

Entry 7 Winslow Deposition

DEPOSITION SUMMARY OF FRANCIS J. WINSLOW

I am the 61-year-old Head Master of Brahmin Preparatory School.

At a monthly faculty meeting on September 30th, 20XX-2, Mr. Rufus Jones in an angry, inflammatory and insulting way demanded that the school rescind an invitation to a speaker who was scheduled to speak at Brahmin Prep's annual public issues forum. He called it an "atrocious" to invite the speaker and called his colleagues "ignorant." Mr. Jones' commentary was so provocative that another teacher, Mr. Meeks, began shouting at Mr. Jones and physically moved towards him.

I am responsible for the discipline of any faculty or staff member. I participated in the decision to put Rufus Jones on probation and by e-mail on October 20th, I ordered Vice-Head Polonius to place Jones on probation. He was not singled out for this because of any views he stated in the faculty meeting, but rather because of his manner of speech and tone in addressing his colleagues. He was both insensitive and rude, particularly in calling his colleagues "ignorant".

I have great respect for Mr. Jones's passion and energy. However, there are limits to this. It is my job to enforce discipline in such a way that our school respects the views of all members of this community. This is the fundamental premise of education, to have an open environment.

While the views of Walther von Stroheim are personally repugnant to me, there is a certain percentage of the population that subscribes to them. Both Vice-Head Master Polonius and I gave the invitation a great deal of thought and decided that it is better that our students know such things and think about them, rather than to have them remain in the background. That is the real ignorance.

The method of delivery by Rufus Jones at the faculty meeting was completely unacceptable, undermining the collegiality that is so important to our stated educational goals as a school.

While Mr. Jones makes the argument that he was treated differently than fellow teacher Robin Peterson because of the differences in their race, nothing could be further from the truth. It is true that in April of 20XX-3, Robin Peterson had sent out an all faculty and staff e-mail criticizing the administration for failure to retain faculty of color and accusing the school of harboring both subtle and overt racism. I and most of the faculty members were stung by the tone and the content of her e-mail and we did not want a meeting called for by Peterson to occur. Both I and the other administrators of the school decided to approach the matter outside the formal disciplinary system at the school. I had Vice-Head Master Lynn Polonius meet with Peterson and request that Ms. Peterson call off the meeting. When Ms. Peterson agreed, albeit reluctantly, I sent out an all faculty staff and e-mail calling off the meeting. Robin Peterson was not put on probation or otherwise punished in any way for sending the e-mail.

Again, the situation was far different in Ms. Peterson's case. We were able to establish a dialog with her. I expressed genuine respect for her sincerely held belief,

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even though I did not agree with it. She did not use inflammatory words or an angry tone. Rufus Jones did. That is why he was placed on probation and she was not.