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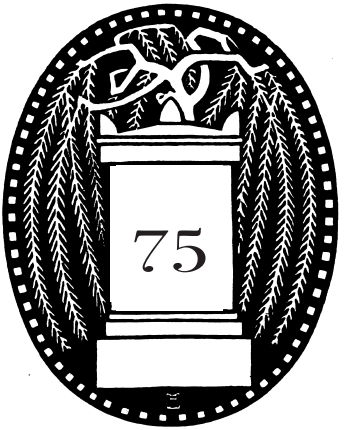

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The 2024 SoPHE Presidential Address

Place: The Quest to Find It, to Shape It, and to Do Your Thing

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Introduction

Good afternoon, friends and colleagues; I am so happy to be with you! It was at this annual meeting last year that Lucy Bailey[1] planted a seed that would take root and become the presidential address that I am honored to deliver today. Last year, William[2] and I attended Lu's session, *Transformations and Reflections: Becoming through Inquiry*,[3] and before introducing her co-presenters, Lu did something I found moving—she invited us to pause, and to acknowledge the SoPHE space we were sharing. It was an invitation to be present, aware, and conscious of this space. The moment was reminiscent of the beautiful Native-American tradition of honoring place, representing a Tribe's historic relationship with the land.[4] Closing my eyes, memories of my first SoPHE came to me. It was 2008, and I had earned my master's degree that May. William was submitting a proposal and suggested that I submit one, too. I resisted the idea because I considered SoPHE to be out of my league. I was a master's-level academic, a lightweight among real-deal, Ph.D. scholars. William described SoPHE as an academic community that welcomed a variety of ideas and encouraged grad students and Ph.D.s alike. The space, he continued, was warm and accepting. Well…maybe? There was only one way to find out—I got to work. I started writing and submitted a proposal. It felt like Christmas when I received an e-mail from David,[5] assigning a day and time for my presentation! When we arrived at the historic Menger Hotel (talk about a special space!) I was greeted by fellow SoPHE attendees who were thoroughly delightful—and no one asked for my credentials! Nerves akimbo, the time came to present my paper. I got through it and then came the feedback. I was anxious. To my delight, the comments were fair, and helpful. They were nice to me! Lucy's thoughtful attention to space led me to realize that in that moment, sixteen years ago, I had found my *place* in this SoPHE space.

Since then, I have done a lot of thinking about how I found my *place* in the spaces of my life. I wondered what made those places mine, and what was important about finding them. How had other people found their place? I recognize that the notion of *place* is not new. *Place* has been well-

considered in academic literature, suggesting that there are a host of factors, like geography, culture, and economics, for example, that influence, and are influenced by *place*. The focus here, however, is the way we find—the way we figure out—our unique *place* in the many spaces we inhabit. For this address, I share two examples of finding my *place*: one that is personal—the earliest memory of knowing my *place*, and one that is professional—my most recent and, since I have retired, my last *place* in the academy.

Finding My Place

Growing up, I knew my place. I was born in the South and as a female child I was trained in the social niceties of being a Southern lady: to speak when spoken to, to curtsy, to never cuss, and to respond to elders with "yes, ma'am," or "yes, sir." I referred to adults as Miss, Missus and Mister. Close friends of my parents who were not relatives were given the honorific titles of Aunt and Uncle. I was to dress modestly and, for goodness' sake, to sit with my legs together.

I grew up a proud Southerner. My grandfather's people came to St. Augustine, Florida in the 1760s as indentured servants from Minorca, Spain. My grandmother's people were sharecroppers in Hortense, Georgia. I grew up hearing stories of my grandmother picking cotton alongside African-American children who, like her, had to leave school to tend the fields. My grandfather was a shrimper, and the fishing village where my mother was born included white and Black families who helped each other. My grandmother contracted scarlet fever right after the birth of my mother, and as a result, she could not produce milk. The Black family living next door had recently welcomed a newborn and the baby's mother offered to nurse my mother, which she continued to do until my mother was weaned. My grandmother told me that without the generosity of her neighbor lady, my mother may have died.

Within the context of *this* community, as a member of *this* family, I knew my *place* to be warm and welcoming, inclusive and genteel. And yet, the nightly news with Walter Cronkite[6] told a very different story. My seven-year-old self watched as the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. led non-violent marches promoting civil rights and housing rights. Despite their peaceful approach, the protesters faced violent police who beat them and used fire hoses and dogs to attack them. I was horrified—and confused. There, in front of the T.V., I realized that my *place* was not a *place* that everyone experienced.

In school I learned about the injustice of slavery, the Civil War, and Jim Crow laws. What was I to do with the glaring contradiction between the *place—my place*—that I loved for its embrace of others, and the *place* that had a history of hatred and discrimination? I believed that the history of the South was true *and* that my Southern experience was, too. Could both be true at the same time? In my struggle to reconcile the history of the South with my *place* in it, I turned to the work of Southern historian Drew Gilpin

Faust, and to understand my *place* in the academy I consulted the work of labor organizers and the American Association of University Professors, the professional organization that has defined the fundamental values and standards for higher education since 1915.

Necessary Trouble: Growing Up at Midcentury

Drew Gilpin Faust, President Emerita of Harvard University, focuses her research on the Civil War and the antebellum South. In her 2023 memoir, *Necessary Trouble: Growing up at Midcentury*,[7] Faust describes growing up in the segregated South and how her childhood shaped who she was to become.

Born in 1947, Faust was raised in Clarke County, Virginia, a time and place she describes as one "of roles and rules, of revered traditions and rigid expectations."[8] Drewdie, as she was known in her youth, rebelled loudly and persistently against the unequal expectations in dress and behavior between males and females. Faust's relationship with her mother was contentious, with frequent protests about wearing "girly" clothes, so it is no surprise that a quotation from *To Kill a Mockingbird* is included in her book's opening pages: "You want to grow up to be a lady, don't you? I said not particularly."[9]

Faust was raised in wealth and, coupled with her distinguished family lineage, the Gilpin family enjoyed a privileged place in the community. Mrs. Gilpin employed African-American men and women to manage the house and the children and spent her time on social events to maintain the family's proper standing. Faust viewed this as a contemptuous display of extraordinary privilege and an abdication of her maternal obligation, writing that "…domestic workers ensured that my mother never had to cook or clean or take direct responsibility for her own day-to-day needs or those of her children."[10]

Drewdie was an excellent student, and a voracious reader who found refuge from her mother in books. Mrs. Gilpin, like many women of her generation, saw little value in education; the path for a Southern lady was to be married, to bear children, and to assume her rightful place in white society. Mrs. Gilpin believed that "it was not only dangerous for girls to have good minds, it was unnecessary—even wasteful."[11]

In 1957, Faust experienced what she describes as an "epiphany:"

> …I was nine years old, in fifth grade, and in the car with Raphael,[12] being driven home from school when I heard something on the radio that startled me: Black children were, by Virginia law, not permitted to go to school with white children. It had never occurred to me. I asked Raphael if what I had understood was true, whether I would be excluded from my school if I was a different color, if I painted my face black. I remember that Raphael never answered my question. My probings about rules

> of racial interaction made him acutely uncomfortable. He was evasive, but for me his evasion was answer enough.[13]

Nine-year-old Drewdie Gilpin set about getting into necessary trouble. Unbeknownst to her parents, she wrote a letter to President Dwight D. Eisenhower expressing her outrage at the injustice of segregation and implored him to do something about it.[14] Drewdie was also angry that no one had explained segregation to her and wondered why she did not notice what should have been obvious in her own household.

Realizing that she could not depend on her parents to teach her about issues facing the country, Drewdie was determined to educate herself on the world that existed beyond the fences of her family farm. She took advantage of the information available: television, radio, magazines, books, and school. Inspired by an article in *My Weekly Reader*,[15] she wrote a play dramatizing a family's plight in the Hungarian Revolution which was performed by her fifth-grade class. She was gratified knowing that, because of her play, her classmates now had a small understanding of the struggle of good versus evil taking place across the globe. The larger world continued to creep in Drew's consciousness: Sputnik, the Cold War, and the integration of Central High School in Little Rock, Arkansas. Adolescence also creeped in during the late 1950s and early 1960s and was punctuated by Elvis (and his pelvis), Little Richard, Chuck Berry, Motown and rock 'n' roll.

In 1960, Drew left Virginia to attend an all-girls boarding school in Massachusetts. Concord Academy was an escape from her mother's diatribes dismissing the value of educating females. It was an escape from a paternalistic vision of the world that was "a dangerous place for women, their bodies and their reputations" that required a man's protection.[16] Concord provided a rigorous curriculum and encouraged intellectual curiosity. Students were told that it was their duty and responsibility "to make a better world," which Drew said, "was a message that had a lasting effect on me—justice, truth, mercy, love: these were meant to be my purposes and the purposes of my education."[17] Away from her mother, Drew was confident that in this new space she would find her place.

In 1963, students were invited to attend a lecture featuring the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., and Drew signed up to go. In Dr. King's words, Drew recognized that she had been blind to the effects of social injustice and was ashamed that in her ignorance she had been complacent and silent. Dr. King's lecture ended with an invitation to join him.

Drew responded to King's invitation by participating in two summer programs to learn about people who lived very different lives from her own. The first was an international experience where she, along with other American high-school students, traveled 7,000 miles across Russia and Eastern Europe to meet young people behind the Iron Curtain. In

bringing together youth from the East and West, the goal was to stimulate conversation about the tensions that exist between each side and propose peaceful resolutions. It was Drew's hope that this group of young people "could help to end the threatening standoff…by getting to know and understand one another."[18] The next summer program took her to the American South and, like the previous summer, was designed to stimulate conversation—this time focusing on race. This was the summer of 1964, when racial tension among Black and white communities was high. The goal among the young participants was to support each other in their common struggle for civil and human rights. Reflecting on her summer in the American South, Drew said that the experience "had given me proximity. I had gotten close, and I could not see stories of racial injustice and white violence in the same way again."[19]

In the fall of 1964 Drew enrolled in Bryn Mawr College and promptly joined "Students for a Democratic Society (SDS)," an organization that promoted and supported an engaged citizenry. Once or twice a week Drew and fellow SDS members knocked on doors in south Philadelphia to encourage residents to meet, organize, and strategize so that together they could improve their community. Like her experience in the South, Drew's work in south Philadelphia gave her proximity; she got close and could not see poverty (or the poor) in the same way again.

Scenes of the brutal beatings of peaceful civil rights protestors in Selma, Alabama were televised on March 7, 1965. Seeing those images, Drew "…knew I had to do something. If I did not stand up, if I did not act after witnessing this, I would be ashamed forever."[20] Faust left campus and drove the 1,000 miles from Philadelphia to Selma to join protestors on the March to Montgomery. Faust writes, "I knew I had not made much of a contribution to the civil rights cause, but I had done something important for myself. I had gone to Selma, as Dr. King had requested, to bear witness."[21] A month after Selma, Faust attended her first antiwar rally in Washington, DC, where she was among 20,000 people protesting the Viet Nam War.

Dr. Faust and I are both G.R.I.T.S.—**G**irls **R**aised **i**n **t**he **S**outh—yet our Southern experiences are *very* different. I was not born into wealth, and my family lineage was certainly not "distinguished." My family moved—a lot—from one rental house to another. My people were indentured servants and sharecroppers who felt a kinship with their Black neighbors. When I was an adult with a family of my own, I got a glimpse—a brief but powerful glimpse—of what it might have looked like to grow up in the Gilpin household. I traveled to Woodbine, Georgia to visit my husband's distant relatives whom we had never met. We were greeted by an African-American woman, dressed in a uniform, who was ironing. The woman of the house rushed in and whisked us away to a different part of the house, where we visited. My son asked if we would be joined by the nice lady who

met us at the door. He was told, "Oh no, she knows her place." Until that moment I had never considered that to *know your place* could be pejorative.

Like Dr. Faust, I had an "epiphany" when I was nine years old. I was riding my skateboard in our driveway, up and down, up and down, for what seemed to be hours. The Cold War was on my mind, (although I wouldn't have called it that, then). My nine-year-old self wondered why the Russians hated Americans so much. On my skateboard, up and down our driveway, I wondered what we could have possibly done to people we never met that would cause them to hate us so much.[22] Mama opened the kitchen door and called out, "Carolyn, are you still out there? Everything okay?" I said, "Yes, ma'am." When mama checked on me, I made a connection: Russian mamas love their children like my mama loves me. (This was 1966, long before Sting expressed a similar sentiment in his song "Russians."[23])

It is not the similarities or differences in our stories that attract me to Dr. Faust's life. What I find compelling is the way she approached circumstances and events that were not of her making, but most certainly affected her *place*. Injustice was her call to action. In action she created her *place*; a *place* made right, and true, and authentic by her work for racial justice. Dr. Faust said,

> Partly it was that youthful clarity and determination about doing the right thing [that drove my work]. But perhaps even more fundamentally, it was necessary for me—necessary to enable me to survive amid the stifling silences that threatened to define my life.[24]

Mothers of Invention: Women of the Slaveholding South in the American Civil War

Environments—the spaces we inhabit—are dynamic; they change. For women of the slaveholding South during the Civil War, "necessity, not choice, would prove to be the source of change—what they would have called the 'mother of invention.'"[25] These women found themselves in a situation for which they were not prepared: a war with armies of nearly a million men fighting on Southern soil. These privileged and educated women from the slave-owning class wrote diaries, letters, and memoirs that meticulously chronicle what they were thinking, feeling, and experiencing during those four years of war. In the voices of more than 500 Confederate women, Drew Gilpin Faust tells their stories in *Mothers of Invention: Women of the Slaveholding South in the American Civil War*.

"The farm or plantation was the central economic institution of the Old South,"[26] and men served as the South's organizing principle. So, when three out of four white men of military age left for war, the women from slaveholding families assumed complete responsibility for the management of the plantation. Some women found that they had the aptitude and temperament for their profound war-borne responsibilities.

For others, worry was consuming; they questioned their abilities and became paralyzed with fear. One woman questioning her abilities was Lizzie Neblett, a plantation mistress from Texas, who knew nothing about finance, agriculture, or managing slaves. Only months into the war, Lizzie wrote, "I am so sick of trying to do a man's business when I am nothing but a poor contemptible piece of…human flesh [who is] looked upon as belong[ing] to a race of inferior beings."[27] Lizzie's sentiments reflected the pre-war status of this class of Confederate women who were privileged yet subordinated as women.

Southern privilege is an understood but unwritten collection of rules, expectations, and traditions that regulates behavior. Privilege is not earned, it is bestowed, it is generationally conferred. It is a lifestyle, a way of interacting with the environment. War dramatically changed everything about privilege. The work required of them in wartime would have been considered unfeminine, undignified, and unacceptable—even prohibited—prior to the war. As the weight of their new, war-borne responsibilities grew heavier, it is no surprise that Confederate women reported feeling disoriented and confused. Their *place*, as they had known it, was disappearing. Women began to realize that the familiar, privileged place they once enjoyed was now an obstacle to the work being required of them. In the quest to find their new place came a more significant realization: womanhood had to be re-defined.

Women began participating in the forbidden practice of discussing politics and doing so in the public sphere. A Florida newspaper, *The Jacksonville Standard*,[28] published a letter in support of secession written by a group of women calling themselves the "Ladies of Broward's Neck, Florida."[29] Aware of the real possibility that as women their opinions would be dismissed, the letter preemptively states that their views, "were not frivolous or ill-founded but were supported in fact and argument."[30] They assert it was precisely their female identity that made politics "peculiarly appropriate to [a] woman's sphere."[31] A new definition of womanhood was emerging.

Troops needed a host of supplies, including winter socks, gloves, and underwear, so women throughout the South organized hundreds of groups to help in the war effort. The governor of Alabama distributed raw goods to these "ladies'-aid associations" in his state to be sewn into tents and uniforms.[32] To supply troops with items that could not be homemade, women organized money-raising events: concerts, fairs, and dramatic performances, with *women* as the featured performers! One of the performers, Clara MacLean of South Carolina, confided to her diary that she was "astonished at her sense of pride in her first theatrical effort. 'I feel quite important,'" and she experienced "a new sense of self emerging."[33] Not surprisingly, there were those who found the theatrical efforts of these women to be brazen and unacceptable. For some Southerners, public

performances were an assault on the long-held notion of femininity, and a disturbing departure from the image of a Southern lady who should be delicate, modest, refined, and seen but not heard. In a letter to *The Confederate Union* newspaper, a soldier from Georgia asked readers whether it was "… right for young ladies to appear in public on the stage?"[34] Most respondents insisted that, "There is no immodesty in young ladies doing that which a whole community approves."[35] Women were empowered by their new work and were receiving a measure of support from their communities. The new definition of womanhood was expanding.

As clothing became scarcer, women began to weave, make, and wear homespun dresses. Jefferson Davis, President of the Confederate States, "celebrated homespun," but many Southern men were "deeply disturbed that their wives had taken up textile production."[36] Will Neblett wrote to Lizzie, "I do not like the idea of your weaving. It is mortifying to me. I wish you not to do it." In response to her husband's admonition, Lizzie said that she, "wasn't happy about adding yet another responsibility to her already heavy burden, but she was 'forced' to in order to clothe her children."[37] This exchange between Will and Lizzie reflects the war-borne change in marital relationships. When husbands left for war, they left wives who were subservient, docile, lady-like, and proper. While they were gone, their wives learned some things: sewing, weaving, and managing a farm. They entered the public sphere as organizers and performers and became political. Wives changed, and husbands like Will Neblett were not too happy about it.

Out of financial necessity, many Confederate woman began working outside the home, for renumeration, for the first time in their lives.[38] These women became teachers, nurses, and office workers—jobs that had been traditionally held by men. Adelaide Stuart, who had taken a job with the Treasury Department wrote that circumstances, "had pushed her into the workforce which was 'the best thing that could have happened for me—it is strengthening all the best parts of my character.'"[39] Necessity drew women into the public realm: the workforce, political activism, and organizing to support the war effort. In their letters and through their diary entries, they describe how they were evolving not only "toward a newly valued self, but [made] a more explicit and bolder claim to a public voice and a political identity."[40]

Women of the slaveholding South knew their place—until it wasn't. In 1861 war came to their land and took their men. The wealth they had once known was gone, along with the privilege that their wealth had purchased. Amid all the loss, something was found; a *new place*; a *place* women defined and created *for themselves*. Through their work women had earned the right to be heard. Their voices had power that had not come from privilege. These Confederate women could not have known then that a century later the new *place* they had created would contribute to the foundation of a women's movement.

Finding My Place in the Academy

A funny thing happened to me when I was working in the lawn-and-garden department at Lowe's—I was offered a job teaching at a university. Really. You know how most academics spend countless hours scouring *HigherEdJobs.com* and *The Chronicle of Higher Education* for an opening in their field? You know how most academics write a cover letter, submit a CV, and hope upon hope to get a call from the chair of a search committee requesting a phone interview, then an on-campus interview, then a job offer? Not me. There I was, watering the variegated pittosporum when the Chair of the English, Humanities, & Languages (EHL) department at Southeastern Oklahoma State University offered me a job teaching freshman composition, right there in the outdoor lawn-and-garden department of Lowe's Home Improvement Store in Durant, Oklahoma!

Of course, there's more to the story. I knew the EHL Chair, Dr. Randy Prus.[41] We had first met through my brother, Dan,[42] who was a Spanish professor in that department. As a professor at Southeastern, William also knew Randy, and we had all become friends. Randy knew that I had recently earned my master's degree at Southeastern, but what he did not know was that I had been looking for a teaching position for months. After writing 186 cover letters and submitting 186 CVs to colleges and universities within a 300-mile radius of Durant, I couldn't find a job, so, I went to work at Lowe's. Randy desperately needed an adjunct, and I desperately needed a job.

Teaching is my jam. After 15 years teaching middle school in public and parochial schools, I resigned from a job I loved to attend graduate school, hoping to experience teaching at the college level. Now I had my shot. I began by investigating what it meant to be an adjunct at *this* university because I knew that the role and responsibilities of adjuncts vary widely across institutions. As a schoolteacher, I had been involved in writing policy, so reading policy, specifically as it relates to adjunct faculty, seemed a logical place to begin. It helped that William was a longtime member of the Faculty Senate and for years had been intimately involved in writing and revising policy at the university.[43]

After getting my policy fix, I investigated ways to get involved in my new academic community. Our campus had recently established an AAUP Chapter, that included William as a founding member. The AAUP welcomes (and encourages) adjuncts to join—so I did. It didn't take me long to realize that in the space of this professional association, I had found my *place*. In this space I had purpose, agency, and I was empowered to do my own thing. I became president of our Chapter, served two terms, and became an officer at the state level. Our Chapter developed relationships with administrators and made our presence known around campus. We introduced the AAUP to faculty at symposiums and to new faculty at their orientations. Our Chapter members were elected to the Faculty Senate in noticeable numbers.

For six years we organized and hosted regional conferences featuring nationally recognized scholars, activists, and leaders from the AAUP, headquartered in Washington, D.C. Our conferences attracted faculty representing eleven colleges and universities from six states. In a remarkable show of support, our university administration financially contributed to these AAUP events, which helped to make this professional development opportunity free of charge for Southeastern faculty, and an opportunity for which there was no travel involved—the event was held on their own campus. Additionally, we were given use of university facilities free of charge and free advertisement on the university's website.

When appropriations for public education were cut at the state and federal levels,[44] our Chapter moved beyond our campus. We visited the local Rotary Club[45] to discuss the budget situation taking place in their beloved hometown university (locally referred to as "the college") and invited the community to attend a candidates' forum we hosted,[46] which was advertised on local television news channels.[47] We held a letter-writing soirée, and filmed one-minute videos that we sent to 175 state legislators explaining the impact that their cuts would have on our campus and on our work in our classrooms. Chapter members traveled to Oklahoma City and met with state representatives, senators, and the Lt. Governor to put a face on the professoriate and a face on the consequences of their budget decisions. William and I met with our U.S. Representatives and Senators in Washington, D.C. to explain how cuts in federal appropriations would affect faculty and students at our regional institution in rural, southeastern Oklahoma.

These activities were remarkable for several reasons, beginning with the fact that I was leading the charge to organize faculty *as an adjunct*. I had no protection from the real possibility of reprisal from what could be considered subversive behavior: rabble-rousing, pot-stirring, dissent from the established role of adjunct—I don't know…behavior unbecoming an adjunct? Is that even a thing? I wasn't afraid, I had so little to lose.

Also remarkable was the unique relationship we forged with our university president. As you well know, history is rife with examples of adversarial relationships between administrators and faculty. This contentious relationship is so common that the AAUP has an expression: administrators are their best recruiters. To be honest, we were not pleased when Sean Burrage[48] was named Southeastern's president. He was a prominent attorney, former politician, with limited experience in higher education from a wealthy, well-connected Oklahoma family. I thought, "great, another 'good ole boy.'" William said, "we're going to have to work with him, so we need to figure out how." And we did. We worked hard. We communicated frequently with President Burrage, in public and in person, through e-mails and in hand-written notes. We were honest with him and let him know when we disagreed with his decisions (in public and in

private). What was more effective was that we complimented him when we agreed (in public and in private). Over time we developed mutual respect and trust. President Burrage realized that we could help him; we could speak to Regents and legislators about budget cuts in ways he could not. He was beholden to them in ways we were not, which expanded our freedom, and earned us his gratitude. William and I never thought we would feel affection for an administrator, but we did, and when he resigned, we were genuinely sad.

When the Regents met to form a presidential search to replace President Burrage, our Chapter requested[49] and was granted a spot on the agenda to make a presentation to the Regents and presidents of our six sister institutions. Our presentation was entitled: "The Success of Shared Governance at Southeastern."[50] We wanted to let the Regents know what was possible when a president works with his faculty. We had done great things together and we wanted the Regents to know about it. When my presentation was over, I looked at President Burrage and he had tears in his eyes. He sprang from his seat and gave me a hug. I won't soon forget that moment, or the possibilities for a university and a faculty when they work together.

Teaching was my job, but teaching is also my art and my craft. I worked hard to prepare lessons that were challenging, creative, and fun for me to teach. In my department, I acted "as if" I was *real* faculty by doing what was required of faculty but not required of adjuncts: I held office hours, attended academic conferences, wrote and presented papers, and even published a few. I attended department meetings, got myself assigned to committees, and helped write accreditation reports. The tenured and tenure-track faculty treated me as their colleague, and my chair, Dr. Prus, supported us all—as equals. In his words and deeds, no faculty was "less than." At the university level, my work in the AAUP was known, and competing against Ph.D.s, this master's level adjunct even won a few awards for excellence in teaching and for meritorious service. I reflected on my good fortune, which I attribute, in part, to the intercession of the patron saint of contingent faculty, St. Precaria,[51] whose likeness hung in my office, and to whom I offered regular novenas.

Involvement in the AAUP provided a window into the nationwide status of contingent faculty, and through that window I saw that my experience at Southeastern was an exception, rather than the rule. In the many AAUP meetings we attended across the country, the message from contingent faculty was consistent: things were bad for them at their university—and their numbers were growing.

In their *2024 Bulletin*, the AAUP reports that "in fall 2022, less than one-third of faculty were on tenure lines, and that the proportion of faculty who are appointed each year to tenure-line positions is declining at an alarming rate. Sixty-eight percent of faculty held contingent

appointments."[52] Joe Berry and Helena Worthen provide a history of the proliferation of contingent faculty in their book *Power Despite Precarity: Strategies for the Contingent Faculty Movement in Higher Education*. One reason Berry and Worthen give for decades of increased reliance on contingents is cuts in government appropriations for higher education.[53] I suspect that your campus, like Southeastern, has experienced significant cuts, too. Budgets cuts cause institutions to set new priorities. Many chose to increase spending on athletics, physical plant, new technologies, and administrative costs and *reduce instructional budgets*, "which they accomplished by hiring more contingent faculty instead of tenure-track faculty."[54] Over-reliance on contingent faculty creates an unfair system in the academy. Tenured and tenure-track faculty should be providing 68% of the instruction in universities, *not* contingent faculty. Terminal degrees matter, expertise matters, academic freedom matters. Without a majority of tenured and tenure-track faculty, the academy becomes less than it could be, and there is no shortage of examples of what has happened in higher ed, due, in part, to the steep reduction in tenure-track lines.

Environments act on us, and to find our place we must act on it. Unjust systems, like that of contingency, create environments that are difficult to act on. To act means to risk losing *place* before it can be found. For some, the risk may seem too great. For others, action is the work that is necessary to create a just place within an unjust system. Action may not fix it, but it is the only way to affect it. It was through my action that I found—no—I *claimed* my place at Southeastern. It was a dogged pursuit. In action I had agency, purpose, and meaning. I learned which tools were available to me as an adjunct, and I used them. Policy was my friend, and precedence didn't matter. Unless explicitly forbidden in policy, I claimed what I needed to do my thing and, in doing so, I created a place for myself that was authentic and just. I boldly went where no adjunct had gone before.

Endnotes

1 Lucy E. Bailey, Ph.D., is Professor of Social Foundations and Qualitative Inquiry at Oklahoma State University, OSU's Director of Gender, Women's, and Sexuality Studies, and a longtime SoPHE member and past-President.

2 William Fridley, Ph.D., is Professor Emeritus, Southeastern Oklahoma State University, longtime member and past-President of SoPHE, and Carolyn's husband.

3 Lucy E. Bailey, Stacie Lynn Warner, and Amanda Kingston, "Transformations and Reflections: Becoming through Inquiry," (paper presented at the annual meeting of the Society of History and

Philosophy of Education, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma, October 6, 2023).

[4] "A Guide to Indigenous Land Acknowledgement," National Environmental Education Foundation, 2025, https://www.neefusa.org/guide-indigenous-land-acknowledgment

[5] David Snelgrove is faculty at Oklahoma State University's School of Teaching, Learning and Educational Sciences, and longtime SoPHE member, site coordinator, and program chair.

[6] Walter Cronkite anchored the *CBS Evening News* from 1962 to 1981. "Walter Cronkite," *Wikipedia*, January 29, 2025, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Walter_Cronkite

[7] The term "necessary trouble" is taken from a March 1, 2020 speech by U.S. Representative John R. Lewis of Georgia commemorating the Selma, AL to Montgomery, AL civil-rights march that became known as "Bloody Sunday," March 7, 1965. The complete quotation reads, "Get in good trouble, necessary trouble, and help redeem the soul of America." In response to Dr. Faust's request for permission to use his words in her book's title, Congressman Lewis replied that, "he would be honored."

[8] Drew Gilpin Faust, *Necessary Trouble: Growing Up at Midcentury* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2023), 17.

[9] Ibid., v.

[10] Ibid., 25.

[11] Ibid., 21.

[12] Raphael Johnson was an African-American man employed by the Gilpin family.

[13] Faust, *Necessary Trouble*, 84.

[14] This letter is now the official property of the U. S. National Archives and Records Administration and is housed in the Dwight D. Eisenhower Presidential Library in Abilene, Kansas.

[15] *My Weekly Reader* was an educational pamphlet used in classrooms from 1928 to 2012, initially published by the American Education Press of Columbus, OH. It featured current national and international events, written in age-appropriate language. Weekly issues included copious photographs designed to appeal to school children and enhance their understanding of people and issues from around the world. Dr. Faust credits this publication for her idea to write to President Eisenhower (p. 85). "My Weekly Reader," *Wikipedia*, November 1, 2024, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Weekly_Reader

[16] Faust, *Necessary Trouble*, 23.

[17] Ibid., 135.

[18] Ibid., 145.

[19] Ibid., 215.

[20] Ibid., 217.

[21] Ibid., 225.

[22] My adult-self wonders how my nine-year-old-self knew about the Cold War or that Americans distrusted and feared the Russian people. Dr. Faust wondered the same thing (*Necessary Trouble*, 91).

[23] "Russians" was released as a single in 1985 and appeared on Sting's debut solo album "The Dream of the Blue Turtles." Written by Sting, the song used the *Romance* theme from the *Lieutenant Kije Suite* by Russian composer Sergei Prokofiev, with whom Sting shares writing credit. The music video, directed by Jean-Baptiste Mondino, followed the single's release: https://youtu.be/wHylQRVN2Qs?si=96npoVahzRnRxyIz

[24] Faust, *Necessary Trouble*, 90.

[25] Drew Gilpin Faust, *Mothers of Invention: Women of the Slaveholding South in the American Civil War* (Chapel Hill, NC: The University of North Carolina Press, 1996), 195.

[26] Ibid., 31–32.

[27] Ibid., 65.

[28] *The Jacksonville Standard* was a weekly newspaper which began publication sometime in the early fall of 1858, published by Ramon Canova and edited by Dr. Holmes Steele. Samuel Proctor, "The Call to Arms: Secession from a Feminine Point of View," *Florida Historical Quarterly* 35, no. 3, article 8 (1956): 266, https://stars.library.ucf.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=2614&context=fhq

[29] Ibid. Broward's Neck was the name given to the property owned by Colonel John Broward and members of his family along Cedar Creek and the Trout River in the northern part of Duval County, Florida.

[30] Faust, *Mothers of Invention*, 11.

[31] Ibid.

[32] Ibid., 24.

[33] Ibid., 27.

[34] Ibid. *The Confederate Union* newspaper was published in Milledgeville, GA by publishers Boughton, Nisbet & Barnes between 1862 and 1865. https://gahistoricnewspapers.galileo.usg.edu/lccn/sn85034083/

[35] Ibid.

[36] Ibid., 47.

[37] Ibid.

[38] Ibid., 80.

[39] Ibid., 91.

[40] Ibid., 162–163.

[41] Randy Prus, Ph.D., Professor Emeritus, Southeastern Oklahoma State University.

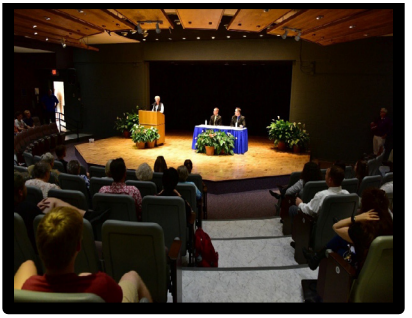
[42] Daniel Althoff, Ph.D., Professor Emeritus, Southeastern Oklahoma State University.

[43] The definition of *bliss* is when two policy wonks find each other.

[44] Kathryn S. McNutt, "Oklahoma Budget Shortfall Hammers Higher Education," *Tulsa World*, April 17, 2016, https://tulsaworld.com/news/education/oklahoma-budget-shortfall-hammers-higher-education/article_a21ddfef-b4ed-5a39-9128-e27eeeaf778f.html; Kathryn S. McNutt, "Oklahoma Last in Nation in Funding for Higher Education," *The Oklahoman*, June 16, 2017, https://www.oklahoman.com/story/news/politics/2017/06/16/oklahoma-last-in-nation-in-funding-for-higher-education/60593189007/

[45] Visit to Durant, OK Rotary Club, September 9, 2019. Pictured (left to right) are AAUP members Doug Wood, William Fridley, Carolyn Fridley, Stan Alluisi, and Rotarian Mike Davis.

[46] Forum featuring Oklahoma House Candidates (District 21), Dustin Roberts (R, left) and David Northcutt (D, right). Moderated by Carolyn Fridley (at podium). Southeastern Oklahoma State University, September 8, 2016.

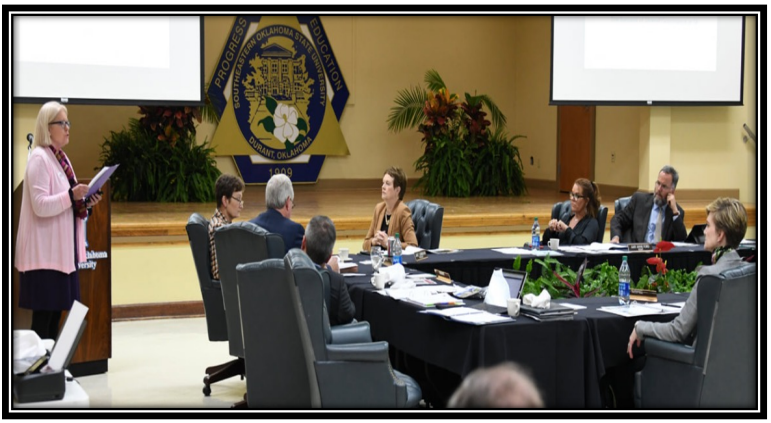


47 "Free House Representative Candidates Forum at Southeastern," KTEN ABC 10 TV, September 7, 2016, https://www.kten.com/free-house-representative-candidates-forum-at-southeastern/image_412717a1-d5e9-5bb5-88d4-e18c793923df.html

48 Sean Burrage, J.D., Director of State and Federal Relations at the University of Oklahoma (1993–1996); Attorney at Taylor, Burrage, Foster, Mallett, Downs & Ramsey, Claremore, Oklahoma (1996–2006); Oklahoma State Senator (2006–2014); President of Southeastern Oklahoma State University (2014–2019); Vice President for Executive Affairs at the University of Oklahoma (2019–2024); Chancellor of the Oklahoma State System for Higher Education (2024–present). "Sean Burrage," *Wikipedia*, December 18, 2024, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sean_Burrage

49 Letter to Sheridan McCaffree, Executive Director of the Regional University System of Oklahoma, posted on the Southeastern Oklahoma State University website: Faculty Senate Documents, Fall 2019 (September 12), "A second letter from the AAUP to McCaffree (9-10-19)." https://www.se.edu/faculty-senate/wp-content/uploads/sites/65/2019/09/AAUP-Request-to-RUSO-9-10-19.pdf

50 Meeting of the Regents of the Regional University System of Oklahoma Regents, October 11, 2019, Southeastern Oklahoma State University. Text of the presentation can be found on the Southeastern Oklahoma State University website: Faculty Senate Documents, Fall 2019 (October 16), "Speech given by AAUP SE Chapter president Carolyn Fridley," https://www.se.edu/faculty-senate/wp-content/uploads/sites/65/2019/10/AAUP-RUSO-Board-Meeting-10-11-2019-1.pdf



[51] St. Precaria is a fabricated saint that I read about in Chris Hables Gray's article, "Saint Precaria at the University of California," *ACW* (*Adjunct Commuter Weekly*), October 24, 2015, https://adjunctcommuterweekly.com/2015/10/24/saint-precaria-at-the-university-of-california-by-chris-hables-gray/. Intentionally mis-labeled "St. Precaria," the image adorning my office wall was actually that of St. Philomena (c. 291–304 A.D.), a real saint, canonized in 1837, https://www.catholic.org/saints/saint.php?saint_id=98

[52] American Association of University Professors, "Contingent Appointments and the Academic Profession," *2024 Bulletin*, July 2024, 60, https://www.aaup.org/file/2024Bulletin_ContingentAppts_0.pdf

[53] Joe Berry and Helena Worthen, *Power Despite Precarity: Strategies for the Contingent Faculty Movement in Higher Education* (London: Pluto Press, 2021), 81.

[54] American Association of University Professors, "Contingent Appointments," 64, https://www.aaup.org/file/2024Bulletin_ContingentAppts_0.pdf