

October 2019

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## BLACKFACE, SWASTIKAS AND ACADEMIC FREEDOM

**Steve Mumme**

Just over a month into to the new semester and already first amendment and academic freedom issues are front and center on campus. First, there was the angry student reaction to racist expressions on campus, an Instagram shared photo of students sporting blackface followed by a swastika drawn on a campus apartment wall. The impassioned rebuke of these blatant racist acts was predictable and justified, captured in multiple voices and President McConnell's campus messaging on September 13 and 20. In the midst of this we learned that Turning Point USA's founder, Charlie Kirk, was booked for a return tour to campus, accompanied by Donald Trump, Jr., provoking further heated condemnation.

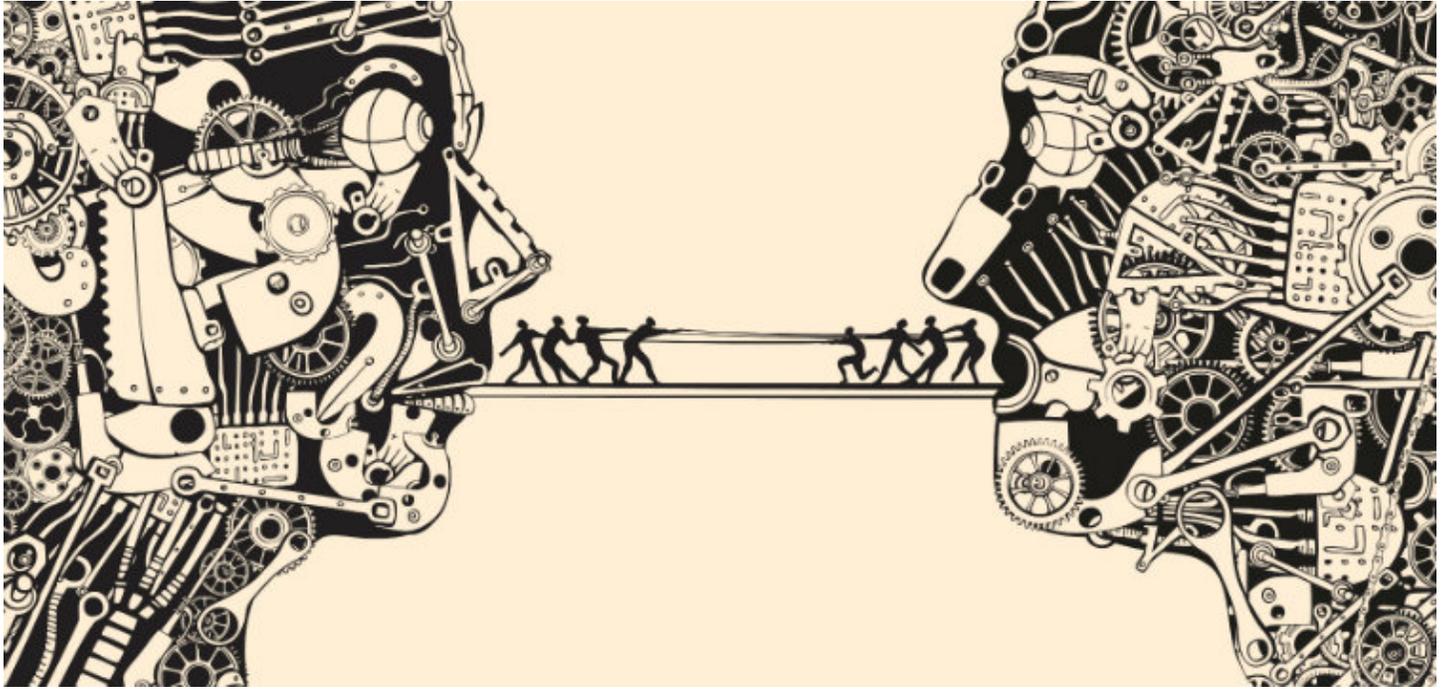
Then, behind the scenes, we learned that some faculty wishing to publicly express their views on recent events and the present campus climate have been told by superiors they should align their message with college statements on the topic. No doubt well

intended by administrators the suggestions were understandably received badly by the faculty involved.

Both episodes raise fundamental academic freedom issues. In the first instance, racist expressions on campus warrant a vigorous rebuke, placing faculty in the responsible position of speaking out and leading campus conversations on a host of issues tied to our national shame. Faculty voice and the facilitation of these civic conversations clearly enjoy academic freedom protection. In the present moment **and** following President McConnell's lead many faculty and students will deplore Turning Point USA's return to campus and where faculty voice is concerned, whether expressed in the classroom or during office hours, **that too** is covered by academic freedom, just as Charlie Kirk's **October 22** address is free speech protected.

University efforts to manage faculty responses on this these highly charged issues, though well intended and directed at channeling campus discourse on these highly charged matters into constructive deliberative venues, run afoul of these same academic freedom protections. It is entirely reasonable that administrators invite faculty assistance with messaging on vital campus-wide and community relevant concerns. It is quite another matter to insist on controlling their voice; even in these divisive and heated times, even on an issue of such vital importance as racial discrimination and diversity, CSU Principles of Community notwithstanding.

The American Association of University Professors has consistently supported the application of academic freedom to faculty voice on matters of public importance affecting shared governance and matters bearing on the institutional climate in which academic instruction is exercised. At CSU, as with Colorado and the country a large, we are living a moment when a clear understanding of the exercise of faculty voice is required, perhaps more than ever. Faculty who may be interested in this topic should consult the Preface to the University Faculty and Administrative Professional Manual and the AAUP Redbook. And if they choose to speak out on matters of importance for the campus community they should do so knowing their speech is protected.



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## CAMPUS EQUITY WEEK, OCTOBER 21-25, 2019

As the month of October rolls into view, it is time once again to reflect on the role and value of our Colorado State University Non-Tenure Track Faculty and how their working conditions can be improved. Progress was made over the past academic year towards more fully incorporating NTTF's in our campus faculty community and improving wages and working conditions, but much more needs to be done. **Campus Equity Week**, a nation-wide campus event, is meant to highlight these issues and provide venues for dialogue between faculty and between faculty and students on needed measures to address these problems. This year **Campus Equity Week** begins on October 25 and ends, appropriately on Halloween, October 31, the perfect metaphor for the scary employment circumstances facing many of our NTTF colleagues.

**Why Campus Equity Week?** The AAUP believes that all faculty should have access to the protections of academic freedom and tenure, a fair return on their work, due process protections, and inclusion in institutional governance. Throughout this Halloween week, faculty, students and local communities from Connecticut to California, will continue to call attention to the truly frightening implications of precarity and disinvestment in higher education and will inspire change through actions, brown bag discussions, art installations, and other methods.

Caprice Lawless, AAUP second vice president, instructor at Front Range Community College, and a leader in the AAUP's Colorado Conference, speaking to NTTF's statewide says, "In these times, especially, we need to

# THE SCARY STATS ON THE RISE OF CONTINGENCY IN HIGHER ED



= % of contingent faculty



= % of tenure-line faculty

1975



(55% contingent)



(45% tenure-line)

1995



(66%)



(34%)

2015



(70%)



(30%)



Source: Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System

stay connected, to share facts and to validate our experiences. Academic labor activists make good use of social media, year-round. We can do that in between the mountains of grading, and it helps keep us sane. **Campus Equity Week** allows us to get dressed up, to be with colleagues face-to-face, and to make some noise. We are wired to feel the camaraderie and solidarity that comes from creating and attending these events.

“CEW has become our Olympics. This week, we will see examples of everywhere of all the energy we've collected in two years of connections, discussions, and frustrations.” She continues, “Academic workers will continue to organize until we see significant change. It is reassuring to know we are not alone, that our movement is growing, and that this week we will get to meet friends old and new at **Campus Equity Week** events.”

So, look for announcements of **Campus Equity Week** events and make a point of attending one of these during the last week of October. Know that you are contributing to a stronger faculty and deeper institutional commitment to all faculty at Colorado State University.

AAUP-CSU is planning to participate actively through a meet-and-greet event. More information will be shared with the membership and will also be on the events calendar. Please join us.

# OFFICERS, CSU CHAPTER OF THE AAUP

Mary Meyer, President, [meyer@stat.colostate.edu](mailto:meyer@stat.colostate.edu), 491-5762

Ross McConnell, Co-President, [rmm@cs.colostate.edu](mailto:rmm@cs.colostate.edu), 491-7524

Natalie Barnes, V-P for Non-Tenure-Track Faculty Affairs, [Natalie.Barnes@colostate.edu](mailto:Natalie.Barnes@colostate.edu), 491-6774

Dimitris Stevis, Secretary and Treasurer, [Dimitris.Stevis@colostate.edu](mailto:Dimitris.Stevis@colostate.edu), 491-6082

Steve Mumme, Colorado Conference President, [Stephen.Mumme@ColoState.edu](mailto:Stephen.Mumme@ColoState.edu), 491-7428

Bill Timpson, at large Executive Committee member, [William.Timpson@colostate.edu](mailto:William.Timpson@colostate.edu), 491-7630

Mary Van Buren, at large Executive Committee member, [mary.vanburen@colostate.edu](mailto:mary.vanburen@colostate.edu), 491-3781

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**Facebook page:** <https://www.facebook.com/CSUAAUP?fref=ts>

**Website:** <https://aaupcsu.org>

**AAUP State Conference:** <https://coloradoaaup.org>

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**To join AAUP and our CSU chapter, sign up at the national AAUP site:**

<https://www.aaup.org/membership/join>

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## MEMBERSHIP MEETING OF THE AAUP-CSU CHAPTER

**October 30, 2019, 12-1, LSC 380**

Officer Elections

Ways to Become Involved

Strategies to Increase and Diversify Membership

Ideas to Enhance our Chapter's Role and Activities

**Please contact any of the officers for questions and ideas for the agenda**