



No.10, Jalan Mesjid Negeri
11600 Penang, Malaysia
Tel: (6)04-828 4648
Fax: (6)04-8284648
e-mail: cizs@streamyx.com

(BERHAD)

3rd November 2016

Tan Sri Prof. Dzulkifli Razak
President, International Association of Universities
UNESCO House
1, rue Miollis
75732 Paris Cedex 15
Secretariat :
Tel.: (33 1) 45 68 48 00
Fax: (33 1) 47 34 76 05
E-mail : iau@iau-aiu.net

Assalamualaikum wrbt

Dear Tan Sri Prof. Dzulkifli

This refers to an article, “To decolonise math, stand up to its false history and bad philosophy” by C. K. Raju. The article was published in the *Conversation*, global edition, on 24 October, 2016, and became immensely popular before being taken down suddenly, without sufficient reason, two days later.

The larger context of the article is the ongoing agitation by South African students for the decolonisation of universities, beginning with the “Rhodes must fall” campaign. Its immediate context was an earlier article in the *Conversation* by Karen Brodie who asserted that “Much, though certainly not all, mathematics is the work of dead white men.” C.K. Raju objected to Brodie statement as a piece of false history, and argued that the Brodie article aimed to misdirect students, since it aimed to recolonise, not decolonize their minds, by continuing to promote false history.

C.K. Raju also criticized the Brodie article for failing to cite serious earlier work on decolonisation, including the decolonisation of math and science, done under the aegis of the Multiversity in Malaysia, Iran, and India, which easily shows up even on a google search.

Raju's article was taken down for “editorial reasons” which have not been publicly specified. There was no reference to any errors in the article: had there been any, the *Conversation* should have simply published a rejoinder from any of its readers.

We believe taking down the article is therefore a clear admission of the inability of people at *Conversation* to contest C.K. Raju's arguments at the academic level. Apparently, the “editorial reason” privately communicated to Raju was that his article had

CITIZENS INTERNATIONAL is a global initiative from Penang, Malaysia. It seeks to analyse the causes of increased militarisation of the planet and to work towards an environment of peace and international security including the preservation of social justice, ecology and sustainable development. CI also intends to support the development of traditional knowledge systems.

too many self-citations. Such a reason would not stand public scrutiny. It makes a mockery of the *Conversation's* claim of "academic rigor", which has very obviously been subordinated in this instance to political expediency.

However, *our* major concern with this controversy is with the decolonisation of the education system.

C.K. Raju argued that false history was the tool used to advance unjustifiable claims of both racial and colonial superiority. In fact, he went further and argued that the same false history was analogously used to advance equally unjustifiable claims of the superiority of the Western philosophy of mathematics. He observed that he had already demonstrated alternative ways of teaching math. People who doubt C.K. Raju's claims are free to contest them through open academic debate, but we denounce the attempt to suppress them through, what appears to be, a blatant act of censorship. Censorship aims to prevent us from critically reflecting on the weaknesses of the Western academic system, which allowed that false history to be constructed in the first place.

Conversation's actions seek to consolidate rather than assist in demolishing that false history.

Therefore, through this open letter, we urge all persons concerned with the future of education to publish this letter, and to re-publish and re-post or link to Raju's article (now posted on his blog at <http://ckraju.net/blog?p=117>), everywhere possible, as a token that they are for an open academic debate on an important question which has been stifled by an arbitrary editorial act of censorship.

If there are no facts to support racist and colonial history, let it fall for ever, and not be saved by such editorial interventions.

We look forward to your reply, soonest.

Thank you and Wasslam.



S.M. Mohamed Idris
Chairman
Citizens International Berhad and Multiversity, Penang
No. 10 Jalan Mesjid Negeri, 11600 Penang, Malaysia
Tel/Fax: 604 8290586 email: idrismdcap@gmail.com