

RESOLUTION FROM THE EMERGENCY SUMMIT OF SCHOLARS AND ACTIVISTS DEFENDING CRITICAL THINKING AND INDIGENOUS STUDIES, LAWRENCE, KS, SEPTEMBER 29-30, 2006:

WHEREAS Indigenous Peoples continue to defend their sovereignty and resist ongoing efforts to eliminate their (our) peoples, cultures, lands, resources, and histories, and we recognize that access to, and promotion of, historical truths and analyses that challenge the oppressive aspects of the status quo are essential to the survival of all of all Indigenous and non-Indigenous communities and youth; and

WHEREAS the University of Colorado has expanded its attacks on Professor Ward Churchill to encompass not only his critique of U.S. foreign policy, but to undermine his analysis of the history and lived realities of Indigenous Peoples; and

WHEREAS the University of Colorado is attempting to fire Ward Churchill based upon pretextual charges of research misconduct which have been “investigated” by a committee of non-Indigenous academics, none of whom are experts in American Indian Studies; and

WHEREAS the University of Colorado’s investigative committee has chosen to reinforce mainstream “truths” concerning the 1837 smallpox epidemic and other matters while accusing Ward Churchill of “disrespecting American Indian oral traditions” despite extensive testimony by Indigenous scholars supporting Professor Churchill’s historical interpretations; and

WHEREAS the biased nature of the University of Colorado’s investigation into Professor Churchill’s scholarship can be seen in the University’s repeated violations of its own rules and in its committee’s insistence that Professor Churchill be held to arbitrarily chosen standards which have not applied to other scholars; and

WHEREAS the University of Colorado’s investigative committee has justified the severity of its recommended sanctions on the basis of Professor Churchill’s “bad attitude,” i.e., his refusal to recant his understandings of historical truth; and

WHEREAS the attacks on Ward Churchill, one of the most prolific scholars in the field of American Indian Studies, are being used to chill the expression of counterhegemonic truths, to re-impose a “consensus” history dictated by the perspective of the colonizers, and to fuel racist attacks on students and scholars of color; and

WHEREAS we recognize that the attacks on Ward Churchill are part of a national and international movement to undermine the disciplines of Indigenous, Ethnic, and Gender studies which emerged as a result of protracted community-based struggles in response to the failures of mainstream disciplines to accurately reflect our collective histories and realities;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that we, the undersigned Indigenous and non-Indigenous scholars and activists, call upon those who value academic freedom, the unconstrained pursuit of truth, and true diversity in education to join us in urging the University of Colorado to: (1) acknowledge that its investigation was deeply flawed, (2) rescind the report of the investigative committee, (3) fully reinstate Professor Churchill, and (4) acknowledge the value and necessity of perspectives which challenge orthodoxy in the pursuit of truth.

Signatories:

(institutional affiliations listed for identification purposes only)

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