

# Steve Mayer spouts off Appreciate your library!



By Steve Mayer  
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I would like to take this opportunity to respond to Student Government Association President Rodney Horton's anti-smoking diatribe that appeared in the last issue of The Capital Times. I find it unsettling that our noble, elected president has resorted to threatening students with monetary punishment for the behavior of the few.

I was disgusted to read the insipid, banal pleading by Horton, whose message to students was rife with hubris and appalling arrogance.

There is nothing worse than a politician who is inebriated on his own power espousing this sort of puerile, authoritarian gibberish.

Apparently Horton has determined that smoking by students and faculty members is the most detrimental activity on our campus, and unfortunately

according to Horton's column, so does this university since they are considering renovating the building to combat the scourge of nicotine-riddled students preying on the innocent.

If this crisis is the most important issue on the SGA's agenda, more important than, for example, the disgraceful price of textbooks, then perhaps it should be absolved because it is nothing more than a fiscal vacuum.

If there really is a problem, it is not smokers, but rather impropriety, and it is ludicrous to think that Big Brother should be given the power to regulate behavior that is deemed undesirable.

In the grand tradition of Camus' "the nakedness of man faced with the absurd," Penn State decided to place ashtrays at all the entrances under "No Smoking" signs. If the person who considered this planning reasonable is a Penn State graduate, then I am forced to call into question the ability of this institution to educate and prepare the youth of America for tomorrow's challenges.

If our dear president needs something to occupy himself with instead of castigating addicts,

perhaps he can make sure a more adequate supply of The New York Times is available in the newspaper vending machines; or better yet, since I am paying an exorbitant amount of money for the "privilege" of parking, he can see to it that the parking lot is actually plowed after snowfall rather than sending campus storm troopers to harass students getting a fix.

Horton, like almost all politicians who came before him and certainly will come after him at all levels and forms of government, perpetuates totalitarian control and degenerate policies in order to placate a voting public and justify the existence of a government position.

By the year 2012, all forms of government in this country will outlaw fun because of "public safety" reasons.

If detestable policies such as those proposed by Horton are carried out, it will become necessary to replace

"President" with "Führer"—after all, Hitler also hated smokers. Fortunately for Horton, smokers usually can be identified easily by their yellow, nicotine-stained fingertips. Smoking Students of the Campus, Unite!

**"...I am forced to call into question the ability of this institution to educate and prepare the youth of America for tomorrow's challenges."**



By Rodney Horton  
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No one can doubt that our library is filled with useful resources that is beneficial for us to complete our academic endeavors. For example, the cyber café is a major help for those (such as me) who do not have a computer on campus. Having a computer on campus is a hassle for me — but that is another story. Some students enjoy getting out of their dorms to meet friends and classmates in the library to work on key assignments. The library has a staff of professional men and women that can help any student find the vital materials that are needed to accomplish tasks.

Most students appreciate our campus library. Our library has certainly grown from being housed where Stacks Market is currently dwelling. Thanks to several key individuals, the library is a separate building

with three floors of knowledge, research tools, court cases, statutes, and the like. Just as the library has changed, so has our campus. We have gone from being a junior-senior campus to being a four-year college. For some reason, I think we operate as if non-traditional students are the only individuals that roam the hallways of the Olmsted building. I know some are thinking, "he is only doing this because he is a lame duck president." I must attest that lately I have been braver than before, but that is because I have a great love and respect for my campus. So when I hear a valid concern from my fellow students, I must address their concerns. One of the concerns is the library.

I have developed a plan to make the library more effective for the student body based on the concerns:

- We must get rid of the "we ain't done it that way before" attitude. Times and periods change, so we must change as well. The library administrators must look at the possibility of extending operation hours during finals week. I went to a private school in which their library was the size of a classroom and closed at 8:00pm. I know I should not compare apples to oranges, but I just want the readers to understand that I

truly appreciate our library and that this is not some "angry rant." This arrangement would benefit students in the long run. Some say "we did that before and no one showed up." My question is: was that done before or after we (technically) became a four-year institution? Concerned students said that if it is after 9:00pm, they do not even bother going to the library because within an hour "the library will be closing in thirty minutes." We must realize that there are graduate students that need extended time in the library and traditional college students that can use the late night

accessibility.  
• Customer training for staff members (especially those that are in direct contact with students). I have received complaints about a "condescending tone" from certain staff members.

When I ask who the individuals are — the description of the individuals has been consistent. I hate to be disingenuous, but the university's student center policy is in effect everywhere, including the library. We must continue to provide services that will benefit the entire student body, even more we must continue to operate in a manner that is student centered. I am Rodney Horton and I approved this message.

**"We must get rid of the 'we ain't done it that way before' attitude. Times and periods change, so we must change as well."**

# To speak or not to speak, the great question

Academic freedom inside and outside the classroom is challenged at the University of Colorado.

By John Fox  
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The issue of academic freedom has been streamlined into American consciousness with the recent controversy surrounding University of Colorado ethnic studies professor Ward Churchill.

The controversy stemmed from a 2001 essay written by Churchill in which he compared the 9/11 victims in the World Trade Center to German Nazis. The essay, published on the Internet, has been widely circulated and the likely reason for its mass exposure and deliberation, four years after publishing.

The incident has forced a nationwide debate. The discussion focuses on whether limits should be set on the content of a college professor's lecture as well as the statements made outside the classroom as a representative of their college or university.

Churchill discreetly resigned as chair of the ethnic-studies department on Jan. 31, though he will continue to teach for the department.

In a press release issued by Churchill on Jan. 31, he offered his side of the story. Churchill claimed the media coverage of his analysis on the 9/11 attacks were inaccurate and served to defame his character as well as prompting death threats.

"What I actually said has been lost," said Churchill, "My point is that we cannot allow the U.S. government, acting in our name, to engage in massive violations of international law and fundamental human rights and not expect to reap the consequences," said Churchill.

This may not be the first time that a professor's academic freedom has been challenged, but it has been the most publicized in

recent years.

The policy on academic freedom at The Pennsylvania State University is chock-full of grey matter and inductive logic. According to Penn State's policy, HR-64, "Faculty members are entitled to freedom in the classroom in discussing their subjects."

While the policy grants PSU professors freedom in classroom discussion, it also states that each faculty member is responsible for "the maintenance of appropriate standards of scholarship and teaching."

The policy does not discuss what is or is not appropriate. The policy also states that faculty members are free when they are

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- Prof. J. Craig Haas

writing or speaking as a member of the community. Although, it asserts that if a professor is writing or speaking as a member of the community and not as a professor in the classroom, he or she is "expected to remember that the public may judge the profession and institution by their utterances."

The policy's circular language leaves PSU professors vulnerable to controversy not unlike that of what happened to Ward Churchill.

Craig Welsh is an instructor of art and communications at Penn State Harrisburg. Welsh has been a professor for 3 years and has taught at York College before coming to PSH in 2003. Welsh said that his academic freedom has been challenged in the past and has even changed the content of one of his lectures for fear of it being too controversial.

Welsh defined what he believes is the line that a professor should not cross in the classroom. "It is the point at which a lecture goes from commentary to sensationalism all for the purpose of hyping a topic," said Welsh.

Professor J. Craig Haas, philosophy and humanities, said that his academic freedom has never been openly challenged. A professor since 1993, Haas teaches courses that have great potential for stirring up emotion and student criticism such as Ethics, Friendship, Comparative Religion, and the Hebrew Bible.

Haas elaborated on the statement he made concerning his academic freedom having never been openly challenged.

"However, some students have objected to references to religion in philosophy classes," said Haas. "It seems to have been misinterpreted as advocacy. But it would be academically dishonest to pretend that religion doesn't exist or doesn't have influence, even if some people wish that were so," he said.

Haas defined what a professor ought to avoid during classroom discussion. "An instructor should avoid language that denigrates human beings individually or by groups, especially members of the class," said Haas. "I don't mean a joke about a politician or a celebrity, or simple playful banter with a member of the class, I'm referring to malicious insults or slurs directed toward a person's religion, political beliefs, race, gender, disability, or character."

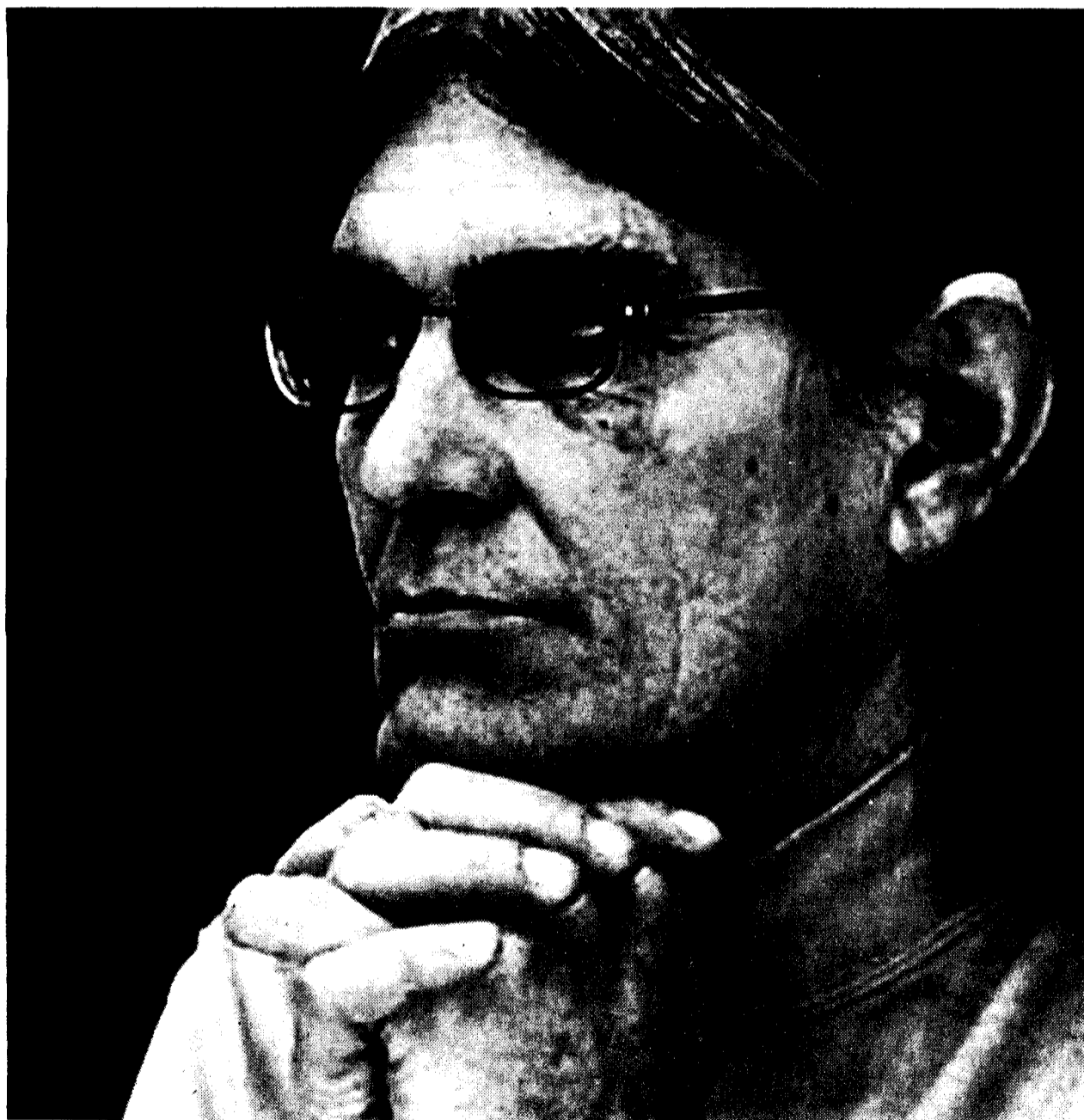


Photo by Kat Wade/Chronicle

University of Colorado ethnic studies prof. Ward Churchill's controversial essay has spurred a national debate questioning whether limitations should be set on academic freedom of speech.

He does believe there should be limits to what a professor can and cannot say.

"Academic freedom is about ideas, not people," said Haas. "You can disagree with someone about anything, but if you turn it into a personal attack or try to silence dissent, you're abusing the dignity of the other person—and by undercutting his or her right to be taken seriously, you undermine the other person's academic freedom."

Dr. Troy Thomas, associate professor of humanities and art history, has been a professor for thirty years and said that his academic freedom has never

been challenged in any serious way. He spoke about an incident that did come close.

"One time a student accused me of showing an artwork that promoted witchcraft, but she was totally mistaken," said Thomas. "Bosch's Garden of Earthly Delights" is an entirely Christian painting, even if it shows naked figures in a garden of pleasure and gruesome scenes in Hell. Nothing ever came of her charges — she did not go to the School Director, so our discussion after class was the end of the matter," he said, "No student has ever complained about my showing images of nudes in art works. I

think this is because I frame the discussion of such as important works of art, not just frivolous nude images."

As far as the line Thomas would not cross in class, "I would not discuss or show pornography in class because I have no reason to do so," said Thomas. "I mean real pornography, not works of art."

PSH's policy concerning academic freedom, HR-64, can be found in the faculty handbook. A summary of its content can be viewed via the Internet at [www.psu.edu/dept/prov/fachand/polseca.html](http://www.psu.edu/dept/prov/fachand/polseca.html).