



VIA ELECTRONIC MAIL

March 25, 2021

Dr. Mark C. Reed
President
St. Joseph's University
5600 City Avenue
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania 19131

Dear President Reed:

Dr. Gregory Manco, visiting assistant professor in the Department of Mathematics with fourteen years of service at St. Joseph's University, has advised the American Association of University Professors of the February 21, 2021, teleconference with Dean Shaily Menon, department chair Kristopher Tapp, and chief human resources officer Zenobia Hargust, notifying him that he was being placed immediately on paid administrative leave and thus removed from his teaching duties. According to a subsequent email message of the same date from Ms. Hargust, the stated basis for the action was "several complaints regarding online postings" "allegedly made" by Professor Manco that were "of a biased or discriminatory nature." Professor Manco has informed us that he was not afforded any procedure in which to contest his suspension.

We understand that the action was taken after a Twitter user on February 19 shared screen shots of three tweets from Professor Manco's personal Twitter account, tagged St. Joseph's Twitter account, and asked "this your mans?" The accompanying screenshot depicted three of the professor's tweets. In the first tweet, Professor Manco responded to a media report concerning President Biden's support for a commission to study reparations for Black Americans, by stating:

Suppose your great-great-grandfather murdered someone. The victim's great-great-grandson knocks on your door, shows you the newspaper clipping from 1905, and demands compensation from you. Your response?

Now get this racist reparation bullshit out of your head for good.

The screenshots of the second and third tweets showed Professor Manco's responses to different posts also concerning race-related issues. St. Joseph's tweeted shortly thanking the Twitter user "for bringing this to our attention" and assuring that SJU was "looking into this immediately."

The interest of this Association in Professor Manco's case stems from its longstanding commitment to academic freedom, tenure, and due process as set forth in the joint 1940 *Statement of Principles on Academic Freedom and Tenure* and the Association's derivative *Recommended Institutional Regulations on Academic Freedom and Tenure* (copies are attached for your convenience).

The AAUP has long considered the suspension of a faculty member from his or her primary responsibilities as a severe sanction, regardless of its purported basis. As noted in the attached *Use and Abuse of Faculty Suspensions*, a 2008 report issued by a subcommittee of our Committee A on

Academic Freedom and Tenure, suspending a faculty member from his or her core responsibilities “implies an extremely negative judgment, for which the basis remains untested in the absence of a hearing” and may “create a prejudicial atmosphere totally out of proportion to the alleged offense and undeserved in the professor’s previous record.” Accordingly, under Regulation 7a of the *Recommended Institutional Regulations*, an action to suspend a faculty member can be imposed only after an adjudicative hearing before an elected faculty body, the procedures for which are set forth in Regulation 5. Needless to say, one potential purpose of such a hearing is to protect academic freedom by affording peer review of any allegations that academic freedom violations have occurred. We have noted the St. Joseph’s University *Faculty Handbook* appears to be silent in this regard. It seems clear that Professor Manco has thus not been afforded the safeguards of academic due process called for under these generally accepted standards.

Doubtless you are also well aware that the AAUP’s opposition to punishing academics for their expressions as citizens rather than scholars dates back to a joint AAUP-AAC&U interpretation of the 1940 *Statement of Principles*, “the administration should remember that teachers are citizens and should be accorded the freedom of citizens,” and the AAUP’s derivative *Committee A Statement on Extramural Utterances* (attached).

The information in our possession relating to the case of Professor Manco has come to us from him and media accounts, and we appreciate that you may have additional information that would contribute to our understanding of what has occurred. We shall therefore welcome your comments. If the facts as we have recounted them are essentially accurate, we urge his reassignment to his normal faculty duties. As to any further action in his case, we urge that it be consistent with the procedural standards we have set forth. And we recommend that the abovementioned procedural standards be incorporated into the university’s faculty handbook.

Sincerely,



Anita Levy, Ph.D.
Associate Secretary

Enclosures (by email)

- cc: Dr. Cheryl McConnell, Provost
Dr. Shaily Menon, Dean, College of Arts and Sciences
Professor Kristopher Tapp, Chair, Department of Mathematics
Ms. Zenobia Hargust, Chief Human Resources Officer
Professor Gregory Manco
Professor Ann Green, President, St. Joseph’s University AAUP Chapter