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March 11, 2016

The Graduate Faculty
Southwestern University
Via Professor Chito B. Salazar
President
Villa Aznar, Urgello Street
Cebu City 6000
Philippines

Dear Colleagues in the Graduate Faculty:

I am writing to convey my strong concern regarding the Doctor of Humanities (*honoris causa*) that your university awarded on February 18, 2009, to Mr. Emmanuel Dapidran “Manny” Pacquiao. To be honest, several of my colleagues in the Philippines and abroad wondered during the time why Mr. Pacquiao was granted such an elevated and strictly academic form of recognition, when most standard measures required for such an honor were missing in his public record. However, with a more liberal interpretation of critical research and practice, I presumed that you had regarded Mr. Pacquiao’s multiple championships in boxing as evidence of dedication to and expertise in the craft and science of his specific sport.

As you may have been aware of by now, on February 15, 2016, Mr. Pacquiao granted an interview where he remarked that he believed in same-sex practitioners as “*masahol sa hayop*” or worse than animals. The fuller interview, intended by his supporters as proof that he had been misquoted, merely mitigated the prevalent impression that he felt hatred toward members of the lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transsexual (LGBT) community, but nevertheless affirmed his view that members of this community were less than human. After issuing an apology, he proceeded to circulate via Instagram (since deleted) the source of his harsh opinion, the Book of Leviticus in the Old Testament, which stipulated that such individuals deserve to be stoned to death.

The outcry that followed from Mr. Pacquiao’s pronouncements focused on his campaign to hold a seat as Senator of the Republic. The media pointed out Mr. Pacquiao’s record of having had the most absences as Congressman, with only four attendances during the last year of his term. The most high-profile among his corporate sponsors, Nike, called his position “abhorrent” and announced the termination of its sponsorship arrangement with him. HBO, responsible for the pay-per-view broadcast of his championship bouts, similarly criticized him in the strongest terms. Asia Society, which handed him a Game Changer Award last year, described his comments about homosexuality as “an affront not only to our global mission but to any understanding of dignity, diversity and the embrace of all peoples, regardless of race, gender, religious beliefs, and sexual orientation” (“Statement Regarding Manny Pacquiao’s Recent Comments,” *Asia Society Philippines* website, February 20, 2016).

From experience, I can acknowledge that certain decisions made via the academic process may sometimes have been compromised by haste or inadequate information. In certain cases, people who hold the good name of a school could turn around and violate the principles that the school, via its recognition mechanism, entrusted to them. During my experience over three decades as faculty at the University of the Philippines (where I was with the College of Mass Communication and became Founding Director of the Film Institute), we maintained the integrity of the institution by constantly ensuring that our candidates were fully aware of the expectations that a liberal education degree encompassed. The earned doctorate I acquired at New York University similarly entailed constant reminders impressed upon us of the need to uphold hard work and integrity.

I assure you I am not in the habit of intervening in the affairs of an independent educational institution. However, Mr. Pacquiao now could claim to being a colleague of mine (as well as a few other Filipinos) in an overlapping field, a claim that you had made possible. I urge you to look closely into your process of granting him his honorary degree, and take appropriate and immediate action in retracting the degree that you had granted. The reputation of Southwestern University in particular and Philippine education in general is at stake, during this crisis moment when Philippine educational institutions are already under fire for their low standing in the eyes of global colleagues, as reflected in annual ranking services such as Quacquarelli Symonds and *Times Higher Education*.

By grossly misperceiving ancient and alien cultural prescriptions as applicable to universal modern contexts, using his celebrity status to propagate these utterly embarrassing and backward readings, and seriously endangering an already oppressed minority, Mr. Pacquiao has proved himself unworthy of being addressed as a Doctor of Humanities and is incapable of maintaining the ideals of liberal education.

Thank you for your attention. Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have further questions about my message.

Truly yours,



Jose Hernani S. David
Professor of Cultural Studies
Inha University

Copies furnished: Media Editors