

Detroit mayor charged on eight criminal counts

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Detroit Mayor Kwame Kilpatrick was charged with perjury, obstruction of justice, misconduct in office and other criminal counts on Monday. The charges arise from his decision to have the city of Detroit, which is nearly bankrupt, pay millions of dollars in hush money to several former policemen whose eyewitness accounts of Kilpatrick's behavior would be politically damaging.

Kilpatrick was booked on eight criminal charges, while his former chief of staff, Christine Beatty, was charged on seven counts in the same case. Kilpatrick and Beatty are charged with lying under oath during civil suits brought by the three cops, who claimed they had been fired to cover up a sexual affair between the mayor and his longtime top aide.

Last October, the Detroit City Council approved an \$8.4 million settlement with the three policemen, Gary Brown, Harold Nelthorpe and Walter Harris, after the mayor suddenly dropped his opposition to any such compromise. In January, the *Detroit Free Press* began publishing extensive excerpts of text messages by Kilpatrick and Beatty, sent out over their city-owned cell phones, which confirmed both their affair and the retaliatory firing of the policemen.

Kilpatrick faces up to 15 years in prison if convicted on all counts and would be removed from office under the city charter if found guilty of a felony. The Detroit City Council, which has no authority to remove the mayor from office, passed a resolution last week, by a 7-1 vote, urging him to resign. Kilpatrick has adamantly rejected such appeals and continued to do so after Wayne County Prosecutor Kym Worthy said that she would be bringing charges against him.

In her statement Monday morning announcing her decision, Worthy implicitly rejected any comparison to the Clinton impeachment proceedings. "This was not an investigation focused on lying about sex," she said. "Gary Brown's, Harold Nelthorpe's and Walter Harris's lives and careers were forever changed. They were ruined financially and their reputations were completely destroyed."

She cited the *Free Press* article on the text messages as the origin of her investigation, indicating that there had been no ongoing effort to target the mayor—a longtime political

ally—until the text messages demonstrated that he and Beatty had lied repeatedly under oath. At that point, she said in a subsequent press interview, "The decision became easy."

Without naming names, Worthy suggested that several lawyers working on behalf of Kilpatrick and Beatty had engaged in "deliberate obstruction" of her investigation, including the possible destruction of documents and other evidence. There were "potential" charges against them as well, she said.

Two high-ranking Detroit city employees, John Johnson Jr., a city attorney, and Patricia Peoples, Kilpatrick's cousin and the deputy director of human resources, were in court Monday facing contempt charges for refusing to cooperate with Worthy.

The Kilpatrick case has split the Democratic Party officialdom in Detroit and surrounding Wayne County. Kilpatrick himself is a scion of this establishment, the son of Congresswoman Carolyn Cheeks Kilpatrick, currently chair of the Congressional Black Caucus, and Bernard Kilpatrick, a longtime top official in the Wayne County government. The lone vote on the Detroit City Council opposing the call for his resignation came from Monica Conyers, wife of Detroit's other long-serving congressman, John Conyers.

While the Kilpatrick camp has portrayed the prosecution as a plot by white suburbanites to seize control of the city government, those leading the campaign for his ouster included figures like Councilman Kwame Kenyatta, with a long career of black nationalist demagoguery, and City Council President Ken Cockrel Jr., son of the late civil rights attorney, who would become mayor if Kilpatrick is ousted.

Kym Worthy is also a pillar of the black Democratic Party establishment, going back to her role as an assistant prosecutor of two white policemen who beat to death a black man, Malice Green, on the city's southwest side in 1992.

More importantly, there are no serious political differences between Kilpatrick and the business and financial elite of the Detroit area. He has carried out the mandate of the auto bosses and millionaires to hold the line on wages and benefits of city workers, cut services to the city's

impoverished residents, and create a “business-friendly” environment in the city, including tax-free enterprise zones and the promotion of casino gambling that preys on the most vulnerable sections of the working class.

The disaffection with Kilpatrick on the part of the corporate establishment arises because his personal corruption has become an obstacle to the implementation of their agenda. Even before the current scandal, Kilpatrick had become notorious for plundering city resources for his family’s benefit while demanding incessant sacrifices from city employees.

In 2005, Kilpatrick barely survived a challenge to his reelection mounted by Freeman Hendrix, a former city deputy mayor. Kilpatrick finished second to Hendrix in the first round of the non-partisan election, but won a runoff by a narrow margin.

In the period since the *Free Press* exposé, Kilpatrick’s behavior has become increasingly bizarre and provocative. He and his wife appeared side-by-side in a televised event at a Detroit church January 30 at which the mayor expressed contrition for unnamed sins—effectively conceding that the text messages were genuine.

Meanwhile, city attorneys fought a month-long rearguard action to keep secret the documents surrounding the settlement with the three fired policemen, which had been withheld from the Detroit City Council before it voted to approve the huge financial payoff. They ultimately lost this battle in the Michigan Supreme Court.

Kilpatrick subsequently told one radio station that he was “born” for the position of mayor and was “on an assignment from God.” He said he had “an intention of being mayor, you know, until God tells me to do something else.”

In a state of the city speech March 11, broadcast over local television, Kilpatrick departed from his prepared remarks to denounce demands for his resignation, calling the campaign a lynch mob, and claiming he was being treated as a “n—er”—despite the fact that most of those seeking his ouster are also black.

After the City Council voted 7-1 to urge him to step down, Kilpatrick declared, “You take a whole day to discuss an issue like this? My reaction is: This is over. It has no effect. It’s not binding. Let’s get back to work.”

In a related matter, the surviving children of Tamara Greene, an exotic dancer who was murdered in 2003, have filed a \$150 million lawsuit against Kilpatrick and the city of Detroit, charging that the mayor’s office quashed an investigation into her killing.

Greene was believed to be a participant in a widely rumored “stripper party” at the mayor’s official residence, Manoogian Mansion, one of the many reported scandals during his first term in office. Greene was shot to death

shortly afterwards, and former Detroit police officer Alvin Bowman has charged that his homicide unit was pressured to drop the case, although it appeared to be a “hit,” possibly carried out by another policeman.

Detroit Police Chief Ella Bully-Cummings has denounced accusations of a police cover-up of the death of Tamara Greene as “reprehensible.” Attorneys for the family have subpoenaed the text messages exchanged by city employees and the police during the early-morning hours on the day Greene was killed.

Harold Nelthorpe, one of the three policemen involved in the \$8.4 million settlement, told attorneys for the Greene family that Kilpatrick’s wife had returned home unexpectedly during the stripper party, and “that a fight ensued between Ms. Kilpatrick and a dancer, and that the dancer received injuries requiring medical attention.” Greene was said to be the dancer in question.

The descent of the Kilpatrick administration into gangsterism is a demonstration, not merely of his personal corruption, but of the decay of the whole Democratic Party establishment in Detroit. The Democratic Party has long abandoned even token efforts to improve the living standards and social conditions of the masses of impoverished working people in the city. Its leading personnel, black and white, have integrated themselves into the corporate establishment and many of them have seen the resources of the city as an opportunity for personal enrichment.



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