

Scholar's Statement in Support of Professor Ward Churchill

April 28, 2007

(institutional affiliations noted for identification purposes only)

Gil Anidjar:

The attack on the university, on intellectual life and on political engagement, indeed, on the political and ethical significance of our profession is no more than the latest round in a long struggle dedicated to the destruction – in each of us – of that which thinks and weighs and learns and judges with integrity, conviction and courage. Ward Churchill is who he is precisely because he speaks truth to power, because he reminds us of our obligations, as scholars, activists, citizens and illegalized individuals. He reminds us of our duty in the face of intimidation, in the face of collaboration and silence, in the face of hegemony, economy, carpet bombing and other kinds of mass murders. He calls on us to stand up in a climate of ever expanding fear. For it is fear, not conscience, that makes cowards of us all. But it is also fear that moves those who seek to silence Ward Churchill and we who follow his example. *They* are the cowards who, armed to the teeth with weapons of mass destruction, weapons of mass intimidation, they who want us all to be cowards and never to stand up, never to think and act responsibly, never to have the courage to think and weigh and learn and judge. The war on terror should start with them, with the fear mongers. That is why Ward Churchill is our example and our model: he puts an end to the reign of fear. That is what tenure, in the true sense of the term, is. And that is why Ward Churchill will never lose his tenure. Ward Churchill has already won. And we “most dangerous professors,” at Columbia University and elsewhere, we will make sure he continues winning. With Ward Churchill, we will continue to join in that fight. And together with him, we will win. We are winning.

Gil Anidjar

Associate Professor

Department of Middle East and Asian Languages and Cultures

Columbia University

Bill Ayers:

Dear Colleagues,

In Brecht's play *Galileo* the great astronomer sets forth into a world dominated by a mighty church and an authoritarian power: "The cities are narrow and so are the brains," he declares recklessly. "Superstition and plague. But now the word is: since it is so, it does not remain so. For everything moves my friend." Intoxicated with his own radical discoveries, Galileo feels the earth shifting and finds himself propelled surprisingly toward revolution. "It was always said that the stars were fastened to a crystal vault so they could not fall," he says. "Now we have taken heart and let them float in the air, without support... they are embarked on a great voyage---like us who are also without support and embarked on a great voyage." Here Galileo raises the stakes and risks taking on the establishment in the realm of its own authority, and it strikes back fiercely. Forced to renounce his life's work under the exquisite pressure of the Inquisition he denounces what he knows to be true, and is welcomed back into the church and the ranks of the faithful, but exiled from humanity---by his own word. A former student confronts him in the street: "Many on all sides followed you with their ears and their eyes believing that you stood, not only for a particular view of the movement of the stars, but even more for the liberty of teaching--- in all fields. Not then for any particular thoughts, but for the right to think at all. Which is in dispute."

The right to think at all, which is in dispute----this is what the Ward Churchill affair finally comes to: The right to a mind of one's own, the right to pursue an argument into uncharted spaces, the right to challenge the church and its orthodoxy in the public square. The right to think at all.

It's no surprise that this outrage against Professor Churchill occurs at this particular moment --- a time of empire resurrected and unapologetic, militarism proudly expanding and triumphant, war without justice and without end, white supremacy retrenched, basic rights and protections shredded, growing disparities between the haves and the have-nots, fear and superstition and the mobilization of scapegoating social formations based on bigotry and violence or the threats of violence, and on and on. There's more of course, and this isn't the only story, but this is a recognizable part of where we're living, and a familiar place to anyone with even a casual understanding of history. Here the competing impulses and ideals that have always animated our country's story are on full display: rights and liberty and the pursuit of human freedom on one side, domination and war and repression on the other. The trauma of contradictions that is America.

Ward Churchill is under a sustained, orchestrated, and determined attack because of his political beliefs and statements and activities, and nothing more. No one doubts his productivity or his accomplishments. But the attack on Churchill is neither isolated nor innocent--- the high school history teacher on the

west side of Chicago gets the message, and so does the English literature teacher in Detroit and the math teacher in an Oakland middle school: be careful what you say; stay close to the official story; stick to the authorized text. If someone of Ward Churchill's stature and standing for so many years at the University of Colorado can suffer this kind of campaign, what chance do I have?

Every committee, every investigation, every report plays out under a shadow of the star chamber; everyone must choose who to be and how to act in response. For this reason I support Ward Churchill unequivocally, unapologetically, wholeheartedly. I urge my colleagues and my students and everyone who values education as a grand enterprise geared toward enlightenment and liberation to speak out forcefully and fearlessly now on behalf of the liberty of teaching and learning, on behalf of the right to think at all.

Sincerely,
William Ayers
Distinguished Professor of Education and Senior University Scholar
University of Illinois at Chicago
billayers.org

Dana Cloud:

To my colleagues and comrades:

I stand today with Ward Churchill against the right wing culture warriors who have set their sights on critical, progressive, and radical faculty on campuses across the United States.

It is obvious that the charges against Professor Churchill did not originate with questions about his research, but about the political arguments he made after 9/11. We all have the right as citizens to speak our minds and hearts on matters of importance. We must defend this right every time it comes under attack. If Professor Churchill's scholarship were really the issue, the administration would have found fault during his tenure review or subsequent promotions—including promotion to Chair of his department. No, these attacks are politically timed and motivated and we must see them for what they are.

David Horowitz and the American Council of Trustees and Alumni, among others, are engaged in a well-orchestrated, well-funded, and coordinated assault on faculty across this country, under the cynical guise of a campaign for academic freedom. They know that real academic freedom is what has made universities in the U.S. and around the world spaces of critique and democratic dissent throughout modern history. In this context, we are threats to the bullying, racist, imperialist warmongering, lying, cheating, and stealing, anti-woman, anti-gay,

and anti-freedom ruling class that is running our country.

They spend hundreds of billions of dollars on a devastating war for oil, an atrocity, a massacre that we should grieve at least every bit as intensely as we do those young people in Virginia. We see the ruin and waste even as we know 46 million Americans do not have access to health care, Medicare is in jeopardy, children around the world starve while too much food is produced in the West to sell, and the money spent destroying Iraq could actually end world hunger. We stand together to challenge the sick priorities of a society organized for profit rather than human need and freedom.

We can only stay strong in those struggles if we hold the line on the most basic struggle that ties us together: for the right to fight at all.

There can be no doubt that ACTA and Horowitz and their minions are licking their chops waiting to see if Professor Churchill will fall. We have done everything in our power to stop the University of Colorado Administration in its efforts to fire him. If they go through with this decision—and I hope they will be wise enough to think again, but if they go through with it, it will bring shame on them and leave a devastating scar in the intellectual and political landscape.

And if this thing comes to pass, it will be a warning to those who have held back from standing in solidarity with Professor Churchill.

Many of us are vulnerable. But we cannot afford caution. We may have legitimate differences with and criticisms of each other. But we cannot become so mired in difference that we cannot see the urgency of standing together. We must have each others' backs. We stand today for Ward Churchill. In doing so, we are asserting the fundamental principle of freedom of thought and action in a world that desperately needs our courageous voices, powered by our collective strength.

In solidarity,

Dana Cloud

Associate Professor, Communication Studies, University of Texas (identification purposes only; I do not speak for the University in this matter)

Horowitz antagonist

Longtime member, International Socialist Organization

Drucilla Cornell:

Ward Churchill has been a brave and important scholar. I have followed his work carefully and I have learned so much from him. But I am defending him because there is more than just his work involved. We are fighting for academic freedom for all of us. We cannot let Ward Churchill's case set a dangerous precedent.

Drucilla Cornell
Professor of Political Science, Women's Studies, and Comparative Literature,
Rutgers University

Hamid Dabashi:

I write this note on behalf of Professor Ward Churchill who in my estimation today stands for all of us in the U.S. academy. The crucial task of cultivating critical judgment for responsible citizenship has scarcely been a more urgent task in the long and tumultuous history of this country. With Ward Churchill it is the very inviolable principle of free and fearless exercise of democratic dissent that is today on trial.

There is a magnificent scene in Stanley Kubrick's "Spartacus" (1960), when a Roman general stands before the captured slave army and demands that they turn over Spartacus, or else face vindictive punishment. To save his comrades, Spartacus stands up and says "I am Spartacus." But one after another of his comrades immediately stand up and say "I am Spartacus!" Today, every single professor teaching in the remotest parts of this country with an abiding conviction in the moral duty of democratic dissent is Ward Churchill. In the company of that magnificent chorus of hope for the democratic future of this country, I too am Ward Churchill.

In Solidarity,

Hamid Dabashi
Hagop Kevorkian Professor of Iranian Studies and Comparative Literature
Columbia University

Michael D'Andrea:

To Allies in the struggle for justice and peace:

The United States is suffering from a colossal crisis in moral, political, and academic leadership. Although this crisis is reflected in failed leadership in all areas of our society, it is most obvious in the Bush Administration's incompetence and dishonest handling of the War in Iraq and the occupation of Afghanistan.

These recent military ventures represent only 2 of a long legacy of military interventions that are purposely designed to protect the economic and political interests of a small number of persons in leadership positions in this nation.

The individuals who benefit from the immoral and failed foreign and domestic policies that perpetuate the suffering and death of millions of persons in our nation and around the world understand the importance of silencing those persons who present clear and accurate critiques of the immoral and ineffective leadership that continues to exist in our country.

These persons also understand the importance of discrediting and removing those scholars in higher education who assert the courage to unveil the crisis in moral leadership that exists in the political, educational, and corporate institutions in the United States.

Attacks on progressive scholars continue to increase on campuses across the country as is reflected in the case of Ward Churchill at the University of Colorado. Students and faculty who are committed to the principles of democracy and freedom are coming together on April 28, 2007 from various parts of the nation to publicly express their support for Ward Churchill and the many professional and social contributions he has achieved as a scholar and activist.

The stellar academic career of Ward Churchill and his commitment to promote justice and freedom through his scholarly endeavors far outweigh the criticisms of those who seek his termination as a faculty member.

With this in mind, I want to have my voice counted among those advocates for free speech and academic freedom that are assembling on April 28, 2007 in Colorado and across the United States to support Ward Churchill. As a progressive scholar who was recently banned from the University of Hawaii for my work as a social justice and peace advocacy and critique of the crisis of administrative leadership in our country and on our campus, I join in solidarity with all of those meeting in Colorado to support Ward Churchill.

Now is the time for all of us to join together to support Ward Churchill and his right to free speech and academic freedom.

Now is the time to support all progressive scholars whose social-political critiques mark them as targets to be silenced, discredited, and removed from their faculty positions.

Now is the time to join together against those persons who seek to undermine our collective efforts to promote justice and peace in our world.

Now is the time to express our unity with Ward Churchill and publicly acknowledge our respect for his many contributions as a scholar and social justice advocate.

Now is the time to stop the coordinated attacks on the voices of dissent that are being raised by millions of people committed to promoting justice and peace in our world.

In the continuing struggle for justice and peace I submit my support for Ward Churchill and other progressive scholars in this world,

Michael D'Andrea
Professor
University of Hawaii

Richard Delgado:

The issues the Ward Churchill case poses are of vital interest to all students and faculty members concerned about academic freedom. They include selective prosecution and the legitimate role of critics and others who voice unpopular ideas. They are of special concern for racial minorities, Native Americans, students, and workers. We must all insist on justice for Professor Churchill and the assurance that travesties, like those that marred his case, do not happen again.

Professor Richard Delgado
University Distinguished Professor of Law & Derrick Bell Fellow
University of Pittsburgh School of Law

Richard Falk:

All of us who value academic freedom should now stand in full solidarity with Ward Churchill. The outcome of his case at the University of Colorado is the best

litmus test we have to tell whether the right-wing's assaults on learning and liberty will stifle campus life in this country. Never in my lifetime have we in America more needed the sort of vigorous debate and creative controversy that Ward Churchill's distinguished career epitomizes. We all stand to lose if his principled defense fails.

Richard Falk

Milbank Professor of International Law Emeritus, Princeton University;
Visiting Distinguished Professor (since 2002), Global Studies,
University of California, Santa Barbara

Juan Gomez-Quinones:

Ward Churchill is a uniquely productive scholar in areas of social history research seminal to the ongoing evaluation of the present United States society. If there is to be a substantive mass of informed analysis which would be of critical assistance in charting a more economically just and more ethically governed society, Professor is already surely a key contributor. The appropriate site for critical research and critical discourse is the university. Clearly, the university which would not collegially accommodate a productive, recognized scholar would weaken and tarnish its unfolding role in fulfilling its claim to being an institution of learning, the site of scholarly production and the sharing of knowledge. Consequently a university must safeguard through specific acts protecting specific scholars such as Professor Ward Churchill. The punishment being designated for Professor Churchill ending his University of Colorado scholarship and removal from this university is a confession he is being persecuted as a scholar. As I hereby do, I ask scholars who are committed to the practice of academic freedom and civil liberties to join in solidarity the defense of Professor Ward Churchill and support his continuance in his university position.

Professor Juan Gomez-Quinones
Department of History, UCLA

Robert Ivie:

Anyone who believes in the democratic value of academic freedom, who understands that protecting unfettered scholarly inquiry is crucial to developing and sustaining a healthy democratic society, and who know that the very purpose of exercising academic freedom is to hold orthodoxies – whether political, religious, social, or economic – accountable to critical thinking, also understands how easy it is for institutions of higher learning to rationalize violations of academic freedom, especially in what is perceived to be dangerous times. To succumb to inevitable political pressure, especially when the fruit of the university's internal investigation of a targeted professor has been so overtly poisoned by forces external to that university, amounts to a mockery of the principle of academic freedom and a failure to serve the very purpose for which the institution was founded.

Robert L. Ivie
Professor of Communication and Culture
Indiana University, Bloomington

Robert Jensen:

Many of us with left/progressive values have been targeted by forces that want to undermine independent, critical inquiry in the universities. But in recent years no one has been targeted with the ferocity with which reactionary forces have gone after Ward Churchill. Defense of his academic freedom stands at the center of the struggle for not only our universities but for a democratic political culture.

Professor Robert Jensen
University of Texas at Austin

Carlos M. Munoz, Jr.:

The attack on the academic integrity of Professor Ward Churchill is an attack against all of us who cherish the principles of academic freedom. In particular, it is an attack against those of us who have long labored to develop the disciplines of Ethnic Studies in the academy. We must continue to demand that those who govern the University of Colorado immediately stop the witch hunt against Professor Churchill, one of the most prolific Ethnic Studies scholars in the nation.

Carlos Munoz, Jr., Professor Emeritus, Department of Ethnic Studies,
UC Berkeley

Peter N. Kirstein:

If one looks at America today, one sees the thunder of the right as a strategic threat to higher education. Ward Churchill's persecution and silencing before his scheduled appearance at Hamilton College, and the possibility of the revocation of his "continuous" tenure is symptomatic of the persecution of progressive faculty. It is essential that American Association of University Professors' guidelines be addressed to reverse this execrable auto da fe. ***"Teachers are entitled to full freedom in research and in the publication of the results..."*** American Association of University Professors, "1940 Statement of Principles on Academic Freedom and Tenure." I have been persuaded by both the AAUP C.U. president and other analyses that the alleged academic misconduct of Professor Churchill was either scant or non-existent. I have seen nothing that would suggest he should be fired. The 1970 Second Interpretive Comment of the 1940 Statement also pronounced: ***The intent of the statement is not to discourage what is "controversial." Controversy is at the heart of the free academic inquiry which the entire statement is designed to foster.***

Also suspension cannot be levied unless there is an imminent threat to the individual or to others. That is the ONLY basis of a suspension according to many A.A.U.P. documents such as the ninth "1970 Interpretive Comment" of the "1940 Statement of Principles of Academic Freedom and Tenure," the "1958 Statement on Procedural Standards in Faculty Dismissal Proceedings" and the revised 1999 "Recommended Institutional Regulations on Academic Freedom and Tenure.. I was suspended for an anti-war e-mail to the Air Force Academy and I know the literature quite well. C.U. would do well to fully apply this epochal statement and other A.A.U.P. academic freedom policies to the current controversy over Professor Churchill's status as a tenured full-professor. My statement, however, is my own.

Peter N. Kirstein, Professor of History, Saint Xavier University
Vice-President Elect, A.A.U.P. Illinois Conference

Henry Silverman:

Ward Churchill has been a controversial writer, speaker and teacher, someone who has stimulated much needed discussion and debate. He comes from a long tradition of provocative university thinkers who have suffered from the recent ascending arc of right-wing intimidation. This campaign from right-wing thought police is attempting to define what is acceptable speech and behavior in our academic institutions. The Ward Churchill firestorm has chilled free speech at our universities. To stifle dissent is to stifle education. All who cherish real educational values should speak out in his behalf.

Henry Silverman
Professor and Chairperson Emeritus
Michigan State University, East Lansing, Michigan

Paul Von Blum:

I vigorously oppose the continuing attacks on academic freedom, exemplified by the politically inspired assault on Professor Ward Churchill of the University of Colorado. A university must be a bastion of free and open expression, including (and especially) those views and opinions that challenge dominant ideologies and values. The targeting of Professor Churchill is ultimately an attack on the deepest values of a democratic society.

Professor Paul Von Blum
African American Studies and Communication Studies, UCLA

Immanuel Wallerstein:

For me the issue is very simple. I do not know Ward Churchill and I have not read much of what he has written. But the whole move for his dismissal was precipitated by his criticism of the U.S. government's reaction to September 11, which caused some Colorado legislators to call for his dismissal. This is direct and dangerous interference with academic freedom. Furthermore, it undermines the legitimacy of political dissent, without which no country can pretend to be democratic. We must all defend such dissent, whether or not we agree with it.

As far as I can see, the university administration, knowing that they could not openly accede to such illegitimate political pressures, did an end run and sought to find an excuse, a thin one in fact, to dismiss Ward Churchill on other grounds. They knew what they were really doing, which was responding to political pressure. And we know that it is shameful. They should rescind all action along these lines.

Immanuel Wallerstein
Professor Emeritus and Senior Research Scholar
Yale University

Howard Zinn:

I have declared my support of Ward Churchill because to defend him is to defend the principle of academic freedom, the idea that no one should lose his or her job or status in education because of factors outside of teaching and scholarship. Those factors -- political, ideological -- are evident in his case, and they are joined by a mean-spiritedness which does not belong in an academic or any other environment. The attack on Ward Churchill comes at a time in our nation's history when constitutional rights are under attack by the national government, when war threatens the lives and well-being of all, and therefore we need the marketplace of ideas to be as open as possible. If we want to live in a democracy we must protect that openness. That is why defending Ward Churchill has an importance far beyond his particular situation.

Howard Zinn
Professor Emeritus, Boston University