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Diversity is a Badge and White Privilege is the Yielder

Reflections on Private School

In 2017 I found myself looking for the next step in my career. I was unsure whether I wanted to go to school for Art Therapy or Art Education. I found myself at an art opening with a fellow artist and member of the North Shore Arts Alliance who mentioned Case Western Reserve's Art Education program in Cleveland and wrote me a letter of reference right away. Next thing you know I was driving to meet with the head of the Art Education Department for an enrolment interview. The individual in question was late. So late in fact that I missed the second interview I had lined up, just in case I felt the Art Therapy Program at Ursuline was a better fit for me. Little did I know this lateness, which was blamed on the fact that he had on a boot due to diabetes complications, was actually a common occurrence. I believe one of the basic forms of respect to someone is just as simple as showing up on time. This man however, thinks he is so important, you will wait for him. No matter the reason.

DIVERSITY IS A BADGE

Case Western Reserve University has a very diverse student population. And they have to let you know it. The head of the art Education department is no exception, in fact I was told by a third party that I was his “favorite kind of student”, because I was multi-racial. During my time at

Case I would be constantly reminded that I was there solely because of a letter of reference, frequently, in front of other students. Never because of my portfolio or my 3.5 GPA.

The opposite of a diverse and welcoming environment. Examples of the types of anti diverse actions of Mr. Shuckerow:

(1) We had a student whose preferred pronouns were “she, her” and that was made clear on the first day of class yet he refused to acknowledge this and would repeatedly refer to this individual as “he” or “him”. I saw this student after the semester and she told me she planned on coming back for painting 2 after Mr. Shuckerow has officially retired.

(2) He could not remember students names if they were not white and I had to frequently remind him how to pronounce students names, tell him he was talking to the wrong student, or he would come up with a nickname from them that half the time he wouldn't even remember.

(3) To further build onto this I had a meeting with Mr. Shuckerow on 10/2/2017 to mention that a particular student had confided in me she was going to leave the class because she felt neglected. This student was African American and Mr. Shuckerow would constantly walk past her during critiques and class time without acknowledging her, including one time where I specifically had mentioned she wanted his advice on something and he never stopped to talk to her. His response was that she was maybe “More sensitive” than he realized.

(4) During this interaction I called to his attention the blatantly sexist remarks that he makes. In the past he has said things such as “that's kind of sexy,” or

referred to female students as “babe”. One particular incident was when he called on an Asian student for wearing mostly black and white clothing. He asked her if she ever wore a feminine scarf as they are sexy. He then told the student to go into the gallery and get a scarf off the wall. On top of everything that is already wrong with this picture, these scarves belonged to another professor, Adriel Meyes. The student then came back in the room and Mr. Shuckerow had the student model the scarves in front of the whole class while Mr. Shuckerow explained he used to be a fashion photographer and that women should pay attention to the changing seasons and fashions. A little while later during the same class he mentioned something about sports to another female student and followed it up with “So you weren’t a sexy cheerleader?”

(5) While being a TA I got to see the extent to Mr. Shuckerow’s unfair grading. We had a white student who frequently came in late and actually frequently made fun of Mr Shuckerow but thanks to his poor hearing never caught on. He praised this student for having “natural talent” and clearly made her a favorite. After she disappeared for about a month or so missing at least 7 classes I had counted and late for I’m not sure how many others (and I believe that would automatically fail her by university standards) was able to come back and ask her what she could do to still pass the class. She was told not to worry about it and was given an A despite not having completed all of the work to date.

(6) He angered someone enough that they posted a flier in the gallery stating that his masks were considered “Colonial”. I’m sure he thinks it was me, but it was in fact another student or alumni.

At one point during my second semester I was instructed to go into the art gallery and work with a Painting 2 student. At first this seemed like I was finally going to be allowed to finally “teach” and not just be the errand girl to take grills out to Mr. Shuckerow's car or bring in books that were damaged in a flood at his house that he was bringing in to write off on the school account. That hope was very short lived however as I was told that there was an incident where he danced with a student and said student told him he was making them uncomfortable but he continued to dance with them. I suggested to the student who confided this to me that they need to report it. That I, having not been in the room, would not be considered a good source. Too many times students feel embarrassed or ashamed to do anything about this sort of behavior.

I was singled out on several occasions. Although Mr. Shuckerow would say at the meeting that I “Clearly have a problem” with him and that he has done nothing but ‘fully support’ me since I began at Case Western. Let’s look at some examples of his ‘support’:

(1) Last class with Tim Shuckerow on Wednesday Nov 28th 2018: Mr.

Shuckerow had Aundraya speak about her paper first and sit right up next to him.

I was told to listen up because I could learn from her paper.

(2) He threw out our color quiz because it wouldn’t be fair to Aundraya that I aced it.

(3) One of the first classes where Madison had not read the reading, nor had I because it was never officially assigned, we were just told to write about a

Teacher Artists/ Artist Teacher. Madison read the first page of hers and was praised for it and told how wonderful it was and she got an A. Mr. Shuckerew did not let me read mine because he said I should do the reading first then redo my essay (without looking at my essay)

(4) When I looked at my take home essay immediately after the final exam, I noticed that Mr. Shuckerow had already graded it. When I looked next to the grade it said I had not mentioned Eisner, Pebody or another Art Educator. I flipped through and noticed he had only looked at the first two pages and did not even bother to look at the rest of my essay. Why did I write a 6-7 page essay for him to only read the first two? This is also after spending from 12pm-4:30pm writing. So now I wait to see if he does the same thing with the rest of my essay.

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*Update on 3/14/19 I have not been allowed to see my essays as of today. I sent him a new email about because he said last time he would return them this semester * Update as of wiring this on 6/12/2019 it was finally released to me and during my meeting last week I was told if I wanted to dispute the grade I should have done so sooner even though he refused to give me the essay several times I asked for it.

(5) Aundreya mentioned during the student art sale in front of Payton Young, Rachel Manning and Alex that Tim had told her he did not believe I wrote my own essay for Advanced Standing.

(6) Monday March 4th 2019: Mr. Shuckerow Mentioned that in order to take our exams that are required for Art Education certification, we could ask for accommodations and get extended testing time. He then turned to me (this is during our class and with an extra student and guest in our room) to say “that will be helpful for you Cecelia”. -3/14/19

THE EPITOME OF WHITE PRIVILEGE

The head of the Art Education department at Case Western Reserve is rarely on time. It is my understanding that he is required to work Monday through Friday from about 9am to 5pm. He only has two classes two days a week, Monday and Wednesday. Nine out of ten times he will not be on time if he in fact shows up for work at all. Most of my responsibilities as a Teaching Assistant were to make up for the fact that he would not be there. He has shown up to work in sweatpants, Refused to respond to emails because honestly, without his secretary to dictate a message for him, he can not be bothered to put in the effort. He would also change homework or add assignments via email outside of class and then get upset if we did not have it. Or he would assign homework and forget about it. I believe I have written more than a few papers/assignments that were never collected or graded. Same with the quizzes. He comes up with questions off the top of his head so there is no way to go back to most of them to see what the exact question was. He would tell us one thing, then do another then get verbally angry/harassing when we told him he did not tell us to do something. He would stand his ground and say he definitely assigned something but even with multiple students saying he did not assign it it was on us and that we did not listen.

He changed class times more than once to fit another student's schedule, but if I needed to leave earlier or later it was out of the question. Even allowed the same student to come in whenever she wanted during the summer class and she was probably there for less than half the classes and was only required to make 3 objects all summer.

Money Money Money. I would say the number one thing that dictates the actions of Mr.

Shuckerow is money:

(1) During our summer ceramics course he mentioned how much everything cost. The cost of the farm, the cost to clean it, the cost of materials. Everything was about money. Which is ironic because the only reason the course is required every year for students is so that Mr. Shuckerow will have enough students to make sure he gets paid to teach it. If you were a student for multiple years he will require you to take it every summer. I was supposed to be taking an independent study since I had already had 3 or 4 previous semesters of ceramics but he forced me to make simple pinch pots and treated me like I had no prior knowledge of ceramics. If anyone knows my work, you will recall a life size self portrait bust made from terra cotta. I believe it may have even been in my portfolio, so why was treated like I had no prior knowledge of working with clay?

(2) During the meeting that I had with Mr. Shuckerow and Elizabeth Bolman, the Art Department Chair, he mentioned he supported me via montary routes. It is true that I went to Case on a full scholarship, but I did not beg anyone for that and I would have gladly went to Ursuline and paid if it meant I would be treated with dignity and respect by the one person I would be seeing the most during my 2

years attending the institution. Also while at the meeting there were supposedly “letters” from my classmates that stated that I was a very angry person and hated Mr. Shuckerow. These letters were apparently written on birthday or greeting cards and in now way actually looked like anything that one would write a letter of such intent on.

(3) This does not mean I am not thankful that I did receive help, but also I was constantly reminded whenever I was upset with something that “That was why we pay you the big bucks” (referring to the stipend I received for being a Teaching Assistant) and here I thought it was for putting up with him as well as actually teaching and giving helpful information. This also is a fundamental description of almost any abusive relationship: You can’t be mad that I did this, I give you money. Well the school does, but the way Mr. Shuckerow talks about it it’s like he found my poor brown body in a gutter and fed and clothed me out of his own pocket.

(4) Lastly, when I was trying to see if I could get assistance going over to the UK to speak about my work, he would not let me forget he used his own personal credit card for which he got the airline miles and was also reimbursed by the school.

It would be one thing if the money wasn’t held over my head like some sort of compensation for not complaining about what an awful instructor he was.

Killer of creativity. We were only allowed to listen to the music Mr. Shuckerow played unless you were one of his select favorite students. He would come in late and sometimes students

would be playing their own music, working quietly with no music (students listening to their headphones if they desired) or on occasion the first semester I was there some students would put on a movie and play the audio through the stereo. He would come and become furious even though every single student was working on their painting. He would then put on some of his loud jazz music.

CONCLUSION

The day before my Show and Tell, the last big “graded” event of my education (aside from the Thesis show which takes place AFTER the grades are due) I started having an allergic reaction to an antibiotic I was on. Let me remind you that I ended up in the ER once already due to sinus problems. I missed exactly 2 days of student teaching. Aside from that I had perfect attendance and was never late despite not having a car. I had a face that was beet red and swollen but still arrived early and had all of my work set up in advance, well before my fellow classmate. I powered through my presentation and dealt with all of the questions that were asked of me and was told by my elementary supervisor that I was “much improved”. Even stayed to watch my classmates Show and Tell. I then continued working on the Secondary binder of my student teaching experience which was due within the following day or two. It was very important to me to finish it. The next day I spent several hours finalizing and making sure I had everything in the binder from the table of contents to photos of me working with students to the assessments and the examples of student works. It was all there. So much time, energy, and attention to detail. After I finished it, I went to the ER with swollen hands and red blotches all over my body. I had to take my rings off that morning and just barely got the two on my ring fingers off. I was told I was lucky I came in when I did. I put my education before my health, and did it pay off? Well

that binder you see, the one I spent so many hours over several days to complete... it was never looked at by anyone. It had never even been figured into my grade. So remind me what was the point in all that work? The same can be said of my ePortfolio. I put more effort into my education at Case than Case had ever put into anything. Yet despite the fact that I was much improved, my grade was the same from both the Primary and Secondary teaching. I was also lied to by Mr. Shuckerow when I questioned him about this.

I want to also add I previously met with a contact at the school to mention many of these concerns back in September of 2018. I also met with Christopher Jones Assistant Vice President and Director of Equity Office for Inclusion, Diversity, and Equal Opportunity at Case back in March where he documented my concerns and made copies of the notes I had taken. The conclusion of my meeting with Mr. Shuckerow and Elizabeth Bolman on Friday June 7th was that I 1) waited too long to mention these issues, and 2) I am known for being ‘unprofessional’ and ‘angry’ (which strikes me as a typical stereotype of colored women but maybe I am wrong) and instead of getting upset, I should have talked about it sooner. There is nothing quite like being called unprofessional by someone who mentions using or not using Petroleum Jelly as sexual lubricant or “smashing” in class.

People who are entrenched in powerful positions oftentimes feel as if they are untouchable and can do as they please, regardless of anyone else’s feelings or objections. I’m afraid in Tim Shuckerow’s case that appears to be true, and the faculty at Case Western seem to be complicit in this detestable behavior.