

## Open Letter from Concerned Faculty

On January 21, 2022, the *Harvard Crimson* reported that Professor John Comaroff had been placed on unpaid administrative leave for one semester and prohibited from teaching required courses in 2022-23, among other sanctions. Harvard's Office of Dispute Resolution (ODR) found that Comaroff had "engaged in verbal conduct that violated the FAS Sexual and Gender-Based Harassment Policy and the FAS Professional Conduct Policy." Although Comaroff had been accused by three students, only one allegation was found by Harvard's Office of Dispute Resolution to have any merit. Based on the student's account in the *Chronicle of Higher Education* (August 25, 2020), the allegation concerned Comaroff's advice that openly traveling as a lesbian couple in a particular African country where homosexuality is illegal could lead to sexual violence. Since we the undersigned would also feel ethically compelled to offer the same advice to any student conducting research in a country with similar prohibitions, we are perplexed. How can advice intended to protect an advisee from sexual violence be itself construed as sexual harassment? What rules of professional conduct are broken by informing students of the risks of gender-based violence in the multiple locations around the world that do not recognize the rights of women and LGBTQIA+ individuals in the same manner as in the United States? As concerned faculty we seek clarification of Harvard's professional criteria for us as advisors.

We also seek to understand why the FAS did not accept the final results of its own Title IX investigation and opened a second investigation in the Fall of 2021 (*Chronicle of Higher Education*, January 20, 2022). What are the procedural grounds justifying this action? As faculty members we must know the rules and procedures to which we are subject.

We the undersigned know John Comaroff to be an excellent colleague, advisor and committed university citizen who has for five decades trained and advised hundreds of Ph.D. students of diverse backgrounds, who have subsequently become leaders in universities across the world. We are dismayed by Harvard's sanctions against him and concerned about its effects on our ability to advise our own students.

Sincerely,

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