

NOTE: The following does not necessarily represent the views of the DU-AAUP chapter.

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Sent	Thursday, August 23, 2007 11:18 am
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Subject	Compliments on Churchill Vote

Dear Regent Carlisle,

As a university professor and Colorado taxpayer I want to compliment you on your dissenting vote in the recent Ward Churchill decision. It was the only vote that truly respected the political, procedural, and substantive complexities of the case as well as what many of us in the academy understand as the principle of shared faculty governance.

Despite the mantra that “three separate review panels and over twenty faculty members were unanimous in finding clear instances of research misconduct” in Professor Churchill’s work, CU’s top administrators and your fellow Regents ignore the fact—clear to many knowledgeable outside readers of the documents that CU made publicly available—that the case against Professor Churchill is a certifiable mixed bag. The surest reflection of this is the lack of consensus about sanctions at three different and ascending levels of faculty review—with “ascending levels” being the operative phrase. It’s obvious that the last and best-informed faculty committee to consider the case—the Privilege and Tenure Committee—saw something in the record of hits, misses, nitpicks, and equivocations produced by lower levels of faculty review, as well as something in new information collected *after* the P&T Committee took over the case, that caused it to recommend a one year suspension and demotion rather than dismissal.

The P&T committee also rightly challenged the claim that Professor Churchill misrepresented the General Allotment Act. It concluded, with other honest and knowledgeable scholars, that the basis for policing Indian identity that’s implied by the Act—whether blood quantum or something else—is an area of legitimate scholarly debate. I admire you for agreeing with the P&T Committee on this point, and regret that Regent Carrigan (from my home district) lacked the conviction to parlay his agreement into a second dissenting vote. President Brown chose to disagree with this most critical point even though he commands no special expertise or insight about American Indian history. Frankly, the President’s recommendation suggests a greater interest in solidifying his legacy as the media-hyped “savior” of the state’s flagship institution than in respecting legitimate debate within a controversial area of scholarship. The clumsiness

of President Brown's reasoning is exceeded only by the crassness of his self-congratulatory editorializing in the *Wall Street Journal* and elsewhere—offered up well before Professor Churchill's corpse had begun to cool—spinning the decision as one that serves “the good of the university”.

If I were a faculty member at CU—or a young, envelope-pushing scholar entertaining a job offer from CU—I wouldn't be feeling so good right now. Top CU administrators maintain relationships with an organization—namely, the American Council of Trustees and Alumni—that is poisoning the waters for many dedicated and honest scholars across America. CU's own faculty review panels have, throughout this affair, issued repeated pleas for a strong and *convincing* statement from the central administration supporting the principle of academic freedom. My friends and colleagues in the CU system confess that they're “keeping their mouths shut and their heads down.” All this, when combined with the Regents decision, suggest that traditions of critical scholarship and shared governance hang by a thread on CU's campuses.

I suppose we citizens who support publicly-funded higher education will have to strengthen these traditions and values one Regent at a time. You're a good start, and a fine example for others. Thank you for your support in this much greater cause.

Sincerely and Respectfully,

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