

Derrick Jensen

Derrick Jensen, Author, Crescent City, California, says:

I am the author of many books, including the highly-acclaimed *A Language Older Than Words* and *The Culture of Make Believe*. The latter was one of three finalists for the Lukas Prize Project Award for Exceptional Works of Nonfiction, sponsored by the Columbia University Graduate School of Journalism and the Nieman Foundation at Harvard, which cited it as a passionate and provocative meditation on the nexus of racism, genocide, environmental destruction and corporate malfeasance, where civilization meets its discontents. My work is commonly lauded for its scholarship and clarity of thought, and because I have the courage to write the truth even when those truths make us uncomfortable.

I did not learn how to be a writer on my own. . . . I learned from the great writers, philosophers, and scholars. I include Ward Churchill among these. Reading his works taught me the importance of impeccable scholarship, utter precision in language, and most of all, that courage to write the truth even when those truths make us uncomfortable.

As a working author whose own works require extraordinary amounts of research, I have learned not to trust other people's citations. Whenever possible I follow each footnote back to its source, and then follow that footnote to its source, and so on, as far back as I can. I've found—and this surprised me at first—that the accuracy of footnotes is maybe 90 to 95 percent, that is, that one out of every ten or twenty footnotes is wrong. Most of these errors are trivial (wrong page, and so on) but sometimes they are more severe. My point as it concerns Ward is that Ward's accuracy of scholarship is in my extensive experience unparalleled. He is utterly scrupulous in his precision. There are scholars I do not trust with their footnotes, and there are scholars who have earned my trust. I would trust my very life to Ward's scholarship: it is that solid.