

AIA Investigates VSU Purge

After being hounded for more than a decade for the political views she expresses outside the classroom, Dr. Jean Cobbs, an award-winning sociologist, was laid off from Virginia State University (VSU) shortly before Christmas.

Accuracy in Academia has made an open records request of the Virginia State Council for Higher Education to obtain all documents relating to the dismissal of Dr. Jean Cobbs. "This is an accomplished educator with decades of achievement who expresses her political views and acts on them on her own time, not in the classroom," AIA executive director Mal Kline said. "Our much more numerous friends on the left in academia should follow her example."

Dr. Cobbs formed the Department of Social Work at VSU in the 1970s, got it accredited and kept it accredited for more than 20 years. However, the African-American professor refused to endorse the state's first African-American governor when he ran for the chief executive's job in 1989.

Gov. Wilder's appointed the current head of VSU, Eddie N. Moore, in 1992. Since then, Moore has dismissed a number of distinguished faculty members including, now, Dr. Cobbs.

Moore's casualties are a diverse group-Egyptian, Nigerian and American - but most of his victims have one thing in common: their conservative Republican politics. The case of Dr. Cobbs shows how this dynamic plays out. She was fired as chairman of the Department of Social Work in 1995 after riding on the Republican float in the homecoming parade.

She has been given "unsatisfactory" ratings since then, compared to her "outstanding" ratings of her first two decades at VSU. Additionally, she has been denied raises and benefits for the past ten years.

On top of these indignities, Dr. Cobb's received an unsatisfactory rating from her department chair in 2003 for extended absences. Her absences were due to the unpaid leave she took to care for her dying husband.

Dr. Cobbs' husband died in January 2004. On Dec. 16, 2004, Dr. Cobbs was dismissed via certified letter. To view the story on Dr. Cobbs that appears on our companion web site - www.campusreportonline.net