

Anger and Trust

By Paul LaFollette, Editor

*I was angry with my friend;
I told my wrath, my wrath did end.
I was angry with my foe:
I told it not, my wrath did grow.*
William Blake

The best way to find out if you can trust somebody is to trust them.
Ernest Hemingway



Paul LaFollette,
Editor

The last couple of weeks have been eventful at Temple, and there is much that I could write about. I could rant about the fact that our prescription plan is forcing me to abandon the pharmacist that I have known and trusted for years. I could express “modified rapture” that the Board has decided, at least for the moment, to proceed less hastily in the matter of building a stadium on campus. But I think that it is best to consider, instead, the recent action of the Faculty Senate regarding Bill Cosby and the Board of Trustees, and the effect it is having on our community.

As everybody knows, on Friday, December 4, the following motion was passed.

The Temple University Faculty Senate drafted, passed, and proposed to the Temple Board of Trustees, the first Temple University Anti-Sexual Assault Policy in 1992.

Temple was the first U.S. college or university to prohibit sexual or romantic relationships between faculty members and faculty members' students.

Temple's Sexual Harassment and Sexual Assault Policies were strong statements of ethical standards, not just law.

Temple's Sexual Harassment and Sexual Assault Policies were and are applicable to all members of the Temple University community, including Trustees.

The actions of then Temple University Trustee, Cosby, assaulting a then-Temple University employee, Andrea Constand, violated both Temple University's Anti-Sexual Harassment and Anti-Sexual Assault policies.

Temple University Trustee, now Chair of the Temple University Board of Trustees, O'Connor, nevertheless, provided legal representation to Trustee Cosby, was fully aware of the facts of the Constand's case, including the availability of ten other women who experienced similar assaults [now over 30], and tape recorded admissions by Cosby. O'Connor was bound by the Temple University Sexual Harassment and Sexual Assault Policies. He also violated these policies.

THEREFORE, the Temple University Faculty Senate

- 1. Condemns the actions of then-Trustee Cosby and then-Trustee, now Chair, O'Connor:*
- 2. Calls upon President Neil Theobald to include as a majority of a Committee drafting new No Sexual Harassment, No Sexual Assault and No Stalking Policies, nominees of the Temple University Faculty Senate and students.*
- 3. Calls upon President Neil Theobald to adopt and implement the proposal of his own Committee to form a single office to oversee and implement Temple University's Sexual Harassment and Sexual Assault Policies.*
- 4. Calls upon the Board of Trustees to revoke the honorary degree(s) given to Bill Cosby by Temple University.*

The passage of the motion has developed serious tension and disagreement between various segments of our faculty, and between the Senate leadership and the Board.

We are publishing a letter from Professor Marina Angel (LAW) who introduced the motion at the September meeting of the Representative Senate. We are also publishing a letter from Professor Tricia Jones, President of the University Senate. These two letters display rather different points of view. We hope that by juxtaposing these two statements, we will give you the opportunity to develop for yourself an understanding of what has transpired.

It is my personal belief that as the Cosby situation unfolded, especially after the sealed transcripts were made available, it became highly desirable that our faculty make a statement condemning the kind of behavior of which Mr. Cosby has been accused. Otherwise, we would be open to the appearance of condoning such behavior. One may certainly argue as to whether the wording of this motion was the best way of making that statement, but not, I think, about the need for some sort of statement.

However, for many years Temple has been simmering with distrust, and that distrust falls along several different axes. There is distrust between the faculty and the administration, between the faculty and the board, between the tenured/tenure-track faculty and the non-tenure track faculty, between the research active faculty and the teaching faculty, between the young and the old, the unionized and the non-unionized. Much of the time, this tension simmers, largely un-noticed, but it has been there for a long time.

This recent action of the Senate has resurrected and intensified much of this tension. While the matter of Cosby's alleged actions is an important matter, it is going to play out in whatever manner it does. What we need to be thinking about at this time is the question, "How did our community become so fragmented, and what are we going to do about it?" Answering that question is not about fact finding. It is not about finding blame. I can find plenty of un-praiseworthy activities on the part of each of us. It is, instead, about finding ways to relieve this fragmentation.

I don't know how we rebuild our community, but I am pretty sure that it begins with two things -- a willingness of all of the groups mentioned above to communicate with one another openly, and a willingness to speculatively attempt to trust one another. I am not sanguine about our ability to do this. I do not know who, at this point, has enough widespread trust to provide effective leadership in bringing us back together.. But if we want to be as healthy as our potential greatness demands, we must find a way to heal our damaged community. ♦