

From: Tom Wilde <[REDACTED]>
Subject: Fwd: LATimes Op-Ed
Date: January 22, 2006 10:41:11 PM PST
To: Saree Makdisi <makdisi@humnet.ucla.edu>

Dear Professor Makdisi,

After just recently sending you a few words of appreciation regarding your Op-Ed piece on Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon, I didn't think I'd be able to send you a few more words of appreciation again so soon; today's prominent placement of your "Witch hunt at UCLA" in the LATimes's Current section is well deserved in my view. So, thank you once again for your work.

Please permit me now to use your commentary on this topic to bring a related issue to your attention.

Regarding the Bruin Alumni Association's shenanigans, it seems clear enough that the university always enjoys a certain amount of credibility from what is only the latest episode of this type of witch hunting, insofar as the legitimacy of the university's enterprise derives in no small part from these kinds of ('ideology-charged') debates on the campus itself. Thus, in a very real sense, the university at least tacitly encourages this particular brand of divisiveness, as it gives to many (those inside and outside the university) the appearance of intellectual minds at heavy work. Voilà, the university and its mission substantially defined.

By the same token, it seems clear enough that the university would not encourage student and/or faculty work that calls into question the university's academic credibility and legitimacy as an institution founded on ethical principles. Of course, to find out whether this is in fact the case, we'd first look for instances where students and/or faculty are attempting to show the university that it is violating its own academic and ethical codes; then we'd look at how the university responds to these particular members of its population and their work.

It just so happens that three UCLA faculty have concluded from the facts in my termination file that I was wrongly dismissed from a Ph.D program in UCLA's Graduate School of Education and Information Studies (GSE&IS). Their conclusions would appear to merit student/faculty work, especially so given that following my termination, a UCLA Graduate Division Assistant Dean told me that the university "cannot be expected to [verify]" the information on which it bases its termination decisions. (We can imagine the academic trajectory of students/faculty who state that they cannot be expected to verify the information presented in their scholarship.)

It seems to me that the authentic so-called witch hunts are those that are only rarely exposed by university faculty, for reasons too obvious to state (and we need go back only 50 years to find how few university faculty—on a nation-wide scale—were attempting to show the university that it was violating its own academic and ethical codes in firing—and otherwise blacklisting—once tenured professors). Faculty fear has long been real in authentic challenges to the university's decisions, and it remains so today.

The crucial problem in the case of my termination from UCLA is not that UCLA has wrongly put me out of my academic career (this is a big problem only for me); rather, it is that UCLA's own faculty members have concluded from the facts in my termination file that I was wrongly dismissed by the university and that I nevertheless remain dismissed from my program.

Your recent Op-Ed pieces in the LATimes encourage me to ask whether you'd be interested in meeting with me and/or the other three UCLA faculty members so as to carefully examine the facts in my termination from UCLA and perhaps then take steps that you deem appropriate, based on your own conclusions from these facts. Of course, absent or prior to any such meeting, I'd certainly appreciate the opportunity to send you pertinent facts and the contact information for the three UCLA faculty members who've closely examined these facts.

My guess is that you'd find this matter at least a bit more interesting than that of Mr. Jones and his Bruin Alumni Association, in that this matter actually involves substantive academic principles and the work that must follow out of them.

Once you've recovered from the onslaught that's sure to come to you following today's Op-Ed piece, I'll look forward to your reply.

Sincerely,
Tom Wilde

Ps. As I was pleased that you prompted me to do so, I've included below the letter I wrote to the LATimes in support of your Op-Ed piece on Ariel Sharon.

Begin forwarded message:

From: Tom Wilde <[redacted]>
Date: January 8, 2006 6:55:02 PM PST
To: letters@latimes.com

Dear Staff at Letters to Los Angeles Times,

Saree Makdisi's *The Whitewashing of Ariel Sharon* (Op-Ed; 1/7/06) will likely provoke much "moral outrage," as Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon now lies in hospital fighting for his life. However, it is precisely at such a time, when large outpourings of compassion can most easily blanket both a man and his history with bleary-eyed adulation, that it becomes all the more necessary to bring the facts to the fore. Many a "man of courage and peace"—and much grossly distorted history—have been borne out of this time when mass expressions of sympathy, understandably devoid of unpleasant truths, go on to create the enduring myths of men and their work, though the facts remain to tell us that the reality is, more often than not, far different. Professor Makdisi and the Times have brought crucial facts to the fore at a crucial time.

Sincerely,

Tom Wilde

