



news sports a&e multimedia classifieds

Monday February 14, 2005

Type Here advanced search

Search



- news
- front page
- campus
- metro
- world & nation
- sports
- opinion
- a&e
- corrections
- first amendment

- features
- network
- dr. date
- crossword solution
- classifieds
- multimedia
- grapevines

- about
- about us
- subscribe
- issue archive
- meet moe
- see moe work
- marketing
- place ads
- job openings
- contact
- media kit
- alumni

paid advertising

- Citibank Student Loans
- Fish Oil
- Spiele und Games
- zippo lighters
- ACS Loans
- West Coast Choppers
- African Safari
- College Loans & Student Loan Consolidation
- Buy Chicago Bears Tickets
- Golf Gifts
- Home Equity Loans
- Swords
- Term Life Insurance
- helzberg diamonds

# OPINION [ACADEMIC FREEDOM]

February 14, 2005

Rate this Article

## Open discussion must be protected

Our ideas of free speech are put to the test when we have to tolerate deplorable ideas.

By Jason Steck

**F**ury over University of Colorado professor Ward Churchill's inflammatory and crude comments branding victims of the Sept. 11, 2001, attacks as "little Eichmanns" is well justified. But Colorado now stands at a crossroads where it must decide whether to indulge in an emotional overreaction that sacrifices academic freedom or to rediscover the true meaning of the adage attributed to Voltaire, "I disapprove of what you say, but I will defend to the death your right to say it."

Indeed, "disapprove" seems far too modest a term to apply to Churchill's ranting. In his effort to make a point about what he sees as the malign effects of a capitalist economic system and an overly aggressive U.S. foreign policy, Churchill went off the deep end, embracing a churlish and repugnant image that seeks to justify his ideology on the backs of two buildings full of dead people. Indeed, Churchill worked overtime on this project, seeking to impute actual guilt on workers ranging in status from waiters to stockbrokers, claiming that they were not really "innocents" at all for having agreed to work in the World Trade Center towers that stood as symbols of global capitalism.

To be clear, we should reject Churchill's statements at every level of argumentation. His analysis of economic systems is shallow and imbued with ideological presumption. His anti-Americanism is palpable and his standards of judgment in evaluating policy actions around the world are inconsistent. His tone is offensive and anti-social. One might even fairly call him a demagogue.

That said, Churchill must not be fired. To fire Churchill from his position at a state-run university based on our justified revulsion of his political views would make a mockery of principles of academic freedom that go far beyond this one loopy professor. It would represent a full-scale embrace of state censorship that would ultimately damage a lot of people who are completely innocent of Churchill's vulgarism and are indeed the very people who are most offended by Churchill's views.

In 2003, Colorado led the nation in addressing the issue of academic freedom, by endorsing the "Academic Bill of Rights," sponsored by the Students for Academic Freedom and endorsed by the Foundation for Individual Rights in Education. This movement was provoked by the growing problem of discrimination on campuses against students and professors perceived (rightly or

Sarasota Real Estate  
 Daniel Green Slippers  
 motorcycle  
 Business Degree  
 Online  
 Bumbles MP3 Players  
 Deals & Coupon Codes  
 Online  
 teleconferencing  
 web conferencing  
 Sony & Panasonic  
 Portable DvD Players  
 Student Loan  
 Consolidation  
 Art Schools

wrongly) as political conservatives. The foundation's online database recounts a host of cases where "conservative" students have been targeted for censorship, Orwellian "sensitivity training" and other punitive actions merely because they violated the left-leaning norms that dominate their campus environments. Further, a spate of studies has documented extreme disparities indicating exclusion of conservative professors from departments in most of the humanities and the social sciences. The Academic Bill of Rights represents a long-overdue effort to reinvigorate academic freedoms and reject the notion that the political views of a particular majority should set limits on academic research or advocacy.

What is good for the goose must be good for the gander. If it is wrong for a leftist majority among campus professors and administrators to enact speech codes that punish conservative students and professors, then it is also wrong for our centrist-conservative political majority to impose a speech code by firing Churchill. If Churchill is fired for his political dissent, that will destroy the principle that protects conservatives for being targeted for their political dissent.

The Colorado Legislature recently passed a strongly-worded condemnation of Churchill's comments and that's the way it is supposed to work — arguments should be answered with good arguments. Attempts to punish people who make bad arguments only rebound against us all.

Jason Steck is a political science graduate student. Please send comments to letters@mndaily.com.

 [E-mail This Article](#)

Rate this article:



Ranking of 5 is best.

 [Printer-Friendly Version](#)

#### Opinion News

- ▶ [The pros and cons of Feb. 14 \(02/14/05\)](#)
- ▶ [Letters to the Editor \(02/14/05\)](#)
- ▶ [Driver's-license bill misses the point \(02/14/05\)](#)

#### Top Stories

- ▶ [\[Opinion\] You bet sports gambling is a good idea! \(02/11/05\)](#)
- ▶ [\[Sports\] Reiter's run for the border working out just fine \(02/08/05\)](#)
- ▶ [\[Campus\] Daily Briefs \(02/09/05\)](#)

#### Highest Rated Stories

- ▶ [\[Sports\] Reiter's run for the border working out just fine \(02/08/05\)](#)
- ▶ [\[Sports\] Sheer Grier: Junior pelts Badgers \(02/07/05\)](#)
- ▶ [\[Sports\] NCAA expectations begin to materialize \(02/09/05\)](#)



Ads by Goooooogle

#### Conservative Politics

Huge selection of new & used. Check out the deals now!  
[www.eBay.com](http://www.eBay.com)

#### Politics of Freedom

Political discussion. Issues and answers with pragmatic solutions.  
[diablog.us](http://diablog.us)

#### CQ Weekly

The only publication focused on the lifecycle of legislation  
[www.cqweekly.com](http://www.cqweekly.com)

#### Conquest Fundraising

Phones, Mail, or Online for Republican and conservative causes  
[www.ConquestGroup.com](http://www.ConquestGroup.com)





**SECTIONS**

[Front Page](#) | [Campus](#) | [Politics](#) | [Metro](#) | [World & Nation](#)  
[Sports](#) | [Opinion](#) | [A&E](#) | [Multimedia](#) | [Classifieds](#) | [Dr. Date](#) | [Network](#)

**DEPARTMENTS**

[About Us](#) | [Contact Us](#) | [Daily Jobs](#) | [Alumni](#)

**TOOLS**

[Daily Inbox Delivery](#) | [RSS/XML Feed](#) | [Add Daily Headlines To Your Website](#)

© Copyright 2005 The Minnesota Daily - [webmaster@mndaily.com](mailto:webmaster@mndaily.com)