

FORUM

Donald Trump: the oval office vs. real estate developments

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Guest Columnist

New York City and the real estate building trades is probably one of the toughest businesses one can imagine. To be a

successful builder in New York City, one has to be able to deal successfully with the different factions that control the building trades. You must be tough, confident, persuasive, and fearless.

Racism, vulgarity, sexism, violence and bullying are the hallmarks of the real estate development business.

Donald Trump, candidate for president of the United States, honed his skills in the real estate industry during his rise to fame and fortune in the decades of the 70s and 80s. Much has been written about his early career, but many details have been obscured by the passage of time and overshadowed by Trump's success and celebrity. However, he has been a major player in the cutthroat world of business and finance.

Early in 1971, Trump began cultivating the rich and powerful. He made regular donations to members of the city's Democratic machine. Mayors, borough presidents and other elected officials often were blunt in their requests for campaign cash and "loans," according to the commission on government integrity.

Donald Trump later said that the richer he became, the more money he gave.

As he fed the political machine, he also had to work with unions and companies known to be controlled by New York's ruling mafia families, which had infiltrated the construction industry, according to court records, federal task force reports, and newspaper accounts. No serious presidential candidate has ever had Trump's depth of documented business relationships with mob-controlled entities.

At the first Republican debate in August, Trump alluded to his history of political giving, bragging that he gave money with the confidence that he would get something in return. "I was a businessman. I give to everybody. When they call, I give. And you know what? When I need something from them, two years later,



three years later, I call them. They are there for me," he said. He made reference to Hillary Clinton as a recipient of his generosity who was obligated to attend his wedding.

Over the years Trump became a powerful and fearless developer. He cut his deals his way. He dictated the terms of his deals with his wealth. He tolerated no opposition; it was his way or no way!

Trump's stump speech sounds much like a closed session with shady characters where tough talk, promises and big money will get the job done. "I'm going to make America great again." "I'm going to build a wall on our southern border and Mexico is going to pay for it." "We don't win anymore; when I'm president, we're going to win so much you will be begging me to stop winning." "We're going to build up the military. We're going to defeat ISIS." "We're going to deport illegal immigrants." "We're going to bar Muslims from coming to America." and "Black Lives Matter should try to take my mic from me!" "I'm going to bring our jobs back from Mexico and China." "The Mexicans are going to vote for me, the blacks are going to vote for me. Why? Because I'm going to give them jobs; I'm going to bring back the jobs from China and Mexico." "We're losing all over the world." "ISIS is cutting off heads, drowning people in cages and we are complaining about waterboarding. I'll go further than that. I'll bring back a hell of a lot worse than waterboarding." "Hillary

Clinton, I have not started on her yet."

For sure, when he finishes with Hillary Clinton, only women with no self-respect will vote for him.

Trump never has any substance to impart to his thousands of supporters. What he fails to mention on the stump is that his clothing line is made in China and Mexico. He can initiate the process of bringing jobs back from China and Mexico by having his clothing line made in America.

In the absence of substance, Trump, true to his celebrity status, is an excellent entertainer. He berates his opponents in the worse way, called George Bush a liar and criticized John McCain for getting captured during the war. "He's not a war hero," Trump said. Then he got sarcastic and added: "He's a war hero because he was captured? I like people that weren't captured."

When asked what he would do about the protests and the issue of racially motivated violence, Trump simply stated: "There's no such thing as racism any more. We've had a black president, so it's not a question any more. Are they saying black lives should matter more than white lives or Asian lives? If black lives matter, then go back to Africa. We'll see how much they matter there."

A 1973 suit against Trump and the Trump organization claimed that superintendents at Trump properties would mark African-Americans' applications with racial codes. When an African-American

showed up to rent an apartment owned by Donald Trump and his family, the building superintendent did what he claimed he'd been told to do. He allegedly attached a separate sheet of paper to the application, marked with the letter "C" for "Colored." This insured the application would be rejected.

Donald Trump operated his business with secret racist codes then and will take that concept to the Oval Office if elected.

All he has for his supporters is his "Bad Boy, Tough Guy" image and "We are going to make America great again." When asked how he plans to get things done, he claims he is going to bring in people who can get things done. He brags about the great company he has built and assures his supporters that he will do the same thing for America. Yet whenever he tries to promote his rhetorical plans, they are shot down by the experts. In assessing the state of the United States, it has the worse leadership imaginable. According to Trump, Obama has divided the country. Yet he has expressed his disdain for every non-white ethnic group in the world. At his rallies, he does not hesitate to point out African-American protesters and link them with our African-American president. He has absolutely nothing good to say about anyone except himself and a few of his cronies.

America is still the great melting pot as it was when his grandparents came here from Germany in 1885 and his mother from the Scottish island of Lewis. Grandpa Fred listed his ethnicity as Swedish to avoid alienating his Jewish tenants, as he was one of New York City's premiere real estate developers.

Donald Trump needs to read Article II, Clause 1 of the U.S. Constitution, which states the powers of the Executive branch of the U.S. Government. If for some ungodly reason he happens to occupy the Oval Office in 2016, "I" and "We" will not consist solely of him and his handpicked cabinet. It will be the Congressional Black Caucus, the Democrats, the House of Representatives, the Senate, the Supreme Court, and International law who will have to give their consent to his shallow, racist, dictatorial ambitions.

Walter Smith is publisher of the New York Beacon.

Local students deliver letter to Cooper

March 7, 2016
Concerned Students for Calvin Micheal Smith Winston-Salem, NC
Mr. Roy Cooper
Attorney General of North Carolina
9001 Mail Service Center
Raleigh, NC 27699

Dear Attorney General Cooper:
We have worked tirelessly in recent months to bring together students from Wake Forest University, Winston-Salem State University and Salem College to do what you have actively refused to do for the past eight years: to publicly declare our outrage at the failure of our criminal justice system in keeping Calvin Michael Smith wrongfully incarcerated for the past 19 years. Today, we are delivering the banner, originally presented at the February 18 WSSU rally, which has now been signed by over 200 college students. Through the rally, through this banner, through social media, and ultimately through their votes, hundreds of students are calling on you, Mr. Cooper, to join Calvin Michael Smith's defense counsel in petitioning the Superior Court to vacate Calvin's 1997 wrongful conviction.

For too long you have been silent about the injustice facing Calvin Michael Smith, a working-class black man who has served 19 years in prison for a

crime he did not commit. Your unwillingness to get involved demonstrates how you are ignoring the African-American community, which has largely remained supportive of you despite your lackluster record of supporting them.

Attorney General Cooper, you have the power to review the case, to review former FBI Assistant Director Christopher Swecker's report, and to join the defense counsel, Duke University Professor James Coleman Jr., in a motion to vacate the conviction. Our state is extensively aware, Mr. Cooper, that you formerly entrusted FBI Assistant Director Christopher Swecker in 2010 to audit thousands of cases from the SBI Forensic Lab. And when Mr. Swecker's investigation reported over 200 cases of malfeasance that violated the constitutional rights of defendants, you followed his recommendations. However, in Calvin Michael Smith's case, you have actively ignored Mr. Swecker's review, refusing to even meet with him.

According to the NC Bar Code of Ethics (Rule 3.8) "... a prosecutor should not intentionally avoid pursuit of evidence merely because he or she believes it will damage the prosecutor's case or aid the accused." We believe that prosecutorial ethics require you, Mr. Cooper, to meet with former Assistant FBI Director Christopher



Abene



Herbin



Parnell

Swecker and to acknowledge the truth that his review uncovered, and to meet with Lt. Joseph Ferrelli and Sgt. Chuck Byrom, who spearheaded the Silk Plant Forest Citizen Review Committee. These two independent reviews by law enforcement professionals came to a consensus: they hold no confidence in the police investigation that led to Calvin Michael Smith's conviction. Mr. Swecker further concluded, "Only a new trial that considers the full record and evidence not available, misrepresented or omitted in the original trial will provide the full measure of justice that the Community of Winston-Salem and every accused defendant deserves." (Swecker Report, p. 17).

We and a growing populace of North Carolinians are keenly aware that Calvin's wrongful incarceration is not an isolated injustice, but a result of the racially charged politics and corruption surrounding our criminal justice system. There is a growing consciousness in our country, particularly because of the

efforts of the Black Lives Matter movement, that justice today is indeed still blind when it comes to skin color. This was again affirmed in our own state this past week with the release of Howard Dudley, a black man wrongfully incarcerated for 23 years. In fact, we had an opportunity to sit down this past week with Alicia Garza, co-founder of the Black Lives Matter movement, to discuss Calvin's denial of freedom and to strategize ways that the larger BLM movement might support our efforts in upholding the justice that you are denying him and our community. As Ms. Garza shared one night during the weeklong seminar she taught on non-violent social change, "Silencing around race is what perpetuates racism." And Mr. Cooper, for far too long you have remained silent about the racial disparities and discrimination in our criminal justice system.

According to data from the NC Commission on Racial and Ethnic Disparities in the Criminal Justice System, during

your tenure, black and Latino drivers have remained twice as likely as white drivers to be searched after a traffic stop, and African-Americans make up 57 percent of the prison population, but only 22 percent of the general population. And then there are more specific incidences of your failings to uphold justice for communities of color, such as the 2013 shooting of Jonathan Ferrell, an unarmed black male college student, by Charlotte officer Randall Kerrick. When the jury failed to reach a verdict, you made the unconscionable decision to not retry the case. This far cry from justice yet again demonstrated that to you, Mr. Cooper, black lives do not matter.

The citizens of North Carolina and black voters especially expect more of you, Mr. Cooper. Your decision to defend Smith's conviction, and your more recent decision to actively ignore even substantively commenting on it, is at best cowardice, and at worst a deceptive denial to uphold your oath of office. Your refusal to even meet with former FBI Assistant Director Christopher Swecker conveys the message that a black man's life isn't worth your time or effort. You did not hesitate to intervene, investigate, and exercise your prosecutorial discretion in the 2006 Duke Lacrosse case to dismiss the wrongful charges

against three affluent white men. Yet Smith, a working-class black man, is seemingly underserving of your heroics.

We are committed to holding you, Mr. Cooper, accountable for the ethical obligations of your office, as we are aware of both your capacity and responsibility to act. No longer can you claim to be the courageous crusader for systemic criminal justice reform while continuing to defend the wrongful incarceration of Calvin Michael Smith. We are calling on you, Mr. Cooper, to uphold the oath of your office in seeking justice and truth: Justice for Calvin, who has remained wrongfully incarcerated for 19 years, justice for Ms. Jill Marker, whose actual attacker has still not been held accountable, and justice for the citizens of North Carolina, whose tax dollars have paid to keep this innocent man in prison.

Leaders of the Concerned Students for Calvin Michael Smith are, Hayden Abene, who is a student at Wake Forest University; Jaylon Herbin, who is a student at Winston-Salem State University; and Virginia Parnell, who is a student at Salem College.

