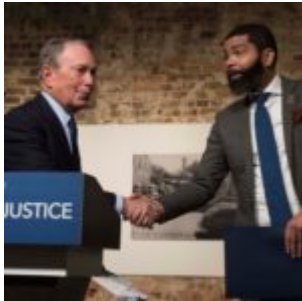


How Mayor Lumumba was Bought: The Closed Bloomberg Meeting in Jackson, Mississippi

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The saying that politics makes for strange bedfellows is a statement that speaks to the many allegiances, alliances and compromises that one must make when engaging in electoral politics. One might think that there could be no more stranger bedfellows in politics than Jackson's self-proclaimed "radical" mayor Chokwe Antar Lumumba and billionaire and former New York City mayor Michael Bloomberg. However, the alignment of Lumumba and Bloomberg is not so strange at all. State power, as a crossroads of ethnic patronage politics, is not very weird unless we believe that black power means nothing without power to the common people even after people of color retain coveted positions above society. How many of us believe in that today?

Many black politicians, especially the young ambitious ones, enter office with the idea that the office they seek is merely a steppingstone to some higher office or some lucrative position as an appointed government bureaucrat or in a capitalist firm. So, while they claim to be working for the people, they are busy making allegiances with forces above them that will help to ensure that they have a safe and profitable landing once they leave their present public office.

Considering this reality, we must look at Bloomberg's campaign event in Jackson and ask what role did his money play in his being given a platform to stump for the Democratic Party presidential nomination by the Lumumba administration? Did he buy Lumumba? There have been many accusations made by Bloomberg's opponents, who receive donations from forces that they would be beholden to if they win the office of US president in 2020, regarding his attempts to buy the presidency. Given the millions he has spent on campaign advertising in the initial weeks of his campaign, it appears that he is trying to. Bloomberg also spent a million dollars in Jackson. Given this fact, it is an appropriate question: Did he buy Lumumba? And what in this case was recently purchased?

Bloomberg Foundation Makes a Grant

A year ago, the city of Jackson was the recipient of a million-dollar grant from the Bloomberg Foundation. Bloomberg came to Jackson to award the grant for an art project that aims to raise awareness about food insecurity issues and the importance of Jacksonians making healthier choices when it comes to food. Though drinking fewer soft drinks is a good thing, Bloomberg in the past has been the subject of ridicule and controversy for seeking to regulate how much soda and sugary drinks can be purchased. In an economic system that views whole foods as a commodity and not the necessity they are, there is no such thing as food security except for among the ruling elites and capitalist aspirants.

The project of promoting “food security” in this fashion evinces how out of touch bureaucrats are with working people and that such individuals cannot represent the interests of commoners. Where price controls on necessities like whole and healthy foods are advocated, or guaranteeing them to all as a transitional demand, are found in historical freedom movements and would be constructive, what is really being promoted by Lumumba and Bloomberg is the premise of corporate social responsibility as a mask for those that monopolize crucial resources. Further, the idea that backward commoners need to be taught about the dangers of their unhealthy lifestyles is paternalistic and pathologizes the poor. But why Jackson?

Oligarchs like Bloomberg don’t give money out of the kindness of their hearts. Kindhearted people would not seek to squander the Earth’s resources to the point that most of the society is denied basic needs while they enjoy decadence and luxury. Capitalists make investments. When capitalists *invest*, they always seek a return on their speculations. Bloomberg’s recent criminal justice reform roundtable event held in Jackson on December 3rd was Bloomberg collecting his return on his investment.

On December 8, *The New York Post* reported that Jackson is among one of a small group of cities that Bloomberg has donated millions to that he is now hosting campaign events in. For those who might think that *The Post’s* analysis is a stretch, we can listen to Bloomberg’s own words to provide further insight into the thinking of an oligarch. In a *CBS This Morning* interview with Gayle King he stated, “Nobody gives you anything unless they expect something from you, and I don’t want to be bought.” This statement was made in reference to Bloomberg financing his own campaign and the criticism he has received from other candidates for doing so. Given Bloomberg’s statement, should we believe that Bloomberg was not seeking a return on the investment he made in Jackson? Should we believe that Mayor Lumumba gave him a platform merely because he thinks he’s a nice guy?

Bloomberg’s Visit to Jackson

His appearance in Jackson was not a coincidence. We believe that Bloomberg’s campaign staff took note of Lumumba’s popularity among many black people and young progressives particularly in the south. Given Bloomberg’s own racial baggage, his staffers know that he must capture a significant amount of support from Black voters if he wishes to win the Democratic Party nomination and have a legitimate chance of winning the U.S. presidency. He has drafted the likes of Lumumba, Stockton, Calif. Mayor Michael Tubbs and prominent Black clergy to help him do this, regardless of Lumumba’s public declarations to the contrary.

Hours after Bloomberg’s Jackson event, Lumumba took to Facebook to post that he’s met with several Democratic Party presidential hopefuls, but that he has not endorsed any candidate. This evasion has some truth in it. The “radical” mayor has met with the standard-bearers of the political party captured by the left bloc of capital and supported by half the ruling class. Lumumba also has ties to Bernie Sanders, the “democratic socialist” and “critic of capitalism” running for the

Democratic Party nomination. Does this most “radical” of mayors think the critique of neoliberalism is a game? Does opposing neoliberalism include dialogue with transparent unapologetic capitalists who think it is normal to police our lives?

Who believes working class black people are more stupid, Lumumba, who wants us to believe he is not compromised by taking Bloomberg’s money, or Bloomberg, who wants black people to believe that he is truly apologetic for the racist policies he instituted while Mayor of New York City?

Mayors Lumumba and Bloomberg both have nefarious histories as heads of the police states in their respective cities. This is despite the fact that the former claims to be some kind of Black Power activist and the latter claims to be a philanthropist who offers aid to urban communities as both subordinate them. What makes the choice of hosting Bloomberg in Jackson for a criminal justice reform event hypocritical and arrogant?

Lumumba, before his rise to power, traveled to Ferguson in October 2014 to protest with certain leaders and organizers in the Black Lives Matter network, who at the time were still faking as if they opposed the Democrats and the State. Having left the militant “woke” activist Lumumba behind, Mayor Lumumba froze when within six months of his taking office the Jackson Police Department killed several poor Black people. Instead of taking quick and decisive action, Lumumba genuflected and babbled about officer safety, independent investigations, and police control boards and hand-selected a “task force” (really a task farce) of his closest political allies, relatives and friends to determine when the identities of killer cops should be revealed.

Although Bloomberg has recently given a half-hearted and politically scripted apology for the police occupation, harassment and arrest of mostly non-white people via his stop and frisk policy in New York, he initially doubled and tripled down on the racially motivated program’s merits in stopping crime in the Big Apple.

Recent developments in Jackson and within Bloomberg’s campaign show that their histories with the police are not the only things that are questionable.

Lumumba’s police department is participating in a federal law and order initiative from Donald Trump’s Department of Justice known as Project Guardian. From December 17 to 20, Trump appointee, U.S. Attorney Mike Hurst directed the raiding and terrorizing of poor and Black communities led by the U.S. Marshals and supported by local law enforcement agencies, including the Jackson Police Department. What part of “freeing the land,” the slogan of the Black Nationalist organization Lumumba is affiliated, is this?

In recent weeks, it has been reported that Bloomberg “unwittingly” exploited incarcerated women’s labor by having them make phone calls on behalf of his campaign. Of course, the Bloomberg campaign issued an apology stating they ended the relationship with the company with whom they had a contract that used an unknown third-party contractor who utilized prison labor. Not to be outdone, Lumumba, who claims to be a critic of mass incarceration of Black people and a criminal justice “reformer”, when one looks at the public records of the donors to his electoral campaign, one finds an architecture firm, M3A, who among other things has built three Mississippi jails and prisons including in Hinds County, where Jackson is located!

Shouldn’t these mayors, the phony black radical and phony white apologist, and their “activist” friends have known that experienced observers could gather information to put forward independent thinking and perspectives of our own? Did they expect that “progressives” could suppress the truth for all time?

Jacksonians attempted to attend the Bloomberg event in Jackson but were turned away because the event was exclusive to a few individual bourgeois professionals referred to by the media as “community leaders.” Who chose these leaders? Who and what are they leading? It is imaginable that these individuals were hand selected by Lumumba not for their leadership qualities, but because these individuals are politically safe and would raise no dissent or criticism. Clearly, in Lumumba’s eyes, the “unwashed” masses cannot be trusted. Neither can those who might propagate the destruction of hierarchy.

Residents of Jackson seemed disappointed about being denied access to the event. They talked about how they were going to call to the mayor’s office and tell him that he calls for “participation,” but denied the public access to the event. Were these people disappointed because they were being denied an opportunity to denounce the ruling class and their black hirelings or was the disappointment merely rooted in the fact they could not participate, as in passively listen, observe and “network” with Jackson’s black elites? If it was the latter, there is much work to be done.

Direct Democracy and Popular Governance

We must stop settling for mere dependent participation. “Participatory democracy” is worthless where it obscures who must govern. What makes elected officials and their chosen sycophants more worthy to run the affairs of society than everyday people themselves? Is it because they wear fancy clothes, drive luxury vehicles and speak “proper” English? Anything short of direct democracy and popular self-governance should be unsatisfactory. Popular self-government is a process, but it blooms outside hierarchy. The hierarchy is not an asset or legitimate player in facilitating this. Sometimes their buffoonery and mystification can be a trigger in waking us up. The ruling elites have exploited the Earth’s vast resources and have caused the political, social and economic catastrophes the masses are facing. Why do we accept this ruling class above us? Why is it less insulting when its’ chosen standard-bearers are “black” and make a big show of this alone with no substance or content?

Political and economic serfdom should be repudiated because these aspiring rulers above society (and their richer associates) pursue their own personal prerogatives and neglect the pain, suffering and exploitation of poor people because they are committed to the status quo. They benefit from it. If any change is to come, we, the self-organized and self-governing masses, will bring it about. We know many otherwise “radical” people don’t think so. Mayor Lumumba thinks he is sensitive to the burdens of toiling Black people. This sensitivity, intermittent and really nonexistent as expressed in his actual policies and alliances, is his personal social capital. It is what he trades on. How many really grasp this? It is what makes him useful to politicians and members of the ruling class, like the billionaire Bloomberg.

Some wish to retain state power above society by hob-knobbing with those who are against capitalism and those who are for it. They wish to align themselves with those who denounce the police state and those who cheer it on only to turn around and apologize for its’ brutality. Those who wish to defend the Earth and those who monopolize its resources. Those who speak of Black people as misbehaving consumers and potentially self-reliant producers. We should be clear that Lumumba is not simply “independent” because he hasn’t endorsed any candidate yet. He has no special political values. Lumumba, as he and his supporters might claim, is not gathering capital and resources from every possible sector to benefit all of Jackson. Lumumba is compromised as a community leader and will be known, ultimately, by the instinctive social movement he undermined by befriending and bedding the wealthy and the apologists for the police state. That someone did not stand up and clarify these contradictions at the public meeting in Jackson sponsored by Lumumba for Bloomberg is what was purchased not art installations and false education about food security. What was purchased was the silencing of Black radical and other community voices that are not

blind and deaf but can speak for themselves.

The city of Jackson's website proclaims that Mayor Lumumba is an active member of the Malcolm X Grassroots Movement (MXGM). In 2013, before some leaders and organizers within the "Black Lives Matter" network gained prominence by aligning themselves with the Democratic Party and undermining the legitimate and genuine rage, resistance and rebellion from below in places like St. Louis and Baltimore, the MXGM propagated a report that stated every 28 hours a Black person is killed by the police in the U.S. and played a central role in the civil lawsuit *Floyd, et al vs. City of New York*, whose judicial opinion struck down Mayor Bloomberg's gestapo stop and frisk policy as unconstitutional. Yet, Mayor Lumumba provided a safe space and became a political prostitute for Mayor Bloomberg who now that he is running to win the Democratic Party nomination wants to avoid accountability for his racist and fascist "stop and frisk" policies as New York City's mayor by offering a pitiable apology and a criminal justice reform policy platform. How fast we circulate propaganda and discard the facts of our own existence! Only the veil of "black power," purchased and manufactured so it is not distinguished by the community control of ordinary people, can mask such crimes.