

Members of CWU,

In the year 2020, there have been many issues that have arisen, many of these resulting from practices that are unjust. The current outrage that is occurring within this country, this state, it is about the systemic and institutionalized racism that is occurring within the fabric of this country. It is the unequal pay gap that people of color face, it is the stereotypes, it is the lack of cultural resources, it is the lack of faculty and staff that look like us, that understand our lived experiences and so much more.

Central Washington University continuously prides itself on being the “most diverse university in Washington state”, yet continues to fail in being inclusive, providing resources, and employing diverse faculty. Recently the university President, Gaudino released a statement reading:

“In recent years CWU has grown to be the most diverse regional university in the state. We have endeavored to hire diverse faculty and staff. We wear this mantle as a point of pride, making it all the more imperative for our University to listen closer, talk more and take substantive action to institute meaningful change on our campuses and in our classrooms and our communities. For all that we have tried to do, is it enough? The answer is emphatically, no”.

And he is correct, but at the same time the university’s actions do not speak to this narrative. Actions speak louder than words and the university has continued to fail faculty and students of color over and over again.

The university should be sustaining diverse faculty and making it a commitment to supporting students of color. The injustices are not recognized as injustices by those perpetuating them, the university continues to fail in this area, turning a blind eye. This is exactly what happened with one of the political science department’s greatest professors, Dr. Gilberto Garcia. The university had failed him, targeting him as they have targeted so many faculty of color, threatening to let him go in the Fall of 2019 following the fact that he made a critique of the university’s investment or lack thereof in El Centro Latinx for Latino and Latin American Studies, further known as the Latin Center. Garcia had been the Director for the Latin Center at the time, being the first Latinx director ever appointed to the position. He had seen what the Latin Center had

needed, and he had been doing his job and critiqued the university on the basis that the center only received a budget of \$2,000 annually and had no physical space for twelve years.

Dr. Garcia's critique had not been taken lightly by members of the administration, and he had been targeted as a result. He had and has been supported by his students and when the time had come for review for tenure, he had received an astounding review by the department committee and the college committee to grant tenure, but despite this, the Provost's office, the office of Provost Frank had rejected these reviews and had threatened to not renew his contract with the excuse of doing so due to minor offenses such as him being late to class on a few occasions. This was not the case, he was targeted for strictly political reasons. Dr. Garcia had been told that "he had shamed the university for criticizing Hispanic support systems", but he was right to speak out, the real question is, where are they? What Hispanic support systems do we have? They are frankly unrecognizable. Admin had removed Dr. Garcia from the Director of the Latin Center subsequently and had replaced him with a white biology professor with little qualifications for the director position, a man who studies reptiles. Dr. Garcia was far more qualified, conducting and publishing research on Northwest Latinx experiences, playing a large role in MECHA, being a mentor to Latinx students, participant in the creation of the first Latinx scholarship endowment at CWU, co-founder of Latinx Alumni Association at CWU, and much more. I will say this only once, *you cannot replace the lived experience of people of color with someone who knows a great deal of education about our experiences but has never lived those experiences themselves.* No matter what PhD or education you have on the subject, you will never truly understand what we have had to fight for just to get to where we are, where we want to go, and what we go through on a day to day basis.

This is not the only matter that is troublesome in this area, there is a double standard, although Dr. Garcia had been removed from his position for a simple, but harsh critique, other professors, notably white male professors have or were not removed for their sexual misconduct. Matthew Manweller had been paid \$155,000 to stop legal battles, even after there was more than enough evidence to terminate him for sexually harassing women for years at the university, his first offenses dating back since 2006. As reported by the *Seattle Times*, women were sexually harassed by professors on other occasions, but the university had chosen not to reprimand them for actions. For example, a white history professor Brian Carroll had been dating his students,

and despite this being extremely inappropriate and unethical and violating university conflict of interest policies for not disclosing of not one, but two sexual relationships with his students, he was not fired as he should have been. The university had told him on numerous occasions that he could not do so, and when he challenged them, the university had chosen to back down and do nothing. They struck a deal where he would continue to work for the university and would be given great letters of recommendation following his departure from the university when he had chosen to do so five months later. Another case is that of a white music professor engaging in acts of touching his female students inappropriately. Instead of being terminated for these disturbing acts, the university chose to clear him of any wrongdoing, but that was not enough, the university dropped one of the known students who had been harassed from the music department, had her agree to sign a non-disclosure agreement, and offered to pay a year's worth of tuition if she kept quiet, otherwise known as hush money.

There is a double standard within this university that is downright repulsive, and as proud as I am to call myself a wildcat, I am ashamed to see this side of CWU. The university *does not* support faculty of color, it *does not* support students of color, because the university can't even get the first tenant of support right. *In order to support students of color you must support faculty of color*, it is the most basic of things to do and this university can't even do it adequately. Faculty of color are not listened to, they are not valued, which is showcased by this single event. I could tell story after story, testimony after testimony, but my mentors, my faculty of color asked me to tell Garcia's, because he deserves justice.

Following the release of this document, I expect the university will do the same thing it always does, make a statement defending itself and actions, or issue an "apology" regarding that in which I have stated to try and protect its image, rather than truly taking a moment to reflect on its actions. Members of admin will likely be upset but just know, this was not meant to target any individual, the only reason you may feel the way you do as admin is because you were complicit and hold the guilt of being so.

I expect to be taken seriously, people of color continuously state the obvious, but the white denial within this country, within this institution blinds the key decision makers. People of color have to fight for everything we have, claw, tooth, and nail for what is just a given to those who are privileged right off the bat. We are taken half as seriously as those are white. As an

institution of higher education and development, we should be better than this, we pride ourselves on being the most “woke” but continuously embrace the status quo. Again, I could tell you encounter after encounter, but I wanted to highlight Dr. Garcia, whose experience, guidance, mentorship, and so much more cannot be replaced. With all that has been stated, I want to pose a question to all those who are reading, why would anyone want to come to a workplace where they are treated as Dr. Garcia has? He doesn’t do it for himself, he does it for all of us, all of his students, he does it to empower us even if sometimes he may feel powerless against the machine that is this institution. Instead of suppressing the voice of faculty of color, maybe the university should take some time, truly reflect on their decisions, and actually support faculty of color rather than just giving us all lip service.

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