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## Shack Attack By Tamara Lush, Francisco Alvarado, Natalie O'Neill

News

### School Duel

*Teachers' union strikes at three of its own.*

**By Francisco Alvarado**

As public schools wind down for summer vacation, most teachers are kicking back. But not the folks in charge of the union representing Miami-Dade County educators. They've suspended three of their most vocal critics for subversive activity.

And it stinks.

"These accusations are completely unfounded," Shawn Beightol says. "It is a complete waste of our members' money."

Beightol and two others, Ronald Beasley and Rory Robinson, are accused of being members of an organization that's detrimental to United Teachers of Dade and of publishing false information about the union. Though they're stewards — and both Beasley and Beightol ran for union president — they can't represent any teachers until an in-house trial is complete.

Beasley claims union president Karen Aronowitz is behind the suspensions. "We will not stop opposing the negative policies of the district and [its] ally, Aronowitz," he says.

Obviously, the union president denies she is retaliating against the three. "I'm not the one who brought charges against them," she says. "But I have an obligation to uphold our bylaws and constitution."

Yet it is no coincidence Beightol was targeted. The high school science teacher has been among the most outspoken critics of union leadership and its handling of healthcare costs and possible layoffs.

Beightol says union attorney Patricia Ireland informed him this past May 20 that a union member — whom Ireland declined to identify — had complained he spread false information: that **the school district provides SUVs to administrators; that a vendor employing Superintendent Rudy Crew's son has received \$392,105 from the district since 2006; and that the school district subsidizes the salaries of 18 UTD officers for \$1.2 million per year. All of this is true.**

Ireland acknowledges she had the conversation with Beightol but insists the false information was unrelated to SUVs, Rudy Crew's son, or subsidized salaries. The attorney declined to be more specific.

She adds that the executive board also found probable cause that the three stewards have tried to recruit UTD members into a rival organization called Professional Educators Network, which Beightol denies.

"We are not seeking to compete with UTD," he says. "We just want to work as a catalyst for change within the school system and the union."