

CU claims to have fired Ward Churchill for “Research Misconduct” . . . What’s Wrong With This Picture?

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Hank Brown and the CU Regents say they fired Ward Churchill because he engaged in “research misconduct.” Further, CU even claims its decision was based on a “unanimous” faculty recommendation.

There are a lot of things wrong with this picture, the most obvious being:

1. Only two committees directly examined evidence in this case. One was an Investigative Committee which found violations on seven counts, but only one of its five members recommended dismissal. After throwing out some of those charges, three of the five members of an Appeal Panel recommended a one-year suspension. In other words, a majority of both groups examining the evidence did not recommend firing Professor Churchill. We fail to see any unanimity.

2. CU President Hank Brown decided to override the recommendation of the Appeal Panel. In doing so, Brown—apparently now an American Indian Studies expert—decided that the Panel was wrong regarding Professor Churchill’s interpretation of the General Allotment Act of 1887 and the Indian Arts and Crafts Act of 1990.

3. CU has characterized the charges against Ward Churchill as falsification and fabrication of evidence and plagiarism. In fact, the specific findings of the Appeal Panel were that he (a) failed to provide sufficient evidence on three facts relating to an 1837 smallpox epidemic; (b) cited to material he had ghostwritten (tho’ no one can point to any standard prohibiting this); (c) published an article in which a co-author’s name was deleted by the magazine; and (d) copy-edited a piece (written and edited by others) which, unknown to him, plagiarized Fay Cohen.

Even if these were true, they don’t constitute grounds for firing a tenured full professor with nearly 30 years of exemplary service.

4. Brown’s recommendation to fire relies exclusively on the Investigative Committee’s Report, yet that Committee itself has been charged with research misconduct in five separate research complaints. Click here to read them:

- [May 10, 2007 complaint against Investigative Committee by 11 professors, \(including 2 experts in American Indian Studies\)](#)

- [May 28, 2007 complaint against Investigative Committee by 5 professors and 2 attorneys \(including 4 Indigenous scholars\)](#)

(Note: Ward Churchill was not involved in the drafting or filing of either of these.)

- [July 12, 2007 complaint filed by Ward Churchill against Michael Radelet and Investigative Committee.](#)
- [July 18, 2007 complaint filed against Marjorie McIntosh and Investigative Committee \(plagiarism\)](#)
- [July 19, 2007 complaint filed against Marjorie McIntosh and Investigative Committee \(falsification, fabrication, misrepresentation\)](#)

These complaints extensively document instances of falsification and fabrication of evidence, misrepresentation of sources, and plagiarism in the Investigative Committee's Report.

5. Just before the Regents' meeting, the University of Colorado dismissed all five of these complaints without investigation. The reason? All of a sudden, the Investigative Committee Report wasn't "research" subject to scholarly standards.

Never mind that the Report runs 124 pages, with 254 footnotes, and was published by the University. Never mind that the professors on the committee claimed to be adhering to scholarly standards in their Report.

The Investigative Committee, apparently, can engage in plagiarism, misrepresentation, falsification, and/or fabrication of evidence with impunity, and their Report can then be used to dismiss Professor Churchill on the same charges. And we are to believe that CU fired Ward Churchill, not for his political statements, but to uphold "academic integrity"?