

Professor Dean Saitta

University of Denver

- Professor and chair of the Anthropology Department at the University of Denver
- Editorial board member of the journal *Rethinking Marxism*
- Supporter of Colorado professor Ward Churchill

Dean Saitta is chair of the Anthropology Department at the University of Denver and director of the university's Museum of Anthropology. His disparate research interests in North American archaeology and labor history are linked by his commitment to Marxist ideology. In 1993 and 1995 Professor Saitta received the Mortar Board, which is the "Top Prof" award at the University of Denver. In 1994, he received an award for Outstanding Support to the Office of Admissions and says that he "loves the opportunity to work with citizens and other educators in disseminating knowledge for the benefit of Colorado's citizenry." His idea of disseminating knowledge, however, is often indistinguishable from promoting radical political agendas and propaganda of an extreme nature. Professor Saitta has served six years on the board of directors at the Colorado Endowment for the Humanities and in 1998 he won the United Methodist Church University Scholar-Teacher of the Year Award.

In a March 2005 statement titled "Thoughts on Academic Free Speech," Saitta defended the beliefs and actions of Ward Churchill. Expressing concern about the future of radical political expression in the classroom, Professor Saitta wrote, "My main concern about the Churchill affair is what it portends for the future of informed, provocative speech in classrooms that are already being monitored by conservative thought police." Of course Churchill was not attacked for his comments in the classroom,

which have neither been monitored nor reported. He was attacked for public statements, for fraudulent representations to the committee that hired him, for plagiarism and for shoddy scholarship.

Professor Saitta was also incorrect in asserting that University of Colorado professors—particularly those in the Ethnic Studies Department—felt they had to be careful about the political statements they made, lest they be characterized as too "liberal" by "conservative thought police." For example, Professor Jualynne Dodson of Colorado University's Ethnic Studies Department—an ardent supporter of Communist Cuba—publicly declared that "the world needs Cuba to go on fighting and demonstrating a viable alternative to the globalization of the capitalist system."⁷²⁵ There were neither reactions nor consequences for her remarks.

On the other hand, Professor Saitta does not extend his calls for "provocative speech" on campus to individuals whose views differ from his. Early in 2005, fellow University of Denver professor Richard Lamm (a liberal Democrat and former Colorado governor) tried unsuccessfully to place an article in the university newspaper, *The Source*. Titled "Two Wands," the piece described a fanciful scenario where racism could be wiped out with the wave of a magic wand, and where minority neighborhoods could acquire, with the aid of a second wand, the intellectual and educational tools they would need in order to improve their lives without public assistance. Said Professor Lamm, "we must recognize that all the civil rights laws in the world are not going to solve the problem of minority failure. Ultimately Blacks and Hispanics are going to have to see that the solution is largely in their own hands."⁷²⁶

In Professor Saitta's view, *The Source's* refusal to publish Lamm's article was not an example of academic censorship. "Governor Lamm sought to publish his essay in an inappropriate place," wrote Saitta. "... [T]here's no controversy here, and

certainly no infringement of Governor Lamm's academic freedom."⁷²⁷

Scientific papers and journal articles Professor Saitta has written include: "Communal Class Processes and Pre-Columbian Social Dynamics"; "Politics and Surplus Flow in Communal Societies"; "Dialoguing with the Ghost of Marx: Mode of Production in Archaeological Theory"; "Marxist Theory and Tribal Political Economy"; "Marxist Models of Chacoan Prehistory"; and "Marxism, Prehistory, and Primitive Communism." He is also the author of a forthcoming book titled *Marxism and Archaeology*. Professor Saitta is a member of the editorial board of the journal *Rethinking Marxism*, which "aims to stimulate interest in and debate over the explanatory power and social consequences of Marxian economic, cultural, and social analysis."⁷²⁸

See also: Professors Brumfiel, De Genova,
Foster, Furr, Richards

Research: Thomas Ryan