

Full Disclosure: Manipulating Donors

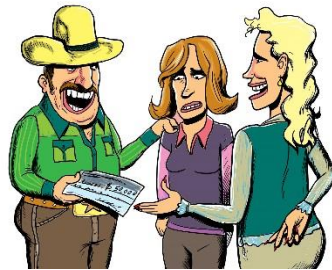
Jenny, a university student studying public relations, accepted an internship position in the fundraising department at Casa Tia Maria.* Casa Tia Maria is a non-profit organization in the United States that provides shelter for Central American immigrants while they look for permanent housing and employment. In addition to shelter, Casa Tia Maria provides food, clothing, and English classes. Most immigrants stay at the shelter for several months before securing permanent housing.

After Jenny had worked at Casa Tia Maria for two weeks, Mary, the director of development, asked Jenny to accompany her to a fundraising dinner at a luxurious downtown hotel. Many wealthy and influential individuals were in attendance. After most of the guests had left, Mary and Jenny were approached by Robert, a Texas oil baron and one of the state's biggest philanthropists. Robert was known to donate to almost any cause as long as he found it to be what he considered "morally sound" and to the benefit of "hard-working Americans."

Mary and Robert talked for a few minutes about Casa Tia Maria and its specific needs. Jenny noticed, however, that most of Mary's answers to Robert's questions about the shelter's clients were vague. When Robert said that he was happy to lend a hand to any poor American citizen, Jenny knew he clearly did not understand that immigrants, who were not U.S. citizens, were the shelter's clientele. Mary said nothing to correct Robert's misperception.

Robert pulled a checkbook out of his jacket and wrote a substantial check. As he handed it to Mary, he said, "I am so pleased to be able to help hard-working Americans." He then turned quickly and walked away.

**This case study is based on actual experiences of a university student. Names and situations have been changed, but the case study reflects the key ethical dilemmas the student faced.*



Discussion Questions:

1. What are the reasons and rationalizations that could prompt Jenny to be morally mute in this situation? Alternatively, what could prompt Jenny to *not* be morally mute? Explain.
2. Who are the stakeholders, and what is at stake for each party? How might each influence Jenny's actions? Explain.
3. Assume Jenny decides to break away from moral muteness, exercise moral imagination, and give voice to her values. What do you think she should do and why? Your answer should include, but not be limited to, the arguments that Jenny should make, to whom, and in what context. Present a plan of action.

4. As this case demonstrates, people in nonprofit organizations are far from immune from ethical issues. Do you think that the nonprofit setting affects any aspects of your responses to the above questions? Explain.
5. Do you think that employees in nonprofit organizations are more likely to fall prey to any particular biases or pressures? Do you think that people generally have higher expectations for employees of nonprofit organizations than for employees of for-profit corporations? Explain your reasoning.
6. Have you ever been an intern or employee in a situation similar to Jenny's? What was the situation? What did you do and why?

Resources:

How Advertising Practitioners View Ethics: Moral Muteness, Moral Myopia, and Moral Imagination

<http://www.jstor.org/stable/4189254>

Values-Driven Leadership Development: Where We Have Been and Where We Could Go

<http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/15416518.2012.708854>

Giving Voice to Values Curriculum

<http://www.babson.edu/Academics/teaching-research/gvv/Pages/curriculum.aspx>

Teaching Behavioral Ethics

<http://ethicsunwrapped.utexas.edu/wp-content/uploads/2014/09/Teaching-Behavioral-Ethics-by-Robert-A.-Prentice.pdf>

Behavioral Ethics and Teaching Ethical Decision Making

<http://ethicsunwrapped.utexas.edu/wp-content/uploads/2015/05/EthicalDecisionMaking.pdf>

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