

Letter from CU Ethnic Studies Faculty Member Benjamin Whitmer - Aug. 11, 2006

Sent to the local media and copied to Hank Brown, Phil DiStefano, Weldon Lodwick and the CU Regents.

I have been a part-time adjunct faculty member of CU Boulder's Ethnic Studies department since January of 2005, beginning just a few weeks before the Ward Churchill controversy broke. During the time since I've had the pleasure of being a first-hand eyewitness as events unfolded, and thought I'd share some a few impressions as CU barrels towards the preordained conclusion of its pig-circus.

I've seen hundreds of death threats and racial slurs pour into the Ethnic Studies department, which CU administrators neither condemned nor made any attempt to stop, instead posting a memo on the department's door stating that the views therein should not be confused with the views of CU, ensuring the faculty understood they were being hung out to dry.

* I've passed a gentleman day after day as he stood outside the Ethnic Studies department holding a sign that contained the most offensive possible racial slurs, and who was only reluctantly removed by CU after repeated requests by students, ensuring the Ethnic Studies student population understood they were being cut loose as well.

* I've listened to hack journalists, politicians and radio jocks fill hundred of hours worth of air time with the kind of sleazy innuendo and flat-out lying about Ward Churchill that would make Walter Winchell renounce journalism in shame, which CU administrators encouraged, pandering slavishly to the local media.

* I've heard scores of CU faculty members express private support for Ward Churchill, while, with a few notable exceptions, always finding a way to weasel out of making their beliefs public. This was the most disheartening spectacle of all. While I expect administrators to evince the lowest kind of cowardice and servility, I had harbored some illusions about faculty members. After all, what's the use of the protection granted by tenure if you're too spineless to stand for anything?

* However, I've also seen Ward Churchill, Natsu Saito and the rest of the Ethnic Studies faculty resist the worst kind of bigotry and lynch-mob rhetoric with a kind of grace and courage that I can only hope to emulate. Watching most of CU's faculty scuttle over themselves to prove their own craven mediocrity, I have been immensely proud to be a member of Ethnic

Studies.

Into the future, I expect nothing but Ward Churchill's firing from CU. Just as I expect CU will continue to marginalize Ethnic Studies in the interest of mollifying the lynch mob drummed up by the local media. Likewise, I have no doubt but that CU will continue to earn its well-deserved national reputation of being profoundly hostile to faculty and students of color.

They say, after all, that the best predictor of future behavior is past behavior.

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