How Work Reviews Can Be Read as Your Colleagues Telling You They Hate You: By the Way, It’s Really about How Institutions Resist Curricular Change, Too

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Abstract

Batya Weinbaum, a former assistant professor in the English department at Cleveland State University (CSU) in Ohio, sued the university for sex discrimination in her treatment and the decision to terminate her in violation of Ohio state laws. A full case summary is available at http://www.aauw.org/laf/cases/weinbaum.cfm

Learn more about tenure issues from the AAUW Legal Advocacy Fund by visiting http://www.aauw.org/laf/library/tenure.cfm

“What universities can and must resist are deliberate, overt attempts to impose orthodoxy and suppress dissent…In recent years, the threat of orthodoxy has come primarily from within rather than from outside the university.”

--Derek Bok, retiring pres. of Harvard, 1991

“In the past, systematic threats to academic freedom have been external. Today, however, the threat to academic freedom comes from within. The barbarians are not at the gates; they are inside the walls.”

American Council of Trustees and Alumni Statement on Academic Freedom 6/24/02

[1] I am playing transformations by Alice Coltrane every night. My sense of self has been destroyed. . . I am the CSU shaman who collects students’ stories and suggests changes in the curriculum. Who gathers stories and suggests new courses. Who comes here with Ph.D. at age 46, seeks new job offers but develops deepened ties with colleagues and relationships with students, brings in speakers, gets my university into the papers....who brings Octavia Butler to campus...who brings Diana Diprima to campus...who brings native poets to classes....who develops and offers new courses on Asian American lit, Native American Women’s Writing, Jewish American lit, who ...does oral histories in the peace movement in Israel....who brings out a book to national reviews on Amazon archetype in world lit...who ...gets two other book contracts ...whose three other books are in the library... whose twenty four other pieces of short scholarship since coming to the university didn’t qualify for tenure ....whose majority of teaching evaluations in the fourth (top) quartile didn’t help either...

willfully degrading; dominating and subverting; subverting through cunning; manipulating; threatening to degrade; willful intent to destroy; bringing down morality through any possible means; operating as the invisible other
[2] The above are codes gleaned from Stephen Carr’s analysis of anti-Semitism. The codes appeared in various letters written in my fourth year work review, which ultimately led to my receiving a terminal contract, without a hearing—and the effects of the terminal contract began before the announcement of a post-termination arbitration hearing were out.

[3] I perform this exploration in the spirit of the journal which encourages examination of the mundane aspects of our lives, and subjection of every day aspects of work situations to serious analysis and micro-inspection. I am examining in detail the mundane, exposing the normal to examination of intricate processes, and in doing so interpreting literacies to include the reading not only of books, arts and films, but reading and writing the world and reading and writing oneself into the world, and in relation to the world.

[4] In some ways, the letters written do not appear to me to be normal. Although passed off as normal, they appear abnormal. They appear to many readers outside of the immediate workplace context in which they were produced and circulated as psychologically abnormal, yet they were passed off as normal, within the group itself.

[5] Furthermore, what is more frightening, they successfully (so far—as I write, the process is being either sustained or reversed by an outside arbitrator after sixteen days of McCarthy-esque hearings) assassinated my character and had the effect of chasing me out of the university where I was doing good work and publishing at the rate of a superstar, as well as surveying students on their interests in multicultural literature offerings and presenting this data to the Committee on Instruction in a conservative, British literature dominated Department of English that didn’t ever have time to analyze the data, but had time to generate letters of personal attack on me to get me out instead. The university has cancelled my life insurance, my disability insurance, and has barred me from further campus meetings. At the assistant professor level, going up for my fourth year review only, I had, since coming to the institution, one book out and reviewed positively in national journals. In addition, I had two more in press, plus 24 smaller pieces of scholarship in highly competitive journals and peer-reviewed anthologies since coming to the institution. I had 25 citations in the index of scientific citations; the average of associate professors in my department was 4. The last woman (considerably younger than myself) going up for me had published a total of 100 pages (four articles and one book chapter) when she went up for tenure the year before. Nonetheless, the chair’s letter had said only about me that in terms of scholarship, I had produced about what was to be expected in terms of scholarship. One out of the three outside review letters had stated that the previous woman (in eighteenth century British lit, I’m a contemporary multiculturalist) hadn’t published enough to even receive tenure; but whatever one might speculate to be the intervening factors, she was nonetheless argued in. She was shoed under the door; for me, the gates had closed.

[6] My sense of faith in the order of things, in the process, in the academic world, and in myself was undermined. In spite of an extraordinarily high rate of scholarly production, plus the majority of my teaching scores being in the top quartile, I was still found unlikely to get tenure by first my department, then by my college. I missed the commonplace expectations that women are supposed to behave in a biosocial context, and that behaving in a likeable, pleasing manner and remaining non-threatening was more important that publishing, high visibility and high quality service and teaching.
[7] While a younger man in nineteenth century British literature with significant teaching evaluations in the lowest quartile, and less publications, not even one book since hire, hired after me, was tenured in by the same decision makers, in the same season that he made what seemed and felt like an inappropriately vicious written attack on me, recommendations that I was not tenurable were made.

[8] Disparate treatment can be observed in age and field, in terms of the first woman, and in terms of age, gender and field, in terms of the second case. For both these recommendations were supported by the upper administration. I was given a terminal contract; the younger, less published, nineteenth century British lit man was tenured in. Even my record of service achievement was also high for an assistant professor. The objective record included the development of several new courses, the development of a multicultural/multiethnic concentration, the starting up of a new journal, the development of an internship program, working with Women’s Studies that got its first major, extensive positive press coverage for the University, bringing in funds, but all remained well-nigh invisible. Once I got a grant for ten thousand dollars from a University source, nothing was said; two years later, he got the same amount, and a letter was written by the same chair who had refrained from comment on mine and ccd to the Dean congratulating the nineteenth century Brit Lit man on the unusually high amount of the grant.

[9] Based on illicitly collected letters and trumped up exaggerated allegations about breaking of professional ethics, my accomplishments appeared to be slighted if not ignored. I was instilled with fear of going down to campus, because who might have read the circulating letters, and dread of going on the job market, because who might call back and hear what my colleagues had to say even if I did get an interview, which I often did.

[10] The decisions as they were being made that seemed to have robbed me of my career mid-life appeared to have been largely based on subjective random data such as conversations collected at parties, hearsay and gossip about alleged conversations and interactions at cafes, and projections and interpretations about unwitnessed events. My sense of self worth was nearly destroyed. The evilness of the cannon balls thrown at me overcame my house, interfered in my relationships, shattered my self-esteem, broke up my family and my ties and my sense of the routine and, in short, created turmoil invading my personal life. This is the definition of uncollegiality—to so attack some one consistently and persistently, with such force, to the point where they cannot work. Yet, I continued to do my job, and to execute my profession, for what that’s worth.

[11] If there are lessons to be learned...they surely are not lessons about the triumphs of antifeminist intellectual harassment. On the contrary: in each instance, a strong, determined woman surmounted the harassment and survived, even succeeded. But there is a lesson to be learned, nonetheless: in each instance, the woman paid too high a price, a price that never should have been exacted in the first place. The energies of those who will be needed to lead the academy into the twenty-first century should not be so carelessly squandered.

Veve Clark, Shirley Nelson Garner, Margaret Higonnet, and Ketu H. Katrak

Anti feminism in the Academy

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The letters analyzed by many provoked numerous reader responses. A psychoanalytic anthropologist thought the force with which they were written, and the terminology, such as “invasive,” and “ate up meeting time,” indicated a deep-seated hatred of women and repressed homosexuality. A participant in women’s spirituality circles saw language of a witch-hunt, as did a political scientist who worked in Africa. Another political scientist and an anthropologist each saw evidence of what they separately referred to as a lynch mob. A forensic psychologist thought since the statements were general and not specific, in the review letters, the authors should be sued for insinuating psychological issues (boundary between personal and professional), which were really about my feminism, and not about psychological categories. Two male mentor/supporters, one in Urban Studies and another in Communications, saw law suits, against individuals and the university, for libel and assassination of character. A clinical psychologist thought a doctorate in English does not provide one with degrees to make statements about personality and hence that any dismissal could be immediately dismissed once it got to court. A gestalt therapist thought the statements indicated bipolar personality, and depicted some one who needed to be on medication, which meant that an ADA suit was a possibility, which was an opinion, indicated by two lawyers independently. Eleven senior faculty from across the university, representing three Colleges, were shocked and disturbed at the level of attack, and on their own formed a delegation to go to the President on my behalf. This delegation included three Emeritus professors, two of whom I had not met at the time that the group formed. They went out of principle for what a university—their university—should represent, not out of interest in representing me.

On the wake of world terror, a few weeks after the university had been shut down, and in the period in which students who had been holding it together began to fall apart, a secret memo was sent out by my Departmental Peer Review Executive Committee on Oct 4. Its intent was to gather letters about me to presumably to evaluate my service, but since I was neither notified nor consulted, the effect was to gather a mound of minutiae of evidence to be used to terrorize me. On the wake of this event, the PRC, sent letters out only to the tenured faculty of the Department of English, and hence, although I am an interdisciplinary person, and did much service work University-wide, which remained invisible to them, the small group’s executive committee sent letters only to itself. They did not ask me who would be able to evaluate my service or to whom I would want letters sent. This was the procedural violation that will ultimately make the noose hang around them. Or this remains the hope. During the arbitration, this was brought out.

I can have compassion for this small group of people, who it appears in retrospect selfishly wished to kill me off rather than to have the whole university move in the direction of the future. From the giraffe’s view, the future is what I stand for and represent, to many of the individuals trained in the old traditionalist school. These folks seemed to have initiated what many perceive as such a vicious witch hunt against me.

But from a distance, one could compassionately say, that they were trying to restore a sense of normalcy after Sept 11, and trying to expel the foreigner within their midst, even if it was myself. They, feeling terrorized perhaps, wanted to do what they had to do to regain control of their own little roost. Perhaps to do this, to regain control of their every dayness, they had to chase me out, to maintain or re-establish a sense of their own normalcy, to gain a sense of their bearings, themselves.
[16] By instilling fear within me, they might have felt, was their only way to combat, to get me out, because my publication record was superlative, and so was my teaching. I had surveyed students, which had indicated great interest in multicultural offerings at the upper levels. I upset the apple cart. I documented interest in more than the “same old same old,” the Miltons, the Chaucers, the Emily Dickinsons. Admittedly, this would have meant an ego death to the teachers of the old works, and thus rather than discuss the results of the survey, the data, which would have meant seriously setting goals to change the curriculum, they seemed to have gone about shooting the messenger to forestall change instead.

[17] The semester after I did a multicultural research report, still not openly discussed, not two months after the vote to reject my suggestion to rewrite the catalogue copy to put names of women authors into the bulletin descriptions of the department courses, I was handed, on Oct 31, 25 pages of letters, containing over 100 allegations largely of a personal nature to which I was to respond in less than two and a half business days. Unconsciously, I can only suppose, the departmental will was that I would be destroyed.

[18] Unconsciously, the group showed signs of slipping and falling apart. The chair, who shouldn’t even have been attending the meetings, “by accident” forwarded me an email in which he discussed the departmental meetings he was attending, and how much everybody dreaded them, with his shrink. I promised I would keep his secret; I am tired of keeping secrets by now.

[19] People turned on me who had spoken to me in quite friendly supportive manners, only the weekend before. The meetings were continued and continued, behind closed doors, with a colleague who had promised to call and give me results calling instead to tell me he wasn’t allowed to tell me what happened and hanging up. Which was rude I thought. Another colleague was pressured to reintroduce old healed hurts. Every matter of conflict archaeology was performed, taking the subject of discussion way off the bounds of judging my professional dossier, and my submitted professional work. A letter dated Oct. 12, 2001 was submitted by a junior colleague going up for tenure that same season through the same decision makers. He wasn’t even in the group named and invited to respond to the memo, and was crossing boundaries himself to have even responded to a memo that for all intents and purposes hadn’t been addressed to him and hence he should not have been allowed to read. Nonetheless, perhaps being eager to get the votes of approval from those in the group who had not been so eager to give him early tenure when he had requested it the previous spring, he entered a letter against me, supposedly unsolicited. In five pages, he made something like 39 allegations only 4 of which had anything to do with direct service work with me, the subject of the call of the memo

[20] Here I am in the Midwest. According to Stephen Carr, anti-Semitic tracks since 1892, such as The Talmudic Jew, The Original Mr. Jacobs, and The Protocols of Zion proliferated in the US after World War I particularly as spoon-fed through Henry Ford’s newspaper published in Dearborn, Michigan. The latter, The Independent, and the original tracts, spread images of Jews willfully degrading, dominating and subverting the American public. Beliefs thus proliferated and espoused later then surfaced in insidious ways, in a variety of discursive commentaries and communities. These included Minnesota populist tracts in which Jews were depicted as subverting other people’s orders through cunning intention, a reprehensible spectacle from which invectives were taken to inflame hostility to denounce Jews for manipulating the mind of the American
public. The demonization of ethnic control over media was used to protest the changing cultural landscape that threatened to degrade America, and was a rebellion against the onset of modernity.

[21] Many of the letters written demonize me as attempting to co-opt committees with multiculturalist agendas, dismissed as my “personal” thing. As a woman of course, I couldn’t have a professional or disciplinary position, or be operating as a political being in connection with any others, as one gender analyst read the situation. One particularly frenzied letter, in the final termination packet was written. The author admitted he saw me as a force of nature and himself as an Old Man afraid of being engulfed. In one of the letters—he wrote I believe 56 pages in total between the fourth year review and the termination packet—this author claimed that committee members stopped coming, insinuating they were afraid they would have to discuss multiculturalism due to me. Another Jew on the committee, who wrote me a letter of support, figured it out with me. We actually only discussed multiculturalism at the committee once. Once is enough to dominate and subvert, apparently. Later, the legal brief by the lawyer hired by the University to finish the job even carried the terrorist metaphor further, accusing me of “high jacking,” so great was my apparent force.

[22] I “waste time,” I “recklessly accuse,” I overall operate as the image of the Jew depicted in The Independent, Henry Ford’s newspaper, sold at all his distribution points once. The newspaper consistently depicted mass culture as an invaded body commingling older Shylock images with stereotypes from the Protocols doused with conspiracy theory. The editorials were frequently accusing Jews of operating as the invasive Other with willful intent to destroy the American ideal, bringing down American morality through any means possible. The letters seemed to have steam-rolled me out of Down and Out U, with the image of destroying the mission of the Department, and even the university, which, according to the letters, because of me, people were reluctant to serve.

[23] On the one hand, I was presented as totally ineffectual, and on the other hand, I was presented as being able to force a skewed reading on a Dean, when he wrote a letter of support of me. At a conference of the Association for Jewish Studies I was reading one of the group letters penned supposedly about myself. I pushed it aside, as I could no longer read the tirades, particularly a twisted depiction of a reference to the Holocaust that I had once made in a conversation in a café, making an analogy about degrees of assimilation of Jews to European culture and females to male culture. This happened to me many times this year, even again as I try to write this article. I have an idea, I pick up the stack, I look at the papers, I look down, I shuffle through, what I see there does not represent myself. I looked up, in a daze, at that conference in D.C., where, surrounded by Jews, even Jews I did not know, in a hotel, I was able to see through the smoke that had been thrown at me. Some one had just come up in the restaurant in the DC hotel to sit down next to me. It was the first time since Sept.11 I had flown out of town. She told me of another Jew this had happened to in Wisconsin; we connected.

[24] Terrorism can be a form of action that doesn’t involve planes, bombs or buildings. Now, Young Mr. Nineteenth Century Brit Lit, tenured in over me, has power over me. I went to lunch with a tenured member of the Department. What can I do, with this vicious attacker as Graduate Program Director? If one student complains about one thing, it might turn into a memo and be used in the future against me. I have been under attack like this steadily for, how many years?
[25] We were in a café.

“Why do you assume the worst?” I had tried to explain my terror to my senior colleague. He didn’t seem to understand me. I squirmed fitfully.

“Well, look what Hairy [I’m calling him here] wrote, look what he did! He detailed all these conversations at parties, at cafes, and wrote such distorted things…he depicted me so terribly; he said I asked invasive questions in my office, when I really asked him, if he had family. What was the matter with that? I thought I was being friendly! What a broadside attack letter, and the Department put it in my dossier and passed it through the college and used it to fire me.”

“Hairy knows how things work around here.” My kindly senior mentor, who sort of looks like Jesus Christ, come to think of it, said softly across the table to me. I looked up. He had uttered those words as if to reassure me. When we get together I have taken to initiating the conversations with, let’s pretend we are in Maui, or on a beach, or anywhere but here. We share a relationship to a common geography that is more expansive than this place in which we work, surrounded by the cold stone of concrete in city buildings in a gray downtown, in which even he, the tall medieval scholar, whom I had hoped to be above it all, has been signing letters against me.

“Yes, attack me! Attack me, to try to get early tenure! And it sure worked for Hairy, didn’t it!”

“No, Hairy knows how to compartmentalize. That letter did the Department more harm than good.”

I swallowed. I hadn’t been privy to this information. All I knew was how the letter had hurt me.

“OK,” I swallowed some pride. I wrote that down. “A GOOD STRATEGY IS TO TRY TO COMPARTAMENTALIZE: DO NOT ASSUME THAT EVERY SMALL COMPLAINT BY A STUDENT WORKING FOR ME WILL BE USED AGAINST ME AND WRITTEN UP LIKE SOME HEINOUS CRIME, although this has happened time after time.” And the University legal response to the EEOC claim brought up these small details over and over again.

I looked up and smiled weakly across the garlic bread between us on the blue-checkered table. “I see you are right. I have assumed the worse. I feel like a victim of abuse, battering and terrorism. I will try to proceed more calmly from now on.”

On the way back to campus, I carried my brown swinging hobo purse in one hand and my blue floral book bag in the other. As we walked up Euclid Avenue, I even joked about preparing to become a bag lady, or to go back to being a bag lady again, if I had to, and the year I had to look forward to ‘didn’t’ look so grim. Of course, even this kindly senior
mentor, when push came to shove, and they all had to stick together, testified against me, in the end.

WORKS CITED

Altman, Meryl. “To Whom It May Concern.” Undated.


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ii For analysis of how criteria actually shift for tenure reviews when necessary, in order to protect the traditional structures and strictures of academe, see “An Unten(ur)able
iii To give an indication of the level of stress on our campus, I was called twice, once in my office and once at home, about a student for example in the first few weeks of October who was crying, screaming, threatening to get a gun and end it all. No one knew whether she meant shoot herself or shoot the professor. The student who broke down had been known to work with me. The threat had been made to another professor; the counseling center had been asked to call me by my chair since she had been known to work with me on my journal and to repeatedly take my classes (I am committed to working with a range of disability students, having been a disability advocate for a number of years). I was asked by the counseling center to determine if this student had a tendency to danger and if a police report should be made, and if she was a danger to herself and others. I said that I should not be asked to make a professional evaluation of the student, since I was not a psychologist, and that I had not witnessed the event, and only that I had made repeated efforts to get her to go to the counseling center and to get the counseling center people to come see her myself. I asked if there were witnesses to this threat, I was told there were, and I said I would interview the witnesses first. I did, and thought the student was suicidal and not threatening the professor and that she was frustrated over losing financial aid, not really ready to kill herself or the professor but more in need of support in terms of an advocate to get her through the financial aid system. The chair was willing to meet with the student but not with anyone else, as he thought the student should speak for herself, and rejected my notion of organizing an advocacy support system for her. Immediately after this event, the series of attack letters on me were written. Perhaps there is not a one-to-one causal relationship. But it should impart to the reader the amount of emotional stress that existed in the campus environment, including the fear that a student that I worked with was possibly making a threat on the life of another professor in the department, which I had been asked to assess and had determined (correctly) was not valid.

iv Apparently, I am in good company, as such attempts at inner purging have occurred cyclically in some form or another to Jewish intellectuals before, such as Freud, Marx, Levi-Strauss. See Cuddihy.

v This metaphor was cited as inappropriate when the letters were sent for external review to a women’s studies reader (Altman): “The prospect was very much like that of being inundated by Faulkner’s ‘Old Man,’” the flooding Mississippi River, that overflows its banks and overwhelms the entire landscape. I didn’t fancy spending my final years at CSU sandbagging the levees before such a force of Nature…” (Richardson 25 October 2001) The memo illustrates the essential thesis of Horkeimer and Adorno’s *The Dialectic of Enlightenment*, which is that reason is anthropologically conditioned by the fear of nature. Richardson, the memo writer, illustrated the reasonable drive, then, to emancipate humans (the Department of English) from nature, dialectically prostituting reason as a

vi As nearly 40 people from around campus did, and more from the community and nationally and internationally; some were used in the arbitration.

* Batya S. Weinbaum, Ph.D. is a board member of Women in Judaism: A Multidisciplinary Journal. Her biography is available on-site.

July 6, 2005

Interim Report

Since the time of this writing, Dr. Weinbaum’s case on gender discrimination has been filed in the State of Ohio. She has received support from Greater Cleveland NOW, Ohio NOW Education Legal Fund, National Women's Studies Academic Discrimination Advisory Board, the Equity Fund of the Women's Classical Caucus, and the American Association of University Women, whose update summary is available at http://www.aauw.org/laf/cases/weinbaum.cfm. The AAUW takes continuing donations for the support of her case and others like it. The trial is scheduled for May, 2006.

Although hundreds of names have already been submitted in the form of group letters by scholars and petitions signed by students, faculty, community activists and local business people to the Board of Trustees, the Board of Regents, the Provost, and the President, additional letters of protest can be addressed to President Schwartz, RT 12th Floor, Cleveland State University, East 24th and Euclid Avenues, Cleveland, OH 44115. Additional appeals for her reinstatement can be sent to Dr. L. Barbato, Chair, Department of English, RT 18th Floor, Cleveland State University, Cleveland, OH, 44115.

NEWS from the American Association of University Women Legal Advocacy Fund

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
July 7, 2005
Claims of “Lack of Collegiality” Used to Mask Sex Discrimination in New AAUW Legal Advocacy Fund-Supported Case
Case Highlights Collegiality as a Smokescreen for Discrimination

“Sex discrimination that is covered-up by claims of lack of collegiality is still sex discrimination.”
– Leslie T. Annexstein, director, AAUW Legal Advocacy Fund

Washington – The concept of “collegiality” – the idea of cooperation and collaboration among colleagues in college and university faculties – is being scrutinized as a guise for sex discrimination in a new case adopted by the American Association of University Women (AAUW) Legal Advocacy Fund.

“Of all of the criteria that universities may use in evaluating the performance of women faculty, the use of collegiality as a criterion in employment decisions has too easily become a mask for sex discrimination,” said Leslie T. Annexstein, director of the AAUW Legal Advocacy Fund.

“The use of highly subjective criteria – such as collegiality – thwarts the ability of talented and credentialed academic women to enter the male-dominated ranks of higher education,” added Annexstein.

Batya Weinbaum, a former assistant professor in the English department at Cleveland State University (CSU) in Ohio, sued the university for sex discrimination in her treatment and the decision to terminate her in violation of Ohio state laws.

Weinbaum began her employment at CSU in 1998 as a tenure-track assistant professor. She claims that at the time of her hire, CSU officials promised her certain benefits such as a part-time graduate assistant, office space, and technical equipment to support her work on a feminist journal.

However, Weinbaum alleges that the university initially failed to fulfill all of these promises. Worse, she maintains that although her scholarship, service, and teaching were well above average - and often outpacing her colleagues- she continually faced harassment and disparate treatment from her male department chair, including exclusion from committees and the withholding of pertinent information.

The situation came to a crisis point in her fourth-year review, when the department’s peer review committee commended her on her scholarship and teaching, but questioned her potential for providing service to CSU’s community based on its assessment of her inability to work with others in her department. As a result of the assessment, the committee ultimately recommended that she not be reappointed.

Weinbaum claims that her chairperson and members of her peer review committee went so far as to solicit letters from people who disliked her to help base their decisions on
immaterial subjective personal and interpersonal matters rather than empirical fact. Her claims are bolstered by the results of her union appeal, where it was determined that university officials committed procedural irregularities when conducting Weinbaum’s review and treated her in a manner demeaning to her gender.

“Batya Weinbaum’s experience is representative of many cases we have seen where academic women have been halted in their careers because of their purported lack of collegiality,” said Annexstein.

“Unfortunately, gender stereotypes persist, and Weinbaum’s personality did not fit into her colleagues’ view of how a female professor should act. However, sex discrimination that is covered-up by claims of lack of collegiality is still sex discrimination,” Annexstein concluded.

Weinbaum filed her case in the State of Ohio Court of Claims in 2004. The case is in discovery. She has been awarded an initial $5,000 from the AAUW Legal Advocacy Fund to support her case.

A full case summary is available at http://www.aauw.org/laf/cases/weinbaum.cfm Learn more about tenure issues from the AAUW Legal Advocacy Fund by visiting http://www.aauw.org/laf/library/tenure.cfm

Editors: Interviews are available with AAUW Legal Advocacy Fund director Leslie Annexstein on this and other cases. Contact Jean-Marie Navetta at (202) 785-7738 or email navettaj@aauw.org to set up an interview.

The AAUW Legal Advocacy Fund provides funding and a support system for women seeking judicial redress for sexual discrimination. LAF is the nation’s largest legal fund focused solely on sex discrimination in higher education. Visit our website at http://www.aauw.org for more information.

AAUW: Because Equity Is Still an Issue

* * *

End Result:

From The Plain Dealer (Cleveland.com)
CSU, English Prof Settle Suit; She Gets $50,000

Saturday, January 21, 2006

Ted Wendling
Plain Dealer Bureau

Columbus - A judge approved a settlement Friday in which Cleveland State University will pay $50,000 to a former English professor who sued the university after she was fired in May 2003.

The settlement agreement, filed in the Ohio Court of Claims, says Batya Weinbaum will drop her lawsuit and not seek renewal of her teaching contract in exchange for the lump-sum payment.

Weinbaum sued CSU in 2004, claiming that Earl Anderson, then the English Department chairman, "bullied" and "marginalized" her, made defamatory comments and did not provide her with promised support and equipment for a feminist journal she edited.

She also accused Anderson and other CSU administrators of sex discrimination, saying they trumped up "petty" charges such as having children in her office while showing leniency toward male colleagues who committed more serious infractions.

For instance, she claimed, university officials failed to discipline a professor who falsified his credentials and another instructor who engaged in sexual relations with his graduate students. She did not identify either professor.

CSU officials could not be reached for comment, but in court papers filed by their attorney, they denied Weinbaum's allegations and said the university has a strong policy of "promoting equal employment opportunity and prohibiting illegal discrimination."

Weinbaum, the author of "Islands of Women and Amazons," currently lives in Oaxaca, Mexico.

She is the editor of Femspec, a journal featuring writings on fantasy, surrealism, myth and folklore.

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