

IN THE UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT  
FOR THE NORTHERN DISTRICT OF ALABAMA  
SOUTHERN DIVISION

**JOHN F. KNIGHT, JR., and ALEASE S. SIMS**, et al., individually and on behalf of others  
similarly situated, \*

Plaintiffs and Plaintiffs-Intervenors, \*

**UNITED STATES OF AMERICA**, \*

Plaintiff-Intervenor, \*

v. \*

Civil Action No.  
2:83-cv-1676-HLM

**THE STATE OF ALABAMA**, et al., \*

Defendants. \*

**KNIGHT-SIMS PLAINTIFFS' MOTION FOR ORDER TO SHOW CAUSE  
WHY DEFENDANT AUBURN UNIVERSITY AND ITS BOARD OF TRUSTEES  
SHOULD NOT BE HELD IN CONTEMPT**

**EXHIBIT A:**           *"AU official questions reasons for athletic firings,"* MONTGOMERY

ADVERTISER, February 15, 2005

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## AU official questions reasons for athletic firings

By **Jay G. Tate**  
*Montgomery Advertiser*

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AUBURN -- As he stood in a cramped auditorium at the Draughon Library on Monday morning, Daymeon Fishback was shocked by the things he heard.

The former Auburn University basketball player was one of approximately 150 people who attended meeting to discuss recent reorganization efforts within the school's athletic department.



Samantha Johnson, left, a member of the Auburn University admissions and records support staff, voices concerns Monday at a news conference.

-- Julie Bennett, Advertiser

Two of Auburn's three black athletic administrators were laid off as part of the changes announced last week, which have touched off another round of controversy on the Plains.

"I've been informed today just by being here. That's why I came," said Fishback, who graduated three years ago. "I think it's serious. I'm just a pup among a lot of big dogs around here. It's a lot more serious than I could ever see."

Keenan Grenell, Auburn's assistant provost for multicultural affairs and diversity, said Monday that the layoffs of assistant athletic directors Stacy Danley and Eugene Harris were unjustified.

When announcing the changes last Thursday, athletic director Jay Jacobs said the layoffs were made in the name of organizational efficiency. Personalities, he said, were not part of the equation.

Grenell believes there's more to the story.

"I didn't buy Jay Jacobs' rationale on Thursday, I didn't buy it on Friday and I don't buy it on Monday," Grenell said. "Even after experiencing a perfect 13-0 season in football, the mainstream for the majority of African-American students is an environment of unfairness, discrimination, marginalization, racism, disparity of compensation. The list could go on and on."

After learning of Danley's and Harris' demise -- both are on paid administrative leave until May -- both Grenell and university senate chairman Willie Larkin spoke with Jacobs in separate conversations.

They pushed Jacobs for more specific reasons for the dismissals.

None were given.

Asked Monday if it's possible that the jobs were eliminated without regard to race, Grenell answered quickly.

"I don't think that -- based on knowing what this culture is, what the culture

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(with) athletics has been and continued to be and knowing what those two individuals have confided in me," he said. "Trust me, it had nothing to do with restructuring."

Larkin said he initially figured the layoffs were at least partially because of budgetary concerns.

He said that idea dissipated quickly while talking with Jacobs last week.

"He said: 'No. Athletics has lots of money.' He's right," Larkin said. "When we added everything up as to why this decision was made, it did not speak to legitimacy. There were some other things that had to be going on in order for this decision to be made."

Danley has said he believes his position was eliminated because of an \$80,000 settlement he received from a discrimination suit filed against Auburn in 2003.

The details surrounding that case have not been made public.

Grenell believes the controversy could have been avoided had Jacobs discussed his ideas with the Office of Multicultural Affairs and Diversity before making a final decision. Grenell suggested that such a move is common procedure on campus, though Jacobs said he isn't aware of such a provision.

"I don't think there is standard procedure when it comes to something like this," Jacobs said Monday. "I certainly wasn't trying to alienate anyone. I knew I didn't want anyone else to take ownership in my decisions. I was going to do what I thought was best. At the end of the day that's how it was going to be."

Grenell said he'll recommend that Jacobs re-hire Danley and Harris for other jobs within the department's new structure, though it's unclear if either man is interested in such a move.

Harris and Danley could not be reached for comment Monday.

Fishback, now a broadcaster based in Auburn, hopes to see Harris back on campus soon.

"Words can't express what he's done not only for me but for other people around the university," he said. "With all the guys he's brought in, he's had a prodigious effect on this university."



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