



Washington-Baltimore Newspaper Guild @ RFA

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ARBITRATOR ORDERS CANTONESE BROADCASTER REINSTATED FAULTS RFA FOR HANDLING OF CASE; CRITICIZES INVESTIGATOR

In a total victory for King Man Ho and the Guild, an independent arbitrator ordered RFA to reinstate the Cantonese broadcaster to his old job with full back pay and benefits.

Ho was fired in late February after he had a Twitter exchange with two Chinese bloggers who had objected to his coverage of their meeting with Secretary of State Hillary Clinton. Ho recorded the meeting on video which was posted on the RFA web site. The bloggers attacked Ho on Twitter, claiming — among other things — that he had fabricated the story. RFA claimed Ho was insubordinate because he had allegedly been told not to get into an exchange with the bloggers.

In his ruling, the arbitrator made it clear he gave little weight to RFA's claims Ho had been told not to Tweet with the two bloggers. Ho testified at the arbitration hearing that his service chief, Shiny Li, told him just the opposite. He in fact kept her posted of what he was doing and relayed his tweets to her. She never objected to his Tweeting until after RFA higher-ups — instigated in part by the State Department — called the Tweets into question.

RFA also claimed Ho's Tweets had violated the company's conflict of interest policy and code of journalistic ethics. Again, the arbitrator disagreed, though he did say in the future Ho should not engage in a public debate with news sources.

The arbitrator blamed RFA for much of the controversy, starting with how Ho's story was edited, to an apology Ho was forced - upon threat of discharge - to post on his personal Twitter account, to how the investigation was carried out.

He said the investigation by Human Resources Director Alan Tanenbaum was "far from complete," and contained mischaracterizations and inaccuracies.

The arbitrator made a point of saying there was absolutely nothing wrong with Ho's story that triggered the controversy. Even RFA conceded his story was fine. To this day, no RFA official has ever explained why they forced Ho to post the Twitter apology for an accurate and fair story.

The arbitration hearing was conducted over three days in July and August. The ruling was issued November 9

King Man says he is very anxious to return to RFA.

The back pay alone will amount to about \$50,000