

Philippines, another abuse of power: “As journalists and as women, we are enraged by this virtual rape of Senator Leila De Lima by our lawmakers”

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SLUT-SHAMING IS AN ASSAULT ON ALL WOMEN

We, the WOMEN WRITERS IN MEDIA NOW, are outraged.

The intent of the Speaker of the House of Representatives, supported by the Secretary of Justice, to show during a House hearing the video, purportedly of a woman senator having sex, is vile, sexist, if not outright misogynistic. It is meant to defile a human being, who is, by right, entitled to respect, privacy, and dignity.

This behavior of our national leaders is a disgrace. It violates the right of every person—female or male, whistleblower or lackey, young or old, ordinary citizen or senator—to the guarantees of dignity and respect by our Constitution. It is, for us, a source of anguish and anger that the leaders of the House and the Executive show no trepidation or qualm about violating these guarantees, with malice towards one.

We are incensed by this cavalier threat by the Speaker and the Secretary of Justice to expose the sexual proclivities, real or imagined, of any person. This is an abuse of power. It effectively defiles a person who has not been proven to be in the right or in the wrong. And, even if the person were eventually found to be in the wrong, what can that person’s sex life have to do with the case under investigation, other than to shame the accused, titillate the public, and herald the powers of a speaker and a justice secretary?

As journalists and as women, we are enraged by this virtual rape of Senator Leila De Lima by our lawmakers. We are scandalized by this attack on her basic constitutional right to dignity and privacy.

Slut-shaming is cruel, despicable, and in this case, un-parliamentary. It is, at its core, an assault on all women. Yes, on all of us. Your very own wives, mothers, daughters, sisters, cousins, and friends.

All of you who smack your lips with delight at the thought of exhibiting a sex video to the world to shame a woman, are you not descending to the level of perverts? Yes, perverts.

A man, no matter how crass, is not made to undergo such a punishment. But, under a misogynistic government, women are fair game. When a woman rails against the powers to express outrage, she is dismissed as hysterical; when a man hurls personal insults in anger, he is lauded as decisive. When a woman is sexually active, she is shamed; when a man has multiple sex partners, he is extolled.

These vestiges of a double-standard have no place in our society in the 21st century. We demand the

respect due us who hold up half the sky. We demand to be treated as co-equal partners in building our nation.

We must put an end to this ugly voyeurism that has publicly debased a woman senator without regard for her personhood. We call out our legislators' impaired thought processes. We want the return of respect, dignity, and due process for all. We insist, as citizens, to be treated right.

We still, after all, live under a democracy, last we looked.●

Signed October 1, 2016

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