

# FACULTY SPEAKS

Volume 1, Fall 2017. Editor: L.A. Perez-Feliciano & Asst. Editor: La Shanta Gill-May

## COMMENTS FROM THE FACULTY SPEAKS EDITOR

### Some Philosophical Musings

by Dr. L. A. Perez-Feliciano  
Faculty Speaks Editor

Esteemed colleagues, before I proceed with this account, I must ask you to excuse my use of philosophy and analogy to convey my message. I assure you that I am not trying to write in riddles. Neither am I trying to imitate our “research gurus.” Having said this, if you give me a little of your time, I am going to tell you a story that I hope you will find interesting.

Life is about facing all those ordeals that test our very existence. In the end, all of us have our odyssey to tell. The choices we make trying to solve our present problems impact our future challenges. Life plays a cruel joke on us. Whatever limited insight we may have into the future depends on our past experiences and observations. Unintended consequences thwart our best efforts. Sometimes we get lucky and hit the mark. However, it is foolish to depend on Fortuna to guide our lives. Philosophy is useless for understanding the present; it can only try to make sense of the past.

This perplexing shortcoming is the curse of

Minerva’s owl. As Hegel remarked, *Athene noctua* “begins its flight only with the falling of dusk.”<sup>1</sup> In other words, hindsight is what makes possible our understanding of history, our lives, and actions.

In the *Women of Trakhis*, the poet Sophocles expressed a similar thought when he stated “You do not know your own life, whether it is good or evil, not until it is over. Mine I know now. It is unlucky and harsh.”<sup>2</sup> When we look back at our lives, this is when regret sets in as we ponder “If only I would have done things differently.” We gain nothing by “wallowing in the mire,” except a “devil’s haircut.”<sup>3</sup>

Despite this limitation of ours, we cannot stop making decisions and taking actions as we try to achieve desirable ends. There is no need to despair. We are not entirely wandering in the dark. At the government level, there is a good standard to determine a policy’s success or failure. As Burke noted in *An Appeal from the New to the Old Whigs*, a good policy is one that contributes to the “happiness of millions of people” and promotes the “well-being of the present generation.”<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Hegel, G. W. F. (2008). “Preface.” *Outlines of the Philosophy of Right* (Oxford World’s Classics) (p. 16). OUP Oxford. Kindle Edition.

<sup>2</sup> Sophocles (2011). *The Complete Plays of Sophocles: A New Translation* (pp. 107-108). HarperCollins. Kindle Edition.

<sup>3</sup> “Anything that makes someone feel bad, depressed, or stressed out ...”

<https://www.urbandictionary.com/define.php?term=devils%20haircut>

<sup>4</sup> Burke, Edmund (1999). *The Portable Edmund Burke* (Portable Library) (p. 476). Penguin Group. Kindle Edition.

A successful policy is one that we can see and experience its positive results. The same applies to institutions, organizations, and corporations. In Texas Southern University's case, we need policies that actively contribute to its present success and lay the foundation for continual improvement. In the *Reflections on the Revolution in France*, Burke argued that the state is a "partnership not only between those who are living, but between those who are living, those who are dead, and those who are to be born."<sup>5</sup> The same partnership applies to TSU. By taking care of the present, we assure that those that came before and those that come after can have a profound sense of pride for their historic alma mater.

We have our eyes fixed on moving TSU forward and assuring its future viability. Not long ago, this proud Institution confronted great uncertainty and at times turmoil. With the new administration, things seem to be going in the right direction. One of President Austin Lane's goals is to "move Texas Southern University closer to becoming a higher education institution of first choice for high school graduates, transfer students and professional degree seekers, while remaining a welcoming school for those in need of a second chance" (TigerLand Newsletter, Jan 2017).

Maybe the worst is behind us. However, none of us can seriously argue that "all is well." Turbulent seas continue to batter the ship. As the captain and helmsman of this boat, President Lane has a firm hold on its steering wheel. His job is to maneuver the vessel away from the dangerous cliffs on both sides of the narrow strait that we currently navigate.

The heaps of human bones littering the strait's rocky shore were the ominous signs of the dangers that awaited Ulysses and his crew if the boat's captain would have lost his grip of the wheel and if the rough waters would have pushed the ship into the rocks.

When Ulysses was making his voyage from Troy to his home in Ithaca, Circe warned him about the dangerous strait that he was about to cross. She instructed him to avoid the side where the swelling waves crashed against the protruding rocks. Only the Argo made it across the narrow passage through this route. Further along, the channel became narrower and on both sides of it were two caves where the hideous monsters Scylla and Charybdis waited for their prey. To avoid the sirens' enchanting melodies that attracted their human prey to a certain death, she told Ulysses to have his men cover their ears with wax. If he wanted to listen to their beautiful and bewitching songs, his men had to tie him to the ship's mast, and he had to order them not to untie him no matter how much he pleaded for his release.<sup>6</sup>

The faculty believes that the current administration is guiding this historic Institution in the right direction. Dr. Lane is "listening and learning ... from multiple TSU stakeholders." So much so that "Many of the ideas and feedback gained from those conversations have already been implemented." President Lane promised to continue making changes "to maximize the University's full potential" based on the recommendations he continues to receive from stakeholders (TigerLand Newsletter, Jan 2017).

<sup>5</sup> Burke (1999). (p. 458).

<sup>6</sup> Homer (1967). *The Odyssey of Homer*. Book VIII (pp. 186-188). HarperCollins. Kindle Edition.

## Some Philosophical Musings

Continued From Previous Page

Before Ulysses and his men embarked on their risky sea journey, Circe asked him to go down to Hades to consult with the soul of the elder prophet Teiresias.<sup>7</sup> He needed the old seer's advice if he wanted to make it to Ithaca in time to save his ancestral home and lands. The thieves, circling like vultures, were waiting for the right time to snatch his property away from him. Ulysses listened attentively to Teiresias. His counsel was straightforward; do not make the same mistakes that the others before you made when they tried to make their way home from Troy.

We are glad that the "Listen & Learn Tour" was a success; its findings, "ideas and feedback" continue to produce positive results. However, in policy matters as in life,

one must be on the constant lookout for Scylla and Charybdis. These sirens hide their real intentions behind their captivating suggestions and charming personalities. Let us say that they do not have the best interests of TSU at heart. Teaching and service are to them what sunlight is to Dracula. They would do whatever is in their power to prevent those that want to eliminate this "no work culture" from getting to positions where they can implement policies to eradicate this pernicious ethos. This eradication will only come to fruition if TSU's dedicated faculty vigilantly stand guard to prevent the "swelling waves" from crashing the ship "against the protruding rocks." The faculty's vigilance will allow needed sunlight to burst through.

<sup>7</sup> Homer (1967). (p. 165).

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## A MESSAGE FROM THE FACULTY SENATE CHAIR

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Dear Colleagues,

As my first semester as Chair of the Faculty Senate/Assembly comes to a close, I want to take a brief moment of your time to say, thank you to the Senate/Assembly.

It is due to your support and collaboration that we have made it through a semester that began with great uncertainty due to Hurricane Harvey. We saw a city become a hashtag, #HoustonStrong, and come together to rebuild. We even witness the city's first, Major League Baseball title by the Houston Astros.

With this in mind, it will require our willingness to put our differences aside and build bridges that will allow us to come together to continue to move this university forward. We, as the Faculty Senate, must continue our work on behalf of the Assembly as well as the University and all of its stakeholders.

## A Message from the Chair

Continued From Previous Page

I am grateful to my colleagues that remain diligent and committed to Teaching, Research, and Service. Although, it is also important to me that we, the faculty of this great institution, continue to seek shared governance. While some faculty may feel disenfranchised in some aspect of the university governance process, I ask you to reconsider your position. As a member of the faculty, we do have a collective power. I ask of you, one thing, and that is for you to not abdicate your individual talent and to seek a voice in your department,

academic unit (school/college) and university committees. We have the ability to become the change we want to see.

I look forward to continuing this journey with each of you. Again, thank you for your time and efforts.

Please enjoy your break.

J. Kenyatta Cavil, Ed. D., M. B. A.  
Chair, Faculty Senate/Assembly  
Texas Southern University

## TSU FACULTY SENATE



*From Left to Right (Standing)*

Senator Nancy Griesinger, Program Coordinator La Shanta Gill-May, Senator Edward Bell, Senator Humphrey Regis, Senate Parliamentarian Mammo Woldie, Senator Carla Brailey, Senator Mario Hollomon, Senator Claire Thoreson, Senator Lucy Ojode, Senator Jeffrey Lowe, Senate Chair/Former Secretary Jafus Kenyatta Cavil, Senator Iris Lancaster, Senator Cyril Abobo, Senator Dianne Jemison Pollard, Faculty Senate General Counsel April Walker, Senator Carlton Perkins, Senate Treasurer Olurominiyi Ibitayo, Vice Chair Edieth Wu, Senator Lacey Reynolds, Faculty Speaks Editor Luis Perez-Feliciano

*From Left to Right (Sitting)*

Former Senate Chair/Secretary Rasoul Saneifard, President Austin Lane, Senator Ahunanya Anga, Senator Zivar Yousefipour

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# WE APPRECIATE YOUR SERVICE...

## Farewell to These 2015 – 2017 Executive Officer and Senators...

### *Executive Officer*

Dr. Vera Walker Hawkins (SOC)

### *Senators*

Dr. Anunanya Anga (TMSL), Dr. Nana Asara (COE), Dr. Marylise Caussin (COLABS), Dr. Daniel Georges-Abeyie (SOPA), Dr. Lila Ghemri (COSET), Dr. Mario Hollomon (COSET), Dr. Carlton Perkins (JHJ), Dr. Graham Thomas (COSET), Dr. Christopher Tymczak (COSET)

## ...And We Welcome New 2017 – 2019 Executive Officers



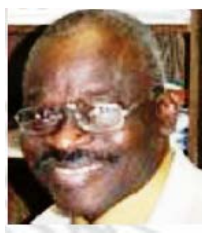
**Dr. J. Kenyatta Cavil**  
**Chair**



**Dr. Edieth Wu**  
**Vice Chair**



**Dr. Rasoul Saneifard**  
**Secretary**



**Dr. Olurominiyi Ibitayo**  
**Treasurer**



**Dr. Mammo Woldie**  
**Parliamentarian**



**Dr. Luis Perez-Feliciano**  
**Faculty Speaks Editor**

## ...And Returning and Newly Elected Senators

### *Returning Senators*

Dr. Cyril Abobo, (COPHS), Dr. Edward Bell (COPHS), Dr. Nancy Griesinger (COSET), Dr. Jeffrey Lowe, (SOPA), Dr. Lucy Ojode (JHJ), Dr. Lacey Reynolds (COE), Dr. Claire Thoreson (COE), Dr. Zivar Yousefipour (COPHS)

### *New Senators*

Dr. Carla Brailey (COLABS), Dr. Rockell Brown Burton (SOC), Dr. Carlos Handy (COSET), Dr. Demetrios Kazakos (COSET), Dr. Iris Lancaster (COLABS), Dr. Grace Loudd (COLABS), Dr. Edward (SpearIt) Maldonado (TMSL), Dr. Emmanuel Nwagwu (COE), Dr. Chu-Sheng Tai, (JHJ)

### *Faculty Senate General Counsel*

Dr. April Walker (TMSL)