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## **Dr. John Telford Defends Arne Duncan, Secretary of Education, on “Ground Zero” Charge in the Detroit Public Schools**

(Detroit, Michigan, December 16, 2009) John Telford, teacher activist, superintendent, passionate civil rights champion, world-class sprinter, street fighter and now author (***A Life on the Run: Seeking and Safeguarding Social Justice***, Harmonie Park Press, **January 2010**) says Duncan suggested last May that the Detroit Public Schools were at the epicenter of everything that is wrong with education in American today.

While the Ground Zero charge strikes a cord, little can be done to address the problem because of the widespread corruption starting at the very top of the school administrations in Detroit.

Telford, however, makes it clear that the Detroit Schools didn't sink into this disgraceful condition overnight. It began with white flight from the city in the 40's and 50's and accelerated in the late 60s and early 70s with the hasty promotions of unqualified black administrators within an ill-conceived (but NOT ill-advised) affirmative action program, and reached its current nadir due to generations of miseducated parents and the accelerating incompetence and corruption at the very top.

This is tough talk for tough times, but what makes the retired 74-year-old Telford different is that he comes from inner city Detroit, stayed there, taught there and still cares deeply about what happens to his students.

If what he says is true, then exposing the real reasons behind the failure of the Detroit schools is a critically important first step. And one that no one seems willing to tackle. While Detroit may be one of the worst school systems in America, many others are plagued with the same problems and few former administrators, those with direct knowledge of what goes on are willing to speak out.

An interview with Telford will provide an extraordinary look behind the scenes of a big city school system and some concrete steps to make it right.

A snapshot of what is needed:

- ❖ Eliminate the public charter schools-
- ❖ Redirect more money proportionally to traditional public school districts with the greatest social need. Most misbehaving teens in urban schools can't read.
- ❖ Isolate misbehavers in special classes until their grades and behavior improve and squeeze the financial balloon to surround them with remedial and behavioral support systems.
- ❖ Establish stiff anti-nepotism clauses in hiring and promoting instructional and administrative staff.
- ❖ Many urban school districts, including Detroit, are being run by black "classists" who funnel most of the tax dollars into a few elite schools and let the others rot.

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### *Praise for **A Life on the Run***

“A Life on the Run is a triumphant tale of teaching, fighting, loving, racing, civil-righteous rebellion, and raw courage. Dr. John Telford lays it on the line in exciting activist/educator style—like the exciting activist/educator he is.”

—Professor John A. Powell, Executive Director, Kirwan Institute for the Study of Race and Ethnicity at Ohio State University writes in his introduction for **A Life on the Run**.

#### **ABOUT JOHN TELFORD**

John Telford has run on many tracks –not all of them always the right ones. He out ran Olympic champions, hosted radio shows, appeared on television, wrote over one thousand newspaper columns, coached and taught in ghetto schools and in colleges, led school districts and social welfare agencies and continues to fight for urban school reform and minority rights.

#### **Publication Information for Telford’s book:**

**Title:** A LIFE ON THE RUN: SEEKING AND SAFEGUARDING SOCIAL JUSTICE

**Author:** John Telford  
Harmonie Press  
Publication Date: January 2010  
Price: \$24.95 ISBN: 978-0-899901-49-7 Pages: 435

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Dr Telford can also be seen at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KfmGVZi5ca4> from documentary filmmaker Oren Goldenberg.