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World of Soul Motorcycle Community Takes Lead on College Tours

By Lee Edwards

Imagine this. A motorcycle enthusiast or “biker”, who organizes Historically Black College and University (HBCU) tours for inner city kids.

No need to imagine, because it is really happening, thanks to Terry Hardy, founder and President of World of Soul Motorcycle Community (WSMC), an organization he founded in 2008.

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Terry Hardy
World of Soul Motorcycle Community founder and president.

photo by Lee Edwards



Barbara Byrd Bennett Resigns as Chicago Public Schools CEO as Federal Probe Continues



Former Chicago Public Schools Chief, Barbara Byrd Bennett resigns amid federal probe into questionable \$20.5 million no-bid contract the Chicago Board of Education awarded to Bennett’s former employer.

By Deborah Bayliss

Chicago Mayor Rahm Emanuel issued a statement on Monday morning, announcing Chicago Public Schools (CPS) CEO, Barbara Byrd Bennett’s resignation as the federal probe continues into a \$20.5 million no-bid contract awarded to the leadership development academy for whom, she once worked.

"I am saddened by the circumstances that have led to Barbara’s resignation and I wish her well. As a city, our focus must remain on finishing the school year strong and tackling the billion dollar budget deficit that threatens the progress our students, teachers, principals and parents has made over the last several years," Emanuel said in the released statement.

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World of Soul Motorcycle...

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Hardy founded WSMC after developing a love for riding motorcycles in the mid-2000s. Quickly, WSMC evolved from a simple social network into a large motorcyclist association, connecting motorcyclists nationally. The group then established the Ride for Change Ride for Hope Foundation (RCRHF) which is a 501 c(3) non-profit. RCRHF sponsors HBCU tours.

According to RCRHF's website, the HBCU tours provide disadvantaged youth access to opportunity through exposure with a journey outside of urban areas providing a new outlook to fuel greater aspirations toward achieving a college education and visiting historically black colleges

and universities connects students with their cultural heritage and institutions.

"Ride for Change Ride for Hope is itself an awareness campaign that tells the story about America's history that says despite our challenges we've always found ways to move the nation forward therefore ride for change, ride for hope," said Hardy.

Hardy previously worked alongside Rev. Jesse Jackson, Sr., Rainbow PUSH Coalition and PUSH Excel. He helped organize college tours there before he started his own organization.

Hardy envisions RCRHF sponsoring 30 passenger buses someday carrying youth and parents from Chicago to visit historical black colleges and universities (HBCU).

"If you can imagine what

[100 motorcycles escorting 30 buses] would look like going down the highway, a helicopter videotaping that journey, that would be quite impressive," said Hardy. "We think that it is one that could spark a paradigm shift to the perceived value of education stemming from minority communities namely Chicago at this time in light of the situation we have with the violence."

Hardy wants his college tours to focus on HBCUs because of their history and connection to the African American community.

"We feel it's important to tell our story," said Hardy.

"Historically black colleges have a unique position in America's history as it relates to educating our youth and the opportunity



World of Soul Motorcycle Community founder and president Terry Hardy first fell in love with motorcycles after riding a Harley Davidson motorcycle. World of Soul Motorcycle Community is an inclusive motorcyclist association that connects urban motorcyclists to commercial and non-for-profit entities.

to benefit from what HBCU's have to offer."

World of Soul Motorcycle Community will have its next quarterly meeting at Urban Partnership Bank, 7701 S. State Ave. in Chicago, on June 12 at 9

a.m.

To learn more about World of Soul Motorcycle Community or Ride for Change Ride for Hope Foundation visit www.worldofsoulma.com.

Barbara Bryd Bennett Resigns...

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In a letter dated, May 29, Byrd-Bennett notified David Vitale, president, Chicago Board of Education, of her resignation effective June 1, 2015.

"I will remain forever thankful for the opportunity to serve the children of Chicago and the District," Byrd Bennett writes. "I also appreciate the steadfast support of you, the Board, and the District and wish all of you continued success in the important work that you do to further the mission of CPS and the interest of the children that it serves."

Byrd-Bennett was on paid leave that started in April following reports that federal investigators were looking into the contract between CPS and SUPES Academy.

SUPES reportedly has turned over records to investigators, who also asked for documents from Byrd-Bennett and three other employees.

CPS has since suspended its contract with SUPES.

Jesse Ruiz, former Board of Education, president, currently serves as CPS' interim CEO.

A memo dated April 18, 2015, from Ruiz to CPS staff, stated he is engaging an outside firm to do an independent review of the contracting process to evaluate the process by which the SUPES contract was approved, and whether reforms to the overall contracting process are needed.

"Every dollar is critically needed in our classrooms and we need to ensure not a single penny is wasted," Ruiz wrote in the memo. "Our process needs to be as strong as it can be in light of the financial challenges our District faces and our responsibility to those we serve."

All Board members, including Ruiz, voted on the contract, with the exception of Carlos Azcoitia, who was not at that particular board

meeting and therefore, not present for that specific vote.

Wendy Katten, director of Raise Your Hand, a grassroots coalition of parents and concerned citizens who advocate for quality public education for all children, told the Chicago Citizen Newspaper in a recent interview that the entire School Board needs to be replaced and that her group is calling for their removal.

"They all signed off on the SUPES contract..." said Katten. "We need a more conscientious Board...we need some democracy."

Mayor Emanuel on Tuesday announced the appointment of four new Chicago Board of Education members that will replace Carlos Azcoitia, Henry Bienen, Deborah Quazzo and Andrea Zopp whose terms expire June 30.

Gail Ward worked in the CPS system for more than 35 years as a teacher, counselor, elementary school principal, and as the first principal of Walter Payton

College Prep High School. She also served as CPS's Chief Officer in the Office of Principal Preparation and Development; Rev. Michael Garanzini, a university administrator, tenured professor, author, and scholar, has spent the majority of his career working in higher education; Dominique Jordan Turner, has a background in urban education and high school strategy; Turner is currently is President and CEO of Chicago Scholars Foundation, which provides underserved high school students access to quality educational opportunities and Mark Furlong, retired CEO of BMO Harris Bank, and the former CEO of Marshall & Ilsley Bank.

The Chicago Citizen Newspapers asked previously if Mayor Rahm Emanuel, in light of the Board approving the no-bid contract, would now consider an elected School Board. Catherine Turco, a spokesperson for the mayor



Chicago Mayor Rahm Emanuel

Photo By Deborah Bayliss

replied via email saying, Mayor Emanuel has not changed his position on an elected School Board.

Katten said, "We wish the mayor would listen to the voters who overwhelmingly support having an elected School Board but we're not surprised he's not listening to us."