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September 18, 2006

VIA E-MAIL, TELECOPY AND FIRST CLASS MAIL

Sylvia Nasar
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VIA E-MAIL AND FIRST CLASS MAIL

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VIA E-MAIL AND FIRST CLASS MAIL

Jessica Rosenberg
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Re: Dr. Shing-Tung Yau

Dear Ms. Nasar, Mr. Gruber and Ms. Rosenberg:

Please be informed that this office acts as counsel to Dr. Shing-Tung Yau ("Dr. Yau"). I write in connection with Dr. Yau's claims for defamation against each of you and Advance Magazine Publishers, Inc. d/b/a Condé Nast Publications arising from your article which appeared in the August 28, 2006 edition of The New Yorker titled "MANIFOLD DESTINY A legendary problem and the battle over who solved it." In combination, the three of you either authored the article or were responsible for "fact checking" it. Each of you bears direct responsibility for its false and defamatory content.

I write in the hope of enlisting your immediate assistance, as well as the assistance of The New Yorker, in undoing, to the extent possible, the literally world-wide damage done to Dr. Yau's reputation as a result of the publication of your article. I also write to outline for you, on a preliminary basis, but in some detail, several of the more egregious and actionable errors which you made in the article, and the demonstrably shoddy "journalism" which resulted in their publication.

Even a cursory review of communications which occurred prior to the publication of the article, information provided by "sources" (some of whom have already informed you directly that they were misquoted or quoted out of context in the article), and information both provided and available to you prior to publication, establish, without limitation, the following:

- (i) that the article's essential factual attack upon Dr. Yau (e.g., that he is an aged mathematician, with a history of making a false claim of originality, who has not contributed meaningfully to his field in over a decade, who has enlisted students to do work for which he can claim credit, and who, as a result of his age, growing incompetence and diminished stature, improperly waged a "battle" in order to share credit for proving the Poincaré Conjecture while undermining the contribution of Grigory Perelman, all in order to win himself standing in China) is false and defamatory and was known by you to be so prior to publication;
- (ii) that numerous events recited in the article and based upon which you attacked Dr. Yau are each in fact, and in and of themselves, false and defamatory, and known by you to be so prior to publication; and,
- (iii) that the article contains both sensationalized quotes which you were warned prior to publication were inaccurate or fabricated, and quotes which have been confirmed by their purported authors to have been presented in a manner which was both misleading or so grossly out-of-context as to convey, intentionally, a meaning opposite to what was actually stated in full and meant by the person quoted.

This is not a matter of mere accusation for the purpose of describing potential legal claims. Rather, these are matters of documented fact. Collectively, these facts demonstrate that you unfairly soiled the reputation of an individual who has spent his entire life earning, justifiably and on the merits, a reputation as one of the foremost mathematicians of our time.

Before describing some of the specific ways in which your article defames Dr. Yau, it is appropriate to comment on the highly misleading and unethical manner in which you went about gathering "facts" for the article and enlisting Dr. Yau and others to unwittingly assist in your effort. On or about June 8, 2006, Ms. Nasar contacted Dr. Yau via his Harvard University e-mail. At that time, she introduced herself as a former New York Times reporter, a member of the Columbia journalism faculty and the author of *A Beautiful Mind*, the biography of John Nash. Ms. Nasar told Dr. Yau that she had just finished reading his "extraordinary autobiography," that she had been assigned a major story on the Poincaré Conjecture which she

informed him would be a “wonderful” and in depth piece, and she asked for Dr. Yau’s assistance in attending a forthcoming conference (Strings 2006) which Dr. Yau would shortly be hosting in Beijing.

In both her initial contacts with Dr. Yau and thereafter, Ms. Nasar stated that she had a specific interest in the “reuniting of physics and mathematics” represented by the proof of Poincaré’s and that she was enlisting Dr. Yau’s help for the article because of his role as a world-leading mathematician who had also contributed and was contributing to string theory. At one point in her discussions with Dr. Yau, Ms. Nasar informed him that Stephen Hawking had provided her with a statement about Dr. Yau’s “brilliant” contributions to physics. Ms. Nasar indicated to Dr. Yau that Professor Hawking’s comments were important to the article and would be prominently featured. (Notably, Professor Hawking’s obviously favorable comments about Dr. Yau did not make it into the article). Based upon Ms. Nasar’s representations about the focus of the article and her purpose in speaking with him, Dr. Yau thereafter generously gave Ms. Nasar, as well as Mr. Gruber and later Ms. Rosenberg, hours of his time both here in the United States and in China at the conference he hosted.

It turns out that Ms. Nasar’s statements were a complete deception. Not once during what turned out to be a nearly three month process did she or anyone else involved in the publication of the article inform Dr. Yau of its actual intended content or of the numerous charges and attacks upon him which you intended to publish, so that he could respond to them. Despite being in Dr. Yau’s presence both in person and electronically for hours, despite accepting his hospitality in China during which he introduced Ms. Nasar and Mr. Gruber to people who could have provided answers to these attacks, you gave Dr. Yau no opportunity to provide what would have been accurate information in the face of the scandalous gossip upon which you ultimately chose to rely.

For example, you gave Dr. Yau no opportunity to describe his major breakthrough contributions of the last decade. You gave him no chance to respond to the claim that in 1996 he and his student had improperly claimed originality at the expense of Alexander Givental with regard to work on mirror symmetry. You gave him no chance to respond to the central charge of the article that he sought to divert credit for proving the Poincaré Conjecture from Mr. Perelman to himself through Professors Zhu and Cao. You gave him no chance to respond to the fabricated quotes attributed to him and an alleged colleague from a June 3, 2006 press conference held in Beijing. You gave him no chance to respond to the documented false charge that he had attempted to move an important 2002 mathematics conference from Beijing to Hong Kong (with the obviously important and devastating political consequences implicated by such false reporting). These are just a few examples. The point is that you were dishonest about your intentions with Dr. Yau, and then you were dishonest with your readers about the circumstances under which you interviewed him.

As important is the fact that many of the individual scholars interviewed by Ms. Nasar prior to publication report a similar deception. Those scholars have made it clear, in some cases publicly, that they too were misled by Ms. Nasar about the nature of the article and its focus. They complain that, as a result, comments attributed to them are either irresponsibly out-of-

context or are outright false as they appear in the article. Indeed, Ms. Nasar appears to have misrepresented to at least one scholar that she had not been able to meet with Mr. Perelman. Such dishonesty, in retrospect, makes it clear that you had a preconceived agenda as to what you wanted to write and the conclusions you intended to communicate, and then set about to avoid, purposefully, any facts which might undermine that agenda. This is libel.

The Fictitious "Battle" Over Who Solved The Poincaré Conjecture

The essential, highly defamatory attack of your article on Dr. Yau begins with and is framed by your introduction of the very purpose of the article itself, and its conclusion, to readers via the following untrue and highly inflammatory statements, imagery and innuendo:

On page 2, at the table of contents, you pose the central question you want readers to believe the article legitimately raised: "Who really solved the Poincaré Conjecture?" At page 44, in the subtitle, you then describe the content of the article to be about "A legendary problem and the battle over who solved it." On the opposite page, in the form of a disturbing full page rendering of a seated Dr. Yau grabbing a "Fields Medal" from the neck of Mr. Perelman, you provided your answer: that Dr. Yau was waging the supposed "battle" and that he was doing so at the expense of Mr. Perelman. In context and combination, the words and highly damaging imagery painted the false picture that Dr. Yau literally was trying to deprive Mr. Perelman of the most prestigious award in mathematics. This assertion was reinforced by the false caption below the full page image. Thus, in a fashion more representative of tabloid reporting, you informed readers, without qualification, that in fact there was a "battle" going on in the world of mathematics, and that Dr. Yau was improperly waging it.

Thereafter, you offered purported "facts" in supposed support for your stated conclusion. The centerpiece of this effort was your inclusion of quotes set forth at page 56, which you attributed to Dr. Yau and the "acting director" of his Beijing mathematics institute from a June 3, 2006 press conference held by Dr. Yau in China which you claimed had taken place in order "to explain the relative contributions of the different mathematicians who had worked on the Poincaré[.]" Based on the quotes, you represented to readers that Dr. Yau had claimed that he, Professor Zhu and Professor Cao were entitled to "thirty percent" of the credit. To add insult to injury, you pointed out that the numbers supposedly used by the "acting director" did not add up to 100% (e.g., "Evidently, even simple addition can sometimes trip up a mathematician").

The problem is that Dr. Yau did not utter the words you attributed to him and you were so informed prior to the publication of your article. Likewise, there was no "acting director" of Dr. Yau's mathematics institute in Beijing in June of 2006 (or at any other time) who spoke the words you placed in his mouth. (There was a deputy director, Yang Lo, but he apparently did not even attend the June 3rd press conference). You were also informed specifically that the purpose of the press conference was to introduce the work of Professors Zhu and Cao which, rather than claiming credit for a share of the solution of the Poincaré Conjecture, affirmatively acknowledged the brilliant work of Mr. Perelman and the "achievement" of the "Hamilton-Perelman Ricci flow."

Although neither Ms. Nasar nor Mr. Gruber were honest enough to ask Dr. Yau directly about the quotes or whether he claimed credit for himself or Professors Zhu and Cao, or whether he even agreed with the words you intended to report from the “acting director,” you were all nevertheless informed directly, and in multiple ways, that the quotes were fabricated and had been made up by a Chinese newspaper reporter. As one example only, on August 16, 2006 at 12:41:39 PM EDT, Dr. Yau wrote to Ms. Rosenberg as follows via e-mail:

dear Jessica, I should say it again. I hate to be quoted to say that I agree with the splitting of credits as was said by many people. I did not say it and people put that into my mouth (emphasis supplied).

Your article nowhere informed readers that Dr. Yau had told you that in fact he did not agree with the “splitting of credits” and that he did not make the statement. On the other hand, you did know that Dr. Yau, at great risk to himself, had been very critical of Chinese officials responsible for higher education. You were keenly aware of his efforts to challenge ongoing corruption in the paying of substantial monies to foreign based academics for what are essentially no show appointments. All of this was a matter of public record. The combination of your actual knowledge that Dr. Yau claimed not to have made the statement attributed to him and your awareness that the Chinese press had a very real motive to embarrass him, makes your reporting and use of the quotes beyond reckless.

Irrespective of whether you were aware of these facts, materials from and reports of the June 3rd conference itself contradicted directly what you published. Press release materials from the conference made no such claim to a share of credit. Reports published by a Science Times reporter who attended the conference included no such statements. Indeed, a June 4th story by a reporter from the Xinhua News Agency which included mention of a statement from Professor Yang Lo about who deserved credit for the solution was subsequently rescinded on June 9th by the same reporter when Professor Yang Lo stated publicly that he was not qualified to judge the issue of credit and that he was against any attempt to make such a judgment. These facts were available to you prior to publication.

To make matters worse, it now appears that you used these false quotes in interviews with many of the people quoted in the article in order to get them to comment on the “battle” supposedly being waged by Dr. Yau to claim credit for himself via Professors Zhu and Cao. This led people like Phillip Griffiths to label Dr. Yau publicly a “threat to the integrity” of the field of mathematics. I note that your article fails to disclose Ms. Nasar’s relationship with Mr. Griffiths. No doubt Mr. Griffiths simply accepted Ms. Nasar’s word that the statements had been made because of that relationship and then responded with his harsh and untrue comments about Dr. Yau, which further contributed to the destruction of his reputation. Your false reporting of the facts also led others to make similar derogatory and public comments as reflected, for example, in Professor Solomon Golomb’s letter to the New Yorker published in the September 11, 2006 edition. Professor Golomb’s letter was clearly written under the unquestioning belief that the quotes were true.

The truth is that there was no “battle” over who should receive credit for solving the Poincaré Conjecture. There was certainly no “battle” waged by Dr. Yau to take credit away from Mr. Perelman or to contest his receipt of a Fields Medal for his brilliant work. Indeed, prior to writing your article, you received from one of the authors the 327 page paper written by Professors Cao and Zhu entitled, “A Complete Proof of the Poincaré and Geometrization Conjectures – Application of the Hamilton-Perelman Theory of Ricci Flow.” Email communications confirm that you read the introduction to that paper. They also confirm that you discussed its contents with Dr. Yau, as well as the authors. Collectively, they informed you, in what they thought was a discussion of simple historic facts about the article (as opposed to the honest discussion of what you intended to write about their work which you should have had), that under no circumstances were they contending that Mr. Perelman’s work “broke down” in any place, as Ms. Nasar suggested to them (not vice versa). Rather, they made it clear to Ms. Nasar that they fully recognized Mr. Perelman’s contribution and that their paper was simply the first complete proof applying his and Professor Hamilton’s work.

Obvious to you as well were unavoidable facts which you no doubt recognized from reviewing the Zhu/Cao paper itself. First, Dr. Yau is not listed as an author. Second, the authors chose to state explicitly in their title that their paper provides a “complete proof” of “the Hamilton-Perelman theory of the Ricci Flow.” (emphasis supplied). Third, the authors made it clear that their proof “should be considered as the crowning achievement of the Hamilton-Perelman theory of Ricci flow.” These materials point out directly and in detail Mr. Perelman’s brilliant work in modifying Hamilton’s earlier arguments to provide solutions in three dimensions. The authors also made clear the undisputed fact, commented upon by many other mathematicians such as Michael Atiyah, that with regard to certain matters Mr. Perelman had provided only sketches or outlines which needed to be finished in order to provide a complete proof. For this reason, the authors were explicit about the fact that they had been unable to comprehend certain of Mr. Perelman’s original arguments and had undertaken their study so as to produce a self-contained, complete proof. You were informed that as part of this effort, Professor Zhu had spent the better part of a year presenting the Zhu/Cao study at Harvard to colleagues, all of whom well understood the nature of their effort to lay out a complete application of the Hamilton-Perelman theory, and that during that entire process Professors Zhu and Yau had never suggested anything which could have been understood to take credit away from Mr. Perelman.

Your article thus knowingly distorts the work done, its purpose, and where it fit in as part of the traditional process of proving mathematical results. By attributing false statements to Dr. Yau and the “acting director” of his Beijing institute, you left a false impression with readers that the work was claimed to be something other than what was stated. By ignoring the documented statements made by the authors to you, and in particular the e-mail statement from Professor Zhu to Ms. Nasar affirmatively correcting her suggestion that the work of Mr. Perelman “broke down,” you knowingly published false facts in order to sensationalize your article.

You exacerbated the damage done by the false portrayal of a “battle” for credit by outright claiming that Dr. Yau somehow sought to deprive Mr. Perelman of a Fields Medal. You did so while ignoring clear information in your possession that Dr. Yau’s true sentiments were

the exact opposite. Dr. Yau himself informed you and all others who asked his opinion on the matter that he fully believed that Mr. Perelman's work was "brilliant" and that he deserved a Fields Medal. That you would then knowingly present a full page image suggesting the exact opposite is unconscionable. That the image would go so far as to imply that Dr. Yau sought the medal for himself is likewise unconscionable. Dr. Yau is over forty years of age and, thus, is no longer eligible to win a Fields Medal; not to mention the fact that he was already a recipient of the prized Fields Medal.

Finally, I note that you were also informed quite directly that indeed Dr. Yau did, as a matter of historic fact, significantly contribute to the solving of the Poincaré Conjecture in any event (as did other mathematicians). One source for your article informed Ms. Nasar quite explicitly prior to publication that Dr. Yau's 1986 work with Professor Li on Harnack principles was key to both Hamilton and Perelman's work on the Poincaré Conjecture. Mr. Perelman himself has acknowledged this in his own work. You obviously ignored this fact too because it didn't fit in with the premise of your attack upon Dr. Yau from which you would not be deterred by the truth.

**Dr. Yau Did Not Make A Prior False Claim Of Originality
Which Other Mathematicians Believed Was Unwarranted**

In support of the article's defamatory conclusion that Dr. Yau improperly claimed part credit for the solution of the Poincaré Conjecture, the article also claims, falsely, that this was not Dr. Yau's first such transgression. At page 52, the article makes the following statement:

"Occasionally, the difference between a mathematical gap and a gap in exposition can be hard to discern. On at least one occasion, Yau and his students have seemed to confuse the two, making claims of originality that other mathematicians believe are unwarranted. In 1996, a young geometer at Berkeley named Alexander Givental had proved a mathematical conjecture about mirror symmetry, a concept that is fundamental to string theory. Though other mathematicians found Givental's proof hard to follow, they were optimistic that he had solved the problem. As one [unnamed] geometer put it "Nobody at the time said it was incomplete and incorrect."

These statements were not true and you were so informed prior to publishing your article. Again, because of your deception, Dr. Yau was given no opportunity to address directly this false charge made against him. Nevertheless, I am in possession of email communications which took place prior to publication in which Professor Kefeng Liu from the Department of Mathematics at UCLA (who co-authored the work you write about, "Mirror Principle I"). In those communications Professor Liu clearly directed you to Professor Manin's 1997 pre-print at The Max Planck Institute "Frobenius manifolds, quantum cohomology and moduli spaces." There, at page 15, Professor Manin made clear that the mathematics community felt that work remained to be done to complete Givental's arguments. Professor Liu also provided a detailed statement of differences between his work and Givental's. You ignored this information.

You also ignored other published material readily available to you. Professor Gathmann wrote in 1997 in *Mathematical Review* that Givental's proof "was hard to understand and at some points incomplete." In 1999, J. Li and G. Tian (who you interviewed prior to publication), wrote of the conjecture which Givental had supposedly proven: "this conjecture was finally proved rigorously by Lian-Liu-Yau [LLY] in 1997." It is disturbing that you published other comments of Tian about Dr. Yau which were negative, but chose to omit mention of this one.

Still other mathematicians had openly commented in mathematical circles that Givental's paper was "obscure" and "misleading." Indeed, your description of the supposed sentiments of unidentified attendees of Professor Liu's talk on mirror symmetry at Harvard in the fall of 1997 fails to account for the broad sentiment among mathematicians who openly (and with their names attached), had stated that Givental's work was incomplete. I note that even Givental himself, in his March 1998 3-page footnote which you reference, acknowledged the original contribution of Professor Liu and his co-authors. You ignored this as well because it did not support your attack upon Dr. Yau.

Ultimately, the discussion in your article of the publication of "Mirror Principle 1" recklessly ignored facts both in your possession and/or readily available to you from published texts. That you then used this reckless, incomplete reporting to inform your readers that Dr. Yau had been guilty of making a false claim of originality a decade ago was extraordinarily poor journalism and libelous per se.

Dr. Yau Has Made Major Contributions In The Past Decade

Your article further claimed both directly and through clear, actionable innuendo, that Dr. Yau was motivated to make a false claim of originality concerning the Poincaré Conjecture because he is an aged mathematician who has not contributed meaningfully to his field in over a decade. This extraordinary claim was both reckless and absurd.

At page 52, the article states as follows:

"[Yau] was increasingly anxious about his own standing in the mathematics profession, particularly in China, where, he worried, a younger scholar could try to supplant him as Chern's heir. More than a decade had passed since Yau had proved his last major result, though he continued to publish prolifically."

These sentences are followed by a quote from Professor Michael Anderson of Stony Brook about Dr. Yau wanting to be "the king of geometry." In context and as published this series of statements paint a false and defamatory picture. They are indicative of your extreme manipulation and disregard of facts, and penchant for the sensational and unsupportable in the article.

The article names no source for the statements in the first sentence and they are untrue and discriminatory of Dr. Yau and all scholars of his age. Importantly, and unfortunately, these

words inform the meaning of the sentence which followed concerning Dr. Yau's supposed lack of a "major result" over the past decade. Standing alone, divorced from the article, and with a definition of what it means to "prove a major result," it is at least hypothetically conceivable that one could debate the impact of Dr. Yau's "prolific" writing over the past decade (e.g., whether he had "proven a major result.") As presented in the context of the first sentence, however, the clear message is to assign to Dr. Yau, falsely, a highly insulting and false motive for his actions in supposedly making a false claim for credit regarding the Poincaré Conjecture – that he is old, past his prime and had not significantly contributed to his chosen field in years.

Such a statement is demonstrably false and I note that e-mail communication with Ms. Nasar demonstrates her poor and incomplete support for this claim in the article. For example, Professor Richard Schoen from the Stanford University Mathematics Department, and a working geometer, described Dr. Yau's work (along with Professors Strominger and Zaslow), on special langrangian geometry to Ms. Nasar as follows: "In fact, I find it hard to think of any mathematicians whose work over the last decade has been more important than Yau's." Professor Joel Smoller from the University of Michigan directed Ms. Nasar to two "major breakthrough" papers co-authored with Dr. Yau in 2000 and 2005 and wrote "These papers ALONE demolish your statement that Yau has had no major results in the last 10 years. How could you have made such a statement?? Where did you get your information? Didn't you feel a responsibility to check your facts with other mathematicians. Your behavior reminds me of the Jason Blair scandal of the New York Times. Shame on you!"

A simple computer search reveals that the number of critically important publications to which Dr. Yau has contributed over the past decade exceed those of most mathematicians, including other recipients of the Fields Medal. As mentioned above, Professor Hawking informed Ms. Nasar of Dr. Yau's breakthrough contributions in the area of string theory which you failed to report while making these derogatory statements. Professor Stroock, whom you quote in the article, likewise directed you to Dr. Yau's recent critical work on string theory, which you intentionally chose to ignore.

Most disturbing, however, is your reporting of the statements which you attribute to Professor Anderson. As you know, Professor Anderson has described your quoting of him as "completely wrong and baseless" and "falsely attributed" to him. I am aware that Professor Anderson has demanded that the quote attributed to him be removed from the article. I also note that Professor Anderson is not alone in expressing shock at seeing how quotes were used improperly in the article. I am informed that Professor Strook likewise is of the view that the words attributed to him are so taken out-of-context as to torture their true and intended meaning.

Our investigation into this matter remains at the early stages. Nevertheless, it is clear from the above that you created and assigned to Dr. Yau a completely fictitious motive for his actions. By tarring him as old, not contributing and fearful that he was losing his stature in the field of mathematics, you invented a story which had nothing to do with reality. Such reporting properly belongs in supermarkets. It does not constitute responsible comment on a scholar of Dr. Yau's stature and a historic event as significant as the solution of the Poincaré Conjecture.

**Dr. Yau “Pushes” His Students To “Tackle Big Problems Because” That Is
What Excellent Teachers Do, Not “To Retain Control Over His Field”**

At page 52, your article claims that Dr. Yau “pushed his students to tackle big problems” because he was “[d]etermined to retain control over his field.” This statement falsely claims that Dr. Yau’s teaching efforts at Harvard, indeed even the manner in which he has designed his courses, were done solely to benefit himself publicly at the expense of his students. It is difficult to think of a more insulting, let alone defamatory, attack upon a teacher, especially one who has dedicated his life to the advancement of the knowledge of others.

The statement is simply untrue. The facts are that Dr. Yau on repeated and numerous occasions has given of his time and his original thought to his students without making any effort or suggestion that he be given or needs credit for doing so. This is what teachers do. Dr. Yau is a good teacher. Your article fails to describe a single instance in which Dr. Yau actually “pushed” a student to tackle a “big problem” so that he could “retain control over his field.” I believe this speaks volumes about your lack of any source or basis for such a claim.

**The Article Portrays Dr. Yau’s Relationship With China
And The Chinese Mathematics Community In A False And Defamatory Manner**

The article variously, and falsely, attacks Dr. Yau’s relationship with and contributions to the mathematical and academic community in China. Among other things, the article falsely claims that Dr. Yau sought to replace Shiing-Shen Chern as China’s preeminent mathematician by forcing him to “step down;” that Dr. Yau sought to ingratiate himself with the Chinese by “remind[ing] his listeners of his Chinese roots” in a Summer 2004 speech at Zhejiang University despite the fact that he “had not spent more than a few months at a time on mainland China since he was an infant;” that Dr. Yau “made an eleventh-hour effort to have the [2002 I.M.U.] congress moved from Beijing to Hong Kong” as a part of a power struggle with Professor Chern; and that when Dr. Yau lost that struggle he “retaliated” by organizing his first conference on string theory so that it opened in Beijing a few days before the I.M.U. Congress began. Your article goes so far as to suggest that Dr. Yau facilitated the attendance of Professor Hawking at the strings conference as part of this “retaliation.”

These statements are as absurd as they have been devastating both to Dr. Yau’s reputation in China and his efforts to combat institutional corruption at the highest levels of academia in that country.

First, your article cites an unnamed “relative of Chern’s” as the sole support for the claim that Dr. Yau somehow sought to force Professor Chern to “step down.” I am informed and believe that no such source exists. Relatives of Professor Chern familiar with the Chinese mathematics community report that they have never been contacted by anyone at or on behalf of The New Yorker.

Second, Dr. Yau did not make the comments you attribute to him at Zhejiang University. Dr. Yau spoke at a very solemn and emotionally overwhelming award ceremony in the People’s

Great Hall in Beijing. At that ceremony, Dr. Yau received the highest recognition possible from the Chinese government for his contributions to mathematics in China. In response, Dr. Yau spoke of his deep love for and family connections with China. His pride in doing so was both great and genuine. Your reference to his spending no more than “a few months at a time on mainland China” constituted false and defamatory innuendo that Dr. Yau had somehow misrepresented his heart-felt connections to that country.

Third, your claim of an “eleventh hour effort” to move the I.M.U. conference from Beijing to Hong Kong by Dr. Yau was false as a matter of documented fact and was known by you to be false prior to publication. On August 18, 2006 at 9:37:42 AM EDT, Dr. Yau provided Ms. Rosenberg with a 2005 public statement made by S.Y. Cheng, the former President of the Hong Kong Mathematical Society, in which Dr. Cheng stated as follows:

I served as President of the Hong Kong Mathematical Society for the period 25 April 1998 to 11 May 2002. I write to certify that Professor Shing-Tung Yau has never made any proposal to me or to the Hong Kong Mathematical Society about moving the site of the 2002 meeting of the International Congress of Mathematics to Hong Kong. The position of the Hong Kong Mathematical Society was to endorse and fully support the proposal of holding the 2002 meeting of the International Congress of Mathematics in Beijing.

Your article nowhere mentions this letter. Nor does it mention that you had been warned that the “gossip” from which the charge arose resulted directly from Dr. Yau’s challenging corruption at Peking University. Indeed, the devastating effects of this particular false charge are difficult to overstate. As you know, the Chinese take great pride in their accomplishments. The I.M.U. conference had the support of Chinese President Jiang and the Chinese government was involved in hosting it. To suggest publicly that Dr. Yau affirmatively sought to undermine China hosting such an important conference is essentially to accuse him of being against the people of China for his own personal gain. Your false comments in this regard are already being used against Dr. Yau by his detractors in China who want to deprive him of a voice for challenging institutional corruption.

Finally, the notion that Dr. Yau “retaliated” against the Chinese establishment by holding a strings conference in Beijing prior to the 2002 I.M.U. Congress is patently absurd. The string theory conference in Beijing was one of several “satellite” conferences specifically set up to induce researchers around the world to attend the congress. Such conferences have long been part of the I.M.U. Congress. The very purpose of organizing such satellite conferences to nearly coincide with respect to time and venue with the I.M.U. Congress is to give researchers around the world more, not less, of an incentive to attend the I.M.U. Congress. The 2002 Beijing Strings Conference and the appearance of Professor Hawking were considered a real coup for the I.M.U. Congress. The claim in your article of the opposite is both illogical and unsupportable.

Again, it is difficult in this letter to convey to you the damage you have done not just to Dr. Yau but to academic conditions for students and faculty in China by publishing these false

statements in your article. In recent months, Dr. Yau had been finding real traction in his efforts to combat corruption at the highest levels of Chinese academia. You have completely undermined this effort. If this matter proceeds, it will be our intention to discover your motivation for doing what you did. We expect that your communications with Mr. Tian and Mr. Griffiths may have some relevance here. Unlike you, however, we will wait to see what the true facts disclose before making any accusations.

Your article also contains numerous other defamatory statements and innuendo concerning Dr. Yau, his action and his motivations. Quite literally, they are too numerous to discuss in this letter. Collectively, they have destroyed the reputation of a good man, an excellent teacher and an extraordinary mathematician. In our instant age of communication, your article has already been disseminated world-wide, including in the halls of virtually every great center of learning for mathematics.

The character of both you and The New Yorker will be defined, and should be defined, by what you do next in response to this letter. Dr. Yau wants his reputation back. He asks, and demands, that you and The New Yorker issue an apology to him and that the apology appear prominently in the printed edition of The New Yorker and on related web sites and blogs, as well as in a mutually acceptable press release. Dr. Yau asks and demands that you confer with him towards retracting all parts of the article about him which are incorrect and that you do so publicly.

Dr. Yau and I are prepared to meet with you and your legal counsel immediately both to commence this effort and to discuss other ways in which you can help undo, to the extent possible, the damage you have done. If you are unwilling to assist in this effort, then you will leave Dr. Yau no choice but to consider other options. In that regard, I must insist that all materials related to the article be preserved.

Please let me hear from your legal counsel as soon as possible.

Very Truly Yours,



Howard M. Cooper, Esq.

HMC:rd

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