



## March 19, 2015 Press Conference Statement from Attorney Daniel Watkins and UVA Student Martese Johnson

**03.19.2015**

***Williams Mullen attorney Daniel P. Watkins released the following statement at a March 19, 2015 press conference at 6:15 p.m.:***

My name is Daniel Watkins and I am Martese Johnson's attorney. I am here with Martese's mom, Dychea, and his older brother, Michael. His mother works the night shift with Social Services and was just able to fly in today from Chicago to be here and support Martese during this trying time.

At approximately 12:30 a.m. on Wednesday morning, Martese was standing on the sidewalk near Trinity Irish Pub in Charlottesville. An employee of the establishment approached him and asked him for identification. Martese presented a valid Illinois state identification card issued in 2011. The employee then asked Martese for his zip code, and Martese recited his mother's Chicago city zip code at her current address, which is different than the Chicago city zip code on the identification card that was printed almost four years ago. At no time throughout the encounter did Martese present, as has been reported by some in the media, a fake ID.

Nevertheless, Virginia Alcoholic Beverage Control officers who were present on the scene questioned my client about being in possession of false identification. The conversation resulted in my client being thrown to the ground, his head hitting the pavement, the officers' knees pressed into his back, his face and skull bleeding and needing surgery. All this over two alleged offenses: 1) a misdemeanor charge of obstruction of justice without force and 2) profane swearing and/or public intoxication, which, upon conviction, requires only the payment of a fine.

Martese Johnson is an upstanding young man with a bright future. He grew up on the south side of Chicago, raised by a single mother, and is now in his third year at the University of Virginia on a full scholarship based on financial need. He has worked hard to become a well-respected leader on campus and to make a difference in this community. Martese is a member of the UVA Honor Committee and has no criminal record whatsoever. Martese has worked hard to ensure his bright future, and we intend to fight the criminal charges against him with the utmost vigor. Our primary goals are to make certain he receives due process under the law, and to protect his good name.

This afternoon Martese and I spoke briefly with the Virginia State Police as a part of its investigation into this incident. Martese, his family, and I also met with University of Virginia President Theresa Sullivan and the conversation was very productive. President Sullivan expressed her remorse regarding this

terrible situation, and told Martese that he has her support. To that end, Martese has received an outpouring of encouragement and remorse from professors, administrators, University officials, students, community members, and even perfect strangers. Walking on grounds this afternoon, we were amazed and touched as people approached Martese numerous times and offered pats on the back and well wishes.

Martese and his family intend to take the next few days to continue to recover in thoughtful prayer and contemplation.

I will close with a statement that Martese prepared:

*I stand here today as a member of the University of Virginia and Charlottesville communities. I am shocked that my face was slammed into the brick pavement just across the street from where I attend school. Three officers then pinned me to the ground, pressing their knees in my back, while blood flowed freely from the gash to my head.*

*As the officers held me down, one thought raced through my mind: How could this happen? My head lay bloody, but unbowed. I still believe in our community. I know this community will support me during this time. I trust that the scars on my face and head will one day heal. But the trauma from what the ABC officers did yesterday will stay with me forever. I believe we as a community are better than this. We cannot allow the actions of a few officers to ruin the community of trust we have worked so hard to build.*

Thank you.

**[\\*\\*Please note that photos of Martese Johnson are available here.\\*\\*](#)**

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