

January 10, 2020

Ana Mari Cauce, President
University of Washington
Seattle

Dear President Cauce,

We, the undersigned, are alumni and long-standing supporters of the University of Washington concerned about the well-being of its students as well as the institution. In that spirit we request that you urgently consider the case of U.W. student Yueming “Vera” Zhou and address our concerns of the treatment she has received from the University.

Vera lives with her mother, Caiyun “Mary” Ma, in Vancouver, WA. Ms. Ma is a U.S. citizen; Vera has had permanent U.S. resident status since 2010. Vera graduated from Clackamas High School, Portland, OR in 2015 with honors. Her GPA was 3.8 which included 15 credits for college level classes. A main interest of hers in high school was competitive debate. (Exhibit A). She was accepted by the UW, started classes October 2015 and for almost two years was a full-time student. She excelled in her courses and felt honored to be a member of the University community.

Vera’s life turned upside down in 2017, first by a diagnosis of cancer and major surgery (Exhibit B) and then, in October 2017, when she was arrested during a junior year break while visiting her remarried father in Xinjiang, China. She was hand-cuffed, interrogated without representation of any sort and placed in jail without a hearing. Vera’s detention lasted almost two years, first in a prison facility “re-education camp” for almost 6 months and then home arrest for approximately 18 months. With help from the U.S. State Department and White House, Vera’s confiscated passport was returned to her, thus allowing her to return home to Vancouver, WA on September 19, 2019.

The two-fold cause of Vera’s arrest and brutal treatment is critical to why we write.

As noted in her statement (Exhibit C), one basis of her arrest as a “suspected extremist” was the fact that her father is classified as a Muslim by Chinese authorities, thus causing her to be inaccurately deemed a Muslim and targeting her for arrest as part of the government’s well documented brutal campaign against Muslims. Vera’s second and more critical arrest factor – particularly relevant to the University – was that she innocently sought to find her UW homework assignments by making a simple VPN effort to log onto the UW website. This act, falling afoul of the Chinese government’s crackdown to block access to U.S. websites and to punish those who do so, was the critical factor that moved the police to arrest Vera.

Facing imprisonment for seeking her U.W. homework assignments, Vera and her mother had reason to think the University would help them gain her release. Instead, it has manifested an attitude of not caring about her or wanting to get involved with her case.

While Vera was in a Chinese prison, her mother was frantic. Concerned not only about Vera's incarceration, Mary Ma worried about the lack of medical services available to Vera to monitor and treat the cancer. Ms. Ma turned to the University as the only resource she could think of for assistance. In seeking that help, Ms. Ma was regularly dismissed. For example, on November 16, 2017, shortly after Vera's arrest, she was put in contact with Daniel Brencic, Global Travel Security Manager for UW, who wrote back that nothing could be done – the school's position in spite of its advertised expertise and influence in World Affairs. She asked for help on other occasions in 2017 but the UW simply declined to take any interest in Vera's situation. Then things got worse. In fall of 2018 (Vera had now been a prisoner for about one year) Mary Ma started receiving tuition bills and then dunning notices from the University that continue to this day. Further, Vera's absence from school due to her incarceration in China put her into default status which is continuing and prevents Vera from returning to her studies at the UW. In addition, Vera's mother began getting dunning letters from student loan providers, to which the University, to this day, treat as a "not our problem" matter by advising Vera and her mother to deal with banks and federal bureaucracies by themselves.

After her fruitless efforts to gain help from the University, Ms. Ma reached out to human rights organizations and the U.S. State Department China Desk who expressed sympathy for Vera's situation and began to assist her.

In the process of doing so, a State Department official contacted UW Administration directly and - stunningly – was told that the University was involved in negotiations with China over a million dollar deal and for that reason did not wish to be involved in Vera's case.

Mary Ma also received assistance from ChinaAid.org CEO Bob Fu who hosted her for a series of meetings in D.C. around April 10, 2019. One of those meetings was with Congressional-- Executive Committee on China (CECC.gov) and we are told that a memorable moment occurred when a CECC staff person cried upon hearing the story of Vera and Mary Ma's experiences with the University. This staff person was a UW grad dismayed to hear that her alma mater had so abandoned a student in Chinese custody to gain financial considerations from China.

Following the April meetings, official protests from the U.S. were lodged on Vera's behalf resulting in Vera's release in September 2019 after 23 months in custody. One wonders if Vera could have escaped her dreadful treatment much earlier had the University shown elementary consideration for a member of its community and had taken seriously her mother's cries for help that began in November 2017.

The current situation for Vera and her mother is that they are faced with mounting bills for tuition, student loan payments and interest resulting from the period of Vera's imprisonment in China. Their limited family financial resources have also been seriously depleted during that time and, to top matters off, Vera is now classified as a defaulter and thus unable to continue her studies at the University.

What should the UW do now to help? We think the relevant standard was set by the President of Princeton University in the case of U.W. graduate and Princeton research assistant Xiyue Wang. As reported in a December 7, 2019 Seattle Times story, Mr. Wang was released last month from his unlawful incarceration in Iran. But instead of the cold response Vera received from the University, the President of Princeton University tirelessly worked on Mr. Wang's behalf--publically embracing him and openly declaring his imprisonment to be "completely false". In clear contrast to the treatment of Vera Zhou, Princeton President Christopher Eisgruber exhibited a positive and welcoming attitude by issuing the following public statement on Mr. Wang's release: "The entire Princeton University community is overjoyed that Xiyue Wang can finally return home to his wife and young son, and we look forward to welcoming him back to campus." The contrast between Princeton's treatment of its student in the Wang case and the University's treatment of Vera Zhou is seen in the bureaucratic letter recently sent to Bob Fu by UW Director of Federal Relations. (Exhibit D)

A final consideration moves us to write with urgency at this time. We understand that the Washington Post and television's 60 Minutes have interviewed Ms. Zhou about her case and are actively considering reporting on the story. Were that to happen we believe there is potential for significant damage to the University's reputation. We therefor think it vital for the University to address this promptly before things become unmanageable. We believe this can be resolved in a constructive manner for all involved and make the following suggestions.

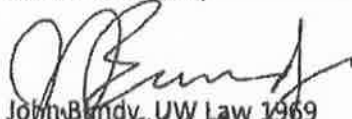
1. The UW should lend its expertise and assistance to Vera to address her student loan issues and do so with the goal of resolving them and getting her back in school. We understand the University has taken some steps recently to help, but also understand that it still seeks to wash its hands of the federal loan program aspects of her case by advising Vera to deal with the banks and bureaucracies responsible for the programs by herself. Surely the University has experience, leverage and expertise with federal loan programs that Vera does not, and we call on it to employ its resources on her behalf.
2. University officials should immediately reach out to Vera and Ms. Ma publically, with warmth and open arms, to let them know that Vera is wanted and cared for, and that her return as a UW student is of high priority.
3. As can be imagined, the psychological stress endured by Vera Zhou was acute and is continuing. For this reason, we think the University should offer counselling assistance

to help get her studies back on track and to deal with stress and trauma related to two years of confinement in China.

4. Finally, we urge the UW to offer scholarship assistance that will allow Vera to continue her studies despite the financial cost her family has paid during the past two years. Events since the arrest in China have depleted the family's resources and this scholarship assistance will also be a clear statement that the University truly welcomes her back.

We look forward to your attention to this matter and are prepared to meet with you to help resolve the issues described. Please direct your reply to John Bundy at 2320 W.

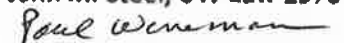
Commodore Way #200, Seattle 98199 or john.bundy@comcast.net



John Bundy, UW Law 1969




John M. Steel, UW Law 1970



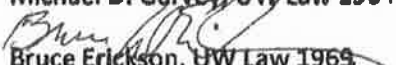
Paul Wineman, UW 1958




Emory Bundy, UW Student Body President, class 1958



Michael D. Garvey, UW Law 1964



Bruce Erickson, UW Law 1969



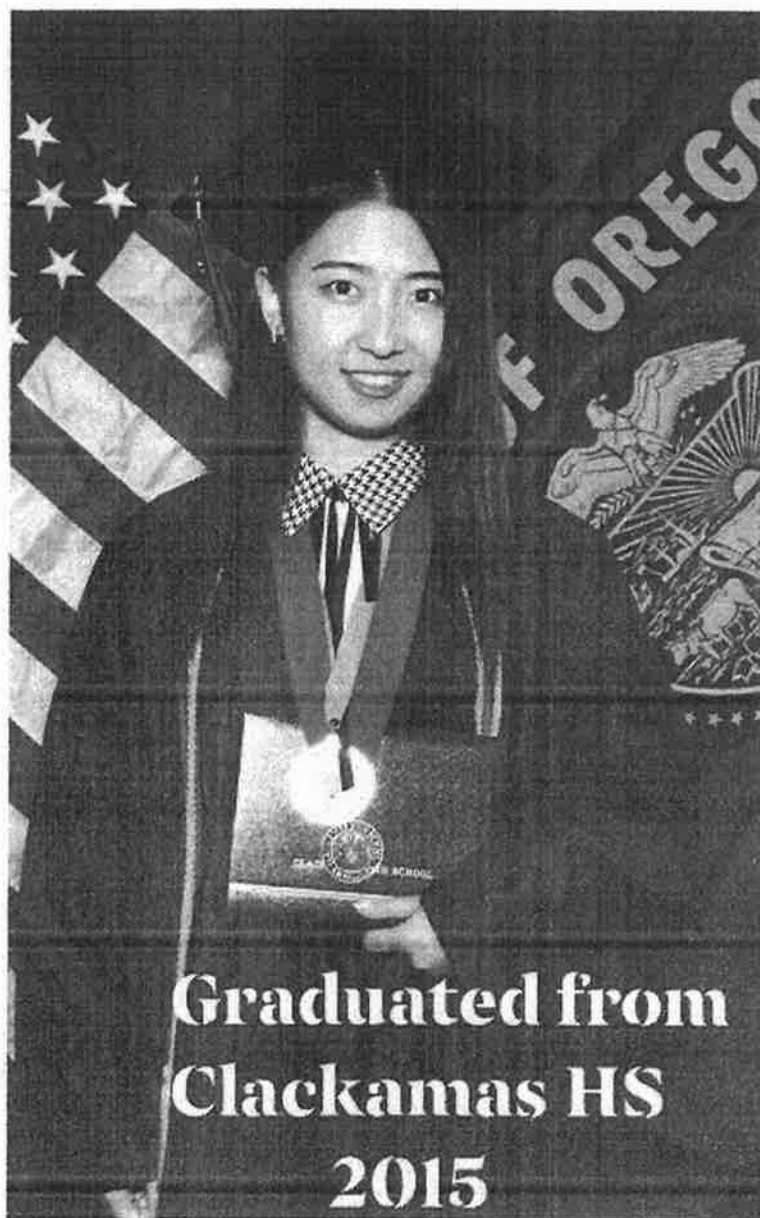
Sue Stewart, UW 1970

cc: Joel Benoliel, Chair, UW Board of Regents

cc: Yueming Zhou

cc: Callyun Ma

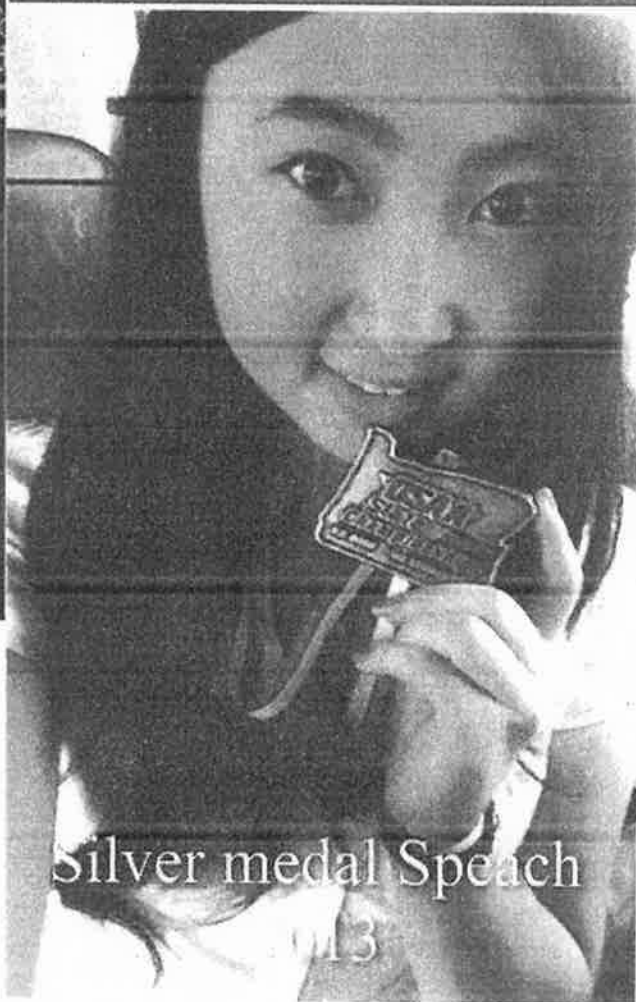
A



**Graduated from
Clackamas HS
2015**



**Atlanta
International
Debate 2014**



**Silver medal Speech
2013**

Zhou, Yueming

MRN: 21213095
Description: 21 year old female



PeaceHealth

Southwest Surgical 7

ZHOU, YUEMING
MRN: 21213095
DOB: 7/14/1995, Sex: F
Adm: 5/31/2017, D/C:

Op Note Date of Service: 5/31/2017 12:00 AM

Status: Unsigned

Rodney S Rushing, MD
Gynecology

ZHOU, YUEMING
21213095
DOB: 07/14/1995

OPERATIVE NOTE

DATE OF SURGERY: 05/31/2017

PREOPERATIVE DIAGNOSIS: Bilateral ovarian masses.

POSTOPERATIVE DIAGNOSIS: Probable mature cystic teratoma.

PROCEDURES PERFORMED: Exploratory laparotomy with bilateral ovarian cystectomies with reconstruction of the ovaries bilaterally.

SURGEON: R Scott Rushing, MD

ASSISTANT: Craig Shambaugh, MD

ANESTHESIA: General.

ESTIMATED BLOOD LOSS: 100 mL.

FLUIDS: 1300 mL of LR.

COMPLICATIONS: None.

FINDINGS: The patient had very large bilateral ovarian masses. The right ovarian mass was approximately 13 cm in diameter. The left ovarian mass was approximately 10 cm in diameter. The cystic mass was containing contents consistent with mature cystic teratoma with hair and sebaceous material. Frozen section was done on one of the specimens and this was consistent with a mature cystic teratoma. No immature elements were identified. There was possibly some very small residual cystic structures within the ovarian wall. There would have been no ovarian stroma left to reconstruct had every single vesicle been removed. Patient is definitely at increased risk of recurrence of her dermoids due to the large size of the dermoid

https://phlink.peacehealth.org/phlink/epiccare/chartreview_report.asp?List=10%2C&Report... 6/1/2017

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cysts, multilocular nature of the cyst contents and questionable residual small cyst in the ovarian stroma.

DESCRIPTION OF PROCEDURE: Patient was taken to the operating room where she was given general anesthetic without difficulty. She was prepped and draped in sterile fashion. A Foley catheter was placed vaginally under sterile technique. I made a midline incision from the pubic bone up to the level of the umbilicus. The skin was taken down with a knife. Subcutaneous tissue was taken down with the Bovie cautery. I nicked the fascia in the midline. This was extended superiorly and inferiorly with Bovie cautery. I identified the midline of the rectus muscles and tented up the peritoneum in between this. I entered the peritoneal cavity with the scissors. I then extended this superiorly and inferiorly with the Bovie cautery. I surveyed the pelvis. There was no peritoneal studding, no evidence of cancer. There was no free fluid. I delivered both masses through the abdominal wall. As mentioned, the right ovary was slightly larger than the left, but both of these were quite large. There was no identifiable eccentrically placed normal ovarian stroma, but as is often the case, once an incision is made on the surface of the ovary, we began developing a plane between the very attenuated and thin ovarian stroma and the underlying neoplastic process. The left ovary was placed back into the abdominal cavity. I placed sterile laparotomy sponges around the right ovary. I made an ellipsoid incision that was quite shallow, so as to not enter into the cystic cavity. I then began dissecting between the dermoid and the ovarian stromal layer. There were several areas that the cyst wall was so thin that I did enter into the cyst cavity. I took great care so that there was no spillage into the abdominal cavity. I laboriously performed a cystectomy. There was very splayed out attenuated ovarian stroma left. It took quite a bit of time making sure there was excellent hemostasis of the hilum as well as the inner surface of the ovarian stroma. I then reconstructed the ovary using 4-0 PDS in a running fashion. The right ovary was replaced into the abdomen.

My attention was then towards the left ovarian cystic mass. I performed the left ovarian cystectomy in a likewise fashion. I then irrigated out the pelvis with approximately 4 liters of warm saline. There was no obvious cystic content remaining in the abdominal cavity. I then placed 2 pieces of Interceed on the left ovary due to its large size and 1 piece of Interceed over the right ovarian remnant. These were placed gently into the pelvis. I then proceeded with closure of the wound with 0 PDS on a loop in a running modified Smead-Jones. The skin was closed with staples. The patient was extubated and taken to recovery room in stable condition. Needle, instrument, and lap counts were correct x 2.

Dictated by: R Scott Rushing MD

RR:HBE190577

eScript document:49-8063171

D: 05/31/2017 16:15:44

T: 05/31/2017 17:47:35

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Zhou, Yueming (MR # 21213095) Printed by [24908] at 6/1/17 8:24 AM

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My name is Yueming Zhou and I am 24 years old. I came to the US in 2008, and became a permanent resident in 2010 (USCIS# 203-032-159, DOB 7/14/1995). My Chinese passport number is G58718133. My mother, Caiyun (Mary) Ma, is a US citizen (passport#: 644310953).

Over the past 10 years, I finished middle school and high school in Portland, Oregon with excellent grades. I was accepted into the University of Washington in Seattle in 2015. In October 2017, I went to visit my father in China during my junior year. After a few days visiting our hometown in Xinjiang, I was detained by the Kuitun city police on October 23rd.

I was detained by police, with handcuffs, without a trial or legal representation. After ten hours, I was then transferred to the fortified "re-education camp" located in the south of Kuitun City, Xinjiang. The police said they detained me because I used a VPN in order to log into the University of Washington Canvas website to upload my homework. Although my family is not religious, our ID cards says we are Hui (Chinese Muslim). They detained me as a suspected religious extremist.

I was held in the re-education camp for 5 months and 18 days. I was able to contact my father once a week for five minutes while in the camp all while being monitored. I was held in a cell with 12 other women, all of whom were Muslim minorities.

I was released on March 11, 2018 but with conditions. I was put under house arrest, not allowed to leave the town, and was monitored daily. My passport was also confiscated by police, further blocking me from returning home to the US. This persisted for 18 months.

With the help of the State Department and the White House, I was given back my passport on September 14, 2019 and flew home to Vancouver, Washington on September 19. I was held in Xinjiang for 23 months in total.

Before my imprisonment in China, I was diagnosed with a life-threatening form of cancer. I had major surgery in June 2017, just 4 months ago before I was held. My life was at risk because I was unable to receive regular, preventative treatments from an oncologist in order to stop the spread and return of my cancer.

My mother, Mary Ma, advocated endlessly for me in the US. During my detention, she emailed the Registration Office on November 16, 2017 and was put in contact with Daniel Brencic, the Global Travel Security Manager for UW. She worked in tandem with Darren Byler (dtbyler@gmail.com), a PhD candidate at UW researching the camps in Xinjiang. In an email exchange, Brencic wrote that the school was in contact with the State Department and that no diplomatic pressure could be applied because I was not a U.S. citizen. He wrote that "Unfortunately, there is nothing else the University of Washington can do at this point." In fall of 2018, my mother received the first tuition bill from UW.

She also went to the University of Washington a couple times to ask for help. The school repeatedly declined to acknowledge my situation. The State Department spoke with UW and

university representatives stated they were unable to advocate for me because of a \$3 million dollar deal with the Chinese government. Even after this, my mother received many tuition bills from the University despite the school being fully aware of the situation.

Contact Information for Mary Ma

Phone: (650) 745-6122

Emails: caiyun.ma@yahoo.com

Home address: 12212 NE 106th St., Vancouver WA 98682

D

CASTRO EMAIL TO FU - 11-6-2019

From: "Sarah M. Castro" <smcastro@uw.edu>

Date: November 6, 2019 at 15:04:55 CST

To: Bobfu <bobfu@chinaaid.org>

Subject: RE: Linking Bob Fu with UW

Hi Bob,

We have talked to Vera and her mother recently. It was her Direct Loan that was in default, and the rules of the Direct Loan Servicer are very different from UW loans because they go directly to her. Those grace periods are shorter than Perkins. The direct loans were transferred from the original servicer to the US Department of Collection. Their number is (800) 621-3115. We suggested two approaches:

1. She should contact the direct loan servicer to ensure that they understand clearly what her circumstances were in the past year; she wasn't avoiding her financial responsibilities, but was literally unable to contact anyone while she was in China. It is possible that forbearances can be back-dated on the direct loans to take her out of default. She will still owe the accrued interest however.
1. If the first doesn't work, she can appeal to the FSA Ombudsman office.

If she has any more issues, please contact me directly and my financial aid office is more than happy to help her on these issues. It's a difficult and confusing situation, and we wish her all the best at Clark. I know she has been in contact with their financial aid office as well, and hopefully, both teams can help her resolve this quickly.

Thanks,

Sarah

SARAH CASTRO

Director of Federal Relations

University of Washington

(202) 624-1426 office

(202) 641-3486 cell