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■ In my opinion

## Uninvited Irony

What would Wayne Morse, were the former Oregon law school dean with us today, say about Professor Ward Churchill being denied the opportunity to speak at the University has he had been promised? It would be consistent with the angry, outspoken way Morse responded to so many other things during the mid-20th Century when he was known as the gadfly of American politics. How — he'd ask with indignation — could the center under his name at the University Law School justify turning away an invited speaker, depriving him of something always vital to Morse: freedom of expression?

At question is the decision by the Wayne Morse Center for Law and Politics to un-invite University of Colorado Professor Ward Churchill, who was to share with his wife, Colorado Professor Natsu Taylor Saito, a luncheon address at a conference co-sponsored by the Center. The March 31 to April 1 event, also sponsored by the University Center on Diversity and Community, is called "Homeland 'In' Security: Race, Immigration and Labor in Post-9/11 North America."

Churchill, an Ethnic Studies professor with Native American identity, became the center of national controversy after an essay surfaced in which he describes some victims in the World

Trade Center as "technocrats" and "little Adolph Eichmans." At issue is Churchill's written statement: "On the morning of 9/11, a few more chickens — along with some half-million dead Iraqi children — came home to roost in a big way at the Twin Towers of New York's World Trade Center." Churchill said he does not defend the Sept. 11 attacks, but pointed out: "If U.S. foreign policy results in massive death and destruction abroad, we cannot feign innocence when some of that destruction is returned."

The University's decision to remove him from the Morse program followed action by Hamilton College to cancel his appearance there. Other reactionary institutions have also denied him a forum. However, Morse would have been encouraged to know one school that welcomes Churchill to speak is in Morse's home state: the University of Wisconsin.

Ironically, Churchill was un-invited to the University exactly a month to the day before the scheduled reopening of the Wayne Morse Free Speech Plaza at the Lane County building in downtown Eugene. On March 15, the remodeled plaza will be opened with the unveiling of a life-size statue of Morse, Oregon's most famous senator. As a member of the Morse Corporation Board, I've seen

the statue; it has the senator gesturing vigorously with a forefinger.

From what I know of the man, today he would be pointing that finger directly at the center that bears his name. Many were the times when citizens — including those in Morse's home state — did not want to hear what he had to say. But he had the courage to say it. Over and over again he was proved right, no matter how unpopular his stand at the outset — for example, his early opposition to the war in Vietnam, as one of only two U.S. senators to vote against the Gulf of Tonkin Resolution that illegally expanded the war.

Valid or not, Churchill's essay stirred anger among closed-minded people like those who once could not abide by Morse's statements that went counter to government policy. Morse might have used different words, but his willingness to speak the unpopular when it needed to be heard would have resulted in his saying the same thing. Even if he disagreed with Churchill, Morse still would have insisted on his right to express his views. If Professor Churchill ever makes it to Eugene, there's at least one venue where he could freely speak: the Wayne Morse Free Speech Plaza.

*George Beres lives in Eugene*

### INBOX

#### University falls prey to corporate media control

The cancellation of Professor Ward Churchill from the Wayne Morse Law Center conference demonstrates the University's commitment to allow corporate media to control and direct its decisions. Aside from freedom of speech issues, Professor Churchill's essay was written over three years ago. He has given numerous talks

over the last three years, including in Eugene in 2003. Professor Churchill is not alone in his thinking; there have been numerous critical essays written in immediate response to the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks.

We live in perilous times and things only become more perilous with the loss of courage. Professor Churchill's ideas may be interpreted as incendiary and provocative, yet he deserves to be heard. The cancellation of Professor

Churchill highlights for us that the University have lost intellectual courage. Turning away from controversy and argument does not bode well as we battle the affronts of fascism as demonstrated by the passage of the USA PATRIOT Act. We feel that one of the University's roles is to hold the line against these attempts at intimidation.

**Robin Irish**  
**Timothy Jones**  
Eugene

#### OREGON DAILY EMERALD LETTERS POLICY

Letters to the editor and guest commentaries are encouraged, and should be sent to letters@dailyemerald.com or submitted at the Oregon Daily Emerald office, EMU Suite 300. Electronic submissions are preferred. Letters are limited to 250 words, and guest commentaries to 550 words. Authors are limited to one submission per calendar month. Submissions should include phone number and address for verification. The Emerald reserves the right to edit for space, grammar and style. Guest submissions are published at the discretion of the Emerald.

■ Editorial

## 'Land of the free' outlaws checks and balances

"For all the mistakes that we journalists make at times, try running a functioning democracy without us."

This is the battle cry from Judith Miller, a veteran reporter for The New York Times, shortly after a ruling by a three-judge panel of the federal appeals court in Washington, D.C., last week that she and Matthew Cooper of Time magazine should be jailed for contempt of court for not disclosing their sources. And what a true battle for First Amendment rights this landmark case has become.

In July 2003, syndicated columnist Robert Novak wrote that senior Bush administration officials tipped him off about a possible case of nepotistic interests by Joseph Wilson, a former ambassador to Iraq, in an opinion article Wilson wrote in the Times that criticized President Bush about comments he made on Africa weapons trade with Iraq. In this, Novak disclosed that Wilson's wife, Valerie Plame, was a CIA operative specializing in weapons of mass destruction.

This fall, Miller, who did some reporting on the issue but did not write an article, and Cooper, who helped write a Time magazine online article questioning the reasons behind the disclosure of Plame's identity, were held in contempt of court for refusing to disclose their sources. Miller and Cooper are now seeking a full appeals court, and if that fails, will make a request that the U.S. Supreme Court hear the case.

Novak is still writing columns for the Chicago Sun-Times, and said on CNN's "Crossfire" in October 2003, "Nobody in the Bush administration called me to leak this. There is no great crime here." He claimed that calls were made to a half-dozen reporters by White House officials, but that he was the only one who published the information. In a column published at the time those comments were made, Novak said Plame's identity wasn't much of a secret anyway.

Miller and Cooper plan to fight the panel's ruling as far as they can, and we commend them on this. Echoing what Norman Pearlstine, editor in chief of Time Inc., told The New York Times last week, we feel it is of critical importance to protect confidential sources. A lack of confidentiality between reporter and source undermines attempts for whistle blowers to speak out against an institution or organization, and it ultimately destroys the judgment process behind what should and should not be printed.

Miller and Cooper both expressed disappointment about the ruling, and last week, Miller showed particular concern for the power of free speech.

"A case like mine is a warning to people not to talk because the government will come after you, and that's what we're fighting," she told The New York Times.

It is a sad day for journalists and activists and whoever else considers free speech a cornerstone in the U.S. Constitution when our courts rule against the power of news organizations to maintain relationships with their sources. The minute we give any entity the power to compromise those relationships we say goodbye to the sanctity of the First Amendment and any true form of checks and balances in this country.

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