

January 20, 2018

A letter from a woman whose “story” was included in the EEOC complaint

Dear Members of the UR Faculty Senate:

I am the woman referred to in the EEOC complaint and the federal lawsuit as the “girlfriend (now wife)” of a colleague of Florian’s, at whom, in 2008, Florian “made a pass” or, in the lawsuit, an “unwanted pass.” These statements are untrue. I attempted to quietly right this wrong by agreeing to talk to the White investigators about my experiences. My mentions in the EEOC report and lawsuit reflect a hijacking of my personal narrative that was taken and published without my knowledge, consent, input or any forewarning. While I am not asserting that this false statement was made in bad faith, it is distressing to me that someone felt they could use my experience to publicly accuse another person of moral misconduct without even checking their facts with the source. While I absolutely empathize with the individuals who consider themselves to have been negatively affected by Florian’s early lack of boundaries and his behavior, and I support fully their right to have their voices and desires heard, I cannot condone the misappropriation of my and other women’s voices.

I became acquainted with Florian over a decade ago when my then-boyfriend, (husband as of 2009) moved to Rochester to become a professor in the Brain and Cognitive Sciences (BCS) department. In the summer of 2008 I spent a few days helping Florian paint his new home while I was between jobs. In the EEOC report and lawsuit, it states, that Florian pressured Celeste Kidd to get me alone because he “desired” me. It says, “At some point, Jaeger managed to arrange a meeting with the woman without Kidd’s help and made a pass at her.” In reality, I volunteered to help him paint his house, and during that time, even though he had ample opportunity, he never “put moves” on me. In fact, I have never in my decade of knowing Florian felt degraded, threatened, demeaned, sexualized, or disrespected by him, and I know very well what it is like to be made to feel that way by a man. Florian could be frank, flirtatious, and complimentary—none of those things were unwelcome or off-putting to me. None of it was creepy, perverted, or weird. I found Florian to be a thoughtful, fun, smart, and kind person. Like many other people I knew at the time, I liked hanging out with him. Florian was never a threat to my relationship, nor an intrusion in my zone of comfort.

My experience of Florian is just that: mine. It is by no means a negation of differing experiences, or a lack of sensitivity to the pain he may have caused others. I simply do not want to be used to contribute to the publicized image of Florian as a depraved sex fiend when that is not my first hand experience (nor second nor third hand, until I read the EEOC report).

The situation in BCS has been excruciatingly painful to so many people, and I include myself among them. For the past 22 months, we have been trying to ethically navigate an exceptionally complicated terrain in the midst of our own lives and personal tragedies. When my father died

early in 2017, at a time I needed my friends the most, our closest ones had already drawn the battle lines over the handling of this issue, and I felt isolated and paralyzed with grief. All of us have lost something in this—there is a grand spectrum of loss—and the longer this conflict continues the greater the loss will be.

Some of the complainants were like family to me—we experienced life together: visiting each other’s newborns at the hospital, hikes, birthdays, trips to the beach, the terminal diagnoses of parents. These are people possessing qualities that I cannot but admire. I have, however, questioned their behavior and judgement in this matter because I believe many innocent people have been unnecessarily damaged, that they have tampered with due process, used a “by any means necessary” approach to achieve their goals, at times betrayed the feminist ideals they claim to promote, and seem to utterly deny that an individual’s boundaries are culturally informed (be it the culture of family or country, etc.) and that, with guidance, can be changed (as seems to be evidenced by Florian’s shift in conduct years ago, since an intervention by the department chair, Greg DeAngelis). Having worked as a therapist, I do not want to live in a world where we define people by their worst moments and we discard them because we do not believe they are capable of change. I refuse to stomach the cynicism of that message and am very concerned what it says to the students observing this situation if we embrace it.

This is why I am making a public statement and a plea to abandon this antagonistic approach and work toward productive changes for students rather than focus on punishment and vengeance (I would argue Florian’s punishment of international public shaming with the false label of “sexual predator” has already been substantial). I will continue to define the complainants in my heart by their best moments, which are true and good, and to hope that the University community can grant a similar humanity to Florian.

With regards,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Molly Tadin". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Molly Tadin  
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