

I'm honest. But I hate telling the truth, because it hurts. Every time I stand up, I have to cut piece of myself off and put it in a suitcase because I know nobody wants to hear what I'm going to say. I hate telling what I believe is the truth because I know it hurts people and I KNOW its controversial. I don't like being that person. But I am. I am because the number one criticism of Senate candidates who go before us give is that everyone agrees with each other and no one's willing to disagree. They don't know that if they were in our shoes disagreeing would mean ten people immediately coming to the rescue of the group, and trying to prove that there is no good reason for you to think or say what you do. We're taught that we should speak our minds and stand up for what we believe in, but when we see someone who goes against the consensus it is discomfoting, it is painful to watch and listen to.

Today I'm going to tell you things that people, including the man to my right (Senate President Thomas Beaucham), don't want you to know. These are things which have been covered up and I have not spoken of to this point because of pleas that I do what's right for Student Government. However, I will tell you these things now, because after my experiences and talking to very smart people who have much better judgement than my own, I believe that Student Government will only get worse until these issues are fully disclosed. And if anyone thinks that I say these things for my own interest, just remember what I said earlier – that I have been willing to tell you the truth before even if it tore me apart from the inside out, let alone at the measly price of a job.

To surmise everything wrong with Student Government, I would say that it is a toxic environment. That is not to say that we do not do plenty of good, but to say this, "leadership in Student Government, with few exceptions, will treat mistakes you make as things for which you should be punished, not learning opportunities. You are not taught to have confidence, but taught to have anxiety – every time I made a mistake Thomas (Senate President) did not merely tell me about it, but he confronted me about it. To drive this point home, the day I was sworn into my office Thomas took me to the side and reminded me that he had the power to unilaterally fire me and that if I made slipped up he would. After that time, he told me on several occasions, to which a room full of people could attest, that he was collecting a portfolio so that if he needed to fire me, then he could. My point is simply this – while Thomas did make attempts, on occasion, to try and bring confidence to me in my role, on most occasions his approach to getting me to do better was to threaten me. I played into these threats by becoming increasingly hostile towards him. For this I must apologize not to him, but to you, because regardless of what others do, it is my duty to work and act in a manner which benefits students.

My purpose here is not to excuse my behavior but to show you that my behavior is not the principle issue at hand. If my successor receives the same treatment by the same environment as I did, the consequences will be as bad if not worse than what we are now experiencing (and I believe we can all agree on this). Firing me is blaming the symptom not the cause. But before I make for you a new scapegoat to blame, that being Thomas, I have to say that he is not the root of the problem either. Thomas has not told you that, at his first meeting with me, he told me that he had had it drilled into his head to watch out for me – for mistakes that I was going to make, and he told me that there were people there who would like to see me fired from my position. This, obviously, was a scare tactic on his part, but I don't disbelieve the veracity of its claim. In my experience at Student Government, most of the professional staff are afraid of quagmires, of looking bad – they are, too some extent, paranoid. And I might, right now, be fulfilling their prophecy. But let us ask whether or not an attitude of paranoia is healthy for the workplace. People talk of acting professional, but what might be more important than that is not fueling and breeding anxiety into your subordinates.

The problem with Student Government, the deeper problem, is that everyone here is political – my problem in particular is that I am not. People here will threaten you, and pressure you, and degrade your self-confidence to get you to do what they want. I believe, firmly, that Thomas has been just as much a victim of this as I have. And to some extent, I assume the same is true of anyone else who might be blamed – all of them are afraid of the consequences of others disapproval, to the extent that they will cave into any request by a superior to do anything. And I say again that I blame no one, because everyone may point to a superior pressuring them, and threatening them, lying to them, and so forth. I say that we must blame the environment, a group effort not only to avoid facing this truth, but additionally, a group effort to hide the veracity of this claim. Many Senators and Students here may feel that I am being too strong in what I say, and for that reason and that reason alone, I believe that the only way for us to fix this, is through a democratic realization on the *bottom* of all the wrongdoing that happens on top. I blame no one for the mistakes they have made, but I will show no mercy to anyone by hiding what they've done, because doing so would only cause these issues to fester.

A while ago a Budget Transfer Request showed up on my desk. This request was for 20,000 dollars transferred from wages, 15,000 thousand of which to a line item named Miscellaneous Supplies. On the lines at which there was supposed to be an elaboration of the request there was no information on what these 15,000 dollars would actually go to. For this reason, I did not sign it, nor did former Acting Treasurer Mason. Several days later Treasurer Mason was told that he would be fired, and panicking, he signed it, only to be let off anyways, something to which you might want to ask him questions. I felt rage about this, but I was told that the person who had made the request and had asked President Mims to fire Treasurer Mason, Vice-President Cole Poppell, had learned his lesson and that it would only hurt Student Government to bring this up publicly. I accepted that reason then, though I do not any longer, as it would seem we have not learned our lesson and continue to treat differences of opinion as matters worthy of firing someone. Anyways, after I communicated my reason for not signing, they said that they had now decided to spend it on a popcorn machine, a printer, and office supplies, but as this seemed to be a substantive change to the budget, I thought it was a request that should be heard by a larger legislative body (the senate), so I refused to sign it in hopes that it would go to Senate. I was then approached by Senate President Beaucham who told me that I lacked the authority to withhold my signature, an argument that he is likely to have been given by VP Poppell considering that it had been used on former Acting Treasurer Mason as well. At that moment I believed that if I failed to sign, I too would be fired, but I accepted that, and refused Senate President Beaucham's request.

Additionally, Senators here should know that the Constitutional Review Committee which currently exists was not an internal initiative, but in fact was requested by student life to Student Affairs. While I am not necessarily opposed to this request, it should be known that Senate President Thomas Beaucham was on this committee until, at a meeting with Director Celeste Watkins and VP Cole Poppell he expressed his concerns about the committee performing the same role as the Constitution and Statutes Committee. Regardless of what explanations have been given, an hour after said meeting he was removed from said committee thereby removing a voice of dissent and the only representative of an entire branch of the government on a committee tasked with changing said government.

Finally, President Mims, who criticized the decision of the Budget and Allocations Committee to forward a number of travel requests in the past was asked at a later time why she signed off on them though she disagreed with them. Her explanation was that she did not have the travel request packet before her so she did not know – a falsehood witnessed by Senate President Beaucham at a later meeting as he had

personally given it to her. Therefore, she not only failed as a leader by publicly antagonizing members of the Student Government which she leads and represents but she was in fact criticizing these subordinates for mistakes she herself had made. This is a point which I wish to make – leaders do not lead by antagonizing their subordinates but inspiring confidence in them.

These are only the mistakes of which I know, and like cockroaches, for every mistake you see there are ten you do not. While these individuals may hate me for airing these mistakes, I say that I had to air them because their being secret allows those who conducted them to act with hubris, and to continue their bullying of their subordinates such that Student Government is a toy of theirs and not the property of the students. And to any who wish to take punitive action against these individuals, I caution you, for I still believe Student Government is a place for learning, and while we might feel anger for those who might act corrupt with power, we should ask whether we expect students who have never before had a taste of authority, including ourselves, to do any better on our first experience of it. Instead, I ask that they be given their chance, but everyone be vigilant and strong to keep them more fair, and more kind. I think such an effort has begun with me, and after this speech, will continue whether or not I am fired. And may the pain of these disclosures be good lessons for everyone in student government, spoken of or not, that the true punishment for one's mistakes comes not from making them, but from refusing to learn from them and hiding them. In the future, we shouldn't be callous towards subordinates, and we need the strength to not give into superiors, or you will have on your hands, excuse me, more shit shows than you can count.

Many might say that I am still too bellicose to do my job and that regardless of whether this speech was good or bad, I cannot be kept in my position. I've learned that, while substantive disagreement on major issues is still virtuous, I cannot let that bleed over into my professional behavior. I have also learned that of all the major issues, both with Thomas and Sami, more earnest and better communication would have been the best solution. It is my determination now, not to be the problem, and to restrain myself in all things so that none can say, "he does good, but in the worst way." But I must say that we have no shortage of evidence to prove that we lack people willing to stand up to bullying and corruption on the third floor, and treating my willingness to do so as a vice and not a virtue is likely a mistake. I can do goods for senate which most are afraid to, and therefore while I am too extreme, I think that people should consider my sin no less great than those who are too placid. It is a balance, and while I might individually be too much, the institution lacks it almost entirely.

And excuse me, but I just have to say this, but what are we to expect of elected officials when, in the practice version of government, we are still incapable of pointing out failures in our own integrity. Is it not the chief complaint of the public that real government lacks integrity, that it is corrupt? Would we not think that, in this learning environment, we would be attempting to solve those problems and be bigger? And yet in the practice arena, where we have so little to gain by our abuse of power, we still cannot resist its temptation and give into it fully. I will not blame anyone for the actions they have done, for like I said, we are imperfect, but why should the person who calls attention to this be fired for it? Have I not reminded you of your purpose and objective?