

Editor's note: Harassment policy

We have heard from readers with concerns about the publication of the Letter “Harassment charges: Injustice done?” (A. Moya *et al.*, 17 August, p. 655). At *Science*, we take harassment issues very seriously. We are working to develop policies that adhere to our editorial principle of airing a wide range of perspectives and that also prevent causing further harm to the targets of harassment.

Publication of a Letter does not represent an endorsement by the editorial staff at *Science*. Past practice has been based on the understanding that reader-submitted Letters are intended to reflect conversations taking place in the scientific community. The published Letter in question did that by raising concerns about the transparency of the investigatory process. This point touched on the challenges institutions face when determining how the processes and outcomes of harassment investigations should be shared, decisions that must weigh the benefits of transparency against important privacy concerns. However, the Letter also discussed the personal conduct and scientific accomplishments of the individual found guilty of harassment.

In the future, we will not publish Letters in which authors argue that an individual accused or found guilty of harassment is likely innocent because others have interacted with that person without incident; this argument is logically flawed. In addition, although some information about a person's scientific achievements is at times necessary to establish context, we will not publish Letters in which authors argue that professional achievements have any bearing at all on the likelihood that the individual engaged in harassment. Such arguments not only lack relevance to harassment behavior but also may result in further harm to the targets of harassment and exacerbate the already daunting process that targets face in coming forward publicly.

We are striving to increase our understanding of all facets of the issue of harassment and to review and modify our editorial processes accordingly.

Jeremy M. Berg
Editor-in-Chief



LETTERS

UCI decided to remove Francisco Ayala's name from the science library after he resigned amid sexual harassment allegations.

Edited by Jennifer Sills

Harassment charges: Enough himpathy

We are well into the #Metoo era, yet journalists and editors are still fixated on the harasser's fall from grace rather than the detrimental effect of sexual harassment on the victims and our society as a whole. The News story "Prominent geneticist out at UC Irvine after harassment finding" (M. Wadman, 29 June, <https://scim.ag/AyalaResignation>) reinforces a familiar toxic narrative: The accomplishments of the harasser hold more value to science than women's right to a safe workplace. This is now so commonplace that it has been dubbed "himpathy" (1).

In the News story, Wadman tells us all about the "eminent" professor, from his scientific accomplishments to his personal hobbies. He did "pioneering" and "ground-breaking" work, he donated money to the university, and he was president of AAAS (the publisher of *Science*). However, we do not hear about the pioneering work of the women he harassed at University of California, Irvine (UCI). From a graduate student to a tenured professor to an assistant dean, the News story reduced the women who demanded an end to his misconduct to complainers. We are told that Ayala was just being "European" and his actions were misunderstood; instead, the narrative should focus on the many women and careers that suffered from Ayala's actions. Wadman then chose to end the article by quoting an Ayala supporter who diminished the investigation.

The same himpathy sentiments return in the follow-up News In Depth story "Report details harassment by famed biologist" (M. Wadman, 27 July, p. 316). Words matter, and *Science* should wield its words and influence carefully. It is time to recognize that harassers have taken a substantial toll on the advancement of science. It is time to acknowledge that sexual harassment in all its nefarious forms puts an unquantifiable burden on the victims (many of whom are our colleagues). It's time to believe women.

**Jane Zelikova, Kelly Ramirez,*
Jewel Lipps, on behalf of 500 Women
Scientists leadership**

500 Women Scientists, Boulder, CO 80303, USA.

*Corresponding author.

Email: k.ramirez@nioo.knaw.nl

REFERENCE

1. K. Manne, *Down Girl* (Oxford Univ. Press, 2017).

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Harassment charges: Journalists' role

As a woman in science, I find the reporting of allegations against Francisco Ayala ("#Metoo complaints fell noted geneticist," M. Wadman, News In Brief, 6 July, p. 8) deeply troubling. The title implicates the "complaints" or "complainers" as responsible for the resignation, as opposed to the actions of the accused or the impartial sexual harassment investigation. The term "complaint" gives the impression that the alleged victims have minor grievances as opposed to serious reports of scientific misconduct. Not only is this title biased

against whistleblowers, it is also factually incorrect, as the first allegations of harassment were allegedly made 3 years before the resignation. I assert that the investigation, not the allegations, caused the accused to resign.

Jessica Duffy

Department of Biology, Midwestern State University, Wichita Falls, TX 76308, USA.

Email: jlduffy1009@my.mwsu.edu

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Harassment charges: Injustice done?

We are deeply concerned by the way in which our friend and colleague Professor Francisco Ayala has been forced to resign from the University of California, Irvine (UCI), after being accused of sexual harassment ("Prominent geneticist out at UC Irvine after harassment finding," M. Wadman, News, 29 June, <https://scim.ag/AyalaResignation>). The charges that have been raised against him have had appalling consequences.

Those of us who are well acquainted with Professor Ayala know that he is an honorable person, who throughout his career has treated his friends, co-workers, and students in a respectful, egalitarian way. His lifelong commitment to teaching, research, and outreach on biological evolution has won him worldwide recognition. He has been a generous benefactor to the University of California and throughout his fruitful career has opened new fields of biological research, promoted mutual respect and independence

between evolutionary studies and religious perspectives, played a key role in several major scientific organizations, and helped many Spanish-speaking female scholars and Hispanic students, in particular, both in the United States and throughout the world.

From the available information, it appears that the inquiry conducted by UCI lacked genuine due process, fairness, and full transparency. We urge UCI to acknowledge the possibility that its sanctions against Professor Ayala were enacted in haste and to reopen the case and investigate the matter more thoroughly. We understand the wish of both the institution and Professor Ayala not to unduly prolong this whole unhappy episode. It is equally important, however, that justice be done and be seen to be done. If carried out properly, UCI could help devise a more successful model for how institutions should deal with such situations in the future. Devising an improved procedure for these cases would earn everyone's gratitude.

Andrés Moya and 62 additional authors*

Institute of Integrative Systems Biology, University of València, 46010 València, Spain, and Foundation for the Promotion of Health and Biomedical Research of València Region (FISABIO), 46020 València, Spain. Email: andres.moya@uv.es

*The full list of authors is available online.

SUPPLEMENTARY MATERIALS

Full list of authors

www.sciencemag.org/content/361/6403/655.3/suppl/DC1

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Harassment charges: Metoo but due process

The resignation of eminent biologist Francisco J. Ayala amid charges of sexual harassment (“Prominent geneticist out at UC Irvine after harassment finding,” M. Wadman, News, 29 June, <https://scim.ag/AyalaResignation>) has left Ayala's home campus deeply divided. The controversy highlights problems in the way universities currently address charges of sexual harassment. Because the University of California, Irvine (UCI), failed to post easily accessible guidelines on how the Ayala case was handled, especially how and by whom final decisions were made, many UCI faculty are concerned that the university overreached, imposing a punishment not commensurate with the specific charges of wrongdoing. A zero-tolerance policy for sexual harassment should include clearly stated procedures to protect due process and ensure proportional responses to wrongdoing.

I will not engage in the ugly nastiness of “he said, she said” as we debate the

veracity of accusations described in salacious detail (“Report details harassment by famed biologist,” M. Wadman, News In Depth, 27 July, p. 316). These are human tragedies evolving in front of us. Victims strive to regain lost self-esteem, along with justice. The accused wrestle with shock, forced to confront their own cluelessness at shifting mores, and everyone realizes how vulnerable we all are, including administrators struggling to figure out how best to fairly confront sexual harassment and gender equality. We are all at risk when goodwill and communications break down.

To fairly and equitably strike a balance between complacency and overreaction, I recommend three procedures to help achieve the notoriously difficult goal of changing attitudes toward gender. First, we must do more to foster a university climate that takes seriously and protects potential targets, be they male or female. Part of that is recognizing that even subtle forms of verbal behavior—i.e., jokes or comments about appearance—make some women and minorities uncomfortable. Yet resulting deferential treatment can contribute to a climate in which women or minorities are treated differently. Eventually, this subtle, differential treatment can foster continuing inequality. Second, we must insist that legally correct policies and procedures are followed when charges of sexual harassment are made. These procedures need to be transparent and the same for all faculty. Policies should be written in prose that even nonlawyers can understand and posted in obvious places, with regularly scheduled discussion forums designed to help educate all members of the university community. Third, the punishment must fit the crime. If tasteless, off-color jokes and the kind of ambiguous “unwanted touching” of which Ayala was accused warrant his public humiliation, what do we do with more serious charges of sexual harassment? And why is Hana Ayala punished for her husband's acts by having her name removed from gifts to UCI?

The #Metoo movement has done a great service in opening up an area too long taboo. But the failure to follow clearly established, fairly administered, and transparent procedures can too easily produce witch hunts that cast doubts on legitimate charges of sexual harassment. This will set back the move toward gender equality, in the academy and in society at large.

Kristen Renwick Monroe

Department of Political Science, University of California, Irvine, Irvine, CA 92697, USA.

Email: krmonroe@uci.edu

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