

Fifty Years Later, Part III

A Distinguished History?

Mr. Aubrey Lucas Was Also Director of Admissions

If You've Ever Been The Subject of Injustice, You Wouldn't Forget It.

Southern Miss recently announced its celebration of fifty years of integration. Let's revisit an episode in Southern Miss' racist pass. The incident is not merely embarrassing. It is disgusting and despicable.

During the late 1950's, Aubrey K. Lucas was the Director of Admissions at Mississippi Southern College, later named the University of Southern Mississippi, when Mr. Clyde Kennard applied for admission. Among other accomplishments, [Mr. Kennard](#) was "a former sergeant and paratrooper in the U.S. Army." Mr. Kennard's clearly met all conditions for acceptance, except for one insignificant thing: he was black.

Mr. Kennard wasn't just rejected, he was punished for his efforts to become the first black to be admitted to MSC-USM. He was falsely accused of a crime, prosecuted, and jailed.

Mr. Lucas blamed "the governor, J. P. Coleman, who decided against admitting Mr. Kennard." Although Mr. Lucas said, in 2006 – long after Mr. Kennard's death -- "[it was a mistake](#)," he did not stick his neck out to prevent the injustice. Let there be no mistake that the behavior of Mississippi officials was disgusting and despicable. Their behavior was so disgusting that no one, much less one who professes to be a devout Christian, could have perceived what was done to Mr. Kennard was anything other than an appalling injustice.

Mr. Lucas did then what he continued to do over many years. He sat back and watched injustice be perpetrated against others by USM officials including Presidents Thames and Saunders.

What makes anyone think Mr. Lucas will do anything but sit back and watch or passively participate in further injustices, regardless of shortsighted praise from the likes of Jim Cameron? Mr. Cameron, in a WDAM editorial, which was run multiple times last week, was effusive in praise of Mr. Lucas' integrity:

This state is fortunate indeed to have an educator of the caliber and character of Aubrey Lucas back in the saddle again. He has ... built a legacy that will probably never be matched... To know the man is to respect him... We would like to thank Dr. Lucas on behalf of all who love the University of Southern Mississippi for all you've done and all you continue to do.

Let me recommend Mr. Cameron read a refresher of Mr. Lucas' role in one of the most horrible events in the [University of Southern Mississippi's history](#):

Has anything changed? Mr. Lucas has proven, over years of indifference, not to be the man to make judgments to correct injustice or correct grievous wrongs. If history is prelude to the future, he'll simply sit back and watch

If you had been a black man or woman looking to better his/her lot through an education when Mr. Lucas was Director of Admissions, I question whether you would be praising Mr. Lucas. If you were a faculty member fired or abused by an intolerant Mr. Thames, you wouldn't be praising Mr. Lucas as he sat back and watched from the comfort of his well-paid position as Emeritus President. If you were a faculty member abused by an intolerant and incompetent Ms. Saunders, you wouldn't be praising Mr. Lucas as he sat back and watched from the comfort of his well paid position as Emeritus President.