

Dear Constantine Cannon Whistleblower Lawyer Team,

I struggled in deciding how to most persuasively articulate the story of a whistleblower who has inspired me. After much deliberating, it became clear to me that I needed to simply write you a letter in order to effectively express my thoughts and feelings on the matter. So, here it goes.

My little brother, Clay, is my hero. Clay and I grew up with parents who did not finish college and struggled to make ends meet. Our parents did the best they could, but they battled addictions, mental illness, and economic hardship. Clay and I were not raised to think critically or to speak up in light of injustice as meeting basic needs was far more important than intellectual development.

Clay went to the university in the town we grew up in. Our town is an isolated conglomerate of agrarian, rural communities comprised of working-class Americans. Often, the leaders at the university became the leaders in our town. The university's Greek system is the epicenter of campus power as it serves as the primary vehicle for students to obtain social capital and respect at the university. Clay was eager to become a part of that community and joined a fraternity that purported to hold friendship, justice, and learning as its' core values. Soon, Clay was elected to serve as one of his fraternity's leaders and thus became a person who held a great deal of influence on campus.

While a member of the fraternity's board, Clay became a part of a group text that began to exchange overtly racist and sexist messages. The members of the group text openly disparaged women and minorities. The texts also bragged about how the fraternity purposefully denied membership to a young man only because he was black. Clay understood that by being a member of the group text as well as the fraternity, he was complicit to the overtly racist comments and prejudice happening inside his organization. He also began to struggle with the hypocrisy of claiming to hold "friendship, justice, and learning" as core values, yet engaging in such behavior that was happening behind closed doors within the fraternity. Clay decided to write a letter to his brothers informing the fraternity of his concerns and requesting that the behavior stop. Clay's letter was received with ridicule and was ignored.

Clay then began to record the conversations his brothers were having and confronted his organization again. Nevertheless, the other members of the fraternity laughed at him and mocked him for being a "social justice warrior." At this point, Clay had two choices: stay silent or speak up.

To stay silent would have obviously been the easier route. Clay could have patted himself on the back for at least trying to say something, remove himself from the conversation, and finish school without issue. However, that is not what he chose to do. Clay took the conversations he recorded and sent them to the fraternity's advisor as well as the fraternity's nation board. Along with his recordings, he withdrew his membership from the fraternity. One small detail that I think makes Clay particularly courageous was his including of messages he sent himself. He openly admitted to his own fault and implicated himself as a complicit member to a group that claimed to value justice yet engaged in overtly racist behavior behind closed doors. Clay was completely honest and truly desired to pursue the justice that he pledged to value when he joined the fraternity.

After Clay's actions, he was seen as a rat. He was not rewarded for blowing the whistle, he was punished. He was harassed, threatened, and lost any hope of becoming a leader in our hometown. Clay is my hero because even though he knew that he would suffer, he acted anyway.

He exhibited a moral strength against racism that many others could not and have never attempted to match.

After graduating, Clay went to law school and is now clerking for a federal judge. He continued to use his strength throughout school to finish in the top of his class and inspired me to pursue a career in law as well. As a future attorney, I hope to have the strength my brother had when he was faced with the choice to stay silent or speak up. Because of Clay, I am inspired to truly pursue justice and shed light on the darkness. I hope he has inspired you to do the same.

Sincerely,  
Katelyn Jackson