

May 12, 2006

Attn: Phyllis Peoples
Terrebonne General Medical Center
8166 Main St.
Houma, Louisiana 70360

Dear Ms. Peoples:

My name is Nicholas Hillebran. I was employed at TGMC for about seven months as an ER Tech. Before my employment at TGMC, I worked at Teche Regional Medical Center as a CNA/ER Tech. I am writing this letter to you to notify you of some very unethical actions going on at TGMC. These unethical actions start on the departmental level and go as high as administration (in particular, Mr. John Ford, HR Director).

Mr. John Ford terminated my employment at TGMC on January 2, 2006. The main reason, it seemed, for the termination of my employment was because of false allegations against me; allegations that TGMC administration either failed to or did not care to fully investigate. Included in this letter is my side of what happened in regards to the initial reasons for my termination as well as quite a few matters I feel need to be addressed.

I had three days off (December 30 - 31, 2005 and January 1, 2006) as part of my schedule. When I arrived at TGMC for my night shift of 7 P.M. – 7 A.M on January 2, 2006, Percy, head of security, saw me in the ER lounge and asked me to follow him to the ER administration area. Once there, he pointed for me to go in to Ms. Rose Cuneo's office. I went in to her office and found Mr. John Ford sitting at her desk.

Mr. Ford asked me if I knew Percy. I stated that I had seen him around the hospital. Mr. Ford then stated that he had heard that I was looking for employment elsewhere and asked if this was true. I confirmed that what he heard was true. Mr. Ford then stated "...we are going to help you along your way and let you go." I took it that Mr. Ford was speaking on behalf of TGMC when he referred to "we." I asked Mr. Ford what reason was I being let go. I found it to be fishy that a company would discharge a person just because they decide to look for employment elsewhere. Mr. Ford stated that there were complaints filed against me stating that I had threatened my co-workers. Mr. Ford then stated that the reason for Percy's presence was that my co-workers felt threatened by me. In my opinion, this was the most absurd thing I had ever heard of.

I asked Mr. Ford who had filed the complaints against me. He stated that he could not release that for security reasons. Even though the complaints were false, I could understand his concern for the anonymous individual's security. I then asked what were the alleged threats I. He stated that he could not release that information either.

Now the matter started to seem a bit strange as if something was not right (i.e. as if he was not being completely honest with me or he was hiding something).

Eventually, I did find out the identity of the anonymous individuals whom made the complaints. The truth of the matter is that it was only "a complaint" not "complaints" as Mr. Ford had stated. According to the rebuttal TGMC gave to the Louisiana Department of Labor, it was stated that Mr. Tory Fletcher heard me make the comment of "one day I am going to come in here and shoot everybody one by one." The letter continued to state that he told two nurses, Cheryl Dufrene, RN (ER) and Carla Edgar, RN (ER). The testimony of Cheryl Dufrene and Carla Edgar cannot be considered as a valid testimony, especially as an eyewitness account, as is it nothing more than hearsay. They never actually heard me make the alleged statement; they are only repeating what they heard from Tory Fletcher. However, for the record, I will say that I never

once made the statement I was alleged to have made. A person who makes that up a statement as such truly has to be a sick, twisted, and morbid individual. It is a perfect example of how people at TGMC will try to get rid of you any way they can.

I found it difficult at first to accept that Mr. Fletcher would make up such a story. During the time I worked at TGMC, he was one of the few people I felt I did not have to watch my back with. However, this incident seems to have proved me wrong about Mr. Fletcher.

In regards to Carla Edgar, it is not surprising in the least bit that she would pass on such a lie. Ms. Edgar did not like me and was one of them that I knew wanted my employment to be terminated. She was the type that was always right and if you were below her, you were always wrong. Since my opinions differed to that of hers, she did not like me. In addition, since I stood up against her rude and obnoxious attitude, she did not like me.

I asked Mr. Ford what other reason or reasons were there for my termination. I asked this question as TGMC decided to terminate me for false allegations that were not even investigated. It was quite apparent that TGMC decided to terminate my employment without even seeking my side of the story. In my opinion, this is a very unprofessional way to handle a situation (including Mr. Ford's comments in regards to my seeking employment elsewhere).

Mr. Ford then stated a couple of incidents from the past. The first incident was a more recent incident. Mr. Ford stated that a nurse (whom he would not mention the name of) filed a complaint that I had used inappropriate language towards. Later, through reading TGMC's rebuttal letter to the Louisiana Department of Labor, I found out the name of the anonymous nurse. It was indeed the nurse I had suspected.

The name of the nurse was Tonya Pitre, RN (Emergency Department). I found it to be quite presumptuous of Ms. Pitre to file a complaint for the use of inappropriate language. The reason I find such is that Ms. Pitre used inappropriate language on numerous occasions and a regular basis. Many times, Ms. Pitre would greet me with such phrases as, "Hey bitch, what's up?" and "Hey mother fucker watcha doing?" I never said anything in regards to the matters, as I knew she was just joking around. Unfortunately, I noticed at TGMC that if you are not part of a clique or don't fit in, you aren't allowed to joke around in such a manner.

The next incident was in regards to Dr. Michael Isabelle, ER Director. A month or so before the first hurricane hit, I was called in to Ms. Rose Cuneo's office. Dr. Isabelle had sent Ms. Rose a memo in regards to a comment I made and he had become offended by. The exact comment I made was, "I'm glad I don't have to deal with these day queens anymore."

I made the comment on one of the last day shifts I had worked. During my work at TGMC, I noticed that egotistical attitudes were very prevalent. It was commonplace for nurses to push a large amount of the work on the ER Techs while they sat on their butts. If an ER Tech was busy and a nurse would ask them to do something, it was almost taboo for an ER Tech to ask a nurse to do it themselves. It is understood that ER Techs do have certain job duties/functions, however, my philosophy is the following: If an ER Tech is busy with other patients, why should that nurse's specific patient have a delay in patient care just because a nurse feels they are above doing that particular task?

It was also commonplace for nurses to talk down to ER Techs and boast their RN titles. I can understand that there is the chain of command, however, there is something called respect. Respect is not something I saw a whole lot of at TGMC. Nurses would demand ER Techs to do tasks and if an ER Tech would say anything about it, they would be scorned by the nurse as well as have the RN title thrown in their face.

One nurse I worked with, Ms. Karen, had a philosophy that I feel TGMC, ER in particular, needs to have drilled in to their heads. It was the beginning of the shift and I noticed Ms. Karen was stocking the IV cart down the Exam 9-15 hall. I had stated to Ms. Karen that I was going to get to it when I got the chance. She said, "OK." Well, she had ended up stocking the whole cart. I thanked her, as it was a big help to me. She said it was no problem. Then, she stated that she was an Army nurse and that when everyone pitches in to do work everyone can sit down and relax together. That statement literally gave me Goosebumps. It was a wonderful statement. She was just describing what is known as teamwork, not delegation work (as many of the ER nurses seem to practice).

I eventually got tired of dealing with this type of attitude with many of the nurses on the day crew (7 A.M. – 7 P.M.). I put in a request to be transferred to nights. On one of the last day shifts, I had made the comment about the day queens. A "queen" attitude is one that usually has an ego problem and acts as if they are royalty (hence the queen status). When I made the comment, I was in the confines of the ER lounge. The comment was not a loud comment. Dr. Isabelle was not even three feet away from me. Before I made the comment, I had mentioned the attitudes of the day nurses.

Dr. Isabelle decided to write a memo to Ms. Rose Cuneo stating that he wanted disciplinary action to be taken. Dr. Isabelle did not talk to me about the matter. He simply went behind my back and sent a memo. I feel that Dr. Isabelle did not handle that matter in a professional way whatsoever. If he was truly offended by the comment, he could have said something either upfront or later on the side. However, he chose to go behind my back, write a memo to Ms. Rose stating he wanted disciplinary action. In addition, since I felt such feelings towards some of the nurses, why didn't he look in to the matter and my complaints? This was another sign of favoritism and people belonging to a clique.

According to Ms. Rose Cuneo and Mr. Ford, the matter might have been brought as high as Teresita McNabb. When Ms. Rose and Mr. Ford told me this, I asked who was Teresita McNabb (as I had only heard the name in conversation); they stated she was the VP of Nursing. I could not believe my ears! A comment I make offends someone, the person goes behind my back, and then wants the VP of Nursing to handle the matter? I am sure Ms. McNabb has quite a few issues that are more serious on her plate than to deal with an offended egotistical doctor wanting "justice."

Going back to my termination discussion with Mr. Ford, he added that I had disrespected the nurses. I admitted that I did talk back on occasion to a nurse; however, it was never in direct defiance. I had explained to Mr. Ford how the nurses treat those below him. This was explained to Mr. Ford when I was called in by he and Ms. Rose in regards to Dr. Isabelle as well as during the termination discussion. I added that what he and the nurses consider talking back, I consider defending myself. I feel that it is unacceptable and uncalled for when a person is talked down to like a child and treated like dirt. I feel that one does have the right to defend themselves. I asked Mr. Ford that if by defending myself as I had stated was considered "disrespectful". Mr. Ford stated that it was still considered disrespectful and it was not tolerated at TGMC. Once again, this blew my mind away. I thought TGMC was a fair employer, unfortunately, I was completely wrong.

I asked Mr. Ford to do me a favor. I asked him to please look at the personnel records for ER. In particular, I asked him to look at the high turnover rate of ER techs at TGMC just in the past seven months I had been there. Mr. Ford asked me why. I stated that the reason many at TGMC wanted me to be fired was that I have independent thought. I don't accept everything that is stated to me. I have noticed that many at TGMC don't like people whom can think for themselves, those that do not agree with everything they agree with, those that don't fit in to one of the many tightly-woven cliques of the TGMC persona.

I used to wonder why when I would ask people, "Why did such and such get fired?" they would look around with a slightly paranoid look. The type of look as if they were expecting someone to be listening in on their conversations and turn them in. I now understand why they felt the way they did. If you are not a high up person (RN, above, some specialty, or part of the clique), then you are judged against very harshly at TGMC. TGMC is a very prejudice employer and has a large number of prejudice people.

Some may think that is just a conspiracy theory. I think not. I have seen many with the nervous look when talking about things that goes on at TGMC. I have seen a couple discriminated against based upon ethnicity. Mr. Tory Fletcher and his girlfriend (last that I know of) were discriminated against. Mr. Tory Fletcher, an African American male, works as an ER Tech in the ER. His girlfriend, Alonna Billiot (a Caucasian female), works as a hostess in ER. One day Mr. Fletcher told me that he had been called by Ms. Rose because complaints were filed with administration that he had been spending too much time up front talking with her. It was stated that the complaints were validated when administration reviewed the camera footage.

Mr. Fletcher asked me if I thought they were being racially discriminated against. I stated to Mr. Fletcher, that in my opinion, they were being discriminated against based on ethnicity (an African American dating a Caucasian female). My opinion is based on idea that it was stated that camera footage was reviewed to confirm the complaint. However, on nights that Tory, Alonna, and I worked, I would be at the front talking with Alonna as much if not more than Mr. Fletcher would. Therefore, if I were up front so much, then why did the reviewers only cause a ruckus over Mr. Fletcher being up front? It may not be concrete evidence, however, it sure is another fishy happening at TGMC.

What I found most astounding was the fact that Mr. Fletcher done just as Ms. Tonya Pitre had done. He condemned me for actions he himself was guilty of. Mr. Fletcher accused me of telling him of threats that one day I was going to shoot everyone. Such a statement nor any related statement was made by me. However, on one occasion Mr. Fletcher did tell me that he was going to do that exact thing he accused me of. I never said anything because I figured he was just blowing off steam. After seeing how Mr. Fletcher turned around what he said and blamed it on me, I cannot say for sure what Mr. Fletcher's mentality and/or character is. I can say this: If the goal of TGMC was to fire the gunman to protect its workers, they have failed. The gunman (Mr. Fletcher) is still employed at TGMC. This statement I am more than prepared to testify to in a court of law if necessary.

A few other incidents went out between a few nurses and I. Incidents I feel that just escalated some of their hatred towards me. One of the incidents is in regards to Ms. Carla Edgar, RN. I had previously mentioned Ms. Carla Edgar's dislike for me. Her dislike, in particular I believe stemmed from a disagreement between her and I. One night I was helping her in triage. The patient was a two year-old male that I was going to attempt an oral temperature on. Ms. Edgar forcefully told me to do a rectal temperature. I stated that I would like to try an oral temperature first. I prefer to firstly attempt non-invasive procedures on patients, especially young ones. Ms. Edgar started to raise her voice and act quite belligerent and demanded that I do the temperature rectally. At this point, I had no choice. Ms. Edgar's forceful voice had upset the young patient and there was no way that I was going to be able to attempt an oral temperature.

After the patient and their mother left the triage room, Ms. Edgar told me to never do that again. I asked her what she meant. She stated that I should never correct her in front of a patient again. I clearly explained to Ms. Edgar that I was not correcting her; I was merely wishing to attempt a non-invasive procedure before attempting an invasive procedure. She stated that two years of age was too young to perform an accurate temperature.

I have been in the medical field as a CNA/ER Tech for over five years. I was not trying to state that I know more than Ms. Edgar in regards to medicine, however, I do know for a fact that I have successfully performed oral temperatures on children as young as three months old. As I was taught, so long as the thermometer probe is surrounded by tissue with good blood supply, you can obtain an accurate temperature. In regards to children, it is acceptable to place the thermometer between the cheeks and the gums towards the back of the mouth. By doing so, the thermometer probe is fulfilling the goal of being surrounded by tissue with good blood supply.

I explained what I had been taught to Ms. Edgar. She did not even listen to what I stated. She only snuffed off what I said by replying with, "Well just do what I tell you and don't argue with me anymore." In regards to my statement that I had successfully performed oral temperatures on children as young as three months old, she stated, "I'm a pediatric expert so do what I say." I never stated that I knew more than her, however, no single person knows everything. I have worked with nurses that had never used a SurgiVac before. I showed them how to connect the device and use it. That is just one example of how just because one carries an RN title that those below you might not know something that you don't know.

Another incident was with Ms. Joy Rodrigue, RN (ER). A few minor incidents involved assisting Ms. Rodrigue in the triage area. Incidents with Ms. Rodrigue had to deal with sometimes not performing as fast as she would like or not placing a paper exactly where she would like. Instead of explaining what she would want done, she would get in a rage with a rude attitude.

Her attitude carried on to one night where I did hear her threaten me. I had just come on a 7 P.M. – 7 A.M. shift. Jason was the charge nurse for the night. He stated there was a psych patient whom needed to be monitored until security could return. Security had to tend to something on one of the floors. I went near the room the patient was in so that I could monitor the patient, but not be seen. Jason stated to me that when medical staff would go in the room, the patient would start to act up; therefore, if it was possible, for me to not go in the room unless necessary.

I was standing by the computer in the hallway next to the EENT room. Joy Rodrigue saw me standing there and rudely told me to get out of her way. I replied, "Excuse me?" Ms. Rodrigue told me that I was just in her way, standing there doing nothing. I explained to her that Jason told me to stand there and watch the psych patient. She replied that it didn't look like I was doing any work, that it looked like I was standing there doing nothing. I reiterated what I had previously told Ms. Rodrigue. She replied that I needed to act as if I was doing something. I really did not feel like discussing the matter and said, "whatever."

I went to the other side of the hallway so that I would not even be near her, however, in a position that I could still monitor the patient. I had thought the conversation was finished. About five minutes or so had passed by and when she walked by me she stated, "You know, that is really immature the way you acted." I asked what she meant by that. She stated that by me saying, "whatever" was childish and immature. I explained to Ms. Rodrigue that I stated that and walked off because our conversation was completely pointless. She believed that I was standing around doing nothing, even though I explained twice what I was doing. I was not going to argue the same statements back and forth repetitively.

Ms. Rodrigue stated that I should find a job elsewhere since I did not know how to act. I told her that I knew how to act. I stated to her that it was not my fault that she decided to walk around with a chip on her shoulder. She finished the conversation with "whatever" (even though a few sentences she had condemned me for saying such) and then stated that I had better quit while I was ahead because I was starting to "piss" her off. I stated I was not one of the people that would allow themselves to be stepped on by people like her. She got angry and told Jason that he had better do something or else she was going to end up punching me in the face. Jason never talked to me about the matter. However, I clearly heard her state to Jason the threat.

I do not doubt that not long after I was discharged from TGMC, there were meetings on workplace violence and related topics. I feel what TGMC should really be teaching is effective communication skills, topics relating to the prevention of the spreading of rumors, etc. I truly cannot recommend TGMC to anyone for use as a hospital or as an employer. I have never in my life never felt so at unease as I had at TGMC.

Since TGMC has continually failed to address any of the issues I presented, I have decided that I may post this letter on the Internet. Why? It seems that TGMC feels as if they are above everyone else. I guess administration and others feel as if I was just another smart aleck and got what I deserved. Until TGMC learns to respect others, the turnover rate will continue to increase. Slowly but surely people will start to talk more and word will get out how TGMC really treats people. I will be doing my part by warning others via the Internet of TGMC's unethical practices. You can publish all of the commercials you want on TV to promote the positive image of TGMC, however, those such as I that know the truth will warn others.

If my opinions are incorrect, then feel free to tell me how I am incorrect. I would be more than happy to discuss this matter. However, after my experiences at TGMC, what I have stated will not be altered on the Internet. These experiences have been laid out as they happened. I would like to ask yourself: If I experienced what was presented in this letter, how would I feel?

Because of my abrupt termination I encountered much emotional distress as well as financial distress. I still have not decided as to whether I will be filing civil suit against Mr. Tory Fletcher, Ms. Cheryl Dufrene, and Ms. Carla Edgar. What Mr. Fletcher's lie turned out to be was defamation of character and slander. Ms. Dufrene and Ms. Edgar are just as guilty of such crimes since they decided to spread the lie. In a court of law, you cannot plead "I didn't know it was a lie." Common sense should tell someone that if they didn't hear it with their ears, they should not be spreading it around.

In regards to TGMC, how I was treated by the staff, including Mr. John Ford was not illegal, however, it was very unethical and immoral. It truly does sadden me to see an organization such as TGMC, which was founded on a Christian Catholic basis, turn out to be such an immoral and unethical establishment. In addition, since I was initially denied the unemployment, I will be sending a copy of this letter to Louisiana Dept. of Labor. I feel that the Louisiana Department of Labor needs to see the true side of TGMC.

I look forward to your cooperation in this matter.

Best regards,

Nicholas P. Hillebran