

## Response to David Horowitz: What I think of My Most Dangerous Professors Profile

Dean Saitta

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I'm grateful to David Horowitz for taking an interest in my professional life and activities. However, the *Most Dangerous* profile perpetuates several inaccuracies, distortions, and non-sequiturs found in the original "DiscoverTheNetworks" (DTN) profile. Here's the full critique:

First, the relatively minor stuff. Horowitz's profile identifies me as a Chair, a Director, and a journal Editorial Board member. I'm no longer Chair of the DU Department of Anthropology nor Director of the Museum of Anthropology. I ended my term as Chair in 2003, and my museum directorship in 2000. I'm also no longer on the Editorial Board of *Rethinking Marxism*, ending my term in 2003. These facts are evident from my curriculum vita, including the very first page. Careful research for a book published in 2006 would have correctly identified my current position. However, by continuing to identify me as a Chair and a Director—as well as an award-winning teacher—Horowitz is better able to advance his more general argument that University faculties and administrations are complicit in not only elevating "tenured radicals" to leadership positions, but rewarding them for, in his view, dubious performance. The possibility that I might actually *be* a good administrator and teacher is, for Horowitz, inconceivable.

The most preposterous claim in the profile concerns my alleged "support for Ward Churchill". Like many others, I'm a "supporter" of Ward Churchill in only the most mundane of senses. That is, I believe that what Churchill said on 9/12—like the *many* outrageous and inflammatory things that people across the political spectrum said on 9/12—is covered by every American's right to free speech. I've never defended the *specific* beliefs of Ward Churchill. In fact, my "Thoughts on Academic Free Speech" (accessible on the "Application" page of this website) offers no support at all for Churchill's specific beliefs. My concern is for the collateral damage to academic discourse threatened by knee-jerk reactions to statements *made by others* within my profession. That is, my concern is for the thousands of professors *other* than Churchill who use informed, provocative, and not necessarily "radical" speech every day as a way to stimulate discussion, debate, and critical thought in the classroom and in the public arena. Whether Churchill's 9/11 comments are "informed" or "provocative" is beside the point, and I don't take a stand on his comments in my statement.

I'm on record elsewhere with precisely the same position. On March 15, 2005 I sent an email message to three Denver radio talk show hosts (Dan Caplis, Craig Silverman, and Peter Boyles of KHOW 630 radio) who have been actively prosecuting the case against Churchill since his story broke earlier in that year. My email message includes the following passage:

*“Here’s hoping that Churchill and CU both get what they deserve [emphasis added, referring to pending academic fraud and plagiarism charges against WC]. And, that the resolution of this sorry affair will be worth the collateral damage that all parties—including the pundits, who I suspect know less about the history and character of universities than they let on—are inflicting on cultures of learning everywhere” [emphasis in original].*

Clearly, this is not a statement of support for Ward Churchill.

My concern for the professorate in general and not Churchill in particular is also apparent in the sentence “Before the Churchill story broke *faculty members at CU and elsewhere* confessed to being careful about what they said lest they come off as too “liberal” [emphasis added]. I’m referring here to statements (reported in the Denver press) by a variety of professors at CU and other Colorado universities expressing worry about surveillance of their classrooms by Students for Academic Freedom, whose agitations in Colorado were a major news story between 2003-2005. Mr. Horowitz is simply wrong in attributing to me the assertion that professors *in the Ethnic Studies department* at CU were the ones being careful about their speech. CU Ethnic Studies professors may or may not have been careful about their speech, but they aren’t the ones I’m talking about anyway.

Readers of my statement on academic freedom will also note that I’m as critical of the Left as I am of the Right. I explicitly write that “the current assault on academic free speech comes not only from the Right but also from the Left”. This is a segue to a pointed criticism of left wing critics of Harvard’s Larry Summers for their condemnation of *his* protected free speech about evolved biopsychological differences between men and women and the causes of differential participation of men and women in science (and I take no stand on the correctness of Summers’ argument either). Predictably, Mr. Horowitz chooses to ignore this little bit of balanced analysis so that I can be more effectively demonized as just another knee-jerk liberal.

Mr. Horowitz mocks my “professed dedication to teaching a breadth of ideas and encouraging debate” as “utterly disingenuous”. But instead of supporting the charge of disingenuousness with evidence from *my* teaching and professional behavior, he supports it by reporting more of *Churchill’s* behavior which, as I’ve noted above, I’ve never defended. This is a non sequitur of the most blatant kind. Mr. Horowitz also scorns my commitment to public outreach and education, basically equating it with “radical” causes. The Colorado Endowment for the Humanities (which I served as a Board Member for an extended term of 6 years) is hardly a radical organization. I have files full of positive evaluations of my outreach efforts from such radical organizations as the Daughters of the American Revolution and the St. Paul’s Episcopal Church Women’s Group. I have dozens of positive testimonials from teachers and students in Denver area high schools to whom—on behalf of my university’s “Reach Out DU” program—I give dangerously subversive lectures about the richness of Native American culture history and the biopsychological unity of humankind. The same goes for my work with adult learners in DU’s University College Enrichment Program.

Mr. Horowitz similarly misrepresents the alleged free speech controversy at DU around Richard Lamm's "Two Wands" article. Far from advocating or excusing censorship of Lamm's ideas, I've been part of a Faculty Senate leadership that's been *urging* the Governor to let us publish "Two Wands" in an outlet (namely, our *Faculty Forum*, but we have also discussed the formation of a new, online campus journal) that is much more appropriate than *The Source* as a forum for scholarly discussion and debate. The *Faculty Forum* would provide a better context for the Governor's ideas (including re-publication of the original article about minority achievement that so incensed the Governor), and also allow a broadening of the discussion to include many other perspectives on the issue of differential minority group success in America. As I've noted in postings to numerous blogs obsessed with using the Lamm case to substantiate viewpoint discrimination at DU (including *EducatioNation*, referenced in the *Most Dangerous* book), the issue is not what Governor Lamm has to say but rather the university publication in which he seeks to say it (since *The Source* no longer publishes opinion pieces of the sort Lamm has written). Governor Lamm's ideas are, arguably, provocative and important. So why not publish them in a place where, in the interest of learning, they can be given maximum, focused attention and discussion? Isn't this a professed interest of those Horowitz entities (like Discover The Networks and Students for Academic Freedom) that argue for more "intellectual diversity" at the university? There are other aspects of this story that haven't been reported, that have to do with differential power relationships between, and among, faculty and staff.

The claim that I view my subjects through "communist lenses" is downright silly. Part of my scholarship focuses on the dynamics of ancient "communal societies". "Communal" is a term that is utterly commonplace in contemporary anthropology, and has been for years. Mr. Horowitz infers a communist world view from the titles, rather than a careful reading, of my published work. I use the word "community" in the title of another article not cited by Mr. Horowitz. Does use of the word "community" also imply a "communist" world view? I'm guilty of using Marxist theory in my scholarship on human cultural evolution in much the same way that I'm guilty of using Darwinist theory in my courses on human biological evolution. Darwin and Marx are significant 19<sup>th</sup> century thinkers. Both helped change the world of ideas. In archaeology, Marx's ideas are especially relevant for theorizing social forms that existed *before* capitalism. Neither Darwin nor Marx can be held responsible for the adoption, application, or abuse of their ideas by subsequent generations of thinkers.

Finally, I don't have a forthcoming book titled *Marxism and Archaeology*. Again, careful scrutiny of this Portfolio site by Mr. Horowitz's researchers would have revealed that this is a collection of papers I edited for a special issue of *Rethinking Marxism* about the utility of Marxist ideas in archaeology. And to be associated with *Rethinking Marxism* doesn't mean that I hold to every single belief that's maintained by allied journals or institutions. I do have a book coming out called *The Archaeology of Collective Action* (University Press of Florida). This book synthesizes research by the Colorado Coalfield War Project, described elsewhere in this Portfolio. More "dangerously", it places the research in a broader social context defined by continuing

corporate failure to protect the lives of American coal miners (dramatically evidenced by January 2006's mine deaths in West Virginia), and post-9/11 resurgence of a triumphalist American history that not only threatens democratizing trends in public history and memory, but the democratic critics themselves.

In short, the longer DTN profile from which my *Most Dangerous Professors* blurb is extracted is a clumsy hatchet job of classic proportions. It is filled with inaccuracies, unsubstantiated claims, and tortured logic. The "research" is superficial and sloppy. These problems are perpetuated in the book's shorter blurb. If my profile is any indication, the same most likely goes for other *Most Dangerous* profiles that have been distilled from the DTN database. The *Most Dangerous* profiles do, however, nicely illustrate the variety of smear tactics currently being used against professors and other citizens who dare to dissent: character assassination, demonization by selective quotation, and assignment of guilt by (dubious) association.