

An Editorial
Does Evil Lurk In Our Community?

by Marc DePree



Mary Morgan Anderson

A recent [breaking news report](#), Another (Dangerous?) USM Professor Steps Forward, published at usmnews.net, reminded me of the [apparent ease](#) with which USM faculty are accused of being dangerous. All too often forgotten are the mobbers, the "colleagues" who lurk behind the scenes and act in an effort to destroy the lives and careers of colleagues with whom they disagree. They don't just disagree with co-workers, they are so furious and intolerant they conspire with like-minded "colleagues" to destroy lives and careers.

In the series, "Does Evil Lurk In Our Community?" usmnews.net will report on several mobbers. After all, why should innocent people who are mobbed get all the attention and the horrendous publicity that inevitably accompanies accusations of "dangerous" behaviors? Those who mob deserve to be pulled from the darkness where they lurk and seen in the bright light of sunshine.

The nightmare for the person mobbed begins in earnest when short-sighted administrators overreact, as the mobbers anticipate, and quickly punish the accused with banishment. Everyone understands that just the accusation of being "dangerous" destroys the accused colleague's career and potentially his life. (The literature is replete with reports of innocent victims, isolated and defenseless, who commit suicide.) The very nature of banishment is a public statement. And, because of the nature of the accusation, there is no pretense of due process. Of course, the accusers know this, and as a number of them testified in my case, the dirty business was orchestrated and coordinated by University lawyers.

You don't have to take my word for any of this. Unlike faculty who cannot afford to take legal action against mobbers, I was fortunate to be able to take their depositions. As a result, I remain a tenured full professor.

Now, I can offer proof that evil lurks in our community at the University of Southern Mississippi. I begin this series by discussing Mary Morgan Anderson's role in my mobbing. Consider it a warning.

The following is the sworn testimony of Mary Morgan Anderson, taken on June 10, 2008, in the case, *DePree v. USM* (Q. is my attorney's question directed to Anderson; A. is Anderson's response):

Q. Let me hand you a copy of your letter, which has been produced to us. It's marked 0-02439. Can you identify that, please?

A. That's what I wrote.

Q. On August 21st, 2007?

A. That's the day I dated it, yeah.

Q. When did you write it?

A. On that Monday when we were told [by USM counsel] that we needed to have it in writing, I thought we were told by noon the next day or nine o'clock the next day or something. I sat up all night and wrote it.

Q. Tell me -- you've got a quote in here -- is the ranting of a lunatic (DePree). What is that a quote from?

A. Like I said earlier today, it's from other people that have gotten onto the website (USMNews.net, DePree is editor). I couldn't name who, have gotten on the website for the first time, you know, because I was worried about people's thoughts about it. I mean I really -- you know, I -- do y'all believe this stuff (on USMNews.net)? You know, go on there and tell me, do you believe this stuff. And—

Q. How do you think Virginia Tech compares to the situation here at USM? [Anderson accused DePree of being a "Virginia Tech" danger.]

A. Well, I'll tell you, I think it's very similar. How do I think it's very similar? Because I think we're dealing with a person (DePree) who is not stable. Think there's been a lot of signs of that. I think he's done a lot of damage to the University. I think he's done a tremendous amount of damage to the School of Accounting. And we talked in the halls, I mean and every faculty member there will say we talked way before Virginia Tech, why won't the administration do something. Well, because they are afraid of a lawsuit. Well, then there's going to be a -- you know, when he does kill everybody, then there's going to be a lawsuit, a bigger lawsuit...

Q. Has Dr. DePree ever threatened you?

A. I have felt very threatened by Dr. DePree.

Q. Tell me when you have felt threatened.

A. Any time that I was sitting in my office and he slammed his doors around and threw papers around. And, in fact, at one point I felt like I was trapped in there and nobody else was in the hall. And I gathered -- you know, quit working. My point was to get out of the building as quietly as I could. And I got my stuff together and went outside and Dr. DePree was standing outside and I about had a stroke.

Q. Well, did he say anything to you?

A. I don't even know that he knew I was out there. He was busy on -- he was walking up and down. I got in my car as quick as I could. No. He didn't have an opportunity to say anything to me.

Q. He didn't say or do anything with regard to you, did he?

A. I made sure that I stayed out of -- I was afraid he was. You know, I was afraid he was going to lose it...

Q. Okay. How did you know when Marc threw papers?

A. Part of -- Marc -- Marc had all these memos on his door, you know, and I found them offensive, students would ask about them. And one night I just tore them all down.

Q. You tore them off?

A. The outside of his door, yes, I did...

Q. Okay. Did he ever find out you did it?

A. I did everything in my power to let him know I did it.

Q. Did you walk up to him and say, Dr. DePree, I'm the one that took the stuff off your door?

A. I put stuff on -- because what he would do then is put it in the window --

Q. Would you answer my question? Did you ever walk up to Dr. DePree --

A. I was scared of Dr. DePree. I am still scared of Dr. DePree.

- Q. So if you were so scared why were you trying to do everything in your power to let him know?
- A. Because I was sick of what he had done to the school...
- Q. In your letter -- look at your letter, the second paragraph, the last sentence of that paragraph, and read it for me, please.
- A. Okay. The second paragraph, last sentence: With limited interaction with Dr. DePree it became evident to me immediately that his reality's based upon his perceptions rather than the fact of the situation, e.g. his request for a computer.
- Q. Well, did you check into what the facts were surrounding his request for a computer were before you wrote this letter?
- A. I didn't check into the facts. It was common conversation. I heard from Dr. Posey that he had requested a computer.
- Q. Have you ever gotten a new computer since you've been at USM?
- A. When I started.
- Q. Do you know that Marc DePree has never been given a new computer by USM?
- A. No. I don't know that.
- Q. If that were the truth would that surprise you that almost 20 years USM has never supplied him with a computer?
- A. I would find that hard to believe. As a -- a computer?

When I read this, I wonder if you have the same reaction as I do. This woman, who is still teaching your children, worked herself into a frenzy because she didn't like what a colleague had to say. In fact, as you can see from her testimony, like a politician she didn't answer the questions that were actually asked of her, because she likely had no answers. She responded to unasked questions that apparently had some significance to her. She had absolutely no facts -- just amorphous claims of fear.

Just how afraid do you think she really was? She went to my door, ripped down documents she didn't like, and then claimed she did everything in her power to make sure I knew. [By the way, one of those documents was an invoice from Haley Barbour's lobbying firm in DC for \$10,000 "for services rendered". No explanation of the services were provided on the invoice.] Does that sound like the act of a frightened person? Does that sound like the act of

a rational person?

In fact, Dr. Anderson's fit of pique -- tearing memos from my door because she found them "offensive" and didn't like students asking questions about the documents -- is behavior that should have been the subject of discipline. Instead, former-President Saunders found Dr. Anderson's actions and plea to terminate my employment worthy of affirming and following. Former-President Saunders and Ms. Anderson acted as though intolerance and ignorance are guiding principles of higher education.

Of course, when asked for details, she claimed that I had done irreparable damage to the school and the program, but had no specifics. She recited rumor and gossip as if it were **THE TRUTH**.

Do you think Ms. Anderson would think twice about doing the same to you? Remember, if she decides that you do not deserve to be part of her school, because she doesn't like your speech, or for some other reason known only to her, she won't say a word to your face. She'll just make wild, unfounded accusations intended to end your career -- and encourage others to join her.

Let me add one afterthought. Perhaps the most unforgivable and, in my opinion, evil of the accusations is Ms. Anderson's willingness to falsely impute to her deceased father, Dr. Jerold Morgan, an accusation that I committed a crime 20 years ago. That is a display of malice unworthy of the memory of the fine man who was her father.

Q: What's that [files broken into] got to do with [the professor]?

A: And that [the professor] had done it.

Q: Your daddy [Jerold Morgan, past Department Chair of Accounting] told you that?

A: Yeah.

Q: Do you know why your daddy said that?

A: Because he found it was very hard to believe. I mean, you know, very shocking that there was not enough integrity among faculty that had been there to not get into department files, that were not really considerate.

However, when asked for a single detail that would substantiate her fabrication, Dr. Anderson backed away from her fairy tale and acknowledged,

A: You know that was 20 years ago. I don't remember exactly what he said..."

Dr. Jerold Morgan was a friend and had an office across the hall from mine for some time. On more than one occasion he told me he was quite embarrassed by his daughter, Mary. Now I understand why he said it.