

University of Southern Mississippi – A Tribal Moral Community

PART 7

In this series, we will review the peculiar behavior of faculty at USM -- peculiar because their behavior is inconsistent with their extensive education and training. We shall show how science-trained colleagues totally ignored their long years of education and research in favor of irrational behavior. (See, previous Parts for background information in this series.)

A framework to understand our colleagues' irrational behavior is "Tribal Morality" which was recently discussed in several widely published articles. For readers' convenience, we'll apply "Tribal Morality" from the perspective contained in a *Chronicle of Higher Education* report entitled, "De-Tribalizing Academe" by Peter Wood.

"De-Tribalizing" faculty behavior continues with Gordon C. Cannon. His behavior, like others in this series, is selected because he was subject to sworn depositions or, like "Skip" Hughes, insisted on recording conversations. In other words, we report evidence based on their words.

Part 8: Gordon C. Cannon, Ombudsman, University of Southern Mississippi

President Martha Saunders assigned Ombudsman Gordon C. Cannon with recommending whether to terminate Professor DePree's tenure and employment at USM. At his deposition on April 16, 2010 Cannon was asked:

Your report [to President Saunders] says that: "I feel Dr. DePree has been provided with sufficient university resources." What resources had he been provided that you considered sufficient?

Cannon: An office and a desk.

According to Dr. Cannon the University doesn't need to provide its faculty with a chair, a phone, paper, access to a copier, a computer, library services, etc.

What is most telling about Cannon's irrational behavior is the deceptive language in his report.

"I feel Dr. DePree has been provided with sufficient university resources."

Sounds formal and thoughtful, when in fact it hides disgusting deception. Cannon meant: "Dr. DePree has been provided an office and a desk."

Why didn't Cannon say what he meant in the formal report to President Saunders? What he meant if he wrote it in the report to President Saunders would have made him look

stupid, incompetent, and mean-spirited. It would also have meant that he was not being a good member of the USM tribe; that he was not looking after the sacrosanct tribal morality.

What would Gordon C. Cannon, PhD, have done if he were applying the principles of science, *i.e.*, a careful description and consideration of facts and evidence to the accusations against Professor DePree? At a minimum he would have professed and demonstrated through behavior an unequivocal concern for the truth of others' and his representations. So, why didn't he?

A Community of Tribal Morality

Let's assume that Gordon C. Cannon understands that the principles of science, evidence, and reason advance knowledge in areas of his discipline and outside his discipline of Chemistry. It follows that there may be another process underway that helps us understand his irrational behavior. Why did Cannon write a deceptive and misleading statement about resources provided to DePree in his report to President Saunders?

Consider Gordon C. Cannon's behavior from the perspective of Tribal Morality.

Professor Marc DePree, DBA, had collected independent evidence of corruption by USM administrators and some USM faculty. The response from President Saunders was not to investigate the independent evidence of corruption by USM administrators and some USM faculty, but was to assign Gordon C. Cannon, Ombudsman, to investigate Professor DePree. With the choice of applying scientific principles or the principle of inviolable sacredness of USM, Cannon chose to apply the principle that USM is inviolably sacred and beyond question or investigation. Cannon was not chosen by President Saunders to apply principles of reason and evidence he was trained as a chemist. She accurately measured Cannon as good tribal member.

Cannon was comfortable with a deceptive and glib representation in a document that put the career of a tenured professor at jeopardy, *i.e.*, **"I feel Dr. DePree has been provided with sufficient university resources,"** when he meant DePree has been provided with "an office and a desk". His formal report represents no university retaliation against DePree in punishment for his speech, when what Cannon hid was retaliation against DePree. Cannon was also trashing academic freedom, truth, and other principles touted in USM's Faculty Handbook and other documents.

"When the sacred kicks in, [Gordon C. Cannon's] rational capacity gets detoured: '[He] use[s] [his] reasoning not to find the truth but to find ways to defend what [he] hold[s] as sacred.'"

The result? An irrational Gordon C. Cannon, Ph.D.

(You may email the editor at marcdepree@gmail.com for a copy of Dr. Cannon's deposition.)