

11 Forest Avenue
Rockville, MD 20850

June 9, 2015

Lynn Kapiloff
Chief Executive Officer
Sentinel Newspapers
5307 N. Charles St.
Baltimore, MD 21210-2022

Ms. Kapiloff,

I am writing to you to express my deep concern over the apparent lack of accountability for the editorial practices of *The Montgomery County Sentinel* and its staff.

I am sure that you are by now well aware of the well-documented serial plagiarism that has been occurring at your newspaper for the past several years by someone working under the pen name of "William Charles." Coverage in *The Washington Post* and *Bethesda Magazine*, among others, has been comprehensive. The *Post* called the *Sentinel's* plagiarism a "particularly striking" example of an artist "breaking all manner not only of journalistic ethics, but also of all professional code among colleagues."

While the *Sentinel* may eventually be held to legal account for its blatant and ongoing course of copyright violation, it is even more important that the newspaper immediately account to the community it serves for the actions of its editorial staff. As you are well aware, plagiarism is among the worst sins in journalism. It annihilates the trust between newspaper and reader.

The *Sentinel's* response so far has been entirely unacceptable. When I first published the carefully documented allegations of plagiarism against the *Sentinel* (doing so as a private citizen, and not in my capacity as a Rockville city councilmember), your editor, Brian Karem, denied any culpability on the *Sentinel's* part and, instead, immediately publicly threatened a retaliatory investigation via Twitter:



@CherylKagan "The Sentinel" plagiarized no cartoons. Investigating independent contributor who may have. Also



9:37 AM - 29 May 2015



@CherylKagan Also investigating Rockville Council. Thanks for all the information everyone who has supplied it to us!



9:37 AM - 29 May 2015

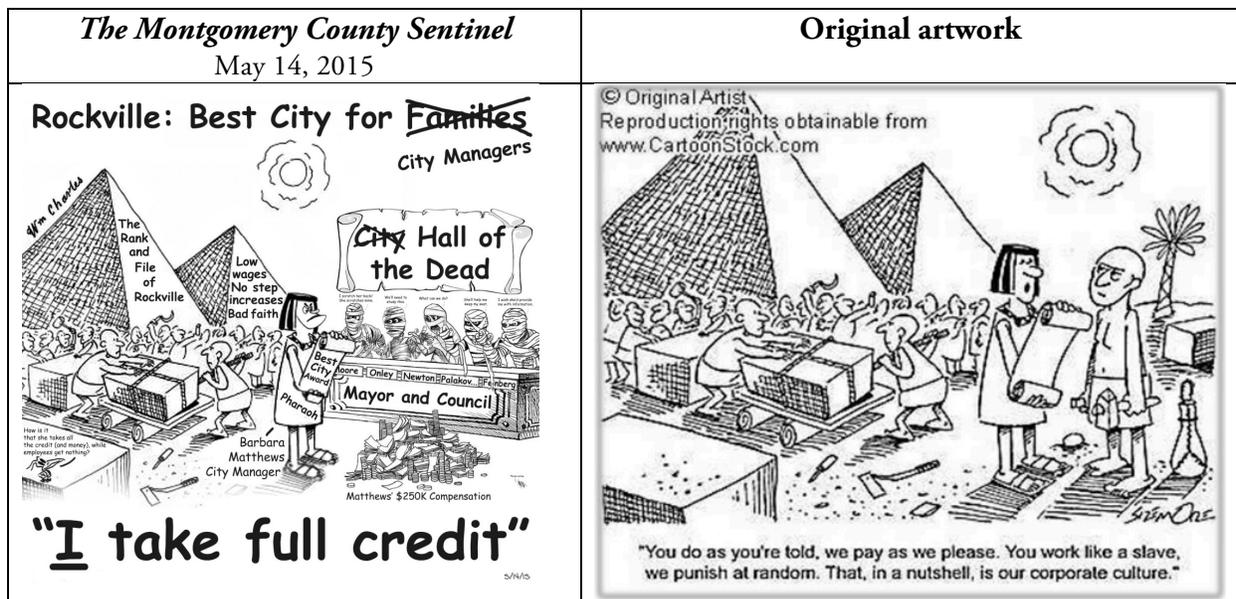
Mr. Karem then used even more surpassingly poor judgment to publicly joke about the matter:



Mr. Karem's public response over the next few days was hardly any better. He described the several years of plagiarism as "two strikes" against 'William Charles' and left the door open on whether he would publish work from his disgraced contributor in the future. Both statements are outrageous.

But what should be of far more concern to you is that Mr. Karem knew about his newspaper's plagiarism for months (at least), and has made false public statements about when he first learned of it. He claims that he was first informed that the *Sentinel* was publishing stolen content in late May 2015 by Mike Shapiro (one of the cartoonists whose work the *Sentinel* plagiarized), and that he acted immediately.

This is entirely false. I personally informed Mr. Karem that his cartoonist was stealing work from other artists on the Internet more than six months ago, on Nov. 29, 2014, while we were both in attendance at the lovely bat mitzvah of a mutual family friend. Mr. Karem was utterly unconcerned by what I told him, and he continued to publish demonstrably plagiarized work for another six months, until at least as late as May 14, 2015:



It is probable that Mr. Karem knew for far longer than six months that the artwork he was publishing was stolen. These cartoons were not buried in the back of the book. They were among the highest-profile content published by the *Sentinel*. I invite you to peruse an archive of suspect *Sentinel* cartoons at netcontribute.com/sentinel. Ask yourself if the wildly differing art styles each week over three years would have rung the alarm bells of any reasonable editor.

The silence from the corporate offices of Sentinel Newspapers has been conspicuous. The community has heard plenty from Mr. Karem, the Sentinel Newspapers employee who knowingly made the decision to publish plagiarized work week after week, and who is presumably trying hard to save his job through his public characterizations of the situation.

But we have heard nothing from you or any other officer of Sentinel Newspapers about how you view this situation, and what you plan to do to hold your editorial staff accountable.

Since 1855, and particularly under the leadership of your family, *The Montgomery County Sentinel* has had a proud tradition of service to the community. As its owner, you are the keeper of a sacred public trust, and the buck stops with you.

You continue to employ an editor who knowingly published brazenly plagiarized content week after week for months and perhaps years. There is no circumstance under which that is acceptable. Your community demands that you hold your editorial staff accountable for its actions.

If you wish to discuss with me any of the information contained in this letter, I welcome you to do so. My phone number is 301-642-2976, and my e-mail address is tom@moores.org.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Tom Moore". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long, sweeping horizontal line above the name.

Tom Moore