IN EDUCATION IS THAT IN PLACES LIKE DETROIT, SCHOOL OFTEN TAKES A BACKSEAT TO THE HARDSHIPS OF LIFE.

DEANNA WILLIAMS

It's the first day of school, which... sucks.

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

ALTHOUGH DEANNA IS PASSIONATE ABOUT LEARNING, HER PAST 3 YEARS AT HENRY FORD HAVE BEEN ROCKY. AS SHE ENTERED HER SENIOR YEAR HER GRADE POINT AVERAGE WAS LOW AND SHE TOLD US SHE HAD TO FIGHT THE FEELING THAT COMING TO SCHOOL WAS MOSTLY A WASTE OF TIME.

ROBERT BOBB HAD PROMISED THERE WOULD BE BIG CHANGES INSIDE THESE BUILDINGS... STARTING WITH WHAT HE CALLED THE SCHOOL'S CEO - THE PRINCIPAL.

BOBB

When there's a problem in the building, I'm not going to search. Don't tell me about the teacher down the hall. I want to know what the hell you've done about it.

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

BOBB PERSONALLY INTERVIEWED EVERY PRINCIPAL IN EVERY SCHOOL ACROSS THE DISTRICT AND THEY WERE ONLY REHIRED IF BOBB FELT LIKE THEY WERE CAPABLE OF MAINTAINING A STANDARD OF EXCELLENCE... DR. LAYNE HUNT WAS ABOUT TO START *HIS* DAY AS THE NEW PRINCIPAL OF HENRY FORD.

DR. LAYNE HUNT

Mr. Abduma, did you get those computers put in the office?

BOBB

You know, he's the individual we're going to look to determine whether or not there's discipline in the building, the school climate is correct. But more importantly, are - is real teaching and learning taking place in the school building?

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

IT WAS THE FIRST DAY OF THE SCHOOL YEAR... BOBB HAD BEEN IN DETROIT ONLY 7 MONTHS... HE'D ANGERED THE SCHOOL BOARD BY GETTING INVOLVED IN ACADEMIC DECISIONS AS MUCH AS FINANCIAL ONES AND *NOW* IT WAS TIME TO SEE WHETHER ROBERT BOBB WOULD BE THE AGENT OF CHANGE THESE SCHOOLS SO DESPERATELY NEEDED.

VOICE OVER LOUDSPEAKER

Students will not attend their first hour class until tomorrow.

ANGRY PARENT

That's what they teach. Detroit Public Schools sucks.

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

IF THE FIRST WEEK AT HENRY FORD HIGH SCHOOL WAS ANY INDICATION, IT WAS NOT GOING TO BE SMOOTH SAILING.

VOICE OVER LOUDSPEAKER

Students who have VOTECH, you will report to the cafeteria.

ISIS WILLIAMS

Oh.

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

DEANNA'S SISTER, ISIS, SPENT THE FIRST THREE HOURS OF SCHOOL WAITING IN THE CAFETERIA ALONG WITH HUNDREDS OF OTHER STUDENTS. THEY ALL HAD AN OFF-CAMPUS VOCATIONAL TRAINING CLASS ON THEIR SCHEDULES, BUT IT WAS CANCELED BECAUSE THE BUS DRIVER NEVER SHOWED UP.

HUNT

Those other kids shouldn't be out of the cafeteria. VOTECH students have nowhere to go.

ISIS WILLIAMS

This is the beginning of the year so it's -- it's real common for us to just sit around and do nothing a lot.

HUNT

VOTECH students, you need to be here at 7AM in the morning.

STUDENT

*You* need to be here at 7AM.

HUNT

Hey!

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

DEANNA MAY NOT HAVE BEEN EXCITED ABOUT THE NEW SCHOOL YEAR, BUT SHE TOLD US SHE WAS LOOKING FORWARD TO HER FIRST CLASS - HONORS ENGLISH.

MS. MAXWELL

And we're going to get started right away. As a matter of fact, you will probably be getting your books tomorrow.

STUDENT

So we're going to be immediately getting our books?

MS. MAXWELL

Yes, yes.

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

IN PAST YEARS, DEANNA'S MOTHER HAD HAD TO CALL THE SCHOOL TO ASK WHY HER DAUGHTER HADN'T RECEIVED ANY TEXTBOOKS... SO THE PROSPECT OF GETTING THEM ON THE SECOND DAY OF SCHOOL WAS BIG NEWS.

MAXWELL

We don't have time to issue you your books today, but tomorrow...

DEANNA WILLIAMS

Tomorrow she said we're gonna start getting our books and stuff. And I guess some other things are gonna happen tomorrow. But I know we're getting our books tomorrow.

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

BUT ON THE SECOND DAY OF CLASS...

MAXWELL

When do you get your books? Umm... I have them. I did put them in the room. And you're going to look at them today but I'm not going to issue it to you today.

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

A MONTH INTO THE SCHOOL YEAR, DEANNA SAID THE TEXTBOOKS STILL HADN'T BEEN ISSUED.

ISIS WILLIAMS

Are we supposed to sit down or just wait for somebody to come?

ISIS' FRIEND

I don't know!

ISIS WILLIAMS

I'm gonna wait for somebody -- isn't this your class?

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

NO TEACHER SHOWED UP TO ISIS' ALGEBRA CLASS... REMEMBER, ISIS HAD SPENT THE FIRST 3 HOURS OF HER DAY SITTING IN THE CAFETERIA.

MISS P

Oh, this is Algebra what?

STUDENT

Three.

MISS P

Algebra 3, okay. If somebody doesn't come in here, although I'm sure they will, make sure they all sign your schedules and if not I'll come back. I was on my way to Ms. Maxwell's....

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

BUT 3 WEEKS INTO THE SCHOOL YEAR, THERE STILL WAS NO TEACHER. AND EVENTUALLY THE CLASS WAS COMBINED WITH ANOTHER -- BRINGING THE CLASS COUNT TO OVER 50 STUDENTS.



DEANNA WILLIAMS

I don't have a teacher for Spanish. It was closed and the lights were off. And then I asked the teacher next store, "Is that still the Spanish room?" and she told me to go downstairs to the office and then the lady at the office told me to come down here.

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

DEANNA WAS SENT TO THE CAFETERIA TO WAIT BECAUSE NO ONE SHOWED UP TO TEACH HER THIRD HOUR SPANISH CLASS.

HUNT

So please try to be on time...

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

ON THE SECOND DAY OF SCHOOL, DEANNA FOUND A SUBSTITUTE TEACHER HAD BEEN ASSIGNED TO THE SPANISH CLASS.

DEANNA WILLIAMS

You're not what?

MR. SANDERS, SUBSTITUTE TEACHER

I'm not the Spanish teacher. Did you need something?

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

DEANNA TOLD US SHE'D BEEN IN THIS SITUATION BEFORE...

DEANNA WILLIAMS

Where do I go to change my classes?

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

...AND THAT SHE DIDN'T WANT TO WASTE TIME IN A CLASS WITHOUT A PERMANENT TEACHER... SHE WAS SENT TO THE OFFICE TO TRY TO CHANGE HER SCHEDULE.

DEANNA WILLIAMS

I just went to my Spanish class and I don't have a Spanish teacher.

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

BUT AT THE OFFICE, DEANNA COULDN'T GET ANYONE TO UNDERSTAND THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN HAVING A TEACHER TO TEACH HER SPANISH...

HUNT

Mr. Sanders is sitting there. He's the little man in the red shirt.

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

AND A SUBSTITUTE TEACHER BABYSITTING THE CLASS.

DEANNA WILLIAMS

Well, he is sitting there but I want to know where to go to drop that class.

HUNT

Mr. Sanders is sitting there because I just left. I just left him up there 2 minutes ago. And stopped in and said he was alright.

WOMAN IN OFFICE

You just said the he wasn't there. That's what you just said. Didn't you say that? You said there was no teacher there.

DEANNA WILLIAMS

I don't have a Spanish teacher, I said.

WOMAN IN OFFICE

Sign that.

DEANNA WILLIAMS

And they told us in the office to just go to class, keep going to class until the counselors can switch our classes around. And there are only 2 counselors. So who knows when that might happen.

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

ON THE FOURTH DAY OF CLASS, THERE WAS NEITHER A TEACHER NOR A  
SUBSTITUTE.

VOICE OF SOUNDMAN

What class is this?

SPANISH CLASS STUDENTS

Spanish!

VOICE OF SOUNDMAN

Where's your teacher?

SPANISH CLASS STUDENTS

We don't know. No idea. Y'all planned this.

TEACHER WHO POPS HER HEAD INTO CLASS

Ya'll ain't got no teacher? Ya'll supposed to be in French. Y'all in the wrong classroom.

STUDENTS

This is Spanish.

TEACHER

Y'all's teacher -- the teacher covering the classroom is Miss Hardin in French.

STUDENT

She in the wrong classroom. Tell her to come to us. She in the wrong class.

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

EVENTUALLY A MUSIC TEACHER WAS ASSIGNED TO THE CLASS. DEANNA SHOT  
THIS VIDEO WITH A CAMERA WE PROVIDED HER.

DEANNA WILLIAMS

This is my last year of school and this is why I'm so upset about it.

MUSIC TEACHER

That is why you have to get your credits.

DEANNA WILLIAMS

Yes! I think it's wrong that it's been 2 weeks and we don't have a Spanish teacher and then they send a music teacher in to teach us Spanish.

SPANISH SUBSTITUTE TEACHER

Because that's what-- who we have. We don't have anybody else right now. I might not -- I may not know the details, or the more intricate parts but you got to trust me that I know the beginning. Got it?

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

IT TOOK DEANNA NEARLY A MONTH TO SUCCESSFULLY TRANSFER OUT OF THIS CLASS.

SCHOOL CAFETERIA WORKER

They're your employees. All I do is pay the bills.

HUNT

Alright, how many hours?

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

NEW PRINCIPAL LAYNE HUNT WAS ALSO HAVING A ROUGH FEW DAYS

HUNT

This is one of those classes where the teacher didn't show up. We were supposed to get seven teachers. Actually two showed up. I'm getting ready to call to see where Randolph's schedule is. I don't know where the bus driver is.

PARENT

Okay because I'm one of those parents who's taken my child out of a charter school in the suburbs and I'm giving it a try but I wanna know that he's safe.

TEACHER

First hour was small -- 8 people, second hour was 14, third hour was like 22...

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

DR. HUNT WAS WORRIED ABOUT HOW FEW STUDENTS WERE SHOWING UP FOR SCHOOL.

HUNT

Fourth hour is usually the busiest lunch...

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

AT THE END OF THE FIRST WEEK, THERE WERE JUST OVER 800.

BOBB

We have eight hundred and...

HUNT

826

BOBB

How many did we have last year?

HUNT

Total? About 1300.

BOBB

Okay. So we got a little ways to go.

HUNT

Yeah, a little ways to go.

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

IT SEEMED THAT BOBB WAS RUNNING INTO A CULTURAL HEADWIND THAT WAS BEYOND HIS CONTROL. HE WAS LEARNING THAT IN DETROIT, IT'S NOT A GIVEN THAT STUDENTS WILL SHOW UP ON THE FIRST DAY OF SCHOOL, OR EVEN IN THE FIRST TWO WEEKS. HIS "I'M IN" CAMPAIGN HADN'T CHANGED THAT.

COSBY

And this man comes to Detroit like a hired gunfighter. Said we've got a lot of problems around here. People riding through town stealing, drinking, picking on this, doing that, and not caring about the children.

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

BUT BILL COSBY'S MESSAGE WAS MUCH BIGGER THAN ROBERT BOBB OR EVEN DETROIT. IT WAS A CULTURAL CRITICISM ABOUT THE STATE OF EDUCATION IN POOR, URBAN AREAS.

COSBY

If you let your child wander around the street and then say that he admires the drug dealer you might as well turn him loose to the Klan too. Protect your children. Education.

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

EDUCATION IS IMPORTANT. AS COSBY SAYS, IT'S THE WAY WE PROTECT OUR CHILDREN.

MR. STOKES, DEANNA'S YEARBOOK TEACHER

Okay, ladies and gentlemen, really quick...

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

BUT AS DEANNA WENT THROUGH HER SENIOR YEAR, HER FRUSTRATIONS WITH HER SCHOOL CONTINUED TO MOUNT.

DEANNA WILLIAMS

Sometimes it's really boring. At times it's like, "What in the world am I doing here?" And sometimes it's just like I'm not at school at all. I'm just -- somewhere -- waitin' to go home.

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

SO DEANNA STOPPED SHOWING UP AND BEGAN COUNTING THE DAYS TO WHEN SHE COULD HOPEFULLY LEAVE THE DETROIT SCHOOLS BEHIND FOR THE PROMISE OF COLLEGE.

DEANNA WILLIAMS

If you love yourself and you value your mind and you don't want it to turn to apple sauce, do not come to Ford. Save yourself the trouble and the agony and the tutoring when you get to college.

RATHER

Whose fault is that? Is it the teachers' fault? Is it--

DEANNA WILLIAMS

It's everybody's fault. It's the kids for not takin' care of the building, for not taking responsibility for what they need to do, for doin' the things that they do to give the school a bad name. It's the administration and the teachers' fault for not having a good rein on the kids. They say that the clothing is a problem. And they give us uniforms. The clothing is not the problem. It's that you're not getting through to the children that's the problem. It's the parents' fault because the parents won't work with the teachers and the counselors and the administration to make sure that their kids are doin' what they need to do. It is the board's fault for stealing from the children and not givin' us what we need and not tellin' their administration what they need to do. It is the mayor's fault and the governor's fault for not payin' attention to what is happening in the City of Detroit. It is everybody's fault. Everybody has had a hand in this. And it is time for everybody to take responsibility for what has happened.

ANNOUNCER AT GRADUATION CEREMONY

Deanna Williams!

KATINA WALKER

Stop! Stop! Stop!

DEANNA WILLIAMS

Mom, I have to keep going. I'm going to school at Eastern Michigan University!

DEANNA'S UNCLE

Grrreat!

DEANNA'S GRANDMA

She did it!

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

IF THERE'S A HAPPY ENDING TO THIS STORY, IT'S THAT DEANNA MADE IT OUT. SHE GRADUATED FROM HENRY FORD AND WAS THE FIRST IN HER FAMILY TO BE ACCEPTED TO A FOUR-YEAR COLLEGE.

KATINA WALKER

Whoo!!! That's my baby!

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

BUT THIS DAY ALMOST DIDN'T HAPPEN.

KATINA WALKER

I know we almost didn't make it and now, even if she goes to college and she doesn't... It just helps her...

DEANNA WILLIAMS

There is no choice but for me to succeed in college.

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

WE HEAR A LOT ABOUT INSPIRING CHILDREN FROM COMMUNITIES LIKE THIS TO HAVE THE DRIVE TO SUCCEED. DEANNA HAD THE DRIVE -- BUT THERE WAS A SHOCKING DISCONNECT -- HER GRADES AND TEST SCORES WERE LOW, AND IT SEEMED THE SCHOOL DIDN'T CARE THAT SHE WAS FALLING THROUGH THE CRACKS.

OUR PRODUCTION TEAM FOUND IT NEARLY IMPOSSIBLE TO WATCH THIS HAPPENING TO HER. SO WE DECIDED TO STEP IN AND HELP. WE FOUND DEANNA AND HER SISTER, ISIS, A VOLUNTEER TUTOR, AND AFTER ONLY A FEW SESSIONS, THEIR PRACTICE TEST SCORES JUMPED TREMENDOUSLY. WE ALSO HELPED DEANNA NAVIGATE THE TRICKY COLLEGE ADMISSIONS PROCESS AND MADE



SURE SHE UNDERSTOOD THE FINANCIAL OPTIONS AVAILABLE TO HER.

IN THE END, WE DIDN'T DO MUCH MORE THAN AN AVERAGE HIGH SCHOOL COUNSELOR -- BUT DEANNA WASN'T GETTING THIS INFORMATION AT SCHOOL.

KATINA WALKER

I thank you...

DEANNA WILLIAMS

Thank you so much.

KATINA WALKER

You guys are part of this also -- and that should be in there -- that without your influence, I don't know... but I appreciate it. I really, really do.

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

A FEW MONTHS BEFORE GRADUATION, A FAMILY CRISIS THREW ANOTHER WRENCH INTO THE WORKS. DEANNA'S SISTER, ISIS, LEFT SCHOOL AND RAN AWAY FROM HOME. THE FAMILY DIDN'T WANT TO GO INTO TOO MANY DETAILS BUT ULTIMATELY KATINA LOST HER JOB AT TARGET BECAUSE SHE MISSED SO MANY DAYS OF WORK TRYING TO DEAL WITH THE TROUBLING SITUATION.

BOBB

Good evening. My name is Robert Bobb; I serve as the emergency financial manager for the Detroit Public Schools...

AUDIENCE

Boo!!!

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

BY THE TIME THE SCHOOL YEAR WAS DRAWING TO A CLOSE, COMMUNICATION BETWEEN BOBB AND THE SCHOOL BOARD HAD BROKEN DOWN COMPLETELY.

ADAMS

We have no information regarding the finances of the district.

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

A DISTRICT COURT HAD TO ORDER THEM TO MEET TO DISCUSS THE BUDGET.

BOBB

On April 19, we provided you with both the detailed facilities plan and the academic plan.

ADAMS

Quite frankly, we never got it...

ANNIE CARTER

We never got it.

BOBB

Well, it's not my fault that you never received it!

ADAMS

Excuse me!!

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

THIS WAS THE LAST PUBLIC MEETING WE ATTENDED... WHERE ONCE THE ANGER HAD BEEN DIRECTED AT THE BOARD, NOW ROBERT BOBB WAS IN THE CROSS-HAIRS.

STEVE CONN

I want to commend the board for standing with the people, the students, the teachers and the parents against this heinous effort by Bobb to destroy public education in our city. We will win!

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

HE HAD UPSET THE TEACHER'S UNION...

CHAVELLE KOTZ, STUDENT

You know your sign said when we started, "We are DPS. We are in." You kickin' us out.

CROWD

Amen!

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

HE HAD CLOSED A LOT OF SCHOOLS...

COLLEESE CHAPPELLE, DPS GRADUATE AND PARENT

You came in as a financial manager, now you want to go into academics, that's not your place. You have lined your pockets with the money that belongs to our children. You need to check yourself.

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

AND THE DISTRICT'S DEFICIT HAD ONLY INCREASED UNDER HIS WATCH.

HEATHER MILLER, DPS PARENT & MEMBER OF DFT

Robert Bobb is a criminal and we are going to expose him.

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

BOBB SAID THIS WAS THE PRICE OF BEING HONEST WITH THE NUMBERS AND OF LAYING A FOUNDATION FOR THE FUTURE. BUT DETROIT'S PATIENCE WITH HIS POLICIES HAD COME TO AN END.

MONICA SMITH

And while you're there in D.C., you need to stay there and don't go around the country terrorizing black cities...

MS. WILLS

Excuse me, Mr. Bobb. My name is Ms. Wills and I'm going to talk to you about student records that are still being missed.

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

BOBB LEFT THE MEETING IN DISGUST... WHILE THE COMMUNITY CONTINUED TO VENT THEIR ANGER.

MAN

The strategy should be, if you really want to get at Robert Bobb, is to attack his credibility and one good way to do that...

RATHER (ON CAMERA)

FOR TOO LONG, OUR COUNTRY HAS DEALT WITH SYSTEMIC FAILURES - LIKE THE SCHOOLS IN DETROIT - BY LOOKING THE OTHER WAY. WE SAY WE WANT CHANGE, BUT WE ARE NOT PATIENT ENOUGH TO REALIZE THAT DIGGING OURSELVES OUT OF DECADES OF NEGLECT WILL TAKE MORE THAN A FEW MONTHS... OR EVEN YEARS.

WHEN ROBERT BOBB ANNOUNCED HE WOULD LEAVE DETROIT WHEN HIS TERM ENDED IN THE SPRING OF 2011, MANY IN THE COMMUNITY AND THE LOCAL PRESS TREATED HIS TENURE AS A FAILURE. THE DEFICIT AFTER ALL HAD GONE UP, WHEREAS STUDENT TEST SCORES HAD NOT. AND WHETHER BOBB'S POLICIES WERE MISGUIDED OR WHETHER THEY WOULD HAVE PAID OFF IN THE FUTURE IS A PLACE FOR HONEST DEBATE.

BUT AS WE STRUGGLE WITH OUR NATION'S MOST DIFFICULT PROBLEMS, WE MUST START WITH AN HONEST ACCOUNTING. AND BOBB'S EFFORTS TO DO THAT, LIKE SIMILAR EFFORTS BY FORMER SUPERINTENDENT CONNIE CALLOWAY BEFORE HIM, WERE MET WITH DENIAL, CONTEMPT AND POLITICAL POSTURING BY THOSE INVESTED IN THE STATUS QUO.

SADLY, THIS IS A PHENOMENON NOT LIMITED TO DETROIT, OR EVEN TO OUR NATIONAL CRISIS IN EDUCATION. ON TOUGH ISSUE AFTER TOUGH ISSUE, WE HAVE ALLOWED OURSELVES TO CONFUSE FINGER POINTING WITH PROBLEM SOLVING AND SELF-SERVING DISTORTIONS WITH A FIDELITY TO THE TRUTH.

WE NEED TO DEMAND MORE, FROM OUR LEADERS, AND OURSELVES.

TITLE CARD 1

DPS has lost nearly 25 percent of its students since we began reporting this story in early 2009. The district has announced that it will turn as many as a third of its schools into charter schools, in an effort to close a budget deficit now in excess of 300 million dollars.

TITLE CARD 2

Deanna Williams is studying creative writing at Eastern Michigan University, earning better

grades than she has since elementary school. Her mother, Katina, is still looking for work. She has gone back to school to become a medical assistant. Isis returned to school and hopes to join the Navy after she graduates. She remains estranged from her mother.

TITLE CARD 3

So far, nine people have been indicted and seven have plead guilty to parts of the kickback scheme that has grown from \$46 million to \$57 million. Federal and state officials continue to investigate financial malfeasance in the district, but no school board member has been accused of corruption.

TITLE CARD 4:

August 2011

DAN RATHER

Well, good morning, Deanna.

DEANNA WILLIAMS

Good morning.

RATHER

I'm not sure that I ever thought that I would see you in this setting. In college, doing well.

DEANNA WILLIAMS

For a moment, I-- I thought I wouldn't be here either, or anywhere.

RATHER

Well, the last time we caught up with you, you'd just graduated from Henry Ford High School. Tell me how life has changed for you.

DEANNA WILLIAMS

In every way, it's so much better. Like-- I feel like I've found my niche in college. I like it so much better than I liked high school. It's just easier. My grades have improved so very much. And everything's just nicer. I d-- I don't really know how to explain it.

RATHER

Well...what's changed?

DEANNA WILLIAMS

I had a boyfriend for a while. That never happened (LAUGH) in high school. And-- my final grades looked different than my final grades in high school. They spelled out ABBA. And that was really neat. I haven't had an A since fourth grade, in anything.

RATHER

And what courses did you take?

DEANNA WILLIAMS

I had Comp One.

RATHER

What is that?

DEANNA WILLIAMS

That's an English composition class.

RATHER

Right.

DEANNA WILLIAMS

It's a lot of reading and writing papers. We read a lot of-- classics, like, classic essays. And then we wrote papers on the essays. One of 'em I remember that stood out for me was Emerson. And it might not be for a good reason. I really thought that what he was saying was a loada crap. (LAUGH) And I said that in class. Like, that's one of the things I like about college, is you can just voice your opinions and there's no wrong way to say it.

RATHER

Well, when you first came, did you have trouble in the classes?

DEANNA WILLIAMS

No. Everything was easy. And I think it was more my attitude that made it that way. I think at Ford I had...just like, a really poor attitude about being there. Like, I just expected nothing so it

just felt like nothing. But when I came here I just felt like I was gonna do well. And I did.

RATHER

Were you surprised that you were able to do the classwork? I mean, let's face it, you came out of-- a less than distinguished public school environment. Some of the things, some of the terrible things you told me before. But how was that transition?

DEANNA WILLIAMS

It was surprisingly easy. The teachers here actually want to help you. Like, they're actually willing to work with you to do things. Not that p-- the teachers in Detroit aren't, but it was like, everybody had a high level of apathy in Detroit, so nobody really cared. But here, they care. And if you're not up to par, they will tell you. And then you can talk to them and everybody's just willing to help. I think that that is what is-- I just-- I love it here so much.

RATHER

Now that you've been in college, what are your career goals? What are your dreams? Have they changed?

DEANNA WILLIAMS

When I got here, I got it into my head that I wanted to be a teacher and a writer. Now, I still wanna be a writer, but I've gone back to what I said originally, that I wanted to be a librarian. Because I think that's really my passion. I love books so much, and just the thought of taking care of books and recommending to somebody what they should read on a certain subject just makes me really, really happy.

RATHER

With time to think about the documentary, *A National Disgrace*, what do you hope people will take away from it?

DEANNA WILLIAMS

When things are wrong, you need to try to change 'em. You need to learn how to listen to your kids, and listen to what the teachers say. Or to what administrators say about your child's learning process. Be more involved in your community. Because people who live in the city aren't really involved in what it takes to be-- to run the city. And really, runnin' the city starts with your kids. If you want a better future, you really need to pay attention to who's gonna be runnin' it. Like, the-- the woman who was on there. That was, I think, one of the best parts of the documentary. She said, "We need to make a change and it needs to happen now." That was, like, one of the proudest moments I have ever had in my life, to see a teacher sittin' there sayin' that we had dirty laundry. It was refreshing to hear an adult tell the truth.

RATHER

Well, Deanna, you've just finished your freshman year, right? And you made pretty good grades.  
Question: can you finish? Would you finish?

DEANNA WILLIAMS

College?

RATHER

Yes.

DEANNA WILLIAMS

Definitely. I will just-- I love this experience so much, and I'm-- I really wanna see it through, all the way to the end. I wanna walk across that stage in the convocation center, and I wanna hold my diploma up and let my mom take pictures and sing the school song.

RATHER

And to those people who say, "Listen-- I love this young woman, I hope she can make it, but I just gotta believe the odds are too long, and in the end, she won't be able to finish," you would say what?

DEANNA WILLIAMS

That I have learned that nothing is too difficult to achieve if you really, really, really want to achieve it. And I really, really want this. I want this really bad. You have no idea. And I will do it no matter the cost. No matter what happens. And I know that my mom will do whatever to help me see this through. And there are people at this school who will help me do (NOISE) whatever to see this through. I can do this. I know that I can do this.

RATHER

Deanna, thank you very much.

DEANNA WILLIAMS

Thank you.

RATHER

You know how much I wish you good luck.



DEANNA WILLIAMS

I-- well, thank you so much.

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

If you'd like to add your name to an email list for information on upcoming programs, or if you would just like to send a question or comment, please email us at [viewer@hd.net](mailto:viewer@hd.net).