

From [Dean Saitta <dsaitta@du.edu>](mailto:dsaitta@du.edu)
Sent Wednesday, October 29, 2008 12:52 pm
To AAUP Chapter
Re: Provost Luncheon

Dear Colleagues,

I've tangled with Dick Lamm (as well as his mentor, Lawrence Harrison) over the issue of differential group achievement in America, sometimes very publicly, over the last few years. A false accusation that I was party to censoring Dick's views here at the university led, in part, to me being blacklisted by David Horowitz, character-assassinated by John Andrews in the Denver Post, and condemned by various other wingnuts. On the other hand, Dick and I have also debated our differences, very civilly and at his invitation, in his graduate public policy class. It's my impression that this was a very positive learning experience for everyone involved. So, based on my experience I don't believe that Dick is a racist or extremist. I just think he's listening a bit too much to certain Harvard eggheads who cling to 19th century views about culture and who've ignored or misunderstood everything that anthropology has been saying about the nature of cultural differences for the last 150 years.

So, I'm not keen for the AAUP chapter to take a position on Dick's invitation to be a Provost Luncheon speaker. We exist to protect academic freedom for all faculty members, and Dick is a member of the faculty. While the academic credibility of Dick's views is a legitimate question, I don't think he can be regarded as "fringe" in the same way that the Holocaust Deniers or so-called "Race Realists" on university faculties can. That said, I can certainly understand the pain that Dick's views cause for black/brown faculty and students. I also think it's pretty tacky to have him speak in such a high profile venue during Latino Heritage Month. I'm guessing that Dick's invitation to speak is, to some extent, a way to put the alleged censorship issue of 4 years ago behind us. Perhaps it's also a way to show that we entertain a diversity of views on campus. Maybe the thinking was that some of the controversy produced by the choice of Provost's Luncheon speaker would be offset by the fact that we just had a Provost's Conference dedicated to Inclusive Excellence...to say nothing of the Faculty Senate's independent effort to highlight the workplace narratives of our black/brown faculty in a special, widely-distributed paper edition of the Faculty Forum that you'll be receiving shortly.

Whatever's the case, I'm glad that peaceful and respectful counter-events and other actions are planned, including delivery of letters that remind the administration of our fundamental commitments around diversity. Wish I

could be there to witness some rare signs of life! Kudos to Miriam Bornstein and others for arranging the counter-events. The last time our faculty got upset about a university action that was deemed disrespectful to marginalized and disenfranchised groups—last summer’s GSIS Korbel Dinner “Bridge-Builder Award” to former Newmont Mining CEO Wayne Murdy—none of the faculty complainers showed up to protest on the day of the event. Plus, there’s been absolutely no follow-through on a widely acclaimed (at the time) idea to have GSIS atone by sponsoring a symposium about indigenous human rights. Instead, I noticed that Murdy was an Honorary Chair for this year’s Korbel Dinner.

Very best to all,
Dean

Dean J. Saitta
Professor, Department of Anthropology
President, DU Chapter AAUP
University of Denver
Sturm Hall 146-S
2000 East Asbury Street
Denver, CO 80208
Phone: 303-871-2680
Fax: 303-871-2437
Web: <http://portfolio.du.edu/dsaitta>