

DeMorning DeBonis: Sept. 17, 2010

TODAY IS SEPT. 17, 2010 -- 46 DAYS UNTIL GENERAL ELECTION

Any hope that schools Chancellor **Michelle Rhee** and presumptive mayor-elect **Vincent C. Gray** might come to an accommodation appears to be fading fast. **Bill Turque** [reports today on A1](#) that when the two meet next week, "it is increasingly likely that the discussion will focus on the terms of her disengagement from the D.C. school system rather than how she might stay," seizing on this quote from Rhee Wednesday night: "Yesterday's election results were devastating, devastating. ... Not for me, because I'll be fine, and not even for Fenty, because he'll be fine, but devastating for the schoolchildren of Washington, D.C." And so begins the airing of possible names: There's former city administrator **Robert Bobb**, who "was a conspicuous presence at Gray's election night celebration"; **Barbara Byrd-Bennett**, former Cleveland schools chief; **Deborah Gist**, the former state superintendent who is now in Rhode Island; and Rhee's predecessor, **Clifford Janey**. [TBD's Sarah Larimer](#) and [The Post's Jay Mathews](#) add a few more names to the list: **Jean-Claude Brizard**, Rochester schools chief; **Kevin Chavous**, who says he doesn't want the job; and, gee whiz, **Rudy Crew**, who has appeared on every list of potential big-city superintendents ever compiled. Whoever it is, **Valerie Strauss** says at [her Class Struggle blog](#), there's no sense drawing things out: "Leaving her as chancellor during a long search, with Rhee keeping one eye on the door, is unacceptable. Nobody with half a heart in a job is going to perform very well."

AFTER THE JUMP -- Rhee continues her impolitic ways -- Why it's not Rhee's fault Fenty lost -- Race and the mayoral race -- Killing the Green Machine myth -- Eleanor explains lobbyist fundraising call

*** MAIN COURSE ***

WHY THEY DON'T LIKE EACH OTHER -- "Gray, a genteel politician from the old school, has deep roots in the African American middle class that has been the heart of the District's public school teacher corps. That constituency has been traumatized by many of Rhee's reform efforts, which have included hundreds of layoffs, firings and outspoken comments about the poor quality of D.C. educators. ... Rhee, like the mayor who hired her, had passions that veered more toward inputs and outcomes than collaboration and consensus. The record on her watch includes generally improved test scores, an enrollment that has stabilized after decades of decline, a labor contract that gives the District new power over teacher job assignments and an evaluation system that can lead to dismissal for instructors who score poorly. ... At an October 2009 hearing, Gray fumed over her decision to restore a \$9 million cut in summer school funding that the council had made a few weeks earlier. The budget shuffle increased the number of teacher layoffs (266) she had just announced, a move that caused a political furor. In Rhee's calculus, summer school was more important. ... The layoffs were bad enough, but Gray expressed particular concern about Rhee's apparent disregard for the protocols, procedures and personal collaborations that Gray considered essential to smooth functioning within his political world. In this case, the process dictated that Rhee made sure that the council wasn't blindsided by the news. But Rhee displayed little interest in either process or political niceties as she rushed to implement an ambitious agenda. She told Gray that she wasn't trying to embarrass the council, that she just wanted to protect the interests of children."

MICHELLE THE IMPOLITIC -- Fab take from **Eugene Robinson**, writing at the [Post Partisan blog](#): "The arrogance takes one's breath away. Rhee essentially declares Fenty -- and herself -- to be indispensable. Moreover, she alleges that [Gray], who will be the city's next mayor, is prepared to allow students of the D.C. public schools to suffer 'devastating' consequences. I know this will sound like hyperbole, but it's literally true: I've seen Latin American juntas surrender power more gracefully. ... [A]fter what she said, I find it hard to imagine how Gray could ask her to stay -- she might at least begin a constructive dialogue aimed at a smooth transition. But the way to start that conversation would be with words of congratulations. Instead, she took the peremptory **Louis XV** approach: 'After me, the deluge.' But it's not about her, you understand. As she said at the Newseum, 'I'll be fine.' " Also excellent: **Martin Austermuhle**'s take [at DCist](#).

SWEET UNITY -- Yesterday, **Adrian Fenty** was relaxed and gracious in endorsing Gray as the Democratic nominee for mayor at the D.C. Democrats' unity breakfast. WTTG-TV's **Karen Gray Houston** [was on the scene for WTTG-TV](#); also [AP](#). Said Fenty, "I look forward to having Vince Gray as my mayor." Incidentally, Fenty has won the most votes in the Republican primary race for mayor, winning 822 of the more than 1,300 write-in votes cast. Other winners: **Kwame Brown**, **Phil Mendelson**. Fenty has said he will not accept the nomination. Reports from [Post Now](#), [WRC-TV](#). A "Run, Fenty, Run" Facebook page [has appeared](#).

READ THIS -- **Mike Madden**, [writing at the City Paper Loose Lips blog](#), pens the much-needed counter-narrative, explaining why exactly that education reform is not responsible for Fenty's loss: "What went wrong with education reform in D.C. was Adrian Fenty. ... [I]f Rhee felt the need to throw some sharp elbows around, maybe that's what the situation called for. Her job is to improve the schools, not win the next election. Winning the next election, though, was part of Fenty's job. It doesn't do any good to bring in people who are on the cutting edge of their field's policies if you lose your own job not long after they arrive. Fenty simply couldn't be bothered to try to sell Rhee's school program to the people who mattered most in assessing it -- District voters. ... A Mayor Fenty who didn't let basic political outreach slide, and who made some effort to keep the District's black middle class engaged in their government, who didn't give his frat brothers sweetheart contracts, who didn't snub **Dorothy Height**, and who picked his battles for important issues (like fixing schools) instead of pointless ones (like baseball tickets for the D.C. Council) could have done exactly what Fenty did on education, and still won." Ends with a devastating kicker -- just perfect. Also see two Atlantic pieces, [one from Natalie Hopkinson](#), who explains "Why Michelle Rhee's Education 'Brand' Failed in D.C.," and [one by Ta-Nahisi Coates](#), who argues that Fenty ignored the "essential" of politics, "not alienating your allies, and converting would-be enemies, all while pushing the right solutions."

MORE CW -- **Joe Klein** [says at Time](#) that teacher unions "should be ashamed of themselves for this latest, disgraceful ploy" to oust Fenty/Rhee. Good Morning America [covers the Gray win](#) with a will-Rhee-stay lens. WRC-TV [has footage](#) from the Wednesday "Waiting for Superman" Newseum premiere. Director **Davis Guggenheim** [tells City Paper](#) he wants Rhee to stick around. The Hollywood Reporter [lists all the boldface names](#) from the screening: **David Axelrod**, **Melody Barnes**, **Al Franken**, **Scott Brown**, **Chris Dodd**, **John Legend**, **Kevin Johnson**, et al. Cato Institute sees Fenty loss as evidence that [school choice](#) is the best policy: "Politics is simply too volatile -- and enacting tough reforms too

politically risky -- for even good reforms to be sustained." More from [Color Lines](#), [Jack and Jill Politics](#), [BBC News](#) ("What can Obama learn from DC's mayor?").

EXAMINERAGE -- The Examiner's **Jonetta Rose Barras** on [race and the mayoral race](#): "A decade ago, **Anthony A. Williams** was drafted for mayor by a broad coalition of blacks and whites. Those residents chose a new leadership model that de-emphasized race, focusing more on merit and results. But that alliance weakened as blacks became increasingly concerned about the shift in the city's demographics, the consequences of a meritocracy and the potential loss of their economic and political power. Today, some African Americans have morphed into a black version of **George Wallace**, impeding progress. Gray, the presumptive mayor-elect, has promised to unite the city. That's a commitment he can't keep without altering his own race-based philosophy." Colleague **Harry Jaffe** writes that Gray's "deals with the devil" -- aka unions -- [will haunt him](#): "Gray's biggest problems will come when the unions ask him to quit firing city workers and start hiring. Problem is the city is out of money, and Gray can't deliver. Poor Vince."

THE DEATH OF THE GREEN MACHINE -- In the not-a-column this week, I [debunk the myth of the Big Green Machine](#) that I played no small part in spreading: "Fenty never actually built a political machine that would consolidate his power and help him wield it for years to come. The 'big city mayors' that Fenty so idolized -- such as **Richard M. Daley** of Chicago -- govern from a pedestal, but one that's secured by a political base. The foundation of Fenty's pedestal eroded fast. ... It's not just fixing streetlights and filling potholes and making bulk trash pickups. ... It's taking meetings. It's showing up at funerals. It's sending thank-you notes, distributing free tickets and invitations, and engaging in small-bore patronage that keeps a coalition intact, a base grounded. And it's that sort of thing that Fenty had no patience for. After ascending to the mayoralty, he didn't have the time to call and thank key members of his campaign team. ... And although he had his devoted corps of 'MOCRS' -- the young, hardworking staff of the Mayor's Office of Community Relations and Services -- few, if any, had deep roots in the communities they served. Fenty might have won thanks to the grass roots, but to judge from the people whom he chose to work for him, he must have considered those roots withered."

ELEANOR FIGHTS BACK -- **Eleanor Holmes Norton** responds to the leak of a fundraising call she made to a lobbyist, released by **Andrew Breitbart's Big Government**, [telling Politico](#) that it was a "standard request made by candidates to potential donors who do not know the candidates or their work" and that it "fully complied with legal and ethical requirements." Meanwhile, the [Wall Street Journal editorial page](#), [Politics Daily](#), [ABC News](#), and [blogs galore](#) take up the story. Media Matters [attempts a debunking](#) -- everyone does it.

*** SMALL PLATES ***

Business looks forward to Gray mayoralty; says **Doug Jemal**, "Vincent Gray is a very, very competent man and I think he'll do a great job" ([WBJ](#))

Fenty camp urges Ward 3'ers to keep yard signs up through inauguration ([TBD](#))

Arlington County boss urges Gray to keep **Gabe Klein, Harriet Tregoning**; Klein says city would be "in great hands" under Gray ([WBJ](#))

Watch out, **Muriel Bowser** ([D.C. Wire](#))

Howard Kurtz doesn't get all the race talk ([Media Notes](#))

Missed this yesterday -- Smart take from **Colby King** on how Gray won: "The remarkable thing about [Gray]'s victory was the unremarkable way in which he went about it. He kept his ego in check and did it by the book." ([PostPartisan](#))

How **Harry Thomas** won reelection -- and the National Organization for Marriage and The Post editorial board lost ([Loose Lips](#))

Unions, obviously, happy to see Fenty go ([City Desk](#))

Cheaper SmarTrips means a mess ([The Post](#))

"What Does a Vincent Gray Mayoralty Mean for Georgetown?" ([G'town Metropolitan](#))

Adams Morgan dog shooting highlights need for MPD to develop "canine force continuum" ([Change.org](#))

So long Smartbikes; hello Capital Bikeshare ([Housing Complex](#))

Tour company sues D.C., says guide licensing is unconstitutional ([Legal Times](#))

Fraudsters target city purchase cards ([WBJ](#))

David Alpert speaks up for the BOEE ([GGW](#))

How to fix child poverty in D.C. ([Huffington Post](#))

D.C. Water rates go up Oct. 1 ([WTOP](#))

D.C. Vote's Ilir Zherka says Gray is the "right person at the right time" for voting rights ([TBD NewsTalk](#))

How D.C. stacks up among the world's capitals ([Housing Complex](#))

Yeah, Courtland's column was something, wasn't it? ([DCist](#))

*** ON THE MENU ***

Gray does Plotkin at 10:30 on WTOP, Kojo on WAMU-FM at noon

By Mike DeBonis | September 17, 2010; 11:21 AM ET

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