

TIME CERTAIN 3:15-3:30 PM – Open Forum for the Campus Community

Dr. Marlon Sherman of the Native American Studies Department spoke regarding faculty behavior. His comments are reproduced verbatim via the recording:

“I think some of you know me. This is probably, hopefully you'll end up really ticked off at me today because I'm here to talk about something very serious. But I think this is the proper forum because most of the groups on campus are represented here, and this involves most of the groups on campus. So, *'I came to bury Caesar today, not to praise him. The evil that men do lives on after them,'* Yep, evil. I've heard, and what prompted me to come here today was that yesterday I had a class session in which we could not continue talking about our assigned subject because some of the students were so upset and one of them, one of the young men was actually crying in class because he was so frustrated.

He was frustrated with—he named, later on, he named—five professors in his complaint, but the one specific professor that he talked about in that case, um, shut him down in class. The professor just happened to be a science professor, the professor criticized and disrespected, said the student, who is not Native, disrespected Indigenous knowledge and Indigenous ways of knowing. And said they cannot be science. And when the student challenged the professor, the professor shut him down. And he was so frustrated and so angry he could barely talk about it.

Some other students chimed in, and they had had the same experiences in their classes. Disrespect not only of Indigenous peoples but the disrespect of the students in their own classes, in not allowing them a forum to rebut what the professor had been teaching. I've also heard from other sources, that, well you know of course people now are looking toward the pilot programs for the place-based learning communities and working to get those integrated within the systems, and what we did, what Native American Studies did with the College of Natural Resources worked really well. Apparently it's still working really well after the first couple of years. And it's helping with retention in the sciences. So it's working so well that, 'oh gosh, let's spread it around the campus. Let's let everybody take advantage of a program like that.'

The problem though is that some of the professors would like to take advantage of the program, but they don't want to have to change their own teaching styles and their own curriculum. Different students learn different—different students from different societies, different cultures, learn in different ways, they have different experiences, certain things in school are more relevant to them and they learn better when they learn subjects that are relevant to them, or at least are able to put to use the subjects in university back home. Doing the things that are relevant to them. And there are some faculty on campus who are absolutely resisting that. They want Native American Studies or CRGS or somebody like us, one of the minority teaching groups, they want us to take care of diversity on campus. They want to send their students to us, all three colleges, I'm not talking just about the sciences here, I'm talking

about faculty in all three colleges, they want to send their students to us so that we can be the diversity. So that the students who come from LA from San Diego, from Sacramento, can look at us and say, 'yeah, this is a really diverse college here.' When in fact what's being taught in all the other classes has nothing to do with social justice or equity or anything to do with those terms. Let alone "diversity", whatever that means these days.

I figure this is the forum to talk about it. Somebody here needs to start an official discussion because I see the problem as elitism. Two things, well, elitism is basically one thing, elitism is selfishness, self-centeredness. In some places it borders on pathological. Because it is so much centered on oneself and one's own accomplishments. And what the faculty are saying and I've had this discussion with faculty before, what some of them are saying especially some of the full professors, tenured professors, especially full professors, are saying, 'You can't tell us what to teach. You can't tell us that we have to learn about diversity; we're unionized! I'm a full professor and I earned my degree at Oxford,' or some damn place. 'Don't tell me what to teach: I know it all. That's your area of expertise, you teach that. And then send them on here when they feel good.'

The faculty on this campus, yeah, they're elitist. And in some cases that transfers over to what I call racism. What actually *is* racism. And misogyny. Because I will tell you, Indigenous cultures are built on the feminine. And if you diss an Indigenous culture, you're disrespecting my mother. And I resent that, and so do our students. A lot of our students come from feminine-centered cultures.

I'm not going to take it too much further, I'm just saying that the faculty here are looking for excuses and the excuses that they're settling on are: 'the union, we have a contract, you can't tell us, we have academic freedom, you can't tell us, and I'm fully tenured, you cannot tell me.' So, that's my comment today. Something that needs discussion. I'm not saying anybody in this room is doing that, I'm saying across campus it's happening. I don't know who all is doing it, I don't know all the names; I know some of the names. Um, a hand over here? Bernadette?"

Senator McConnell: "Yeah, I wanted to make a quick comment alongside of that? Is that all right? I just wanted to go alongside of that and say, it is part of our strategic plan to, the direct language for that is that: 'We have a special opportunity to learn from Native American cultures, the unique ecosystem and special communities of our region and to apply that knowledge,' and it doesn't specify that it should be CRGS or Native American Studies that has to apply that, so I just wanted to say that it's already part of our strategic plan and if it's already that someone here is saying that, I would totally agree that something does need to happen."

Dr. Sherman continued:

"Yes, thank you, and I am fully aware of the strategic plan and it is a good plan, the problem is that people who may have signed on to that plan are actually actively resisting it by not wanting to incorporate any types of social justice or equity issues within their own curriculum. People

would rather rely on somebody else—it doesn't have to be us—but somebody else outside of their own class, just because they're not familiar with it. Maybe they're a little bit afraid of having to learn something new? I don't know. I know that I will never learn skiing because I don't want to ski with those little kids who are better than me. Maybe that's the case, I don't really know, but it bears talking about, it bears further discussion and serious discussion among all the people. Whenever I go to these so-called diversity meetings, you know what, it's the same people. It's always the same people. I finally gave up because we know it all. (No, I'm kidding.) But it's all the same ones, the people who really need it never come. Every time. So, how do you get everybody involved? That's my question. Everybody. *Everybody*. Thank you for your time."