

-----Original Message-----

From: Tom Wilde [deleted]
Sent: Wednesday, June 18, 2008 8:50 PM
To: C.P. Otero
Subject: Re: UCLA

Dear Dr. Otero,

If my letter doesn't turn up in your mail at some point, you can come back to this message and open the attached files. One is my letter; the other is an enclosure.

Also, I mailed another letter to you just today, via the UCLA Dept. of Spanish & Portuguese, so you might want to keep an eye out for it in the future. (I would send this along as a file as well, but it contains an enclosure that cannot easily be put into electronic form.)

Sincerely,
Tom Wilde

On Jun 20, 2008, at 7:40 PM, C.P. Otero wrote:
Dear Tom Wilde,

Thank you for bringing me up to date. I'm not surprised you feel "more sinned against than sinning", I understand you feel the away you seem to feel (giving what you describe), and I hope there is a satisfactory solution. Do you know that I've been far away from LA for some time now and I won't be back for a while?

Sincerely,
Carlos Otero

-----Original Message-----

From: Tom Wilde [deleted]
Sent: Monday, June 23, 2008 6:37 PM
To: C.P. Otero
Subject: Re: UCLA

Dear Dr. Carlos Otero,

Thank you for your reply.

Of course, how I feel and anyone's understanding of how I feel about my termination are wholly irrelevant.

I had thought my last letter to you made it clear that facts and academic principles are at issue. And the faculty conclusions drawn from these facts raise a serious issue of academic freedom because no faculty member has spoken out on this termination, despite their making or knowing these conclusions.

Because you've shown great interest in (and admiration for) Noam Chomsky's views on the university, I'm inclined to note also that your reply [above] is in stark contrast to his replies to me on the matter. Indeed, given your book, Chomsky on Education, it appears you may be interested in contacting him to ask him how he responded (and I would offer that he never used the situation as an opportunity to assess my feelings and thereby quote Shakespeare). In any case, he stated to me that didn't see physical distance as the obstacle you indicate it may be.

I hope my next letter to you, which should arrive there soon, helps you to understand not my feelings but a central operation of the university. And I hope my letter impels you to consider that when this operation shows the university's complete disregard for facts and fundamental academic principles, the university's own professors cannot then simply "hope there is a satisfactory solution."

Sincerely,
Tom Wilde

On Jun 24, 2008, at 10:49 PM, C.P. Otero wrote:
Dear Mr. Wilde:

I suspect I'm missing something, so your answer to this question might be helpful: What would you do if you were in my place and you received the email you've been sending me?

Sincerely,
Carlos Otero

-----Original Message-----

From: Tom Wilde [deleted]
Sent: Saturday, June 28, 2008 9:26 AM
To: C.P. Otero
Subject: Re: UCLA

Dear Dr. Carlos Otero,

Your several introductions to Noam Chomsky's books have greatly encouraged me to write to you from the beginning, and from your work I've just assumed that you fully agree with Chomsky's statement on the responsibility of intellectuals. So I'll use his statement to answer your question [above]: "It is the responsibility of intellectuals to speak the truth and to expose lies." Accordingly, whether it's me or anyone else in your place, this is the first order of work. "This, at least, may seem enough of a truism to pass without comment. Not so, however," Chomsky was compelled to add.

Of course, the facts and principles used to speak the truth and expose lies may come to anyone in your place in odd packages. Indeed, if anyone in your place truly understands this position (as defined by the university), I should be able to send them the facts and principles of my termination wrapped in profanities and complete nonsense, and they would simply discard this wrapping (however disgusting to them), work with the facts and principles, and stand up with these facts and principles to get the university to operate properly—in their names.

I suspect the something that you're missing could be found by righting your question: What do professors do when they receive facts (or at least their colleagues' conclusions on these facts) indicating falsehoods and lies are being used by their university to terminate their students?

And from my understanding of your work (and to quote a bit of it), I think you may agree with me that this question and its answer put us well along the path to "discovering important truths about the real workings of power."

Sincerely,
Tom Wilde

On Jun 29, 2008, at 11:05 PM, C.P. Otero wrote:

Dear Tom Wilde,

Since time is limited and no one can do everything, selection is unavoidable. At the moment my highest priority is to fulfill my commitment to write to books for two different British publishers which are long overdue [. .].

Sincerely,

Carlos P. Otero

From: Tom Wilde <deleted>
Date: July 1, 2008 10:10:17 PM PDT
To: C.P. Otero <otero@ucla.edu>
Subject: Re: UCLA

Dear Dr. Carlos Otero,

Thank you for your reply.

While I wouldn't have supposed that writing two books leaves no time for other activities, I'll comment on your putting forth book writing to exclude professors' acting on facts and principles that are central to the operational integrity of their university.

Your 'selection' begs important questions, the most obvious of which is: After how many such terminations do professors stop writing to defend that which allows them to write in the first place? Allowing my termination virtually guarantees that others like it will follow, while preventing it goes quite a long way to preventing others like it; this much is (or should be) clear to us all. Or if such terminations are just occasional, do professors simply allow them and then expect their students to ask nothing of them in return? In fact, this selection indicates a serious breakdown in the university, given the significant responsibilities of the university's uppermost faculty members.

Given these faculty responsibilities, one reasonably thinks these faculty members would feel obligated to offer at least a compelling argument for their inaction in a decision that is central to the university's operation. The UCLA Faculty Handbook states the university's professors are "to participate in university governance," so their inaction in this crucial decision may be seen as their failure (inability?) to fulfill a core requirement of their positions.

In my view, the most reasonable approach to this situation entails gathering these professors "to participate in university governance," with the understanding that facts and academic principles matter when the university makes a termination decision.

Because you are known as "a long-standing student of Chomsky's extensive and diverse body of work," I think his replies to me on this matter would interest you. In turn, he may appreciate knowing that you write books to the exclusion of determining how your university operates on your students. And you may want to contact him to get his answer to the question you put to me.

In any case, your selection now allows me to stand your question fully upon its feet: What would you do if you were terminated as I was (at this point, accepting the faculty statements I provided you) and your professors then told you that their book writing prevented them from acting on facts and academic principles to determine how their university expels their students? As you were also a student, your answer to this question might also be helpful.

In your book, *Chomsky on Democracy & Education*, Chomsky writes that "while understanding the world may be good for the soul (not meant to be disparaging), it doesn't help anyone else, or oneself very much either for that matter, unless it leads to action." Not a bad thought to keep in mind as you get along with your book writing.

Sincerely,
Tom Wilde

(Fifteen months later)

-----Original Message-----

From: Tom Wilde [deleted]
Sent: Wednesday, October 14, 2009 6:53 PM
To: Carlos P. Otero
Subject: Fwd: UCLA

Dear Carlos P. Otero,

I'm working on a website on which I would like to post some letters that I've written to you (attached [above] as Word docs), along with the email exchange that I'm forwarding here. [. . .].

Additionally, I would like any thoughts you might have on not wanting our email exchange to be posted on the Internet.

The website is: UCLA-Weeding101.info

Your examination of this site and some of the documents posted there will hopefully give you a good idea of what I'm trying to do there and why I think my letters to you and our email exchange are important additions to this site.

In any case, when a public university that markets itself globally as a bastion of the free exchange of ideas threatens legal action in an attempt to eliminate this website from the Internet (and virtually no media outlets attempt to look into this event), I think I may be on to something.

I hope to hear from you soon.

Sincerely,
Tom Wilde
Santa Monica, CA

On Oct 16, 2009, at 12:57 AM, C.P. Otero wrote:

Dear Mr. Tom Wilde:

Thanks for the information. I took a quite look (time is a scarce commodity these days) and my initial impression is that you put a considerable effort into it, to judge by the results.

The email exchange that you say you are forwarding is missing.

As you surmise, I don't want my part of our entirely private e-mail exchange to be posted at all.

Since Professor Brenner has been a close friend of mine from the time we joined UCLA, I'm inclined to believe that your view of your experience as a UCLA student might have merit, but without hearing both sides of the story (something I was not able to do), no one can reach a well supported conclusion.

Sincerely,
Carlos P. Otero

-----Original Message-----

From: Tom Wilde [deleted]
Sent: Saturday, October 17, 2009 4:17 PM
To: C.P. Otero
Subject: Re: UCLA

Dear Carlos P. Otero,

Thank you for your prompt reply.

I've pasted [above] the email exchange that you couldn't find at the end of my last message (though I think if you scroll down past the letter attachments in that previous email, you will find our exchange there).

After saying that you took a look at the website, you state that "no one can reach a well supported conclusion." Your close friend Robert Brenner, for one, was able to reach a conclusion on my termination, as were the two other UCLA faculty members whose conclusions I also quoted. So unless I've pulled their conclusions out of a hat or these faculty members offered their conclusions without careful examination of the available facts—and you could simply ask them if they did so—your conclusion is not supported at all.

Indeed, your own conclusion here that "no one can reach a well supported conclusion" indicates that you simply dismiss your UCLA colleagues' conclusions. I myself dismiss conclusions from faculty members who have not first carefully examined the facts of my termination.

I have put careful consideration into the relatively few lines that you wrote in our email correspondence [above] and I can only assure you that I do not take lightly my putting our exchange out for the public to examine. UCLA is a public university of significant value in my view, and I represent any number of hundreds of thousands of university students here and in universities around the globe. Through my website, I am trying to make what I think is a meaningful contribution to the university, and hence education as a whole, so that when I weigh my respect for your privacy in this highly specific case against my respect for what must be at the foundation of the university (and my deep respect for those struggling to secure this foundation), I choose to stand for the university's foundational principles (and those struggling for them, often at significant risk) over your privacy to a few lines that, to me, reveal nothing more than a UCLA professor's blithe disregard at best, or thinly-veiled contempt at worst, for his university, its faculty and students, and the public supporting this public institution.

In fact, your message here further strengthens my sense that UCLA's actions in this case do indeed put this case of my termination quite near to (or perhaps even into) the category of "ideal cases" that Noam Chomsky has strenuously sought and developed (and that you have written of as being crucial to "developing an insightful understanding of the facts and [to] discovering important truths about the real workings of power").

[...]

From all that you have written in your introductions and footnotes to Chomsky's works, you should well understand who inevitably winds up with the short end of the stick in challenges to powerful institutional authority, and this same history strongly assures me that you will continue to fare just fine (and therefore not be perturbed in your book writing).

In any case, it's surely not too late for you to make a (perhaps significant) contribution to your university by offering me some public support for my on-going work on my website.

Sincerely,
Tom Wilde
Santa Monica, CA

On Oct 19, 2009, at 9:23 PM, C.P. Otero wrote:

Dear Mr. Wilde:

On the first line of my email [above] I, of course, meant to write "quick". Because of the demands on me, I have to write in a hurry.

If Professor Brenner and the two other UCLA faculty members were able to reach a conclusion, and they are in LA, they are in a better position than I am to help you. I happen to be far from LA and have no plans to go there in the foreseeable future.

As for the difference in our reactions, one can only drink in his own cup (as the poet said). My first doctor degree was in law.

Sincerely,

Carlos P. Otero

From: Tom Wilde <deleted>
Date: October 21, 2009 7:04:40 PM PDT
To: C.P. Otero <otero@ucla.edu>
Subject: Re: UCLA

Dear Carlos P. Otero,

Thank you for your reply, and like all your others an interestingly worded one.

It isn't a case of "if Professor Brenner and two other UCLA faculty members were able to reach a conclusion"; they did in fact reach their conclusions after their careful examination of the facts of my termination (and since Robert Brenner is your close friend, why not just give him a call so that you can dispense with the "if" here). And yes, these faculty members are indeed in an optimum position to 'help me,' but since nothing followed out of their examinations and their conclusions I am left to conclude that they can see this work as only helping one long-ago terminated student, and therefore decided to get on with the business of their busy careers instead (while no doubt convinced that they are thereby helping many), at the expense of their academic and ethical duties and responsibilities to the university and its students. And your reply here follows the same pattern.

Which is to say that these professors evidently cannot understand that they do not come forth with these facts and these conclusions in order to only "help me." Indeed, the fact that you and several other professors have defined this termination only in terms of 'helping me' demonstrates these professors' inability to understand the issue as one of academic freedom—i.e., their freedom to take facts and conclusions into their own university's central operation: weeding out its students.

Professors don't 'help me' in this case; rather, they come forth with these facts and these conclusions to ensure that the university operates as it markets itself—in their names, and thus to practice academic freedom in the convenience of their own home.

The next line in Brenner's statement that I quoted is: "I have no difficulty saying [this conclusion] forcefully to anyone." As his close friend, you might then ask him why he has decided not to say his conclusion—drawn from a significant decision by the university—"forcefully to anyone." [...]

Since both you and I have noted the "difference in our reactions," I'd like to propose a much more limited release of our exchange [above]. That is, let's try submitting it to Noam Chomsky, whose thinking on such matters (as found in your *Chomsky on Democracy & Education*) has been important to both of us, and whose opinion may allow both of us to gain some further insights on and understanding of what's at issue in this case.

At first glance, my proposal may sound outlandish, given even what little I know of his work and schedule; nonetheless, I don't think our short exchange is so arcane or esoteric that he would dismiss it out of hand, and at least we ought to give him the opportunity to decline our asking him for his take on our exchange.

Given the subject of our exchange, its nature, and its actual words, I'd like to offer, too, that your choosing to end your last message with "My first doctor degree was in law" conjures up in my mind the State Comissar letting me know that should someone attempt to betray him with his own words, he'll simply send 'round the KGB to back him up. (Your remark also shows that your physical distance from UCLA is of no import when dealing with matters you deem important, i.e., it shows how your university terminates its students simply isn't important to you.)

Your chosen position also calls to mind something Paulo Freire once said: "To wash one's hands of the conflict between the powerful and the powerless means to side with the powerful, not to be neutral." I think you owe it to yourself to discover how your university will call you to its side in its central function: weeding out those that threaten it.

I hope you'll agree to my proposal.

Sincerely,
Tom Wilde

-----Original Message-----

From: Tom Wilde [deleted]
Sent: Saturday, October 31, 2009 10:05 AM
To: C.P. Otero
Subject: UCLA

Dear Carlos P. Otero,

In my last message I proposed sharing our email exchange with Noam Chomsky, but perhaps this proposal was not easily seen among the many other words there. So I'll ask you again here: Would you agree to my sending our exchange to him to see if he'd like to offer his take on it?

I'd briefly preface our exchange by letting him know that I think the exchange could give him a good (better?) idea of what a person is up against in attempting to get faculty members to practice academic freedom on the central function of their own university: "weeding out people who might threaten [it]," in his words. (I'd cc the message to you.)

Sincerely,
Tom Wilde

From: "C.P. Otero" <otero@ucla.edu>
Date: November 3, 2009 10:19:28 PM PST
To: "Tom Wilde" <deleted>
Subject: RE: UCLA

Dear Tom Wilde,

My answer is no. Chomsky has important things to do, even more than I have, and not time to misuse.

What you say you're trying to do about the decision of your former department at UCLA might be worth doing. I don't have a way of knowing, but perhaps some of the UCLA colleagues of mine who you say you talked to and are in LA have.

If you continue to try to impose on me the way you have been doing lately, it will be reasonable to wonder whether your way of dealing with people might be at the root of your apparently less than smooth relation with your former department at UCLA.

Sincerely,

Carlos P. Otero

(The above November 3, 2009, email was the last one I received from Carlos Otero.)

From: Tom Wilde <deleted>
Date: November 7, 2009 6:00:45 PM PST
To: C.P. Otero <otero@ucla.edu>
Subject: Re: UCLA

Dear Carlos P. Otero,

Thank you for a reply that builds still stronger support for your saying that "it is often the case that we have to be told something ten times before we can really hear it," and therefore further encourages me to respond:

My answer is no. Chomsky has important things to do, even more than I have, and not time to misuse.

In saying this, you're claiming to know what is and what is not a misuse of Chomsky's time, and therefore your "no" here appears to be your answering for him as well. Fortunately for us, Chomsky is still the only one who can tell us that he has "not time to misuse" on anything that might come his way. And coming from you, he may well read your statement on him as evidence that our exchange is not a misuse of his time. (Please trust that I do know "Chomsky has important things to do.")

What you say you're trying to do about the decision of your former department at UCLA might be worth doing. I don't have a way of knowing, but perhaps some of the UCLA colleagues of mine who you say you talked to and are in LA have.

In fact, you do have a way of knowing much (or at least much more) about what I'm trying to do, thanks to telephones, the Internet, and other convenient means of ascertaining facts and information. As such, your saying "UCLA colleagues of mine who you say you talked to" can be read as nothing more than insinuation. After all, since these are your close colleagues, wouldn't you want to know for certain that they made these conclusive statements on UCLA's primary function—or that I'm merely saying to you that I talked to them?

If you continue to try to impose on me the way you have been doing lately, it will be reasonable to wonder whether your way of dealing with people might be at the root of your apparently less than smooth relation with your former department at UCLA.

"If you can't answer on the facts and you can't answer on the principles, you better throw dirt." Chomsky went on to say, "[I]f you look at . . . the Berkeley professors, and there are plenty of others, it's the Sam Ervin story. You know you can't deal with the material. Either you ignore it, or if you can't ignore it, then defame the speaker. That's the only way you can deal with it if you don't have the brains or the knowledge or you know your position can't be defended. I think that's understandable, and in a sense you can appreciate it. That's just the hallmark of the commissar."

In this case dealing with crucial facts on UCLA's central operation and the university's academic and ethical principles, your closing line here reveals that you somehow know your position can't be defended, so you threw dirt.

Furthermore, your saying my efforts here are an 'imposition' on you shows that you do indeed need to be told something ten times before you can really hear it, because in this case it is your own university seriously imposing (its abusive will) on you (and your colleagues)—not I.

But whether you can really hear this or not, I hope you'll at least agree to allow Chomsky to decide for himself whether our exchange on UCLA's "basic institutional role and function" (in his words) is a misuse of his time.

Sincerely,
Tom Wilde