

Woman says county fired her unfairly

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notify her secretary that a client was waiting.

"That is not my job," Miss Young quoted Miss Boles as saying. "I don't get paid enough to do that. You have secretaries that are supposed to do that."

Miss Boles did not return repeated phone calls concerning the matter.

The client waited 90 minutes before talking with her, Miss Young said. "He was pacing in front of the receptionist's desk," she said.

Confusion exists in the department about whether the secretaries or receptionists should take information from clients when they come into the agency, Miss Young said.

"She thought I was jumping on her back about the situation that existed before I even started working in the office," Miss Young said.

Miss Young said she was shocked by Miss Boles' reaction.

"I am fighting this because I am being discriminated against. That white girl is working, and I want my job back."

-- Constance Young

"I was so embarrassed that she did that," she said. "I just wanted to know why she didn't tell me that I had a client waiting to see me."

The argument between Miss Young and Miss Boles was seen by two other employees and her client, Miss Young said.

Miss Young said she discussed the incident with her supervisor, Sharon Lindenbaum, on June 17.

"I explained everything to her," Miss Young said. "She told me that there were no problems, and I thought everything was dropped."

Ms. Lindenbaum refused to comment on the matter. Gerald M. Thornton, director of the Social Services Department, said he approved of Miss Young's dismissal, but declined to comment further on the case.

During the week, rumors persisted around the office about the argument, Miss Young said. "It was blown out of proportion," she said. "More people were being brought into this than were necessary."

Those rumors preceded a conference on June 20 between Miss

Young, Ms. Lindenbaum and David Bradshaw, the director of income maintenance, Miss Young said.

Ms. Lindenbaum told her that she was being fired by the department, Miss Young said. "She said, 'Debbie (Boles) still seems to be upset about it, and we can't have this in the department. We have to let you go,'" Miss Young said.

"I know you are not actually going to fire me because Debbie is upset," Miss Young said she responded.

Ms. Lindenbaum accused her of cursing at Miss Boles, Miss Young said. "I never cursed at that girl," she said.

"Termination was based on your use of profanity toward a co-worker at the reception desk," Ms. Lindenbaum stated in her letter to Miss Young.

"My investigation confirmed that the incident was witnessed by two other workers and in the presence of a client," Ms. Lindenbaum said in the letter. "This behavior created a disturbance which interfered with normal agency operations."

The agency's action toward Miss Young reflects old Southern white attitudes toward blacks, Marshall said.

"Many white people believe if black people insulted them, they they should be fired from their jobs," Marshall said. "That is a pure slavery attitude."

Bruce E. Colvin, a county attorney, said the department's dismissal of Miss Young was justified.

"I investigated the matter, and what we did was appropriate," Colvin said. "We followed our policies."

Colvin said state law prevents him from discussing the details of the case. "We don't discipline people without good cause," he said. "It was an unfortunate episode for everyone."

Miss Young said she is considering legal action against the department. "I will stick it out to the end," she said. "I don't care that it is just me against three other people. I was treated unfairly."

Miss Young says she plans to take her case to the Equal Employment Opportunity Com-

mission in Greensboro. Miss Young was a probationary employee and does not have the right of appeal to the state Personnel Commission.

Randolph M. James, Miss Young's attorney, said the county's action against his client was unwarranted. "You don't fire people because they get mad," he said.

"Connie is a proud and bright black woman," James said. "I think the receptionist, who is white, was trying to put her in her place, and Connie would not stand for that."

James discounted the county's reasons for firing Miss Young. Many other county employees curse, but they are never fired, he said.

"We are talking about (Miss Young's) career," James said. "It is a crushing blow to lose your first job."

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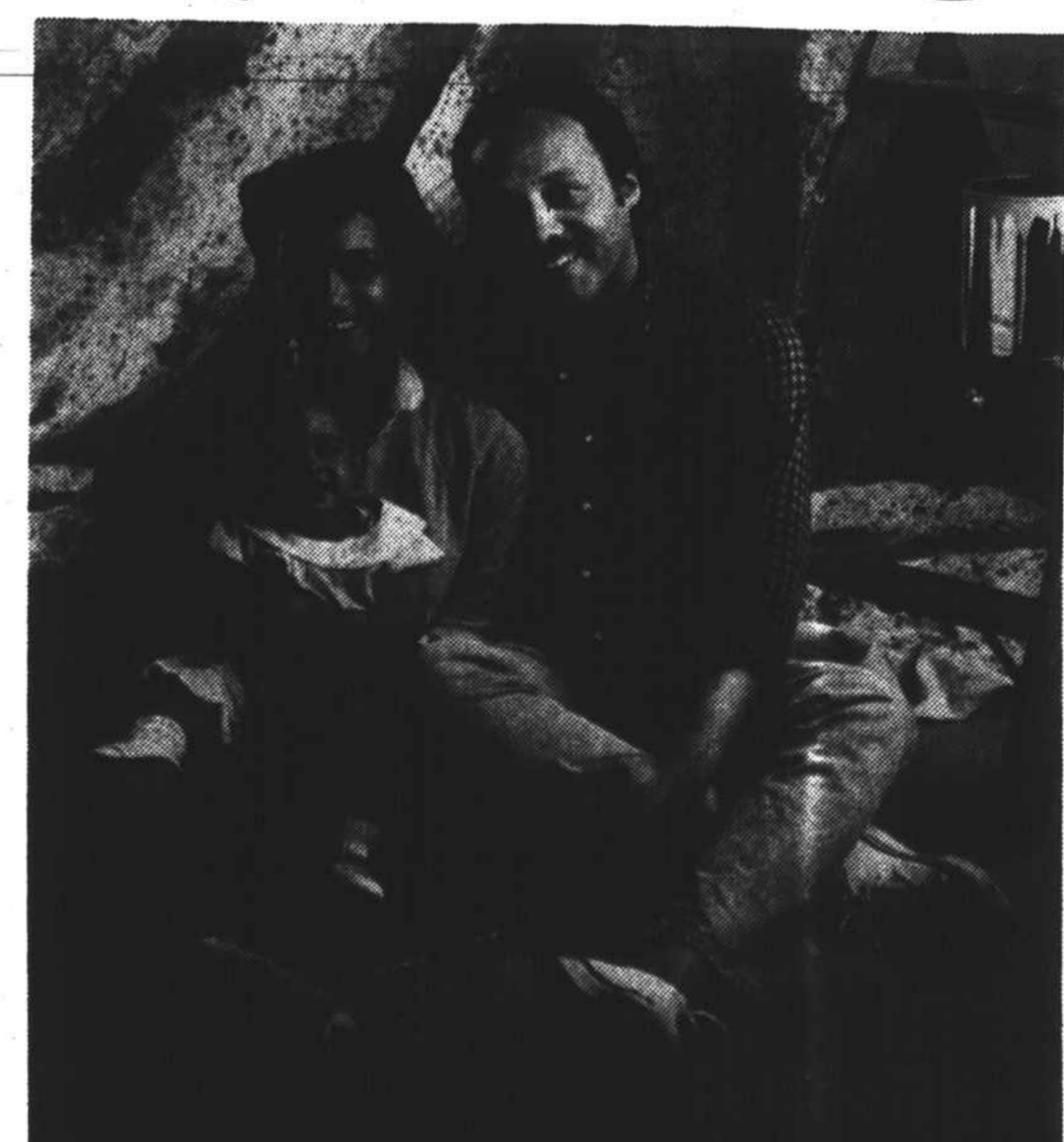
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