

MY BELOVED STATE OF  
**MICHIGAN**

Written by **Buzz Wilson, CEO**



It's been a year since my mother passed. I wrote about her in *The Last Word* (2007 winter edition of *RainbowVisions*) titled, "Ina's Beauty Shop." In that article I described her influence on Rainbow's origins, and her lessons are still valid, not only for Rainbow, but for my beloved Michigan.

There is a reason that Michigan has auto no-fault, great universities, well-paid public employees and perhaps one of the finest medical delivery systems. I take pride in knowing that Rainbow fits well into this mold of excellence.

During my lifetime, I have witnessed the highs and lows of life in the peninsula state. My mom was one of those enlightened souls who made life exciting and fun. We must return to that way of life and overcome the internal conflicts that are turning my beloved home state into a series of unrelated bad experiences that are making life miserable for too many citizens. Forget political party (*that is an irrelevant side issue*), I am talking about entrenched positions that make it impossible to find common ground.

I ask myself, what would Governor Milliken do? His stewardship of Michigan was our high watermark. His own party represents the low point as well – the 1990s when the Republican governor nearly destroyed the state. In fact, Governor Engler's extremism in the name of freedom lingers on in the Michigan Supreme Court, making a mockery of the institutions installed by his predecessor Milliken, which made Michigan great.

Articles written by our President, Bill Buccalo, on Michigan's auto no-fault decline are directly traced to the Engler majority on the Supreme Court. Bill has enumerated how Engler's appointees are slowly undermining the no-fault act, which resulted from a compromise brokered by Governor Milliken. This is not a Republican or Democrat issue; this is classic economic warfare being waged on the poor and defenseless by the super powerful. Whereas, once upon a time, the well-to-do in Michigan progressively set up public programs and policies benefiting everyone. Now these forces are being marshaled to wage open warfare on those very citizens who need effective government the most.

Governor Milliken makes the point that Michigan's economy has historically been cyclical, and it's the role of government to be there when its citizens need support. Yet, Engler cut the taxes of those who could most afford it and decreased spending for those who most needed it in times of economic hardship, such as now. This is shameful. The destruction of Michigan's economy makes me furious. My generation is allowing the progressive state engineered by the generation of my mother and governor Milliken to decline precipitously. I won't take it any longer and I will do my part to restore balance and civility. I have always considered myself a Milliken Republican, and now is the time for me to step up to honor my mother, Governor

Milliken and those who believe that government is there to help, not hurt.

***What needs to be done...***

First, raise my taxes. Governor Granholm (*who regularly converses with Governor Milliken even in the current political climate of polarization*) had to raise regressive taxes to balance the state budget, mandated by law. We should at least restore the Engler tax cuts. We need a thriving Michigan where, in times of need, help is offered.

Second, empty the vast, horribly expensive, growing network of state prisons where the nonviolent are crowding the prisons. Jail is not the answer to drug issues and we all know it. Why listen to the hysterical few who are building a gulag of incredible and lucrative proportions.

Third, deal with the redlining issue straight up. This is obviously racist in nature and we all know it. If you are born into poverty in Detroit, having to pay higher rates is unconscionable. Certainly, in the short run, it would seem to make sense that those who make the rates go up should pay more – fine and dandy. Follow this logic: why not make 83 separate regions in the state? Or 183? Why not an infinite number? The answer is obvious. No one chooses to live in dangerous areas. The politics of reason, promulgated by Governor Milliken, did not foster the every-man-for-him/herself attitude. He recognized that solving problems required reason, not hysteria, and called for compromise wherein each respected and tried to understand the position of the other. Thus, redlining is recognized as fostering the problem of body shop rip-offs, carjacking, car thefts and chop shop operations driving up the cost of auto insurance. This, in turn, leads to the poor (Detroit) having no auto insurance, and in one of the complete ironies of Michigan life today, making them

ineligible to be covered under the medical coverage provisions of auto no-fault. Thus, the rich are again stomping on the poor – all in the name of economic freedom. No wonder that my generation is screwing things up. I choose to spend my remaining time on this planet exposing this for what it really is – economic warfare.

Fourth, invest in Detroit. Rainbow, under my leadership, has avoided Detroit because of a perceived danger to employees and juries who ignore the rules long promulgated by the powerful. Under my leadership, we will change that. There is no reason why we can't find rehabilitation locations that create a thriving, well-maintained and safe working environment. I will challenge the executive committee to do just that. A third of my workforce is from Detroit. It is an insult to them, as well as to the memory of my mom, to perpetuate

this economic regression. What would governor Milliken do? He was a close friend of Coleman Young. To be progressive requires understanding others' differences as well as similarities.

Fifth, continue to focus on reason: Reasonable compromises with our clients and their family needs, reasonable compromises on the needs of our employees, and yes, reasonable compromises on the needs of insurance companies. They are not the enemy. Early on, I turned Bill Buccalo loose on forging reasonable communication with the payor community. This is what Governor Milliken would have done and would do today.

Sixth, do our part. We will take on the forces that try to prevent our population from living in residential communities. The part of the state often referred to as the home of the Reagan Democrats is

trying to redline our population by making it difficult, if not impossible, for us to operate in residential neighborhoods. We will oppose this. We will also try to foster a sense of urgency in containing rehabilitation costs. It is important that we do not make auto insurance unaffordable. In fact, despite what some say, Michigan's experience with no-fault has been positive. Our citizens get the best care available anywhere. We have preserved one of the gifts given to us from those voices of reason.

We are in this journey together. We can continue on the road to mutual repression and stagnation, or we can listen to the voices of reason in our collective recent past. My mom and governor Milliken have given us a guide map for improving the lives of our fellow citizens. We can seize the moment. ♦