



Written by [Bob Adelman](#) on March 12, 2013

Former Detroit Mayor Convicted for Racketeering, Extortion, and More

When it was [announced on Monday](#) that former Detroit Mayor [Kwame Kilpatrick](#) (pictured) had been convicted on 24 counts of racketeering, fraud, and extortion, the *New York Times* failed to mention that it could have been worse — if enough hard evidence had been found to pursue the former mayor's alleged ties to a murder.



Also convicted were Kwame Kilpatrick's father Bernard and his friend Bobby Ferguson, a general contractor.

The trial began last September and after months of hearing testimonies and reading emails, the jury then took 14 days to conclude its deliberations. Because the judge determined that Kwame and Ferguson were flight risks, they were incarcerated immediately, awaiting sentencing.

The *Times* was hard-pressed to condense the reams of evidence (that Wikipedia was barely able to squeeze into 30 pages) presented in the case into a coherent summary:

The verdicts brought to a close a trial in which prosecutors laid out a complex case against Mr. Kilpatrick and his co-defendants — including his father, Bernard, and Mr. Ferguson — arguing that they had used the mayor's office to enrich themselves for years through shakedowns, kickbacks and bid-rigging schemes.

Mr. Ferguson, the ex-mayor's friend and construction contractor, was found guilty of 9 of 11 counts, including racketeering. Mr. Kilpatrick's father, who faced four charges, was found guilty of filing a false tax return.

The criminal indictment was 45 pages long. And yet it included nothing about Kilpatrick's alleged ties to the murder of an exotic dancer who attended a private party at Manoogian Mansion, Detroit's mayoral residence, over the Labor Day weekend in 2002, soon after Kilpatrick took office. The wild party, also attended by Kilpatrick, included strippers who were provided for the entertainment of his guests. One of them, a stripper called Strawberry (27-year-old [Tamara Greene](#)), was attacked and severely injured by Kilpatrick's wife when she found Greene fondling her husband at the party.

When an investigation into the party was undertaken, Greene was a person of interest. On April 30, 2003, at about 3:40 a.m., a white Chevrolet Suburban pulled up next to a car in which Greene was sitting. Two gunmen in the Suburban emptied 18 rounds into Greene.

Greene's family sued the city for \$150 million, believing that she would have been willing to provide damaging testimony in the investigation into Kilpatrick's party and for that reason was silenced. Following Greene's death, two officers from the Detroit Police Department who were involved in the investigation were fired by Kilpatrick. The officers filed a whistleblower suit and were awarded \$8 million in damages. Greene's killers were never found nor was there enough hard evidence to bring charges against the mayor.



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During his terms as mayor, Kilpatrick spent much of his time in court, fending off charges of racketeering, bid-rigging, extortion, misuse of city funds, funneling said funds to companies owned by his wife and close friends, appointing more than 100 close friends to cushy jobs in his administration for which they had no experience nor were they expected to perform, vote tampering during his re-election campaign in 2005 ... the list goes on.

With the convictions, U.S. District Court Judge Nancy Edmunds remanded both Kilpatrick and Ferguson into custody, telling the former mayor: "You showed disregard and contempt for the people of the city of Detroit and a willingness to lie."

A former Detroit city councilwoman, Sheila Cockrel, [told Newsmax](#) that "the culture under the Kilpatrick administration exacerbated the city's already deeply compromised financial infrastructure."

As noted by this author [here](#) and [here](#), and by author Walter Williams [here](#), Detroit is in desperate trouble. Half of Detroit's property owners don't pay their real estate taxes, claiming that city services for which they would be paying aren't being provided. The street lights don't work, the police don't respond, the streets are in disrepair. Seventy-seven blocks in the city have only one taxpayer paying his taxes. [Wayne County](#), where Detroit is located, has been issuing bonds to pay its bills hoping to redeem those bonds with the proceeds from real property foreclosures. So far Wayne County has issued \$300 million in bonds with the increasing likelihood that the county will be forced to default as it can't find buyers for those properties.

The population has dropped by 60 percent since 1950, and tax revenues have declined by \$100 million over the last decade. Currently Detroit is running a \$327 million deficit and has \$14 billion in long-term debt that has little chance of ever being repaid. To see visually what has happened to one of America's premier cities, one can just type in "Detroit Disaster" into YouTube.

In 2010 *Forbes* magazine ranked Detroit as America's Most Dangerous City, and its students are among the worst performing in the country with 57 percent of them essentially functionally illiterate.

In 2012 Detroit had the highest rate of violent crime of any city over 200,000 in population, according to the FBI. There are 50,000 homeless people in Detroit, 30,000 houses without running water, 10,000 homes without power, and 40,000 houses in foreclosure.

Michigan Governor Rick Snyder has determined that Detroit's financial situation is so desperate that he is about to appoint a special emergency financial manager (EFM) to take over running the city from the dysfunctional city council. He will be given special powers to rein in government spending and override union contracts and, if necessary, declare bankruptcy. If he does that, it would be one of the largest municipal bankruptcies in history. There's only one problem: Snyder is having trouble finding anyone to take the position.

The trial and conviction of former Mayor Kwame Kilpatrick and his father and his friend Bobby Ferguson leaves a legacy from which Detroiters will be hard-pressed to recover. It's been a long downhill slide into corruption. It's going to be a long haul back.

Photo of Kwame Kilpatrick: AP Images

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