

The Day I Got Fired From My Foundation Job

by Lupin Pooter

It was probably bound to happen, or at least that's what my father said, and I took it as consolation that he saw it coming. At least my problems were predictable. What else could I say now that I was fired from the Gertrude and Herbert Katzenfeld Foundation?

It all came about, like so many things in the modern world, from social media. Which again, my father had warned me, I should be more careful about. My father tended to be right about a lot of things, which was both reassuring and unsettling, like the way he used to hug me as a kid and tell me I was so very loveable, even if I was a chunky monkey. He also liked to remind me frequently in texts, "DQYDJ," which, to those who aren't up on their Dad texting lingo, stands for Don't Quit Your Day Job, his stock response to my ongoing complaints about work and my inability to pay the bills on what I made.

In my day job I worked at the foundation as an assistant communications strategist. On my lunch break I liked to go on Twitter and check to see if anyone donated to my organization. I had started my own animal rescue organization senior year of college, Animalia, and I had applied to the Gates Foundation for a grant, because I read somewhere that they support animal rights. It was only a small grant I was asking for, by the standards of their money - now at \$68 billion. I wanted \$5,000 to fund my kitten rescue project which had already taken in its fifth batch of kittens.

But of course, I didn't get the grant, so my day job in communications at Katzenfeld continued. It was the first job I got out of college. I had been there for over a year and my salary was less than my rent and student loans combined, so I had to keep my job at Wendy's, working the closing shift from 8 pm to 2:30 am.

On my lunch break, I was scrolling through the Trump-hating tweets and the cute animal videos in my feed, when I saw a tweet from Melinda Gates. "Philanthropy is not about the money," she tweeted. "It's about using whatever resources you have at your fingertips to change the world for the better."

Wow, did that piss me off. Of all people to be talking about how philanthropy is not about the money, here was Melinda Gates. Of course, Melinda thinks everyone should be able to be a philanthropist. Even if you're working two jobs to pay off your student loans, you should still somehow be marshalling your "resources" to be a do-gooder in the world. And wasn't that exactly what I was doing with Animalia, my shelter for rescued kittens?

So I tweeted back. I knew I shouldn't have, but I did it anyway. I responded. All that responding, my father had once said, that will be the death of you. *Really?* I tweeted to Melinda. *You are going to tell us that philanthropy is not about the money? Some of us are working 2 JOBS and still can't make the bills.*

I was sweating, my heart racing and my eye twitching, sitting there at my desk in my cubicle with the walls that didn't even come up to shoulder height, because the foundation believed in openness and collaboration, and also in watching us constantly.

I swiveled in my chair and saw that Jeanine, my team lead, was standing at my cubicle. "Did you finish that letter for the year end campaign?" she asked.

"Oh, yes, it's almost done," I said.

She raised a finger to her forehead, looking perturbed. "The deadline was yesterday," she said as her eyes zeroed in on my phone. "Are you on Twitter?"

"Oh," I said. "I was just -- did you see this tweet from Melinda Gates?" I held up the phone for her to read Melinda's tweet, hoping she might share my outrage.

She stared at the phone and then at me, looking even more perturbed. "I could give two craps about tweets from Melinda Gates. You need to finish that letter."

"Sorry," I said. "I just couldn't let this one go without responding."

Her eyes paused on me then, with a measured kind of disdain. A few minutes later, she called me into her office. "We've decided we're no longer going to be needing your services," she said.

