

REPEAT A LIE A THOUSAND TIMES AND IT BECOMES THE TRUTH

ON CHANCELLOR SERGIO CAO'S DENIAL OF PROF. SARAH RAYMUNDO'S APPEAL FOR TENURE

November 16, 2009

SOCIOLOGY PROFESSOR SARAH RAYMUNDO'S fight for justice and tenure is finally coming to a head. In a letter dated October 28, 2009, Chancellor Sergio Cao has ruled against granting her tenure. We cannot accept the justness of this decision and appeal to the University to set things right.

We can justify our opposition to this flawed decision by starting with two simple facts:

1) That the testimonies detailing alleged instances of Prof. Raymundo's "breach of professional ethics" or "dishonesty" are all **personal opinions** of a small group or of individuals coming from the Department of Sociology. These "facts" have neither been established by consensus nor adequately supported by any investigation or inquiries undertaken by the Department itself. In the minority report dated October 17, 2008 sent to Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs (VCAA) Lorna Paredes, three tenured faculty members (Profs. Marcia Fernandez, Clarissa Rubio and Marie Arguillas) of the Sociology Department strongly opposed to Prof. Raymundo's tenure presented their own "facts" and a (contentious) "interpretation of a poem" which merely represented their own opinions and not that of the Department itself.

2) Prof. Raymundo, not having been formally provided with a copy of these allegations until the release of the Chancellor's decision itself, could not reply to these alleged "facts" continually being cited against her. Furthermore, none of the accusations regarding "dishonesty" or "breach of professional ethics" are discussed or substantiated in any of the official letters written on behalf of the

Department itself which were sent to or coursed through Prof. Raymundo, the College Executive Board or the Chancellor.

It is therefore quite surprising how the Chancellor, in his latest decision, speaks of the "facts" (ultimately stemming from the minority report mentioned above) as if these had already been established on the basis of sufficient evidence.

The transformation of allegations and accusations into facts probably began with VCAA Paredes' June 20, 2008 letter wherein she requested an explanation from the majority of the Sociology Department regarding the case, "Perhaps the **majority** who were in favor can further explain how the academic qualifications and achievements far outweigh **this instance** of breach of professional ethics" (emphasis added). Her phrasing gives the impression that the so-called "breach of professional ethics" had been mentioned in the letter recommending the granting of tenure to Prof. Raymundo. This is actually not the case; the original letter of recommendation only mentions that there were a few concerns about Prof. Raymundo's "political commitment (vis-a-vis her academic responsibilities)." There was absolutely nothing mentioned in it about "weighing" ethical concerns against the other qualifications for tenure (Cf. Prof. Laura Samson's November 3, 2008 letter on behalf of the majority). The **minority** of three however gave an unsolicited response to VCAA Paredes' request to the effect that "it is not possible for academic performance to outweigh ethics" (October 17, 2008) as if, once again, it were an indubitable fact that Prof. Raymundo had indeed committed a "breach of professional ethics" which should be "weighed" against her other qualifications.

This sad train of **assuming the truth** of mere allegations and insinuations by force of repetition reaches its point of culmination in Chancellor Cao's October 28, 2009 letter, wherein he states that he "must also assess Professor Raymundo's academic qualifications and achievements vis-a-vis the other 'academic grounds' [professional ethics] being invoked to deny her tenure. What would tip the balance in Professor Raymundo's favour?" The metaphor of weighing is here once again repeated. But this assumes that the scale does have something on both sides to be weighed. How can the Chancellor assume that there is indeed some weight to the

allegations regarding Prof. Raymundo's "breach of professional ethics"?

The Chancellor believes that, based on some occasions where Prof. Raymundo met with the Chair of her Department (June 2008), two subsequent meetings with tenured faculty members (July 2008 and March 2009), and his own meeting with her on August 25, 2009, that she has been "given sufficient opportunities by the tenured faculty to explain her side of the issues raised."

Why then is this sentiment not shared by many of Prof. Raymundo's colleagues belonging to the Sociology Department itself? Prof. Laura Samson wrote, "I believe that Sarah deserves all the opportunities to be heard, to properly defend herself, and if possible or necessary, to make amends" (November 3, 2008). As late as January 12, 2009, Prof. Lanuza wrote that, "I believe that Prof. Sarah Jane Raymundo deserves a fair hearing before the tenured faculty so that she can answer all serious allegations raised against her by some of our colleagues in the series of our deliberations." A similar point questioning the applicability of the charge of "breach of professional ethics" was raised by Prof. Filomin Gutierrez in a letter dated January 12, 2009. More emphatically, Prof. Walden Bello in his January 12, 2009 letter protested that, "The conflation of the tenure process with a disciplinary process - *especially one that has not reached any conclusion on the guilt or innocence of the defendant* - is wrong and constitutes a dangerous precedent that would destroy the academic objectivity that is central to the tenure process" (italics in the original).

Regardless of the number of times she met with the tenured faculty, the most important thing is that Prof. Raymundo has never been given the opportunity to answer the allegations against her. The specific allegations and the supposed evidences supporting these have never been formally presented to her by any accusing party. This flatly violates the right of Prof. Raymundo to due process. The reality of the matter is that the weighing scale on the side of allegations may well turn out to be empty or just full of air. Likewise, on the other side of the weighing scale containing the other "academic qualifications," the Chancellor's rather mechanical and misplaced judgment on Prof. Raymundo's academic qualifications starkly contrasts with the assessment of the majority of her peers

within the Sociology Department who acknowledge her "excellent quality of mind," "expansive intellectual interest," "competence in current and emerging academic discourses (as) reflected in her teaching" and "capability to engage in sustained scholarship."

We believe that the Chancellor has erred on both sides of the scale. This matter is not a question of weighing Prof. Raymundo's excellent academic record against a pile of unsubstantiated and unconfirmed allegations; it is a matter of looking into the truth of the charges themselves and of setting in motion a process in which this can be ascertained with justice, due process and impartiality.

The quote, "repeat a lie a thousand times and it becomes the truth" came from the pen of the fascist Goebbels who expertly used the propagation and repetition of lies in the brutal campaign to crush dissent and rid Germany of leftwing thought. May this actually be the agenda of those using these nefarious means today, in our University, in the case of Prof. Raymundo?

We must ask ourselves the following questions: How is it possible, in a University that values inquiry and scientific thinking, that repeated allegations can so easily become mistaken for the truth? How can it be the case, in an institution that holds academic freedom sacred, that the defense of individual rights and due process can be so carelessly abbreviated?

**CHANCELLOR CAO'S DECISION, FLAWED AND UNJUST!
NO TO RED-BAITING!
END POLITICAL PERSECUTION IN THE ACADEME!
JUSTICE AND TENURE FOR PROF. SARAH RAYMUNDO!**



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