

1979 Distinguished Teacher of the Year

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Students of Florida Atlantic University, faculty and staff, guests and visitors and University administrators:

So very much of our society is characterized by mass identity that to be recognized as an individual, particularly in a positive manner, is a unique and flattering distinction. We hear frequently of mass distribution, mass transit, mass murder and suicide and the mass media. It would not be an ignorant speculation if one were to ponder, "Whatever happened to, or where does the individual fit into our mass society?" Given the brief time available, I want to quickly speculate on the possible role of the individual in four personal situations:

The individual as a consumer. The individual as an administrator. The individual as a faculty member. The individual as a college student.

The individual as a consumer:

Some of you may rightfully be thinking, "Ryan, you must be out-of-your mortar-board! How can I, as an individual, possibly affect the current trends in our economy?" Well, you can and eventually will if we are to avoid a major depression. Why not take the lead or the individual initiative and help educate and inform others you know?

Individual initiatives include: stop using your bank and store credit cards – pay them off and put them away. One of the major sources of inflation is consumer credit. At a time when individuals should be buying less, due to higher prices and a weak dollar, we are increasing our demand for goods and services and fueling inflation. Ten years ago, average-income consumers needed only 20 percent of their paycheck to cover fixed monthly payments. Today, 80 percent of current income is committed to servicing debts, and that is on the increase.

One of the great lies of all time is "Spend and borrow now because tomorrow your money will be worthless." TRUE! The bankers make this lie a self-fulfilling prophecy. You spend more, borrow more and these same bankers then raise the interest rates due to the "excessively strong consumer demand even in the face of rising prices."

If 20 percent of the individual consumers stop charging and borrowing on tomorrow, there would be an excess of money, the interest rate would drop dramatically and the cost of buying a home or car would be half of what it is today.

Some other quick steps:

Stop buying from national chains. Buy locally from local merchants and your money stays in your community and will not end up in Chicago, New York or on the West Coast.

Have your shoes resoled and heeled, your car repaired, your appliances fixed, and if you can read, there are very few things in this world you cannot do yourself. Remember, when all else fails, read the instructions.

Buy food on sale, cook, can and freeze and shop for the bargains. Turn off the air conditioner, open your windows and learn to sweat while listening to your neighbors complain about the high cost of living. Become a truly individual consumer.

The individual as an administrator:

Huh! If you think you you're in bad condition as a consumer than listen to what has happened to individuals in administrative positions. Herein lies true abdication of individual responsibility. For years the individuals holding administrative positions in Florida's system of higher education have serviced only themselves at the expense of the students and faculty. Their apparent philosophy is "Do nothing and you won't make mistakes." This philosophy finally led to the emergence of a faculty union, the U.F.F. and an educational system where quality exists only when individual faculty generate it in the face of total adversity and lack of support.

The faculty union has provided a wonderful opportunity for individual administrators to once again – or still – do nothing that they are not forced to do by the collective bargaining process. A total adversary relationship has evolved, and unless this situation is reversed the state might just as well pay students to go out-of-state and turn the campuses into condominiums, which would please the hell out of a large portion of Florida's senior citizens.

It is time we think about servicing those citizens of the state who are here to LIVE and not just those who came to DIE.

The individual as a faculty member:

Individuals are in as much trouble here as they are in their roles as consumers or administrators. The lack and nearly total absence of faculty communication and interest

in the maintenance of the university system has allowed incompetency to infiltrate the decision-making structure from top to bottom. The union cannot prop up and pull all the weak-sister faculty, who refuse to speak up for a better system of higher education and who refuse to express votes of no confidence in current administrators or academic conditions. Collective bargaining cannot overcome collective apathy.

The holocaust in Europe parallels the plight of Florida's faculties: they passively accept the lies of those in control and go off to classrooms where they express the hope that tomorrow will bring about "a better day." Unless individual faculty are willing to rebel against the handful of oppressors and cast them out, they will find no allies willing to come to their rescue.

The individual as a college student:

Could it be that herein lies the seed of change that would bring about new hope? *Quien sabe?* Whatever, it is this group of individuals whose insight and initiative are most refreshing and who are at the bottom of the academic dung heap. The way our system is run by the individuals now involved is:

NOW

Legislature

Board of Regents, Presidents

Vice Presidents, Deans

Department Chairpeople, Faculty

Students

THEN

Students, Faculty, Chairpeople, Deans

VPs, Presidents

Board of Regents, Legislature

The Board serves the Legislature, the Presidents serve the Board, the VPs serve the Presidents, the Deans serve the VP's, the Department Chairpeople serve the Deans, the Faculty serve everyone else first and the students last, and the students pay tuition and taxes. The idea that "The University would be a great place if it wasn't for the damn

students" must give way to the notion that the student is the *raison d'être* and the main purpose for higher education.

A very large number of highly competent younger faculty have left our University due to the conditions described previously. More faculty, including myself, will soon join the ranks of the departed. This honor, the Distinguished Teaching Award, bestowed by the only individuals in the institution who still enjoy objectivity, is a most prized accomplishment. In fact, it is nearly a form of religious freedom when one disenfranchised group – the students – can recognize a member of another disenfranchised group – the faculty – in front of their oppressors for the sole purpose of saying, "Thank you, for being an individual and not one of them." Thank you, the students of Florida Atlantic University.