

November 25, 1997

TO: Dean Alice Gresham Bullock

FROM: Dawn V. Martin

RE: Security Problem on Campus

This memorandum is written to supplement information which I presume that you have already received, from Associate Dean Newsom and/or Howard University Police, regarding two letters which I received under my office door and two voice-mail messages which I received on my direct office telephone line. The sender of both the letters and messages has identified himself as Leonard Harrison, a homeless writer who is informally studying Black American history and American law. Most importantly, he thinks that I am his long-lost wife.

When I entered my office on the morning of Thursday, November 20, 1997, two letters had been slipped under my door (copies attached). The first was addressed to "Professor Dawn Valore Martin."<sup>1</sup> This letter begins:

I am here to see if you are my wife. This sounds irrational and unreasonable, I know, but I have been searching for my wife for the last 9 years, since I saw her at the U, of Iowa on March 5, 1998.<sup>2</sup> You may not be who I am looking for. If not, please don't hate me, because I desperately need her. I have no other help anywhere. I will return Thurs. at 1p.m.

The letter continues by giving the address and phone number of the Randell Shelter in Southwest, asking me to call him to let him know either way whether I am his wife.

The second letter is a request to audit my "Race as Factor in American Law class." The problem is that I do not teach this course at Howard. I taught this class only once, in the spring of 1995, at Cleveland State University.<sup>3</sup> "Leonard" discusses critical race theory and African-

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<sup>1</sup>This was unusual in that I generally use my middle initial and no one has ever guessed my middle name, since it was "made up" by my grandfather. It is sometimes mispronounced as "Valerie," but people who know my full name also know that I am very particular about the correct pronunciation.

<sup>2</sup>I have never set foot in the state of Iowa.

<sup>3</sup>This course, which I created, differs from the typical "Race and the Law" class in that it is not a civil rights course, but rather, a survey of various areas of the law, including criminal, torts, family law, immigration, education, and others, in which race as a factor in judicial decisions and legislation. I was struck by the fact that "Leonard" had the exact title correct, indicating more that he had read it somewhere rather than heard it.

American history writing, some of which I have read. He writes very well and has clearly read and thought about the works of which he speaks. It was at this point that I realized that Leonard was the same person who had called and left me a voicemail message a week or two earlier, making the same request. He did not leave a return phone number, but said that he would call back. I had not thought much of it at the time and simply erased the message. If he had called back and reached me, I would simply have explained that I do not teach that course at Howard and ask him where he had heard that I teach it.

After reading these letters, I checked my voice-mail messages, as I usually do upon entering my office. A male caller (whose voice I did not recognize) left the following message at 9:23 am., on Wednesday, November 19th:

How're you doin', Valerie. This is Leonard. I'm sorry I didn't recognize you. I have no excuse for recognizing you. All I can do is ask you to please forgive me and give me a chance to make it up to you. I'm coming up to the school today. I hope I can catch you there so that I can apologize to you in person. You're the most important person to me, so please forgive me.

I think that I could have handled the letter, since he did say that he recognized that he sounded irrational and that I might not be the person that he was looking for; however, to leave this phone message on an answering machine which clearly states that it is the voice mail of Professor Dawn Martin, left me totally stunned. Naturally, I wanted to know: 1) where he had seen me; 2) how long he'd been watching me; 3) how he found out my middle name (despite the mispronunciation); 4) why he chose to call me by what he either thought was my middle name, or by some name other than my own; 5) how he knew about a course which I taught in Cleveland and why he thought that I teach it here; 6) whether he was "confused" and harmless or confused and dangerous; 7) whether he had any history of violence; and 8) what his intentions were toward me. More importantly, I realized that since he had clearly been outside my office door in order to place the letters under it, a man who had apparently "rad up" on me would not miss the opportunity to read the bulletin board outside my office. I had posted an article written by my daughter, Danielle, regarding changing the name of her school. If Leonard read that bulletin board, as I believe he did, he now knows my baby's name, her age, where she goes to school, and most of her after-school activities, including cheerleading, which would make her very easy to find at a game -- particularly since she looks so much like me and her name is printed on her cheerleading jacket.

I did not want to overreact, but I did not want to be foolish either. I wanted to meet Leonard to get answers to these questions and to politely assure him that I am not his wife; however, I did not want to meet this man alone -- just in case he did not take the news well. I had to teach Evidence at 12:00, but after class, I looked for security, since I did not want to be in my office alone at 1:00, when Leonard promised to return.<sup>4</sup> I could not find security. I did meet

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<sup>4</sup>My posted office hours are 1:00-3:00 Monday, Tuesday, Thursday, and Friday. I am sure that he chose 1:00 based on reading my office hours -- giving more corroboration to my concern that he had read my bulletin board and learned information about Danielle.

some colleagues in the cafeteria and showed them the letters. They advised me to call MPD immediately. I then went to your office, but you were out of town, so I went to see Dean Newsom. As I am sure he has already informed you, he told me to use my own judgment, but he advised me to call MPD. I told him that I did not believe that I should call MPD on Howard's campus without the involvement of Howard's administration. He told me to keep him informed. Dean Newsom also advised me not to take the elevator, but rather, the stairs. I told Dean Newsom that I had no intention of sitting in my office alone.

I decided to call the shelter to get some information on Leonard. Assistant Director Russell Farlow informed me that Leonard was listed as a resident, but that neither he nor his staff members could place the name with a face. He asked me to call back after 8:00 p.m., since residents were not allowed in until 7:00.

I had to leave for a doctor's appointment,<sup>5</sup> so I could not call MPD at that time. I had left a message for a friend who is a former MPD officer, so that I could get the name of a contact person at MPD and not have to call "cold" on my own. I did not want to be dismissed as an "hysterical female." Shortly before I left, Dean Newsom asked me whether I had made "that call," stressing the importance of doing so. I explained that I had left the message and was about to leave.

That night, I called the shelter to speak to Leonard. I believed that Leonard might be more inclined to answer my questions than he would MPD's. I did not want to have a harmless person arrested or put out of his only home; nor did I want to anger him by being responsible for having him arrested or put out of his home. If he intended me no harm, why cause him to want to harm me? The truth is that even if he were arrested, he would probably not be held long. I did not want him angry and looking for me -- or worse yet, my daughter.

After staff member, Mr. Smith, told me that Leonard had been at the shelter that night, but had been put out for carrying a stick. Smith said, "You can't keep a stick in here. He's crazy, He's dangerous." He told me that I should say a "special prayer." I asked for a description of Leonard. Smith said that he was almost six feet tall, dark-skinned, and thin. Smith said that he wears a red rag on his head, dark glasses, and carries his bags and a stick.

I called Officer Serleaf, the law school's security officer. I asked him to call to set up a meeting with MPD in the morning. When I arrived at school, I again stated that I would not sit in my office alone. I asked whether someone could be in my office with me during office hours. Officer Serleaf said that the University did not have the manpower to do this. Shortly after MPD arrived, I called Dean Newsom. He attended part of the meeting. MPD made out a stalking report and Officer Woodland, of the Second District, 282-0043, said that the report would be submitted for an arrest warrant for stalking. She wanted me to commit to prosecuting if they

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<sup>5</sup>I am still addressing injuries from my car accident last year. In addition to pain in my back and neck injuries, my right arm has been going numb without warning. I would have had to wait two weeks for another therapy appointment and have paid for the missed appointment.

investigated.<sup>6</sup> I expressed some concerns about committing to prosecuting before MPD investigated, and even asked the language of the stalking law, but Officer Woodland did not know it. Faced with either no investigation or committing to prosecuting (albeit, possibly prematurely), I committed to prosecuting.<sup>7</sup> I also realized and discussed with Officer Woodland that if the facts uncovered did not meet the statutory definition of stalking, the U.S. Attorney would not prosecute anyway. I again expressed concern that Leonard might retaliate if police intervened and then let him go.

The officers went to the library to check for Leonard. I had told them that based on his letters, I firmly believed that he was doing his "research" right in out library. I determined that it had to be through his visits to the library that he first saw me. I went to teach my class. A few hours later, on my way out (I held office hours in the cafeteria), Officer Serleaf stopped me and took me into his office. He assured me that I had done the right thing by calling MPD. He said that he understood my concern over retaliation, especially since I live alone with my daughter. He also told me that before the MPD officers left, they learned that Leonard had a record for "armed robbery." Officer Serleaf was not sure whether there was anything else in his criminal record. Officer Serleaf expressed great concern for my safety and said that he was writing a full report, recommending that main campus send a guard to sit with me during office hours.

When I arrived home, I called MPD to be clear on Leonard's criminal record. Officer Woodland and her partner, Officer Harris, were gone for the day. After some difficulty, I reached a desk sergeant, Sgt. Pearfall, who looked at the file for the first time at my request. She told me that she saw a 1995 assault in his record. Skimming the file, she said, "He's crazy." She told me that I should be very concerned. She told me that she would call the shelter for more information and asked that I call her back. Unfortunately, I went out shortly thereafter, and when I returned, she was off-duty. The case was to be assigned to a detective the next morning, so I decided to wait for the detective's call. No one called over the weekend.

When I returned to school yesterday, Officer Serleaf was on vacation and a female officer was in his place. She knew nothing about Officer Serleaf's report or the incidents involving Leonard.

One of my students, Rolanda Jefferson, works in the library. Today, she saw Leonard there -- fitting the description given by Smith, but without the sunglasses or the bags. He was wearing a red jacket and black pants. He also had facial hair. Ms. Jefferson immediately called security, reportedly informing them that there was a homeless man in the library who had been stalking her professor. When the security officer, Officer Dowdy, arrived and led Leonard away from the library, she called security again and stressed to her supervisor, Adrian White, that

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<sup>6</sup>This was after being subjected to answering questions about ex-husbands and friends in high school. I was clear that I had never misplaced an ex-husbands.

<sup>7</sup>Dean Newsom advised me to commit to prosecuting, for the protection of others on campus as well as for my own protection.

Leonard should be detained because there was both a campus security report and an MPD report on him. Officer Dowdy returned alone, having *escorted Leonard off campus*. Officer Dowdy later told me that he knew nothing of the problems with Leonard and had only been given the report that there was a homeless man in the library. Officer Dowdy said that he told Leonard that he was not authorized to use the library and would have to leave. He reportedly showed Officer Dowdy a Texas driver's license bearing the name Leonard Harrison. He also reportedly told Officer Dowdy that he is from New York.

Officer James Andrews replaced Officer Dowdy on the night shift and informed him of the days' events. Officer Andrews called MPD and learned that the case had been assigned to Detective Henry of the Second District, 282-0043. Det. Henry had left for the day, but Officer Andrews promised to call him in the morning.

Clearly, the lines of communication with respect to security need improvement. The truth is, that if "Leonard" wanted to hurt me, I would be hurt by now. The reports taken would only serve to solve my murder after the fact, since clearly, no effort has been made to protect me. It is a good thing that I believe that my personal safety rests with God, because if I believed that it depended on campus security and MPD, I could not make myself come to work. Clearly, some better security procedures need to be put in place for the protection of faculty, students and guests; otherwise, there is no point in having campus police at all.

cc: Dean Michael D. Newsom