

Demanding Academic Freedom
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In light of the recent media attention brought upon professor Ward Churchill, of our sister campus in Boulder, we are calling on YPSL members and students Nationwide to come together to resist the assault on Academic Freedom. We believe that the attack on Prof. Churchill is a deliberate diversion from the broader right-wing agenda of undermining the future of young people in the U.S. today. We believe that this agenda, which has been well implemented in Colorado and is spreading throughout the country, includes the deliberate dismantling of the public higher education system. Colorado Governor Bill Owens has been instrumental in spearheading this campaign. Higher education budget cuts and shrinking financial aid availability are only the beginning. Recently, Owens stated that he believes he should be in charge of making higher education decisions in Colorado, and that he does not agree with the CU Board of Regents being selected by democratic election. Instead, he would like to select the Board himself. Owens is also calling for legislation that would remove the current tenure policy for Colorado professors, which is currently set by Universities, and instead create a legislative body that would control policy. Owens states that tenure shouldn't protect professors from being fired. We take this to mean that Owens believes any statement a professor makes, in or outside of the classroom, can be used to fire that professor.

The calls to reduce funding to schools have been amplified, including a proposal to completely defund the Ethnic Studies department at CU that Prof. Churchill chaired until recently stepping down. All of these elements woven together create a fabric for privatizing higher education, stifling the right to hear opposing views, and completely extinguishing dissent by young people in this country. As students, we are being threatened with the loss of our academic institutions. As youth, we are being threatened with a future of oppression. We must meet these threats with a resistance and energy that prevails. We must create a world where we can be free to engage in discourse without fear of retribution, a world where youth are given the opportunity to determine their own conclusions, a world that is free from oppression.