

Sun. 16, July 2006

Dean Singleton,

With regard to your recent decision concerning my disciplinary proceedings, I would like to offer the following letter of reflection.

As you know, I was found in violation of a university policy against “disorderly conduct,”

(a) the loud, threatening or aggressive behavior which disrupts the orderly functioning of the University or disturbs the peace and/or comfort of person(s) on the campus of the University;

also (b) lewd, indecent or obscene conduct or expression, either oral or visual, and by whatever means, on University owned or controlled property, or at University sponsored or supervised functions.

It may be the opinion of the University that my involvement in a peaceful expression of *our* First Amendment Rights to Free Speech (one that we all should enjoy in this country), was “lewd” or “indecent.” If the Administration of the University of Miami chooses to think and operate in such a way, then I suppose my guilt is in your eye. (Let’s not forget, if UM wasn’t a private institution, you would be in violation of the US Constitution; of course, we are, and so you’re not... as far as I can tell, but what do I know?)

As I have said before, I unreservedly apologize for any of my actions which apparently have been interpreted as the “disruption of orderly functioning of the University.” I hope you will accept my word that the interruption of any campus business was not ever an intention of the actions I partook in, by myself nor by any other involved students. Moreover, I feel it is important to note that as the Administration decided to lock the front doors of the Ashe Building, my fellow peers began, in fact, *aiding* the continuance of normal business practices as respectfully as they might given the circumstances. They escorted people uninvolved in the peaceful and relatively silent protest to the back of the building and showed them where they could enter so that they may carry on with their day uninterrupted. Also, I will say I do realize that there is both the “*good way*” to go about presenting one’s concerns and the “*way which may work also, but that is probably not as conducive to doing so without encountering troubling hindrances.*” Yes sir, you my friend, are that troubling hindrance in my life right now; in the future, I will do my darndest to know my audience.

I know why these rules and policies exist. I know because I appreciate their *intention*, to protect all of us in the University community. As I’ve said previously, I recognize and I welcome that broken rules are not without their consequences, as I do not usually (or ever, for that matter) find myself on the wrong side of the law. And I have no intention of staying on this side of the fence.

I am well aware that my behavior was evidently inconsistent with the University's expectations of comfort and uniform non-dissent. But you know, a wise fortune cookie (which I keep in my wallet) reads, *"Discontent is the first step in the progress of a man or a nation."* And I became involved in this campaign to help our campus janitors because I realized that change for good hardworking people was, and is still, quite overdue.

I believe strongly that the awareness (and progress) of an issue may sometimes be more important than the temporary discomfort of some involved persons because said view is not in her most politically expedient "best" interest or in the interest of the bottom line. No one told me this matter would conclude easily. In fact, most of what I heard was the opposite; this would be quite an arduous dispute, as it has been. But no one needed to tell me either, how critical my efforts would be; I'm proud of the way I spend my time. As you may recall from 9th grade Social Studies, 149 years ago Frederick Douglass realized, *"Power concedes nothing without a demand. It never did and it never will."* I couldn't have said it better myself; so I won't.

And while I certainly understand, respect, and have always appreciated that universities are institutions of higher learning which have the innate right to uphold their mission of education, research, and study in an orderly fashion – I also believe that, as the prime mentor to the growth of the very people we become, a university bears the "burden" of a greater commitment to its community and really, to our entire society. A commitment to foster the intellectual development of moral citizens and socially conscious beings; that is, persons who are capable of taking into consideration the context of a situation and weighing their morals before their comforts.

I am sure you are aware that education is not solely learned in the classroom. In fact, I will argue you to the death (just kidding) that lessons learned outside the classroom are often *more* reflective of everyday situations and our "real world." And I am further certain you would agree that a university worth more than the paper its degrees are printed on would not shy away from the occasion to be an exemplar for its students, particularly be it a social example of service and character.

Plainly, I participated in said action with the intention of bringing essential consciousness to an issue which plagues thousands across our entire country. The difference is that here at the University of Miami we can do something about 450 of those thousands. To answer your question earnestly, *"How would you view someone in your community who acted in the way you did?"* I would respect him and I would stand up with him. I would evaluate the context of this action and realize that there is a much greater good that can (and did) come from it, if the "right" people just choose to open their ears and their hearts.

I have obviously learned that my actions were not the best way to gather the awareness of the University community. In a similar situation I would search for a better answer. Unfortunately, life doesn't always allot us such spare time and sometimes drastic times call for... well, you know.

However, you must acknowledge this is not the first time you're hearing of this; and this protest did not arise out of nothing, absent just cause. The campus janitors of UNICCO have been carrying this plight since well before 2001 when both the Faculty Senate and Student Government voted to enact a living wage for all campus employees. It will not surprise you now I'm sure, to read that nothing came of that.

It is relatively easy to assess why my actions would be different; clearly this disciplinary outcome was not what I was looking for. But I believe I have also made it rather clear as to why my intentions would absolutely be similar. Sometimes people just need to wake up and speak up; nothing will be handed to you.

Perhaps the hardest question for me to answer is your last, "*What is the most important thing you have learned from this experience?*" This question really just makes me pause a moment; and after a few such moments, I realize that there just is so much that I have gained over the past year. Lessons that can and will apply to all areas of my life – for the rest of my life. I've learned about people (both concerned and ignorant); politics (at times dirty and biased); genuineness (a love for all); power dynamics (struggling to keep its comfort); hardships (as most anything worth fighting for is); determination (and will); our U's Alma Mater (learning the song while protesting it, no less); sacrifice (without a doubt); what passion feels like; how to teach; how to speak... I'm rather certain that I've genuinely learned quite a bit about what we call "life" actually.

I have seen the unfortunate ways in which our world seems to disproportionately favor those few with power and how money talks. But welcomingly, I have seen also the awe-inspiring and greater power that emanates from a united people coming together for the magnificent, yet simple hope of a more fair and just future. This past collegiate year has been an educational experience far beyond what I thought I might have ever garnered from any textbook; for this I am grateful to the University of Miami and the South Florida community.

My actions in the recent months, though helpful to a great many people, were not without their troubling effects on my academic record either. My GPA has surely suffered, yet I am certain that with my focused efforts over the coming year it will rise again! Despite this, I am thoroughly proud of the role I have played in the improvement of the lives of nearly 450 of UM's working families. I plan on attending graduate school in the near future and eventually earning my Ph.D. in Clinical Psychology so that I may continue to listen to, interact with, and offer whatever help I may provide to those who would benefit. Right now, I can see no reason why I should not be able to attain this goal with continued dedication. Rest assured, I will undoubtedly carry the lessons I have learned over the past year in both my head and in my heart for the rest of my life.

I am sure that our future interactions will be of a more pleasant nature.

Respectfully,


Adam Greenberg