

### Theft

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ments, Steven Epperson was legally determined to be incompetent in July 1982 and his father, John W. Epperson, was then appointed guardian of his person, managing whatever personal areas involving health and well-being.

By February 2004, according to an April 15, 2010 court order, John Epperson had died, so Steven's sister, Susan, was appointed his guardian of person. A few months later in June 2004, Susan was then also appointed guardian of Steven's estate, thus allowing her to manage his financial affairs.

Reportedly, Steven had a 1/14th interest in the sale

of real estate that his deceased father apparently owned, and was "... due about \$44,000.00 in distribution ..."

For reasons the court order does not detail, Susan was "... discharged" as estate guardian on Nov. 2, 2004, and there was no "supporting documentation ... found in the court file" confirming it or explaining why, according to the new motion.

In fact, almost five years later, when asst. clerk Paula Todd sent a "Notice of Hearing" to Steven Epperson's family members regarding their father's estate on Sept. 16, 2009, she addressed one of the notices to "Steve Epperson, c/o Susan Epperson, Guardian ...."

If Susan Epperson had indeed been removed as estate guardian almost five years earlier, then how could that happen, the new motion inherently asks. But the alleged fraud goes even deeper.

A "Final Receipt" from the Forsyth Clerk's office dated Nov. 15, 2009 - just two months later - for "cash" in the value of \$44,180.68 listed as the "personal representative/trustee" for John W. Epperson's estate responsible for distributing the funds as "Bryan C. Thompson."

And the "undersigned beneficiary" receiving that money was also "Bryan C. Thompson, Guardian of Steven W. Epperson," the document The Chronicle

reviewed showed.

Attorney Thompson listed himself as both the one authorizing the funds as the alleged legal representative of the father's estate, and the person receiving it as the alleged legal estate guardian for the son, Steven, even though there was no court documentation proving that status.

Thompson's signature is not on the court receipt from the Clerk's Office, but a signature next to the typewritten name of witness "Amanda H. Jones" is.

That Clerk's office receipt was not file stamped, meaning legally, according to previously noted state appellate court opinion, it was invalid and

not properly entered into the court record.

It is not until April 15, 2010, court documents show, that attorney Bryan Thompson was allegedly appointed by the assistant clerk Todd as "Successor Guardian of the Estate" for Steven Epperson.

The Epperson siblings' motion alleges that attorney Thompson "... committed a felony theft by fraud in withdrawing in excess of \$44,000 from an estate in which he is acting as fiduciary and without legal authority taking possession of that money, based upon the fraudulent assertion of guardianship of Steve Epperson at least six months prior to his appointment."

The motion also alleges

that assistant clerk Todd did not give the family "... proper notice ... prior to issuing an order appointing ..." Thompson as estate guardian, and that "failure to notify [the family] ... was intentional and an effort to cover up Bryan Thompson's felony theft."

Attorney Thompson, through his attorney, has consistently maintained that in his role as estate guardian in various cases, he did nothing wrong, and followed the directives of the Clerk's office.

At press time Tuesday, no hearing date had been assigned for the motion.

### Trump

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the black ministers meeting that there was "great love" in the room, and he'll continue to talk tough because that's what has sustained him at the top of GOP presidential candidate polls since the summer.

Indeed, instead of softening his hard right tone or apologizing for his over-the-top statements, Trump has doubled-down on his divisive rhetoric to the delight of predominantly white, right-wing audiences at his many rallies throughout the early 2016 primary states, and the South.

Last Friday evening, Trump appeared at Raleigh's Dorton Arena, and while he filled the horse show headquarters with a capacity 8,000 crowd, there were also protesters both out outside the facility, and inside. The demonstrators inside interrupted Trump's 45-minute address at least ten times, forcing law enforcement to remove at least 25 protesters.

This week, Trump caused universal outrage when he said he wanted "a complete and total shut-

down" of Muslims coming to the United States until national leaders "get a handle" on terrorism. Even members of the Republican Party, embarrassed that Trump's lead is growing in most major GOP polls, excoriated Trump for being divisive, if not racist.

"That is sheer ignorance that he is putting out," said Bishop Todd Fulton, president of the Ministers' Conference of Winston-Salem and Vicinity, on Tuesday. "He is creating more racism throughout the country and the world. Although the Ministers' Conference does not plan to hold a rally against Trump because he hasn't planned to visit Winston-Salem, the conference will educate the community on how Trump is dividing the nation in the coming months as well as protest the ministers who support Trump."

"Trump is unhinged," blasted rival Republican presidential hopeful Jeb Bush. Republican Sen. Lindsay Graham of South Carolina called Trump a "race-baiter" on CNN. Even GOP US House Speaker Paul Ryan of Wisconsin said Tuesday that Trump's

remarks about Muslims "are not who we are as a party."

Without question, Donald Trump's record of racial intolerance is a long one, dating back to the 1970s when he was under U.S. Justice Department investigation for discriminating against blacks trying to rent apartments in his buildings. Trump later settled that case.

In 1989, Trump took out a full-page ad in the New York Times, calling the alleged Central Park Five, accused of brutally raping and beating a white female jogger, a band of "roving ... wild criminals." It was later discovered that N.Y. police had framed the five black teenagers for the crime they didn't commit.

And of course, several years ago Trump challenged President Obama to prove that he wasn't born in Kenya, charging that the president's birth certificate was a fraud, he was not an American citizen and Obama was not worthy of the office. The president responded by getting the original birth document from Hawaii, where he was born, and called Trump a

"carnival barker" in the process.

It is no secret that the Republican establishment can't stand Trump, and would like to derail his candidacy if it could. Trump is averaging 24 percent of GOP voters polled, consistently leading establishment candidates like

former Florida Gov. Jeb Bush, Sen. Marco Rubio and New Jersey Gov. Chris Christie.

Here in North Carolina, where Republicans hope to tighten their grip on majorities in the state Legislature and congressional delegation, as well as the Governor's Mansion, there is concern that if Trump remains popular and seemingly invincible going into the Iowa caucuses and New Hampshire primaries come January, he could possibly

sweep the South straight through to North Carolina's primary on March 15.

Trump is very popular with Southern whites, given his distinctly blue-collar blunt way of assuring that he'll defeat ISIS, improve the economy and return America to "winning."

Establishment Republicans don't want an uncontrollable presidential nominee going into the November 2016 fall elections, but more importantly, they're deeply concerned that Trump is so polarizing, his very presence on the top of the ticket could hurt down ballot statewide and local GOP candidates, especially if the Democratic presidential nominee is Hillary Clinton.

Hillary Clinton is currently polling very strong with African-Americans nationally, and especially in the South, though not nearly as strong as President Obama did when he first ran in 2008. Still, part of the Trump and the GOP strategy is to start early in softening Clinton's massive black support (her Democratic opponent, Sen.

Bernie Sanders, is only polling in single digits in the black community).

Trump's motive is obvious - he doesn't want to be branded an out-and-out racist because then he can't expand his support base if he wins GOP nomination. The Republican Party's motive is just as transparent - grab at least 10 or more percent of the black vote in the general election next fall, plus continue to batter the former U.S. Secretary of State for alleged failures in American foreign policy.

Either way, observers say expect Donald Trump to make more overtures to conservative and Republican black leaders, especially when his campaign continues to focus on Southern primary states like South Carolina and North Carolina.

Trump's goal - to create as much confusion as possible in the black community so that he can grab more black support than any other GOP candidate.

According to Trump, if he could do that, it would make his campaign "huge."

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