



# Why Can't Blackberry Throw Skinner Under the Bus?

BY ANONYMOUS

Dear Readers, if The Nose had an opportunity to put Mayor BlackBerry in a truth chamber and ask him one and only one question, it would be this: Why are you so damn loyal to Sinclair Skinner?

The mayoral pal and frat brother has been at the center of almost every BlackBerry administration fiasco over the last three years: the fishy fire truck, the lottery contract mess, the taxpayer-funded Kappa Alpha Psi frat party, and now, of course, the \$82 million Department of Parks and Rec (DPR) boondoggle.

## What gives?

BlackBerry has repeatedly thrown loyalists under the bus for far fewer transgressions.

Just look at the tire marks all over Team BlackBerry, the small nucleus who worked tirelessly to get him elected. Campaign manager Alec Evans was fired shortly after the primary sweep. Field lieutenant Neil Richardson was banished from the mayoral bullpen within a year, resigned, and will likely go to bat for the other team. Advance man Jason Washington took off to open a restaurant in Adams Morgan shortly thereafter. Policy guru Will Singer, after three years as budget director, happily headed for Northwestern Law School.

## Skinner is the last man standing.

For those debating along with The Nose whether the Mayor deserves a second term, the depth of BlackBerry's devotion to Skinner should be a bright red flag.

The high cost of BlackBerry's allegiance cannot simply be accounted for in taxpayer dollars, it also erodes public trust in District government. Prime evidence of that is BlackBerry's decision to oust Bill Slover from chair of the DC Public Housing Authority simply for excising good judgment and due diligence over the questionable DPR contracts.

Slover, who WORKS in private real estate development, and his wife, Laura McGiffert Slover, an education expert, drank the Kool-Aid during BlackBerry's campaign, working tirelessly for his election. All this despite the fact that BlackBerry did not show the same enthusiasm for Laura when she first ran for school board, a race in which BlackBerry threw his considerable support behind now Deputy Mayor Victor Rinoso. The Slovers did not hold a grudge, however, and Laura served as one of the Mayor's appointed representatives before winning election as the school board's current Ward 3 representative.

DC government needs more Bill and Laura Slovers, not less of them. Yet, BlackBerry had no issue throwing Bill under the bus when he became inconvenient. Why doesn't he do the same with Skinner?

The Nose has come up with two reasons why BlackBerry sticks with Skinner. One, Skinner brings something to BlackBerry that is unique and irreplaceable. Second, Skinner has dirt on BlackBerry that would be career-ending and personally destructive.

Dear Readers, draw your own conclusions. For the sake of argument, The Nose will choose the former.

So what unique qualities does Skinner bring to the table? The Nose can think of three.

## Experienced Race-Baiter

Before his wealth and fame as a DC parks surveyor subcontractor, Skinner was known mostly as a vocal Advisory Neighborhood Commissioner and the brain trust behind the "Gramzilla The Black Business Killa" fliers. The posters, plastered all over the Georgia Avenue NW corridor, featured various racist and homophobic themes targeting Ward 1 Councilmember Jim Graham.

Skinner also got attention for being the next-generation advocate of "The Plan." Adherents of this conspiracy theory believe that white people are on a mission to take over Chocolate City. Citing this, Skinner vocally protested efforts to shut down or remove liquor licenses from establish-

ments where fatal shootings or stabbings occurred, including a go-go club housed in the city's Frank Reeves Center and a Georgia Avenue strip club, saying the actions were part of move to wipe out black businesses in the gentrifying area. He even went on the offensive, protesting a liquor license for a bar then called Temperance Hall, which Skinner believed would appeal to the white clientele.

In all fairness, it should be noted that Skinner was quite pleasant to The Nose in those days, encouraging us to bring our wools and unwashables to his Georgia Avenue dry cleaning store. That business, as well as a satellite outlet at One Judiciary Square, eventually went under, with Skinner owing thousands of dollars in back rent to the city.

Then came the BlackBerry campaign, in which Skinner emerged as one of the most devoted foot soldiers. Within the campaign, Skinner was considered an asset to bring the biracial BlackBerry bona fides in predominantly African-American wards such as 5, 7 and 8.

## Skilled LSBDE Scammer

The Nose must give Skinner credit. Having failed the professional engineering licensing exam twice didn't get in the way of Skinner starting his own engineering and design firm.

In athletic and therapy circles, that might be called really good visioning.

The Nose was certainly impressed with all the blueprints and papers that surrounded Skinner as he sat before the Council, accompanied by the Johnnie L. Cochran of D.C. government employees and subcontractors, A. Scott Bolden.

But the fact is that it is not only cronyism, but the willingness of BlackBerry and other mayors to condone the sharecropping culture of LSBDE that allows Skinner and others to profit. Rather than use economic development to incubate and build black-and-minority owned businesses into larger enterprises, they farm out secret sub contracts to Maryland and Virginia firms.

## An Amazing Ability to Forget

If anyone owes Skinner money, The Nose suggests that now might be the time to straighten out those debts. He certainly seems challenged to remember key details from the various contracts he acquired. But a bad memory apparently isn't a disqualifier for being a District subcontractor.

In the coming months, as the mayoral race heats up, The Nose will certainly be watching to see what role Skinner will play. Dear Readers, The Nose hopes you will pay attention too. ★

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