





# THE TWO TIER SYSTEM



By Donna Frankel

My college Office of Instruction sent out a “survey” asking faculty about what we do with our students that involves developing leaders, equity, and community service. The last question was “what else do you want to tell us?” So I let them have it: *Sadly, I do not see our colleges practicing this with their present policies and two-tiered system of employment. Part-time faculty are not treated as equals though they have the same experience, qualification and education as full-time faculty. We have many part-time faculty (and we comprise the majority of all higher ed faculty in our state) who demonstrate more leadership ability and more moral and ethical responsibility than some full-time faculty and many staff. This is a great, untapped area of leadership right here on our campuses, but we are largely ignored.*

*Do not forget that many part-time faculty teach at multiple districts and navigate the rules, procedures and personalities of multiple institutions in addition to being at-will-employees: easily removed for no reason. We are evaluated at many times the rate of our full-time colleagues when at multiple colleges. Simply stated, we do not have equity in employment and are from from equity in salaries, job security, benefits including sabbaticals, and working conditions. Until this changes, we have no equity on our campuses.*

*Faculty—all faculty and students—deserve the same treatment, protections and respect. It has not happened in the thirty-two years I have taught on five campuses, but I work daily in many venues and organizations to effect this important change. This is Community Service and Service Leadership! Students know and see what is going on. They learn by example, not just through books and lectures. What example do our colleges provide students and the larger community? This would be the ultimate Community Service. It starts with the people in power acknowledging that they have been part of an abusive system and collaboratively start talking and making the changes to bring about true employment and treatment equity. We see this starting to take place with students and faculty of color, but again, the vast majority of faculty (part-timers) are below the radar. Everyone benefits in a community when those with the least are given true equality.*

*I am reminded of Salesforce CEO Marc Benioff who, on “60 Minutes,” talked about his reckoning with the gender pay gap. It cost him three million dollars a year to treat all his employees equitably, and he did it “because it is the only right thing to do.” His moral convictions are higher than those in positions of power at most community colleges in our state. Those working in the state chancellor’s office are all well aware of the situation part-timers face, but staunchly fight against change, sweep inequity under the rug and look the other way. You want change for the better in our community, don’t you? I do too. Start with your own employees, right here on campus. It will reverberate around the state and nation and true equity will be present in our community. Won’t you be the one to set an example?*

In every survey you take, work in the fact that right under their noses they have untapped leaders and equity issues of enormous proportion, and not just involving people of color. Our colleges could not operate without part-time faculty. As the majority in every college, we are here to teach and model leadership, equity, and community service! It is high time we were made whole, too! Do not let a single opportunity go by without bringing up our cause. If we all raise our voices, we will be heard. ♡

**Donna is currently a dance instructor at Mission, West Valley, De Anza, and Foothill Colleges. She also serves as Foothill’s PT Academic Senate Rep.**



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# THERE IS NO SUCH THING AS AN ADJUNCT PROFESSOR

By Debra Leigh Scott, originally posted in the online blog, [junctrebellion.wordpress.com](http://junctrebellion.wordpress.com), on October 18, 2018.

A full year has passed on these pages since I announced my departure from academic “adjunct” employment, listing my plans for reconstructing my life once I was no longer living the life of a precariously-employed scholar. I’ve been silent here as I went about that reconstruction, even withdrawing from most of the conversations about higher education. I’d like to say that this was done through a healthy intentionality – but it was not. The year’s anniversary for my departure has just passed. During this year, it’s become clear to me that more time is necessary for both life reconstruction and for healing the trauma of such long-term professional, economic and emotional abuse. As any therapist will attest, any extended experience of abuse requires extended efforts at healing. When a person is consistently demeaned, dehumanized, stressed, and frightened, there is a kind of PTSD that forms that doesn’t simply go away with a few months of extra sleep, or a week at the beach. Healing takes prolonged, intentional effort to address these effects. And no, you don’t have to have a history of combat in Baghdad to have PTSD. Prolonged emotional abuse, economic stress, humiliation and anxiety can produce the disorder.

The ADA (Anxiety and Depression Association of America) defines the disorder:

“PTSD is diagnosed after a person experiences symptoms for at least one month following a traumatic event. However symptoms may not appear until several months or even years later. The

disorder is characterized by three main types of symptoms:

- Re-experiencing the trauma through intrusive distressing recollections of the event, flashbacks, and nightmares.
- Emotional numbness and avoidance of places, people, and activities that are reminders of the trauma.
- Increased arousal such as difficulty sleeping and concentrating, feeling jumpy, and being easily irritated and angered.”

What I began to realize over this past year is that I had all three symptoms. I did have frequent distress thinking about the years I spent living in poverty while trying to perform the duties of the profession for which I had trained a decade. These thoughts were persistent and somewhat obsessive. I did withdraw from conversations with former colleagues, and from the work I was doing on the documentary about the corporatized university. (Even as I’ve struggled to work on the script, I’ve found myself unable to think straight,

unable to put my thoughts together in a coherent way.) I wouldn’t set foot on a campus anywhere, and especially would not go to the campus where I had taught. I had sleep trouble. And, finally, I realized that I was in a state of near-constant irritation and anger. Not being one to rush to practitioners of western medicine, I chose instead to continue with the kind of gentle work I had been doing: yoga, meditation, journaling. I am not the kind to take a pill for my distress, but I’m sure

that others around me (at least at times) might wish I had. I realized that for many years I was struggling with depression and anxiety – for so long, in fact, that I had normalized feeling terrible. Friends and family probably felt the effects of this more than I did. In that way, our own struggles become the struggles of everyone we care about. For that reason, if not for any other, this is an issue that requires attention.

The reason I’m sharing this is not because I want sympathy – far from it. I’m sharing this because I know that there are at least 1.3 million professors across the United States working on contingent contracts, many who may well be experiencing a lot of the same difficulties. I share this because I want to say that you are not alone. That, in fact, you are in some rather exalted company – the professoriate of any country being some of the best educated and brightest citizens. Our country’s best minds are being driven to mental distress by prolonged labor abuse and exploitation. Think about that for a moment, please.

To screen yourself for PTSD, think about whether or not you can identify the presence of two or more of the following (I have italicized those I struggle with):

- inability to remember an important aspect of the traumatic events (not due to head injury, alcohol, or drugs);
- persistent and exaggerated negative beliefs or expectations about oneself, others, or the world (e.g., “I am bad,” “No one can be trusted,” “The world is completely dangerous”);
- persistent, distorted blame of self or others about the cause or consequences of the traumatic events;
- persistent fear, horror, anger, guilt, or shame;
- markedly diminished interest or participation in significant activities;
- feelings of detachment or estrangement from others;
- persistent inability to experience positive emotions.

I realized that I had persistent thoughts about myself that were negative. I called myself a failure. I thought of myself as a loser. I had thoughts like, “You just weren’t good enough,” whenever I thought about the lifetime I spent struggling on part-time teaching contracts. In other words, I internalized all my anger, turned it into self-blame and self-loathing. I

sincerely believe that, even among those who are working tirelessly as activists on behalf of faculty re-professionalization, there may be a lot of the same kind of internalized anger, a lot of the same self-blame. It is insidious.

All this being said, I want to say that I am doing better and better, happy about my decision to exit life in the Precariat, and excited with the new stage of life I am building. For me, having spent decades in the tar pits of academia, I am looking toward retirement age, but with it, a whole new phase of life. Jane Fonda likes to call it her “third act” – and I think that is a wonderful way of thinking

*The label “adjunct” was applied to us by those who sought to deprofessionalize the role of the scholar, both on the campus and in the country. We never should have accepted it.*

about these life adventures as we who are the first generation of precariously employed scholars enter our years of seniority.

One thing I’ve realized, as I have contemplated my experiences in the corporatized

university: we should never ever refer to ourselves as “adjuncts” or “adjunct professors.” Rather, we should say that we are professors teaching on adjunct, contingent or part-time contracts. The difference? We are not, and never were “adjunct.” The contracts we signed were for part-time employment because the universities decided decades ago to slash the number of full-time faculty positions. The label “adjunct” was applied to us by those who sought to deprofessionalize the role of the scholar, both on the campus and in the country. We never should have accepted it. We certainly shouldn’t have adopted the term and applied it to ourselves. The word means “supplemental, not essential.” Faculty, no matter what their contract, will always be essential to a university. There is nothing “adjunct” about the role we play, and nothing supplemental to our responsibilities and role in fulfilling any mission dedicated to the pursuit of higher learning. Words are important, and the way we choose our words, the way we frame our narrative, is of great importance. There is no such thing as an “adjunct” professor. We are essential. We ARE the university. Any university that allows its administrators to outnumber its faculty is not a university. Any university that values its lazy rivers and climbing walls while diminishing the role of its faculty is not a university. It is, instead, a site which offers an experience of a “notional” college “experience.”

So....this is my first message, upon my return to these pages. Pay attention to the ways you might be struggling with PTSD without realizing it. Pay attention to the ways you might be internalizing your anger at an abusive system and blaming yourself. And pay attention to the way you refer to yourself. Take control of your own story, and the words you use to tell it. No, it won’t change what has happened to our profession on the corporatized campuses. But it will change the way we represent our own reality – both to ourselves and to the outside world. It will begin to reverse the effects of diminishing ourselves – who we are and what we do. That is an essential first step to changing the internal and external reality. Let’s commit to this essential change today, right now, and begin to own our own story.

*Debra Leigh Scott is a writer/playwright, currently writing and co-producing the documentary, “Junct: The Trashing of Higher Ed. in America”. Junct Rebellion is an organization established to raise awareness about the demise of the American university system, through its rampant practice of adjunct faculty labor abuse and its steadily eroding concern about the quality of education provided to students. She also blogs as [The Homeless Adjunct](http://TheHomelessAdjunct) ([junctrebellion.wordpress.com](http://junctrebellion.wordpress.com)). A scholar of humanities, she’s left academia, refusing to submit to any more adjunct contracts. Her personal website is [www.debraleighscott.com](http://www.debraleighscott.com).*

*For more information about junctrebellion, consultations, or to arrange for us to speak with your group, please contact Debra at [junctrebellion@gmail.com](mailto:junctrebellion@gmail.com). We welcome the opportunity to meet and talk with all who are involved in and committed to the idea of high quality education for our children and for ourselves.*

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Continued from page 1, "The Real Message about Contingency"

contingency and the central goal of the contingent faculty movement.

Hopefully, *Non-Regular* will inspire a new message, the real message, about the precarious nature of contingent employment that will make policy makers finally open to reckoning with, not ignoring, the problem.

It may be time for similar efforts like Poirier's to be replicated on other campuses to record the reality about contingency on each campus. Of course, it is vital that disciplined safeguards like those employed by Poirier be in place to protect the identity of vulnerable contingents.

**Notes: Non-Regular: Precarious academic labour at Emily Carr University of Art + Design has been selected for a case study presentation at the Canadian Association of Research Ethics Board's conference in April 2019. While Poirier's project was exempt from the Canadian research ethics process, Emily Carr University's Research Ethics Coordinator felt it warrants study nonetheless to determine if university-based research ethics review processes are appropriately meeting the needs of artists and other creative practice researchers, as well as those who participate in their projects.**

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and other faculty organizations, a number of gains for adjunct faculty that still positively impact the lives of the growing – yes sadly – number of part-time faculty: state funds for paid office hours, state equity funds for adjunct instructors, and a study of part-time faculty working conditions. Eventually, that study put to rest the often repeated and pernicious argument of many administrators and full-time faculty that full-time faculty earn more pay because they had more education and were required to fulfil other duties like participating on committees and holding office hours. If, the disingenuous argument continued, a duty-to-duty job comparison were made, full- and part-time faculty were, for the most part, equally compensated. That claim, as adjunct faculty knew all along, was proven to be false by the Report on Part-Time Faculty Compensation in California Community Colleges.

Another significant achievement of CPFA has been to raise awareness of part-time faculty concerns among other faculty organization, student groups, politicians, unions, and the general public. First through the Action 2000 Coalition (A2K) - "Part-Time Faculty: 100% COMMITMENT, 37% PAY," and then by many other similar campaigns.

My involvement with CPFA may not have started so soon nor been as significant without that first unexpected email invitation from Margaret Quan. CPFA membership will grow and its influence in Sacramento and across the state will increase if you take action now. Your employment conditions leave much to be desired. Even so, California part-time faculty are better off now than they were twenty years ago, and that is, in large part, because of CPFA's work on your behalf.

Now I'm extending a personal invitation to you. We still have a long way to go, and we will go farther and move faster if you become involved. I am asking you (full-time and part-time faculty) to join CPFA today (go to cpfa.org and click "Join") as onetime payment of \$40 for one year membership or sign up for a payroll deduction of \$4 per month....see the membership form on our website.

If you are already a CPFA member, thank you! Now, it's your turn to extend an invitation to other faculty members. I'm inviting you to get two additional people to join CPFA this year.

Once you are a CPFA member, stay informed, and, as you are able, get involved. Your support will make a difference.

**Dave Bush has been teaching history since 1994 when he was first hired as an "adjunct" instructor in the California Community Colleges system; he has taught every fall, spring, and summer term since that year. Dave has been a member of the Communication Workers of America and the California Teachers Association. He is a CPFA "Founding Member" and has served on its executive council.**



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