

# Blaming Black People in Detroit

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Detroit has been delivered to the bankruptcy vultures, with a foreign bank first in line to scavenge the carcass. Yet, corporate media and white public opinion appear to consider the catastrophe to be the fault of Black “shiftless bums who must pay a price for just about anything that the reptile racist brain can imagine.”

The level of hostility that most white Americans have towards black people is endless. Nothing proves that point like the reaction to the court decision which affirmed that Detroit, Michigan is [officially bankrupt](#). If the media, pundits and readers commenting to newspapers are to be believed, Detroit had no problems other than having too many freeloading black people living within the city limits.

According to news reports the damage done by moving money and other resources to the mostly white suburbs was not a problem. Neither were the disastrous Wall Street [derivatives](#) deals which robbed the city. The Republican takeover of the state legislature wasn't an issue either, despite the fact that the emergency management plan was instituted against the wishes of Michigan voters who rejected it in a referendum. According to conventional wisdom none of these factors and none of the bad actors are responsible for the decision to make the people of Detroit liable for the connivance of the 1%.

The corporate media say nothing about the fact that Barclays bank gets paid first, so that it can then pay Bank of America and others. They say nothing about how creditors from civil litigants to vendors will have to settle for pennies on the dollar. They don't mention that city of Detroit retirees couldn't pay into Social Security and have nothing to live on except their soon to be decimated pensions. Of course they also fail to say that the state's constitution specifically protects pensions from cuts announced by the emergency manager. That law is no longer worth the paper it is written on.

The dice were cast long before judge Steven Rhodes ruled that the picking clean could begin in earnest. There was no way that the ruling classes would permit true democracy to function when there was a fresh carcass to scavenge. The evil doing was made all the more easy by a system still fueled by heavy doses of racism.

In 2008 the mortgage-backed securities house of cards fell apart but the international banksters weren't prosecuted or even really blamed by the masses of people. In the minds of too many white Americans, the housing bubble was caused by black people buying homes they couldn't afford. That same line of reasoning says that Detroit is bankrupt because of overpaid city workers and greedy retirees. Some of those black people who worked on automobile assembly lines were also blamed for the struggles of the big three car

makers. Even black people who have jobs are considered shiftless bums who must pay a price for just about anything that the reptile racist brain can imagine.

The terror of the shock doctrine is now in full force around the country. The word Detroit is now being used the way the word boogeyman was used to keep children fearful and compliant. In New York City, municipal workers are being told not to expect retroactive wage increases when a new mayor takes office in January. After all, no one wants New York to end up like Detroit.

But racism is a two edged sword, capable of hurting white people, too. Black people may be punished first but the swath of destruction won't leave white people untouched for long. Black people are the most vulnerable and the easiest to victimize but are not the only Americans depending on pensions to survive. Judge Rhodes made history and in a terrible way. There will be nothing to protect the few Americans who still have defined retirement benefit plans. They can now begin kissing those plans good-bye.

Cities and counties all over the country were defrauded by the derivatives schemers. Corporate greed will ensnare many more and make a mockery of the idea that America is a democracy. Other state legislatures and municipalities will also reach figurehead status and other voter referendums will be rendered null and void.

California cities like Stockton and San Bernardino are in court seeking [bankruptcy protection](#). So far unions have successfully argued that pension plans should be untouched, but with Rhodes' ground breaking decision, all that may change very quickly. It is certain that the rest of financial services sector sat up and took notice when Detroit's fate was sealed in the court house.

Detroit is now the dead canary in the coal mine. The banksters have taken jobs, homes and now a major city. Legislation and the popular will mean nothing when the fat cats set their sights on something they want.

As for the few people left in Detroit they will watch as their pensions, jobs and public resources disappear. They will be the first to see such a level of theft and devastation but they will not be the last.

***Margaret Kimberley's Freedom Rider column appears weekly in BAR, and is widely reprinted elsewhere. She maintains a frequently updated blog as well as at <http://freedomrider.blogspot.com>. Ms. Kimberley lives in New York City, and can be reached via e-Mail at [Margaret.Kimberley\(at\)BlackAgendaReport.com](mailto:Margaret.Kimberley(at)BlackAgendaReport.com).***

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