

I have been advised by several colleagues to provide this roadmap to the following open letter. I invite you to forward it to other interested parties who may not be on my list.

- *Complex Truths and Simple Lies.* I argue that the image of the protest and of Gallaudet is being constructed through a pattern of simple lies put forth by the PR Office.
- *A Crisis of Leadership.* I argue that the crisis results from a refusal by the Board, the President and the President Elect to take a role of leadership.
- *The Board of Trustees.* I argue that the Board has neglected its fiduciary responsibility and that it has been disinformed, misinformed, and managed by Dr. Jordan's administration.
- *Dr. Jordan.* I address examples of the ways in which Dr. Jordan has refused to take a leadership role and the ways in which he has constructed the protest as the violent acts of a rowdy minority. This includes the following topics, in which I identify the ways in which information is being manipulated to spin the administration as victims:
 - *Identity Politics.* I address the ways in which the issues surrounding the crisis have been trivialized by the PR office and the press.
 - *DPN and Dr. Jordan.* I address Dr. Jordan's claim that the 1988 DPN protest has nothing to do with the current protest.
 - *DPN and Unity for Gallaudet.* I draw parallels between the two movements, concluding that they are similarly motivated.
 - *Scheduled Maintenance.* I address the administration's act of spreading manure around the students' tents in Tent City.
 - *The War of Words.* I address the manipulation of words to make the administration appear to be noble victims and the protestors to be hooligans.
 - *Keeping Classes Running and Access Open.* I address the fact that Dr. Jordan and Dr. Fernandes continue to portray the campus as being held hostage when classes and most normal business has resumed.
 - *Students as Victims of the Faculty.* I address the notion that the faculty is inciting the student protestors.
 - *The Use of Fear.* I address the ways in which the administration is using fear of loss of revenue and fear of loss of Gallaudet in their attempts to quiet the disagreement.
 - *The Status Quo.* I address the ways in which the PR office construes the acts of the administration as non-political and the acts of the protestors as political.
 - I argue that all these things accumulate to illustrate a failure of Dr. Jordan to lead the University out of this crisis.
- *Dr. Fernandes.* I address the idea that Dr. Fernandes is a scholar, a successful administrator and a leader, finding fault with each notion. I argue that if she were a leader she would already have been leading.
- I conclude with a call to the administration to stop spinning images and to begin to lead us out of the crisis.

An Open Letter To My Faculty and Student Colleagues and to the Board of Trustees

I am sitting in my office at Gallaudet, as I have been for the last few months, feeling helpless, powerless, and frustrated. When I get like this I either write serious essays or create satirical pieces. I have done two pieces of satire and will stop it for now. It is time for me to get serious.

I ask you to indulge me for a few minutes in a discussion of what I see as a rather complex situation. I do not believe it can be expressed in a few paragraphs or in slogans and I know it is not well represented in the sound bites and video clips that are accessible through the press. I hope that what I have to say will add a useful perspective to the situation.

On Tuesday evening, October 17, a large group of faculty members walked to Dr. Jordan's house and stood quietly with candles and signs that reflected the overwhelming vote of the Gallaudet University Faculty demanding the removal of Dr. Fernandes. I was at home putting my four-year-old to bed when I began to receive urgent emails and voice messages from faculty members saying that Dr. Jordan had agreed to meet with five faculty members and that, somehow, I had been proposed as one of the members of the delegation. I do not see myself as a spokesperson for the faculty, but I agreed to attend the meeting, scheduled for ten o'clock Wednesday morning and subsequently to attend another meeting with Dr. Fernandes.

After some scheduling difficulties, the meeting with Dr. Fernandes took place last Thursday afternoon. The meeting with Dr. Jordan finally happened yesterday, Tuesday, October 24. Both meetings were frustrating and each made it clear that our two appointed leaders do not see conversation with the faculty as leading to a solution to the crisis. Our hopes that we would be able to use the meetings to help end the crisis were not realized.

At the same time, I am seeing that the press is unable to get a grip on what I think are the actual issues at hand in the protest and in the context at large.

This letter is a commentary on my perceptions, opinions, and beliefs about the current situation at Gallaudet. It is what I – a long-time academic and dedicated member of the faculty and a professional anthropologist – see in the continuing restless situation. My observations are based officially on twenty-seven years of “Gallaudet-watching” and on my participation in the Gallaudet structure at a number of levels, including a total of six years functioning as an administrator in the Graduate School.

More importantly, it is based on my nearly thirty-year love affair with this institution. I think, and have thought from the first time that I, a hearing person with no previous connection to deaf people, set foot on this ground, that there is something magical and special about it. In the history of human culture, there are few institutions that so clearly reflect our humanity and our infinite belief in human potential. At the same time,

Gallaudet to me is admittedly full of challenges and problems. But, mostly, it is something to be honored and cherished as a treasure of human patrimony. It is with this in mind that I proceed.

Complex Truths and Simple Lies. Alexis de Tocqueville, the great 19th Century observer of the United States and analyst of American democracy, is widely quoted as having said that it is easier for the world to accept a simple lie than a complex truth.¹ He was especially interested in how such simple lies could be used to strengthen the position of mediocre governments, even in the face of disagreement from the masses.

I believe that we have an illustration of the tenet of the simple lie in the current situation. We and the World are faced with a situation in which the entire perception of Gallaudet hangs on the simple lies and manufactured images of the richly sophisticated and immensely expensive public relations machine of Gallaudet's administration. To me, it reflects a culture of lying² that is infused into every level of the administrative structure of the University; one that at once explains many of the issues raised by the protest and verifies the protestors' claim that the current administration, notably including the President Elect, is unfit to lead the University through the coming years.

I also believe that the truth of the situation is considerably more complex than the information available in blurbs from the PR office or in the kind of questioning that nurtures the media's hunger for hyperbolic and simplistic sound and video bites that fit nicely between dinner and Monday Night Football.

A Crisis of Leadership. I believe that the essence of the crisis at Gallaudet is a failure of our leaders to accept the responsibilities and obligations that are inherent in their positions and a tendency to cover up this failure with a series of simple lies. To me this begins with the Board of Trustees, rests primarily with Dr. Jordan, and is exemplified by Dr. Fernandes.

The Board of Trustees. The Board of Trustees (BOT) is charged with the oversight of the University. It is their job to make the big decisions that determine how the resources of the institution are used and who uses them. They appoint the administrators, who are charged with carrying out the wishes of the BOT. The Board has what lawyers call a *fiduciary* responsibility, growing from a relationship of trust between the governing board, thus called *trustees*, and the bodies for whom the board acts. They are reported to have announced that the current situation at Gallaudet is not within their fiduciary

¹ My memories of Tocqueville persist from my liberal undergraduate education and are enhanced by plentiful discussions on the Internet of his relevance to today's political and social context. I apologize to true political scientists for my amateurish interpretations of one of their icons. Here are three sites I consulted:

<http://www.csupomona.edu/~rljohnson/Professional/toc.html>;

<http://www.tpmcafe.com/user/12618/recent>

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Alexis_de_Tocqueville.

² Cruz, Jeff. <http://www.tpmcafe.com/user/12618/recent>; (accessed October 23, 2006.)

purview, that it is simply an administrative issue. With this statement they have been essentially removed from the context of the protest, except to issue statements in support of Dr. Jordan's administration and their appointment of Dr. Fernandes, and to express their absolute unanimity and their authority. Their participation has been characterized neither by open communication nor free discussion. In short, they are largely absent from the current situation and unresponsive to a multitude of requests from faculty, staff, alumni, and parents to become more involved. Their repeated statements that they have heard the protestors but simply do not agree with them, are nothing more than an exercise of authority. They are not indicative of a group who is interested in communication.³

Why would such a group, charged with the rather weighty obligation to make the important decisions about the direction of the University, abandon that responsibility and disappear? In my opinion, it has to do with the makeup of the Board in general and with the ways in which their decisions have been managed by the administration.

The board is composed of respected members of the community. According to decisions made after the Deaf President Now (DPN) protests in 1988, at least half of the BOT must be deaf. Except for this requirement, there is no inclusion of stakeholders in the membership of the Board. It is largely successful business, government and academic people, who volunteer their time to serve. We are grateful to them for taking time from their busy lives to work with our University. But there are no designated representatives from the faculty, the professional staff, or the student body. There are several members who are also alumni of the University, but I do not believe that they represent the alumni in any official way. Boards of corporations tend to be made up of stakeholders – usually the major stockholders – who have something to lose if the administration of the organization takes a wrong turn. Accordingly, misdirection is noted and dealt with. In such organizations, the Board feels an obligation to oversee administrative activities. In many of this country's best universities, the governing boards must also include the stakeholders. Though there are numerous varieties of this model, it is common for alumni, students, faculty and other parties with a direct interest in the outcomes of administrative decisions to have a voice on the governing boards of universities.

I believe this lack of direct interest in and experience with the University leads the BOT to be less involved in – and less informed about – the issues that are critical to the well-being of the institution. Perhaps more critically, I believe that it has led them to be managed by the very administration they are supposed to be governing.

The University, as we have seen, has a powerful and effective public relations arm. Having always been dependent upon the Federal Government while existing only a few blocks from the Capitol has led Gallaudet understandably to be very aware about and jealous of its public image. Though this tendency has been present here from the time I

³ I understand from colleagues that there were actually several trustee sightings on campus last week and that the “unanimity” of the Board may actually reflect the results of a formal vote rather than the attitudes of the individual members. The Washington Post reported a similar rift in the Board in a news story on October 20.

arrived 25 years ago – and I assume for years prior to that – it has reached epic proportions under the administration of Dr. Jordan. We, as faculty and students, do not have access to the details of the University budget, but we can assume that expenditures for manipulating the positive public image of the University are quite large by any standard. Consider, for example, the numerous slick and expensive print materials emanating from the PR office during the summer attempting to manipulate the image of the President Elect.

In many of my interactions directly with Dr. Jordan during his years as President, and in many more communications from my upper- and middle management superiors, the consistent message has been that we must not conduct ourselves in a way that draws attention to any negative aspect of the university... that to do so would threaten our support from Congress.

This generalized focus is realized in a number of forms, but most obviously in the attempt by Dr. Jordan's team to control absolutely the outward flow of information to the public through the press and the upward flow of information to the Congress and the BOT. To this end, all university employees are forbidden, on threat of disciplinary action, to communicate directly with any member of Congress or their staff or with any member of the BOT. Moreover, the President's Office, through the position of Board Liaison⁴, manages all information provided to the Board, primarily through the thick notebooks that constitute the agendas of their meetings. Faculty and students are given three primary opportunities to get information to the Board, first through their reports to the subcommittee on Academic Affairs (reports which the faculty complains are typically not read before the meeting by the members of the subcommittee) and the second through an event called the Faculty Tea, at which a few selected members of faculty governance, most administrators from the Dean's level up, and the Board have an hour-long roundtable discussion about some topic of current interest in the University. During each meeting, there is also a luncheon to which many faculty and staff are invited. At these luncheons, there is typically one board member at a table of twelve who chats casually about general topics. Outside these three occasions, there is little upward information flow to the Board. Preparation of reports by the mid-level administration is carefully monitored by the upper administration and usually condensed and edited, ostensibly to lighten the reading load for the board members, but more precisely to maintain the image the upper administration is pushing: one of successful outcomes and happy constituents.

It is my experience that the Board itself has bought into the notion that the outward and upward flow of unrefined information is dangerous. A year after the DPN protests and the inauguration of Dr. Jordan, I was the first author of several papers that were critical directly of deaf education, and, by extension, of Gallaudet as an example of deaf education. During that year I presented this perspective at conferences, meetings and in-service days throughout the United States. During the 1989-1990 academic year, I was contacted by the President's Office on two different occasions and told that a member of

⁴ This was the name of the position for many years. I do not know if the exact title has changed, but the function remains intact.

the Board was interested in getting to know me better, an odd notion at best, since I was a lowly chairperson of a small department. On both of these occasions I was invited to a private dinner with a different Board member, each of whom was not in a professional position to have read my papers or to have heard directly any of my lectures. But each of them, after some friendly chitchat, told me to stop saying what I was saying, that my publications and lectures were threatening Gallaudet's image and that, if I did not stop, Gallaudet would lose support from Congress.

I believe that the Board, because its members have little direct interest in the outcomes of the organization and because it is managed by the President's Office through the manipulation of information, has become a group that is driven by and controlled by the President's office. I do not believe that they have acted independently in the current set of decisions and the situation that grew from them. It is clear from Dr. Jordan's own communication to the campus community that he played a significant role in the decision to offer the presidency to Dr. Fernandes. In his email to the community in May, he said that he was not involved in the selection process; that his involvement began at the level of the Board. The denial of involvement is negated by the admission of involvement at the Board level, which, incidentally, is the only level that counts, since they are responsible for "making" the decision.

The Board of Trustees, no matter what they say, is one of the players in the current situation. I believe that they have a responsibility to act independently and with certainty to do what they can to resolve the conflict. I believe that they have the responsibility to stop shrugging off involvement and to try to find out why such a large proportion of their community is in opposition to their decision. For them to remain at a distance is, in my opinion, a failure of leadership.

Dr. Jordan. The President of Gallaudet University, Dr. Jordan, has also, in my opinion, neglected his responsibility to lead the university community. His position from the first day of this protest has been that, though there is substantial disagreement with his actions, he is the person in authority and his decision represents the final word on the issue. He has also been largely absent, agreeing only sporadically to meet with students or faculty and steadfastly refusing to engage in a wider dialogue about the situation. In large part, his communications have been more about authority than about communication.

In his response, we are again looking at his public relations machine, now probably benefiting from the input of outside consultants as well as the staff of the PR Office itself. His responses and those of the entire administrative structure, rather than leading to an open and honest dialogue, have manipulated images and words toward the end of restricting dialogue and free expression. Thus, where one would expect to find a true university leader engaging the community in a problem-solving dialogue, we find manipulation and control of access to information and the "spinning" of images and facts to his own ends, which appear to be the perpetuation of his administrative regime and all its concomitant baggage. In addition, we find a level of application of authoritarian force that is foreign to the notion of the University as a place that values free expression and discussion and encourages variety.

Some examples, beginning last spring:

Identity Politics. From the outset, the PR Office, Dr. Jordan, and Dr. Fernandes have characterized the protestors' issues as "identity politics," claiming that the protest is about the idea that Dr. Fernandes is "not deaf enough." This is exactly the kind of simple lie that Tocqueville must have been thinking of. He talks about a sort of tyranny that grows from the simple lie in order to protect the mediocrity of those in authority. The facts that the protest began as a complaint from people of color about the lack of inclusiveness of the search process and that the complaints about Dr. Fernandes are numerous and varied have been shoved aside in favor of this notion that is calculated to gain the favorable opinion of a decidedly monolingual and diversity-resistant press and public. It is true that the students initially talked about this and about Dr. Fernandes' interaction style. It is true that the composition of the upper level administration and their public use of the language could lead one to think that there is a lack of respect for American Sign Language and it is true that Dr. Fernandes has a personal style that could be called flat by comparison to Dr. Jordan's effusive warmth, but that is not the real issue and never has been. The students are in some ways unsophisticated and they are frustrated and they are not being advised by sophisticated PR consultants. But Dr. Jordan and Dr. Fernandes are, and they succeeded in identifying this as the motivation for the protest, even in the face of substantial contrary evidence. The press, having taken the proffered bait – an extremely palatable one, since it is so useful in a one-phrase summary of the protest – are now hooked, continuing to use the phrases *identity politics* and *not deaf enough*, and thereby trivializing what is a complex and serious set of objections to the way the Dr. Jordan and Dr. Fernandes have managed and led the University. In our meeting, Dr. Jordan claimed that his team (whom he referred to as "we") does not construct the issue in that way, though he continued to say that it was the students who were saying it. His take on it is that the students, by focusing on this, have hurt the image of deaf people. But the focus on this issue came from his team's PR spin who know that it is easier to accept a simple lie than a complex truth.

And yet, as in any complex truth, the issue of what constitutes a deaf president *is* a part of the picture. Though the students mistakenly identified it as an issue of Dr. Fernandes' heritage and signing abilities, the real issue is not the trivial one of identity politics. It is the issue of the vision of the university as a place that is accessible to deaf students who relate to the world through vision and who communicate through the rich bilingualism of literate deaf people who use ASL. In this regard, little has changed since DPN in the administrative imagination of educational theory and practice at Gallaudet. To see this fact symbolized in action, go to any event connected with the protest. You will see protestors – faculty and student, deaf and hearing alike – communicating visually through sign language and through pagers. It is a rich, vital and effective communication environment. By contrast, look at virtually any representative of the administration and you will see them speaking in English on walkie-talkies. There could not be a more vivid symbol of the underlying difficulties at Gallaudet than this.

DPN and Dr. Jordan. Last spring, Dr. Jordan, in one of his rare appearances before the massed protestors at the Florida Avenue gate uttered a statement I could not believe. A student reminded him that it was a student protest in 1988, now called DPN, that gave him the office that he now holds. His response was that he never supported DPN. I presume that he means by this that he did not participate in the actual protest. As I recall it, this part is true. But he was quick to jump at the opportunity to become President and to appear at that final, huge, marvelous meeting of the campus – so big that it required the Field House – and to raise his joined hands in victory before the throng. And he also organized and led roughly ten years of celebrations of DPN each spring, appearing as the victor and leader at each. Thus, though it may be technically correct to claim that he did not support DPN, his assertion in the absence of mention of his participation in all the celebrations of DPN for the next ten years is disingenuous at best and takes on the force of a simple lie, presenting a picture of the current protestors as unreasonable and outside the bounds of appropriate action.

DPN and Unity for Gallaudet. Dr. Jordan has repeatedly asserted that the Unity for Gallaudet protest (one name of the current protest) has no connection with the DPN protest. This is another simple lie. First, all one needs to do is go back to Oliver Sacks' chronicle of the DPN protest to see that most of the same issues were at stake there. In our collective memory, DPN was about installing a deaf president and was at odds with the BOT's decision to install a hearing president. From my perspective as a cultural analyst, the similarities could not be more striking. It is true, that the Unity for Gallaudet movement is not just about having a president who is deaf, but neither was DPN, really. Both are about deaf emancipation and self-determination. In my view, the DPN movement was simply the first step. At that time it was necessary and sufficient in identifying acceptable characteristics of a President of Gallaudet University to define *deaf as not being able to hear*. That still is a necessary condition. The sufficiency condition has changed, and deaf people want the Presidency to reflect their voice.

In both situations, a BOT, whose information was being managed by a sitting president, chose to offer the job to one of three candidates, purportedly the most qualified.

In the first case, there was an apparently highly qualified and highly experienced university administrator who was hearing and who had virtually no experience with deaf people or deaf education. The two candidates who were not chosen were both deaf and both limited in experience, one having been a professor and a dean at Gallaudet for a couple of years and the other having been the superintendent of a state residential deaf school but with only limited academic experience. None of the three candidates was representative of an under-represented group. The Board made the case that the first candidate was clearly more qualified and that the other two were not yet ready to lead. An outsider to the process might have concluded that the deck was stacked in favor of the chosen candidate.

The ensuing uprising had nothing to do with Dr. Jordan. He was, indeed, a bystander. It was about the unfairness and essential bias of the selection process and about the desire of deaf people to determine their own destiny. Because there had never been a deaf

president, the protest latched onto the deafness issue, but it clearly was about the process and the unresponsiveness of the BOT to the community it was supposed to be serving. But, upon the withdrawal of Dr. Zinser, the hearing appointee, the Board went with Dr. Jordan, who had university administrative experience, albeit not enough to become a president in a normal search. For his part, he promised to learn what was necessary to become a president and pretty much did that, staying at the helm for eighteen years. During that time he demonstrated that he was “ready.” From the perspective a student of the politics of deaf education, it is notable and probably not an accident that the person ultimately chosen was also the one who had the clearest speech, who oriented himself as a hearing person would, and who would make a good showing before Congress and potential donors.

In the second case, the current one, there were three candidates, one with substantial, high-level university administrative experience, who also speaks quite intelligibly and is not of the deaf community. The other two candidates are both of the deaf community, not notably oral in their orientations. One is a professor with a few years experience as a dean at Gallaudet and the other is the superintendent of a state residential deaf school. None of the three candidates was representative of an under-represented group. An outsider to the process might have concluded that the deck was stacked in favor of the chosen candidate. Does this sound familiar?

To me, it is a simple lie to say that there is a significant difference between the two processes. In fact, I believe the issues in each to be the same, though the stakes have apparently been raised. After DPN, the community was willing to give Dr. Jordan a chance. He was, after all, a person who did not hear. And though there was considerable muttering about his lack of knowledge about the deaf community, his lack of innovative vision for the institution, and, yes, his limitations in the use of signing (he adheres to the use of English-like signing and stubbornly refuses to sign without speaking simultaneously), he was accepted and honored for the office he held. And he was held up as a symbol of civil rights. But the basic issues that put him there did not change; they waited and they simmered, the expectation and hope being that someone more representative of the people of the community would be the obvious next choice. Dr. Jordan and his team did little to effect an actual change in the ways that Gallaudet functions. In many ways it has not changed drastically in his eighteen years in office. In my view, the people supported Dr. Jordan for his position, not for who he was or for his accomplishments. They hoped to see him grow into the position, but his vision did not change and neither did many of the things about Gallaudet University that are so difficult for deaf people to tolerate. And, when the time came to elect a new president, he would push for someone in his own image, from his own team, who could continue his traditions.

Thus, the more complex truth is that the current uprising is much like the earlier one and that it grows from the inability of Dr. Jordan’s administration to solve the fundamental problems of diversity and access that plague the institution.

Scheduled Maintenance. On the Friday before Tent City was to be re-established, the word went out on the blogs, calling the protestors to the Florida Avenue gate on Monday morning. The next day, Saturday, the Gallaudet Physical Plant began to spread a very strong and smelly manure in the area where the tents were to be erected. According to my sources, it was being spread by a worker known as Shorty, who was working on overtime that Saturday. When it began to rain, he stopped, though to my knowledge, having it rain after you spread manure is a good thing – not a reason to stop. The process was begun again and completed on Monday morning, after some of the tents were already up.

The Administration claims that it was simply scheduled maintenance. They also have claimed repeatedly that their primary interest is the safety and welfare of their students. If both of these things were true, it would be unlikely that they would be paying overtime for the spreading of the manure and almost certain that the workers conducting the scheduled maintenance would notice that students were camping in the area and not spread the manure or at least ask a superior if they should proceed.

When asked about this, Mercy Coogan, the Director of Public Relations for Gallaudet, told a faculty member that she was sure it was not intentional, because it had been discussed as a possibility in a meeting during the summer but had been dismissed. Put these together, and we have a couple of simple lies, leading to an act that is easily interpreted as an unacceptable form of tyranny and a probable violation of health regulations. The responsibility for not stopping this act, no matter when it was scheduled, lies with Dr. Jordan and his team.

Establishing Authority to Justify Repression. On Friday, October 13, I happened to be chatting with a friend who is a political scientist and who lived through two violent totalitarian dictatorships in Argentina. He had been reading the Washington Post that day and noted, without my prompting, that its editorial stance was decidedly favorable to the administration point of view and that there was almost nothing representing the perspective of the protestors. He volunteered that, in his opinion, this was an example, as in Argentina, of the administration establishing authority with the press before making an extremely authoritarian move. He pointed out that the government would represent the opposition in a way that justified forceful and violent action and that portrayed it a *reaction* by the government. He also told me that the strategy was at some point to raise the stake by some symbolic act of violence that would bring the people to the streets and justify even more repressive measures.

It was, in fact, an editorial that day that inspired me to move from the sidelines of the protest and to begin to express my opinion. For weeks we had seen the PR Office spinning the images to make the protestors appear to be trivial and shallow and the administration to be victimized, innocent and noble. Information had been managed thoroughly in such a way that the community was being provided links to articles and editorials favorable to the administration but none to articles with a more balanced perspective or favorable to the protestors. In one case a favorable Post editorial was reproduced on PR Office letterhead without attribution. The wording of that editorial,

written by a person with no ostensible experience with the deaf community, and several preceding it made it apparent that they were written almost directly from PR Office press releases or other documents. To me, the diction, the terminology, and the issues raised were obviously manufactured here at Gallaudet rather than on 15th Street, NW. Below, I demonstrate how Dr. Jordan and the PR machine are characterizing the protestors as essentially violent.

It was revealing to me that my friend was so right. That very night, using the same arguments put forth in the press – arguments that his team had planted there, Dr. Jordan ordered the nighttime arrest of 133 young people at the university gate, ironically including one of the four leaders of the 1988 DPN movement that had put him into his position.

Today as I write this I am looking out my window at a backhoe, bulldozing Tent City. This, I believe, constitutes the second half of my friend's prediction. It is an administrative temper tantrum; a reaction akin to using a shotgun to swat a mosquito, and it will have its desired effect. The symbolism of using construction machinery to raze temporary camps cannot be escaped. It will breed real violence. And as we watch for the press release from the PR office we can predict that it will be justified by "the violent and unlawful acts" of the students. I do not claim here that the students were right in blocking access to the campus and I believe that there is a benefit to having classes continue during the protest and to establishing a civil dialogue. But these acts serve only to amplify the authority of the administration and do nothing constructive to resolve the crisis. I strongly object to the construction of the situation by Dr. Jordan and his team as one in which he had no choice. That is another simple lie.

The War of Words. Dr. Jordan's PR staff is good with words. They should be; it is their job. One faculty member cites Ms. Coogan, the PR Director, as saying that it is her job to "push, push the administration point of view." I suppose that is true, though one wonders why, in the context of a university, there is not more commitment to dialogue and problem solving than to the pushing of an authorized perspective.

Virtually all releases from the President, the President Elect, and the PR Office share the feature of manipulation of words to create an image of any dissenter as violent, unruly, and uncommunicative. The President has repeatedly claimed that the protestors refuse to communicate, simultaneously asserting that he will not change his mind and that Dr. Fernandes will not step down. It is interesting that the word *intransigence* is applied to the protestors, while positive words such as *steadfast* are applied to Dr. Fernandes. In fact, this is a simple lie: both parties are refusing to communicate and whatever word describes a refusal to bargain should be applied equally to them. But the students are students and Dr. Jordan is supposed to be a leader, not an inaccessible authoritarian. I believe that it is his responsibility to find a way for the two groups to communicate. And I believe that it is a straightaway refusal by Dr. Jordan to assume that role of leader that has led to the failure of communication between the administration on one side and the protestors and faculty on the other.

Dr. Jordan distributed a similarly biased response to the overwhelming faculty vote demanding the removal of Dr. Fernandes. The vote, which occurred on October 16, demanded the resignation or removal of Dr. Fernandes. Of 168 faculty members in attendance there were 138 for the resolution and 24 against, with 6 abstentions. This represents 82% of the faculty in attendance and about 62% of the entire faculty. He claimed that he would not submit to *mob rule*. He characterizes the vote as a response to high emotion. I was a part of that meeting. It was in no sense a mob. It was a reasoned, week-long electronic discourse, followed by a two-hour meeting, in which each person had an opportunity to express their opinion about each proposal. It was the most highly attended faculty meeting in my memory and it was characterized by an unaccustomed level of collegiality and reason. The vote was overwhelming and it was fair, and though people were expressing strong opinions, it was not coercive. In our meeting with Dr. Jordan he claimed the vote to be invalid, because the faculty had to walk through two lines of students to get into the meeting and because he was told that the situation was emotionally charged. Having been there I can say that the students were respectful, silent and friendly. Dr. Fernandes, for her part, has also minimized the vote, simply asserting that the numbers are not valid. It is a simple lie to characterize this as mob rule and to minimize it as unimportant but it is useful in sustaining the view of the administration as the victims.

Keeping Classes Running and Access Open. Classes were suspended for just three days. They resumed last Monday, October 16. All the faculty members I know have been meeting their classes since then. Two of us had to leave the meeting with Dr. Jordan – a meeting for which we waited for a full week – to meet our classes. Classes have been running until this morning, the mail has been delivered, and the university has been functioning. And yet as late as last Thursday, four days after classes had resumed, there was a press conference in College Hall in which several students pled on camera that they wanted to return to class. As of yesterday, Dr. Fernandes, in an interview, was still claiming that the students are holding classes hostage. The implication, beyond the lie that classes were not meeting, is that the campus is not safe for the students who want to go to class.

I, myself, have seen no act of violence or intimidation, but Dr. Jordan, in our meeting, continued to construct the protest as essentially violent. I know of a case in which one of the protestors actually took a vandal to the Department of Public Safety and turned him over to the campus police. I see that Dr. Jordan's name on the SAC has been vandalized. I do not approve of vandalism. Beyond this, I have seen nothing of a threatening or violent nature from the protestors. They have been for the most part cordial and peaceful. The student and faculty leaders have repeatedly urged the protestors not to be violent. Dr. Jordan says there are many instances I do not know about: spray painting guest rooms in the Conference Center, flooding Kendall School, and harassing other students. If these things were perpetrated by the protestors, I am sorry to hear it and I urge them to understand how such behavior will harm their cause. Meeting what we see as oppression with acts that can be construed as terrorism or violence will not help to solve our problems. I hope that the protestors take great care not to harm any building or property,

because any sign of vandalism will be used widely to discredit the real issues behind the protest.

In Dr. Jordan's two announcements of the canceling of Homecoming, he claimed that the cancellation was necessary because he could not guarantee the safety of the visitors to campus. This puts forth the image of a band of wild hooligans attacking campus visitors. It is a simple lie. It is in my view this lie that leads to the perception by the accrediting body that the campus is out of control when it is not.

Students as Victims of the Faculty. Though I have not seen it said in print, I have heard members of Dr. Jordan's staff repeat publicly the claim that the student protestors are being manipulated and incited by a few faculty members – that they are not independent in their actions. This is also a simple lie. In fact, I daresay that it is the other way around. It looks to me like the actions of the students have inspired many more faculty members to join the protest than vice versa.

The Use of Fear. Throughout the history of deaf education, it has been rare for members of the client community – the deaf people being served – to be included in any meaningful way in decision making about the organizations. In my conversations with the community during the past thirty-four years, I have noticed an interesting relationship between deaf people and this fact.

Let me preface this observation with a description of the role of the deaf school (and, by extension, Gallaudet University) in the imagination of deaf people. For them the deaf school is the center, the source, the core and the heart of the community, the language and the culture. It is where little children who cannot communicate with their parents may go and where they may learn to function as a fully normal human being. It is a place where little children with deaf parents may go and communicate freely with others like them. It is the place where little children encounter big people who are what the children will become. The deaf school and Gallaudet are both precious places in this sense.

But they have, until very recently, tended not to be governed by other deaf people, a fact that has been accepted historically without any outright rebellion on the part of deaf people. This has remained true even as the institutions have tended to be plagued by various forms of social and physical abuse that grow from institutionalization and inequality. Early in my interactions with deaf people, I began to hear of outrageous examples of physical and sexual abuse of children at the hands of adults and other, older children in the school. In certain cases I watched as known child molesters were feted and honored by the deaf community.

I was appalled and asked how this could happen. I was told that deaf people tended to keep their silence, because, if the word got out about the abuses, the schools would be closed and they would lose their *place*, that they did not have an alternative to the deaf school

This, of course, is another form of the simple lie that keeps the status quo in place. When news of such abuses has gotten out, it has not tended to lead to the closing of the institutions, but rather to a cleaning out of the people responsible. But administrators have learned that this fear is a useful tool for controlling opposition from the clients and employees of their institutions.

Dr. Jordan and his office are using fear in exactly the same way today. We hear that the protestors had better back off or Congress will yank our funding, though I believe that this is unlikely if we get a president with any skills at all. And this Monday we were treated to an email from Dr. Jordan letting us know that the protestors had caused the Middle States Association (MSA) to write him a letter. Dr. Jordan reminded the community that the MSA can decide not to accredit Gallaudet, which would lower the value of the students' degrees. This also is a simple lie. As I read the situation in Dr. Jordan's paraphrase of the letter, MSA expressed their doubts about his ability to maintain control of the university and to keep classes running. This is quite different from the implications he has presented. His attempt to parlay this into a threat to the protestors and to the existence of Gallaudet is another simple lie.

The Status Quo. A particularly annoying characteristic of the administration's statements is the implication that the status quo is, by definition, non-political but that opposition to it is political to its core. This, of course, is an old, simple lie, which justifies the continuation all kinds of practices in this country. All acts are political at some level and those of the administration are no less supportive of their own political agenda than are those of the faculty and the protestors.

All these things accumulate to illustrate a reprehensible failure of Dr. Jordan to lead the University out of this crisis.

Dr. Fernandes. It has been stated repeatedly and widely that Dr. Fernandes is eminently qualified to become the President of Gallaudet University. She is represented as a widely respected scholar of ASL and as an effective administrator – a “change agent.” She is represented as the best choice to lead the university for the coming years.

I disagree, though my view has nothing to do with her signing, her degree of deafness, or her widely cited lack of social graces. I also believe that the protest is not about those things, though they are issues that rankle the students and that they have talked about. They made useful concepts upon which the PR machine could focus the media's interest and attention to divert them from the more pertinent issues.

Her list of publications, dominated by unpublished books and short pieces she wrote for PR publications of the organizations she managed and notably short on publications in peer reviewed journals, is that of a professional administrator, not that of an accomplished scholar. She is not, as the press has said, a scholar of ASL, nor is she an academic. That is fine, because she is not applying to be a professor or researcher, positions for which, in fact, her resume would be seen as somewhat weak. There is really

no need to represent her as an accomplished scholar, except, again, to feed the lie that the protestors are shallow and unreasonable.

In addition, she has limited experience as a faculty member and little teaching experience. Her tenured faculty position at Gallaudet was widely proclaimed to have been achieved by subverting the faculty governance system, which is supposed to be responsible for such decisions. Those of us who went through the required seven year process of evaluations of teaching, scholarship, and service are dismayed that an administrator achieved the status so easily.

Of more concern is the gradual slide of academic standards, the sorry state of student enrollment, and the demographic makeup of the faculty during her time as Provost. Though she put a great deal of attention on her program to improve the quality of education it lacked real substance and, in the absence of a leader with a real educational vision and agenda, it has died an early death.

Compare her academic credentials and her vision to those of a bona fide university president and leader such as Freeman A. Hrabowski, the President of UMBC, who has visited our campus three or four times in the past several years. He is, in fact, a widely regarded scholar and author and is heavily invested in the academy. He is articulate and passionate about his work and driven by a vision of UMBC as an inclusive university. His vision infects those who work and study there and creates a vital and thriving community. As one looks at his accomplishments at UMBC, one realizes that he is, in fact, an agent of change. And there is no question that, although the job of university president is centered on fund raising these days, he and his team are firmly connected to the academic life of the university and that they are intimately involved with the academic vision of the institution. The academic arm of Dr. Jordan's administration, managed for the last few years by Dr. Fernandes is not characterized by the same degree of attention and vision from the president. The Division of Academic Affairs has become a grossly top heavy, oddly organized unit that is not governed by an overarching vision of what education means at Gallaudet University. In fact, it is a smaller model of the overall inefficient and wasteful administrative structure of the University at large. Dr. Fernandes has done little to change this through her tenure here.

In that regard, it is inaccurate to refer to Dr. Fernandes as a change agent. Her showcase program for educational change fizzled. The Academic Affairs Planning process (AAPC), which met for two years, involved literally tens of thousands of hours of human effort on the part of students, faculty and administrators. She pushed it during that time as the opportunity for change in the institution. It resulted in an ambitious document, referred to as *New Directions in Academic Affairs*, which outlined a series of goals that would change the direction of academics at Gallaudet. After a good bit of fanfare and substantial, positive cooperation from the community, she gave in to resistance to change and made the illogical announcement that the goals for innovation could be exemplified only by programs or projects that were already in existence. It thus became yet another in a long line of shallow, make-work exercises for supervisors and department chairs who must struggle to fit old practices into the new, glossy paradigm.

Her vision of enrollment management and recruitment remains ineffective and out of touch with the realities of savvy deaf youth, who see their choice as one between low academic standards in the undergraduate curriculum at Gallaudet or higher standards at other institutions that have now become accessible as a result of federal disability legislation. Enrollment has been suffering a serious decline, and rather than develop a new vision of recruitment to try to find and attract the best students, her organization has gradually lowered admissions standards and found new ways to gloss over the declines. A leader with vision would be vocal and energetic about the loss of students. She has not been.

But some would say that she deserves the chance that Dr. Jordan has implored us to give her. They suggest that she might, as Dr. Jordan did, grow into the position.

I do not think so, and here is why in the simplest terms.

As we talked with her in her office last week, I was struck by her lack of understanding of the situation. She told us that the process leading to her selection was “a little bit flawed, but fair.” She believes that she is uniquely qualified, among all deaf people, to lead the university. She claims that to resign would be bad for the university; that the best thing for Gallaudet is for her to stay. (Dr. Jordan asserted the same claim yesterday in our meeting.) Dr. Fernandes proclaims that she is not staying for herself, but for the good of the university. She believes that, upon assuming the presidency, she will be able to bring the university out of this crisis through communication and dialogue and not through repressive authority. This notion stands in opposition to her other showcase program: the diversity initiative, which was to guarantee new levels of inclusion in such decisions at Gallaudet, but did not.

I suggest that if Dr. Fernandes were competent to lead this university she would have done something positive before now to solve the current situation on the campus. At the Faculty Forum on October 9, she stood before an expectant and not-yet-opposed faculty and was unable to say anything of substance that might help to bring the crisis to a conclusion. The fact that she has been content to sit in her new office and use the press to throw words at the protestors suggests that she is not the communicator she believes herself to be.

I believe that if she were suited for such a discussion, it would already have begun under her guidance. In my view, it would be the incoming president’s duty, obligation, and privilege to lead right now, not later, not after the students became less stubborn, not after an inauguration. Right now. The fact that she has not engaged in such a dialogue and has been unable to provide the community with a picture of how she intends to lead us out of this morass is appalling evidence of the mistake that the BOT and Dr. Jordan have made. I hope they will right it without delay, before more young people suffer and before the university is damaged more than it has already been.

Most importantly, the entire phenomenon of her candidacy is based on simple lies. And here is what Dr. Jordan, the Board and Dr. Fernandes don't seem to "get." Manufacturing a simple lie, manipulating information, disinforming the press, managing access to information, and creating false images does not change the truth. This practice cannot be maintained as a strategy for long. To believe so is self-delusion.

And now my last word. Yesterday, Dr. Jordan asked me directly what I could do about the crisis. I said that what I know how to do is to teach my classes and to write about it. He countered that instead of writing about it, I should be communicating with the students to try to get them to stop protesting.

In response, I have a piece of advice for Dr. Jordan: instead of spinning negative images in the press and instead of flexing your authority, you should be communicating with the faculty and students, ready to adjust some of your rigid thinking, in order to bring this crisis to a conclusion we can all live with.

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