

[NAAFA received this unsigned letter on January 5, 2011.]

Dear NAAFA,

Sometimes circumstances are placed in front of us so we can see the parallels. Sometimes there are great lessons to be learned, so it seems we should always be alert because it is from these lessons that we are able to piece together the fragments that eventually make sense out of the crazy things that are happening in our world. Where am I going with this? Well, I'll tell you.

Most of America knows about NPR Journalist Juan Williams being fired (by NPR Senior Vice President for News Ellen Weiss) for comments he made on Fox News show, The O'Reilly Factor. Williams remarked that when he got on a plane, if he saw people who were in Muslim garb, that he got worried and nervous. This comment caused him to be fired. But worse yet was the manner in which he was fired. Weiss simply called him on the telephone and said she was giving him notice that they were severing his contract. No courteous meeting to explain, no tact, no consideration. Nothing. Bang....done....a ten-year career relationship over! Sound familiar?

The fall out from this situation has been nothing less than interesting and amusing. First of all, Senior VP Ellen Weiss was given the boot just a day or two ago, evidently to gain recognition for their attempt at portraying that they really were sorry for firing Williams. Somebody needed to be axed to show they were trying to correct some bad decisions. And after all, they didn't want to lose their federal funding.

What is most interesting is when Williams told Fox News that he couldn't get over how scared the employees were at NPR. "Why", he said, "When they called me they were whispering because they were afraid that if anyone heard them talking to me, they'd be fired." Well, what's so unusual about that? Agents at American Family are scared for their lives, just about. And it's no wonder. Did agents really get fired when they spoke up to Jack Salzwedel at the Town Hall Meetings? Do agents really get fired when they write letters of complaint to Jack? Are agents really fired out of revenge?

Well, it appears there's quite a lot of similarity among some of America's big corporations. Is there a contagious disease of wickedness and revenge among corporate leaders? Evil such as the revenge we are seeing happening today is almost unbelievable. In fact, it would seem that if the news media became aware of how certain corporations are treating their workers, they would most certainly investigate and there would be some real red faces at the exposure. Real red!!

Agents are being terminated by the dozens. These aren't agents who are failing at their jobs. These are agents who are top producers. These are agents who have spent 25, 30, 35 years running outstanding and profitable agencies. These are agents who thought they had started a business, owned a business, and would someday "trade" a business back to American Family in exchange for a reasonable amount of Termination Benefits, all in an effort to comfortably retire when they were ready. Instead, the rug is jerked out from under them. They are accused of breaking some code of ethics, of violating some compliance law, or of doing something detrimental to the company. They go down in shame and degradation and all because some top dog says, "Fire that creep!"

In the last few weeks, I have heard many reports of terminations.....painful terminations. Does that make you feel good, America Family Corporate, to hurt these people like this? Do you get satisfaction out of seeing people suffer? Does revenge make you feel better? Don't you know anything about serving your fellow man? Don't you know anything about kindness, compassion, respect? Some of these agents are the only bread winners in the families and they have small children to feed. How can you sleep at night when you allow people in your company to treat others like this? It's shameful. I am embarrassed and saddened that such a corporation as this even exists in America today, let alone one that I work for.

I would like to suggest that all agents join the agent association....NAAFA. I never thought I would be saying that, but I am. I can see now that I made a big mistake in not joining years ago. I understand they can really help you if you get fired. Who else is there that can help? Most responsible companies have programs to help laid-off employees and workers find other jobs or get retrained. Many companies are cordial and empathetic when they have to tell you to leave. But not here. They abruptly shut your computers off and say "Sue us if you want to know why you were fired!" Yes, this is a sick place to work. And yes, I'm afraid to sign my name. But this is how I see it.

A scared agent