

**I**f you witnessed the violation of someone's rights would you stand up to your family, your employer, your priest, your neighbor or your friend? What would you be willing to risk standing up for justice? The answer to this question is dependent on many factors. In a personal exchange among friends discussing the risk of speaking up, loss of employment or promotional opportunity in the workplace was the most consistent theme of concern in the conversation. Following economic security, friends then cited loss of family, friends, and reputation as other compelling reasons for remaining quiet. I asked my friends, "Do we have a duty to obey the law?" "Witnessing a violation of the law is not the same as disobeying the law. So perhaps there is no reason to speak out?" one of my friends posited. Or is there? During this exchange, another friend replied: "Right is right. If you witness a wrong and do nothing, you may as well have done the wrong yourself. It may not always be possible or wise to directly confront the wrong-doer, but in my experience, there is always something you can do even if it is just acknowledging to the victim that a wrong has been done."

This story is about **my** decision to stand up for another person's rights, but I would argue that, as the narrative unfolds, it becomes about far more. The story covers more than three years of observations tracking an employment dispute that moved to a civil rights complaint in the case of *Hudson versus Philander Smith College*. Hudson, an alumnus and former staff member of Philander Smith College, was an ardent supporter of her alma mater and enjoyed a warm connection with the institution until her dismissal. I become involved because Hudson served in the same department that I managed at Philander Smith. It's worth noting that while I was identified as a witness, I was never subpoenaed, and neither of the parties were privy to manuscript development. The motivation to document the lawsuit was derived from conversations with cultural organizer and strategist Tufara Muhammad who cited how institutional power stifles victim complaints.

*This is a preview of the book. To read the whole book please visit <https://www.amazon.com/Its-Easy-Talk-Justice-Philander-ebook/dp/B07QDFC5K8>*