

# USDA OFFICIAL SHOULD NOT HAVE BEEN FIRED

At an NAACP banquet last March, an African-American official for the U.S. Department of Agriculture told the audience how she once did not do all she could to help a white farmer get the aid he requested. The official, Shirley Sherrod, who was working at a land assistance organization in Georgia at the time, said the man was condescending. Nonetheless, her effort, tame as it may have been, succeeded: the man's wife today says Sherrod "kept us out of bankruptcy," and that she considers her to be a "friend for life."

A video of Sherrod's admission subsequently surfaced on YouTube and now she has been fired. U.S. Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack forced her to resign citing the "zero tolerance for discrimination at USDA."

Catholic League president Bill Donohue commented as follows:

Shirley Sherrod was fired because of the stupidity and downright injustice of "zero tolerance" policies. Such policies never allow room for mitigating circumstances, nuance and shades of grey; all they do is provide reason for the self-righteous to beat their breasts. Moreover, her infraction took place 24 years ago, and there is no evidence that Sherrod is a threat to white people today. Whether the accused is Sherrod, or a Catholic priest, "zero tolerance" policies make zero sense.

There is another reason why Sherrod was fired: she lost the backing of the elites in her own community. Last week, the NAACP attacked the Tea Party for being racist, so when the video appeared, it had little choice but to throw her overboard in the guise of looking fair. Had the NAACP not succumbed to demagoguery, it would have been able to come to

her defense.

The punishment does not fit the crime. Shirley Sherrod was sacrificed on the altar of expedient politics, and for that she can thank the Obama administration, "zero tolerance" policies and the NAACP.