

On Tantrum-Throwers and Rabble-Rousers

Statement Read at the University Council Meeting

17 February 2020

UP Diliman

Mr. Chancellor:

Thank you for indulging me these few minutes of the Council's time. Having served for some years as this university's spokesman, today I speak for myself. But I will also presume to speak for most if not all of our colleagues in congratulating you most heartily and thanking you most deeply for your six years of devoted leadership and service to this university. It has been a dynamic but also often difficult six years, marked both by a healthy growth in our resources but also by serious and continuing threats to our viability as an academic community.

We have not always agreed on specific matters, and many here, I'm sure, will recall some issue they may have had with either wing of Quezon Hall. As a former administrator myself, I know and appreciate the line between the ideal and the necessary that we often have to cross, to the inevitable disappointment of someone.

It is a sign of our resilience that we have been able to surmount most of those differences and disaffections. Those wishing to destroy this University would like nothing better than to divide this community so they could insert themselves into the breach. They would like to paint our disagreements in terms of a conflict between Diliman and the System, or between the University Council and the Board of Regents.

In truth, it has always been a fight between good and bad, between right and wrong, between freedom and repression, between excellence and mediocrity. And there has always been good and bad, right and wrong, excellence and mediocrity, on both sides of any of those aisles.

Those of us on the side of defending UP are unified in the belief that there can be no academic excellence without academic freedom. We can pursue and produce knowledge only because we are free to think, and to express ourselves.

This university's greatness lies less in its THE or QS scores than in its century-old tradition of speaking truth to power—which some have called a penchant for tantrums, and others rabble-rousing—and you, Mr. Chancellor, have done that tradition proud.

Those who can speak only of the “powers” of administration clearly do not understand and respect our culture of collegiality. Good academic governance has never been about the application of brute power, but of effective persuasion; if it stands to reason, it will be accepted. If not, then all the thunder and lightning from above will not make any self-respecting UP professor agree to what is wrong and unjust.

The real tantrum-throwers and rabble-rousers are those who rant and curse mindlessly on Facebook and Twitter like they owned this place and know better than our collective wisdom. We cannot be intimidated by such vagrants drunk with the presumed powers of an office they will hold for but a few years; we are professors for life. It is us, not they, who will write the history of this institution, and the reckoning will not be kind to the purveyors and protectors of mediocrity.



That history, Mr. Chancellor, will note that in these troubled times, you have exhibited firm moral leadership, demonstrating through this Council that Filipinos at their best must have not only an intellect but a conscience—and the courage to lend their voices to that conscience.

In electing your worthy successor, the Board has shown reason for hope by manifesting a progressive aspect that we can only appreciate and encourage. If we speak as one, with patience and reason, they will listen, aware that we are all accountable less to transient authority than to history itself.

Thank you, Chancellor Mike, for your principled and faithful service. Take a well-deserved break, and I look forward to having you join us soon in these seats reserved for tantrum-prone elders.

Maraming salamat, mabuhay kayo, mabuhay and inyong kapalit na si Chancellor Nemenzo, at mabuhay ang Unibersidad ng Pilipinas.

Jose Dalisay Jr., PhD
Professor Emeritus

