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Frederick Company Fires Employee Who Taunted Bush

By: Jessica Valdez

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Glenn Hiller wasn't surprised by the scattered screams and cuss words he heard after he heckled President Bush at a rally in West Virginia on Tuesday.

But the Berkeley Springs, W.Va., resident never expected what happened the next morning, when he was fired from his \$35,000-a-year job as a graphic designer.

He said his boss at Octavo Designs, a Frederick-based advertising and design company, told him he had embarrassed and offended a client who provided tickets to the rally.

"She told me my actions reflected badly on the company," Hiller said. He said he had worked at Octavo for five months.

Hiller, 35, said he waited for lulls in the president's speech to shout questions and comments challenging what he called "half-truths" in Bush's statements. He said he asked Bush about the benefits of outsourcing jobs, justifications for the war in Iraq and inspectors' inability to find weapons of mass destruction there. He said that at one point, he shouted, "Would you sacrifice your daughters to liberate Iraq?"

Hiller said he then was escorted from the event at Hedgesville High School in Berkeley County, W.Va., and was threatened with arrest by campaign workers.

Hiller's boss at Octavo, Sue Hough, could not be reached for comment yesterday.

But Sandy Sponaule, who gave Hiller the ticket for the restricted event, said his behavior was out of line and made the crowd uncomfortable.

"All I thought was it's not the time or place to be disrespectful of the president of the United States," said Sponaule, whose public relations company has worked closely with Hiller and Octavo Designs. She said Hiller's behavior has put her own work in jeopardy.

The morning after the rally, Hiller said, he came to work and "there was just tension in the air." Hough told him his behavior was "unacceptable" and asked him to leave, he said.

Hiller said he doesn't regret what he did Tuesday and said he would do it again.

"I didn't do anything wrong," he said. "I wasn't a mindless heckler."

He said he was motivated by how Bush is "pulverizing" society and making people believe "that if somebody disagrees with you, they are bad." He also criticized rallies where tickets are required to attend.

"It's a completely scripted speech in a controlled environment where nobody but those who support him [is] allowed in," he said.

Hiller has two children, ages 15 months and 3 years, and he said he has interviews lined up in his search for a new job.

As for Sponaugle, she isn't surprised Octavo fired Hiller.

"In any business, you can't jeopardize client relationships," she said. "You can't be a small business and have your clients wondering what you're going to do next."

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