

## **Con Job: Stories of Adjunct & Contingent Labor**

### **A Film By: Megan Fulwiler & Jennifer Marlow**

0:06

For anybody who wants to know what late capitalism in the twenty-first century looks like, go to the university and you'll see it; it's there.

0:27

**Steve Street, Adjunct, English Department:** We all like to deal with simple blocks of meaning. You know, simple phrases, simple truths. You know, we like to know who's going to listen, who outside academia is going to listen to us explain the difference between the two tiers. The difference between contingent faculty. Are you a teacher or are you not? Are you a professor or are you not?

0:50

**Julie Demers, Adjunct, English Department:** A lot of people don't know what an adjunct is. A lot of my students don't know what the difference is. They come up here to do conferences with me and they say, "Oh, is this your office? It's really cool." And I say, "No. I share this with a bunch of other adjuncts for the English department" and some people say, "What's an adjunct?"

1:13

**Christopher Dean, Lecturer, UC Santa Barbara:** I know a lot of folks who have worked as contingent faculty. They don't come from one perspective. They don't have one experience. They don't have one particular type of income even. It's a huge diverse group. To lump them all together into this sort of junk term. Adjunct faculty, like we're some sort of appendix. Adjunct means that you really aren't a part of the entire endeavor of the academy. Contingent at least gets a whole lot closer to the sort of honest truth. Our jobs are contingent. They're contingent on all sorts of things.

2:00

**Jennifer Lee, Adjunct Composition Instructor:** Last semester I taught four sections of comp one and then I taught comp one at Saint Rose and creative writing. My husband didn't see me, you know, hardly at all. I decided to take two graduate classes as I'm pursuing my MFA and I'm only teaching four, but it's still a lot. It's still quite a challenge.

2:46

QUESTION: And how many students do you have Jen?

2:48

**Jennifer Lee:** A hundred.

2:51

QUESTION: A hundred students?

2:55

**Jennifer Lee:** Well, no. Now it's probably, what, ninety. Ninety. Last semester it was a hundred and thirty. Insanity.

MUSIC

3:04

[Music]

3:44

**Cary Nelson, Professor, University of Illinois, President of AAUP:**

In a piece some years ago I described the English and foreign language departments as the fast food disciplines because they really have originated the problem. I mean, they pioneered exploitation hiring amongst the faculty. It's one of their real achievements that they can go down in history for. The casualization and deprofessionalization of the work force.

4:09

**Seth Kahn, Associate Professor, West Chester University:** Well I certainly think that English studies has been a gigantic contributor to the creation of our current conditions. To the extent, you know, it gets into lots of interdisciplinary politics. I think, to lay out the

reason, I think that's true. With departments becoming more and more financially dependent on general education writing courses and tenured faculty in other parts of our discipline besides writing who don't want to teach them and don't want to ever think about them.

4:43

**Bronwyn Williams, Professor, University of Louisville:** As long as you have a universal requirement for writing courses, then there are going to be a lot of writing courses and the university is going to say we can't possibly full time people when you're running 150, 250, 300 sections a semester. That's just too many people. You're going to have to hire part timers.

5:13

**Bob Samuels, Lecturer, UCLA, President, University Council–AFT:** What we're seeing in higher education is the same institutions that are producing new PhDs are also then eliminating the future jobs of those people by relying on graduate students and part time faculty.

5:26

**Bronwyn Williams, Professor, University of Louisville:** Obviously, from just an economic point of view the number of PhDs, MFAs, MAs who are out there and the number of positions available for them on the tenure line, as departments are currently constructed, mean that there's a surplus.

5:44

**Christopher Dean, Lecturer, UC Santa Barbara:** I don't know if it's a dark secret, but people in comp, we don't tend to talk about labor conditions quite so much. We kind of need an action plan I think.

5:53

**William H. Thelin, Professor, University of Akron:** This is capitalism at absolute perfection because you have all these people

making very little money doing the hardest work. Supporting these programs so that people a little bit farther up on the pyramid can teach their medieval literature or their seminar on Emerson or whatever it might be.

## CARTOON

6:15

So you said you wanted to meet with me today.

6:17

Yes. I'm going to grad school in English.

6:20

No. I don't think that's a good idea. You will probably end up as an adjunct, getting paid less than many of the secretaries and janitors in the school.

6:29

I will work hard.

6:32

**Elizabeth Conway, Adjunct, English Department:** I had a lot of expectations about being an adjunct because it was never my goal. You never hear a first grader say, "When I grow up I want to be an adjunct teacher." It's not something I planned on.

6:43

**Bob Samuels, Lecturer, UCLA, President, University Council–AFT:** Of course the big problems are with compensation, with job security, with intellectual property. A lot of faculty are hired at the last minute. A lot of them never get support or training. A lot of them don't have offices or computers. They're often judged solely on student evaluations. Often they're not even evaluated. And so it's just a general kind of lowering of the quality of how faculty are treated and it's a way of justifying paying faculty less money.

7:16

**Peter Brown, SUNY New Paltz, "Confessions of a Tenured Professor":**

I think casualization came about as a result of monetary factors. It's a form of out sourcing. Such as the way we lost a lot of our manufacturing base that went overseas because labor was cheaper. It's a lot cheaper to hire people off the tenure track and pay them a fraction of what tenure track people make.

7:41 - 7:44

**Marc Bousquet, Associate Professor, Santa Clara University:** Cost and control. That's what it amounts to. Administrators over the past forty years have asserted tremendous control over the mission of the university and their terms. Right, which is to say, over the curriculum and governance of the institution. Control over the spending, the funds they've generated. Larger and larger pots of money through unheard of tuition hikes and they have spent those funds on initiatives that they are deeply committed to that are not necessarily the same initiatives that the faculty are committed to.

8:20

**Bob Samuels, Lecturer, UCLA, President, University Council–AFT:** I think the issue is becoming more and more visible, but the question is, it's unclear how people should feel about it. Or, just letting people know that your kids are going to be taught by non-tenured faculty. Well, the general public person says well, you know, I don't have tenure. No one else I know has tenure. Like, why should anyone have tenure? Everyone I know is part time. Or, you know, and so, I think we need to talk about the quality of education issues and also look at the spending issues. Where is the money going? If it's not going to the faculty, where is it going? What are the priorities of these institutions?

8:56

**Don Eron, Lecturer, CU–Bolder:** When state of appropriations to higher education began to go down administrators started replacing retiring tenured faculty with contingent faculty, with quote on quote, temporary faculty. I say quote on quote not because I'm self-conscious, a self-conscious ironist, but because they would be hired semester after semester, year after year after year. These were not temporary jobs, only technically. And they would teach twice the courses for half the pay.

9:21

**Mike Palmquist, Associate Vice Provost of Learning and Teaching, Colorado State University:** The problem is a simple one. We have this oddly tiered faculty system in which some people get paid quite a bit more than others. It creates inherent inequities. And anybody who sees what's going on says, well, we have to still, we have a growing college population. And how do you meet the need of putting a teacher in front of a classroom? So, economically it makes sense to hire faculty who cost less to the university. I've had arguments with, or discussions. I think arguments might be too strong a word, with some of my colleagues, who are in higher administrative positions than I am who tell me that we owe it the people of the state to provide the highest quality education at the lowest possible cost.

10:06

**Seth Kahn, Associate Professor, West Chester University:** One reason that contingency has become as much of a standard practice as it has... my inclination is to want to put it in terms of neo-liberal economics in the way that that's kind of become a dominant paradigm for higher education. Minimizing costs, selling access to higher education as a kind of economic boon. Saying hey, students you can afford to go to college more easily if we can cheapen the cost of providing the work force for you.

10:47

**Jennifer Lee, Adjunct:** There's been a lot of talk at Hudson Valley lately, ever since the adjuncts' hours and the number of classes they can teach has been lowered due to the affordable care act and not wanting to...see, it all sounds bad doesn't it?

11:01

**Matt Williams, Adjunct, Vice President, New Faculty Majority (NFM):** There is not necessarily a qualitative difference between someone who is a contingent faculty member and someone who is a full time faculty member. But there is a difference in the realities that those two groups live within. It's those circumstances that impinge on every aspect of what we do.

12:05

**Ross Borden, Lecturer, SUNY Cortland:** I don't even think the distinction part time and full time faculty is in fact, it's not a qualitative distinction. All it is, is the terms of your contract. You're employed in this way on these terms, under these conditions. Or, under different terms with different wages. These are just employment categories...you might as well say, these are the people that aren't going to be paid and these are the people that are going to be paid, but the work is the same and the place wouldn't work unless these people were at the work.

12:39

**Matt Williams, Adjunct, Vice President, New Faculty Majority (NFM):** The median wage is \$800 per credit hour on a range of about \$600 to \$1000 per credit hour. Depending on whether you have PHD, a master's degree, how long you've been there, how many courses you've taught. At \$800 a credit hour, it's impossible to earn a living wage. The university limits an adjunct faculty member to only teaching 21 credit hours per academic year. So at \$800 a credit hour, that's \$16,800.

13:16

**Jennifer Lee:** One semester I was on three campuses and it's a lot of travel and less investment. Even if you want to invest more in your students, it's just not feasible. I guess I just imagined having more interaction with other adjuncts, other professors, on a regular basis. I guess I didn't think about just even the travel, right? And the logistical aspects of how split my time is. If I were on one campus it would change everything.

14:02 - 14:13

**Jennifer Marlow, Adjunct, English Department:** I just was not educated to the realities of higher ed. It's labor practices, it's politics. So, when I first got my first adjunct position, I really thought this was the key to the magic kingdom.

14:20 - 14:29

**Jessica Brouker, Adjunct, English Department:** When I got the job at Hudson Valley everybody said, just wait it out because they are really good about hiring full time after you've been there for a while. And they were really good about it. Until about the past four years. Because the year that I came in was the last year that they hired anybody full time.

14:37

**Steve Street, Adjunct, English Department:** I worked real hard, worked many different campuses, but once you get on the adjunct tract, you stay on that tract.

14:49

**Jil Hanifan, Writing Center Director, SUNY Albany:** The problem, somewhat with contingencies, is not that it's part time, which is its own problem, but that it's perceived as temporary. When in fact, people are doing this, like myself, for twenty-three years.

15:01



**Cary Nelson, Professor, University of Illinois, President of AAUP:**

If you look at all the areas, where the use of contingent teachers is heaviest in higher education, you know, the need for it is going to be there for our great grandchildren. Let alone for the lives of the contingent teachers. So there's also no need for flexibility.

15:17

**Mike Palmquist, Associate Vice Provost of Learning and**

**Teaching, Colorado State University:** I remember back in 1995, the first time I was a WPA, maybe it was '96. I had brought a proposal from the composition faculty to allow adjunct faculty to have a voice in our department executive committee. I heard a range of really heartfelt arguments against doing that. Three years later, we were able to get that done, but it was interesting to see just sort of the attitudes, the notion that these are short time people, they are not committed to the department, they are not part of us. So I think part of it is this notion that the faculty really is composed entirely of tenure line, and other folks are there just to assist.

MUSIC

15:58

[Music]

16:11

**Christopher Dean, Lecturer, UC Santa Barbara:** Well, you know, I'm a big believer in truth in advertising. I think the parents would be kind of surprised to know that a huge number of their children's classes are going to be taught by people who, in some instances, are right on the edge of poverty.

16:27

**Julie Demers, Adjunct, English Department:** There was a day, not too long ago, when I was looking at my bank statement and I needed to buy groceries. I thought, well, I'll have to wait till the end of the week to get my check. A student, at the same time, came into

class and she was holding one of those like mocha latte grande Starbucks something's. You know, they cost \$5, something like that. I just remember looking at the student and thinking that here she was buying this drink and that's more than the half gallon of milk that I was going to be buying and couldn't afford at that point. It was just sort of a moment for me because it shouldn't be like that.

17:10

**Carrie Holligan, Adjunct, English Department:** The thing that can improve the condition of my job, what I would have to say, would be higher pay. My reason for believing that is because it's difficult to live on an adjunct's salary. Many of us pair it with different jobs and different professions, and night jobs and side jobs. And as a result it's difficult to focus solely on teaching.

17:36

**Julie Demers, Adjunct, English Department:** I do have health insurance, but the funny thing about the health insurance is the health insurance is so expensive that you can't pay for a doctor's visit.

17:46

**Jennifer Lee, Adjunct, English Department** Well, they did actually offer health insurance, but they paid zero of it and it was \$800 a month.

17:53

**Jessica Brouker, Adjunct, English Department:** I don't have health insurance and I haven't had it since 2009. So, I go to Planned Parenthood because that's where I get my checkups and whatever I need. So, I was at Planned Parenthood in the waiting room one day and one of my students walked in. That was the most mortifying experience of my entire life. I don't want the students to see me at Planned Parenthood. And that's just one sort of example of how strange it is for me sometimes to be standing in front of them

thinking, okay, you know, I want to give you the tools to be productive in society so that you can do better than what I'm doing for myself. You know what I mean, so that you can go out and make and have a financial future that I'm not getting.

18:40

**Zartasha Samson, Adjunct, English Department:** A couple of students said that they were looking for jobs for the summer. And I said, you know what, I'm in the same boat. I'm looking for work, too. And I was very straight with them. I said, look, if you see me in the mall selling frozen yogurt, don't be surprised because I can't find work right now.

18:59

**Daniel Beaudry, Adjunct, English Department:** I understand why schools have set limits about how many courses you can teach as an adjunct, but the unintended consequence of that is that we have to go and sort of, I hate to use the word prostitute yourself, but you end up sort of going door to door, saying hey will you hire me for two courses?

19:16

**Paul Lamar, Adjunct, English Department:** I think I would say to an adjunct, ally yourself with one or two people on campus who have had some experience with the institution and really ask for what you need and be part of the conversation. Again, there's a little luxury of having some time to do that if you're trying to satisfy two masters, two different institutions...may not have that opportunity to be as collegial.

19:47

**Mary Fitzsimmons, Adjunct, English Department:** Especially if you're on multiple campuses and you don't have necessarily a presence on your own campus. You can feel, I think, a part from, rather than a part of.

19:59

**Jennifer Lee:** I feel marginalized a lot of the time. I feel powerless sometimes and it's a strange juxtaposition with the role of a professor.

20:10

**Paul Lamar, Adjunct, English Department:** I love my adjunct life, but it's partly because of where I am in terms of age and experience. If I were younger and starting out and didn't have some experience behind me, I think I'd be hoping I would always land somewhere full time.

20:27

**Julie Demers, Adjunct, English Department:** There's nothing I'd change about the students or the other teachers. It would just be to have a full time position. That's the only thing that I would change.

20:37

**Christopher Dean, Lecturer, UC Santa Barbara:** You occasionally hear things, little snippets, that make it kind of clear that maybe the work that you're doing, a position that you hold isn't that important. Or, you should be doing something more and better. You should get into a PHD program. You should get into a tenure line position. That kind of eats away at you a little bit.

21:00

**Zartasha Samson, Adjunct, English Department:** In this job market I don't even know that with a PHD if I will be able to get a full time job.

21:05

**Jessica Brouker, Adjunct, English Department:** Quite frankly I don't know if I can afford to get my PHD to have more debt and the same amount of opportunity. I just don't know that it's worth it.

21:15

**Mary Fitzsimmons, Adjunct, English Department:** So if retention is a concern of colleges--and it is-- that long-term necessity of having people who are committed to the college, committed to the students is really an important factor in considering what is best for the larger community of the college.

21:31

**Matt Williams, Adjunct, Vice President, New Faculty Majority (NFM):** Let's face it, we're addicted. Okay, the system is addicted to contingency. It's the fundamental business model in higher education.

21:39

**Suzanne Hudson, Lecturer, CU–Boulder:** Administrators are addicted to cheap labor and that's all it is. It's cheap labor, but I don't think there are any arguments that contingency is a good thing for anybody. It's not good for the faculty. It's not good for the college. It's not good for the students. Especially not good for the students.

21:56

**Peter Brown, SUNY New Paltz, "Confessions of a Tenured Professor":** Conditions of teaching are the same as the conditions of learning. Adjuncts typically teach the introductory, elementary courses, the general education courses. So, that for the first two years maybe, most students will encounter primarily adjuncts and if they're running off to another job, if they don't have an office, that's certainly going to affect the students.

22:22

**Anne Wiegard, Secretary, NFM:** I think that teaching conditions equals learning conditions is an equation that can go really in the wrong direction when people say, oh that means part time people aren't teaching as well because they're not paid enough and so on to do a good job. That's not what it means. It means the same thing

that it would mean if you were looking at a hospital and there was a nurse who was responsible for 75 patients by herself. You would say, hmm, the working conditions there are going to affect the patient care. Even if she doesn't sit down all night, if she doesn't get dinner, if she's doing her very, very best, and ninety percent of the patients would say, gosh, this is a wonderful nurse and she's treating me great. It's inevitably going to affect the quality of care.

23:15

**Bob Samuels, Lecturer, UCLA, President, University Council–**

**AFT:** I think a lot of contingent faculty are excellent teachers. Some are better than tenured faculty, but often they're working without proper preparation or time to prepare. Often they're hired at the last minute. Sometimes they're forced to teach a book that they don't even know.

23:31

**William H. Thelin, Professor, University of Akron:** What's really bad is the things that start to appear tried and true are current traditional practices and they're looked upon as rigorous or you know, I can't...there's no administrator in the whole university and I would bet any university, who would complain about a TA or an adjunct giving grammar lessons. Yet, we know those are ineffective. When it comes down to the effects on pedagogy we're getting a lot of undereducated people to begin with teaching introductory composition.

24:05

**Bethany Aery Clerico, Adjunct, English Department:** As I understand it, there's a lot of discussion now about what to do with this massive adjunct pool and the labor force and the lack of full time positions that are available. I would hope that there eventually comes some change because I think that would help streamline

writing instruction and give students much better access to better funded, happy, smarter, more informed instructors.

24:30

**William H. Thelin, Professor, University of Akron:** Composition after this fifteen years or almost twenty years we've become a field and we have understandings that we're going to move on and move forward with and it never really happened because all this composition theory never ever took into consideration who is teaching this, the conditions under which they suffer, under which they toil.

24:52

**Mary Fitzsimmons, Adjunct, English Department:** Teaching the writing courses definitely has a different commitment, a different rhythm in the time that you devote...The reading of the writing takes time and care, and so there could be a lot of that conversation that goes on certainly outside of your classroom space, but I think it's necessary when you're teaching writing to continue that conversation as generously as you can.

25:18

**Jennifer Lee, Adjunct, English Department:** So we're writing more than ever as a society, so if you can find the way to get each student to the importance of writing through something they enjoy already. That's kind of a huge task. There's only so much time in the semester to teach certain things—developing a thesis, research, knowing how to integrate sources into one's writing, both ethically and effectively...understanding what it means to analyze something versus summarizing or responding and then also I think, how to read.

26:03

**Elizabeth Conway, Adjunct, English Department:** The problem is that teaching writing remains a compulsory course at many

universities, and yet it's not its own department and it's often not taught by full time faculty who have invested interested in the campus. But rather, these full time teaching appointments are broken up into bits and pieces and they are scattered to adjunct professors who may or may not be able to return to that campus next year and who are overworked because they're also waitressing in the evening and working at another campus.

26:39

**Paul Lamar, Adjunct, English Department:** For me it's the having the flexibility a little bit of my schedule. So Tuesday and Thursday I can be here, but then some of my students can't meet, so this morning I signed up for Friday morning to come in from 9 to 12 to meet with the students that way. But if I were an adjunct, let's say, at two or three institutions that could be tough.

26:59

**Christopher Dean, Lecturer, UC Santa Barbara:** You want people who really give a damn about their students and care about them and you can teach the rest, but if you don't have that, you're hosed. And I think I've met so many contingent faculty that have that and are willing to do things above and beyond often times what they're actually paid to do.

27:24

**Jessica Brouker, Adjunct, English Department:** The policy of the community college where I teach used to be that you could have up to four courses without being full time. With this new policy, they're saying they can't give us any more than two courses. So now they're hiring more adjuncts so they can get more two courses, instead of fewer four courses. A lot of adjuncts are leaving. I know about four who have other job options right now and they probably won't be there next semester.



27:53

**Jennifer Lee, Adjunct, English Department:** And there's adjuncts that have been teaching four classes for fifteen years and now half of their income is being cut and it's not just here.

28:02

**Mary Fitzsimmons, Adjunct, English Department:** There's that sense that that person is a consistent member of the community, of the faculty. That's wonderful for students especially if they've built a rapport and so they really appreciate looking in the book and finding your name. They want to find you. They'll be like, why isn't she teaching that course. She's taught that before. I was hoping to take that course with her. And you just won't have it. Your name will be missing.

28:25

**Jessica Brouker, Adjunct, English Department:** But if I have to leave teaching, which it's looking like I might have to do because I can't survive with four courses. It will kill me a little bit each day, mentally and emotionally. It really will.

28:37

**Nathaniel Ward, Adjunct, English Department:** What's central to the issue of working as an adjunct in humanities is this issue of why? If you're going to pay us what you pay us and if you're going to eliminate full time positions all over the place, why even bother? Why are these things required? If institutionally you're not that interested in the outcome, then what are we showing up for? What are we making the students jump through these hoops for? So, I think that all of those questions would be answered, that health insurance would be taken care of. I mean I don't know. It's funny. Every time I go into teach I feel like I'm part of a problem.

29:12

MOVIE CLIP: I'm not doing it.

29:15

**Jennifer Lee:** Truthfully I love teaching, but I get really exhausted. At this point I'm looking into other areas. I have one other job one day a week. Until a full time position presented itself to me, I'm looking at what my options are.

MUSIC

29:40

[Music]

30:09

**Jessica Brouker, Adjunct, English Department:** I mean I feel like I've been reading so many things about it that it is out there, but who is reading it? Who's investing in it?

30:24 - 30:28

**Nathaniel Ward, Adjunct, English Department:** If I'm teaching in an institution that's willing to hire me more or less sight on scene and doesn't really care what I do in the classroom and isn't necessarily too concerned with what comes out the other end...How do you assert that it's as meaningful as what goes on in the bio lab or in the economics class or in the political science class or whatever, right? If the institutional policies and practices are tacitly suggesting that what goes on what doesn't really matter and hey, everybody gets an A or a B anyway. I think it's difficult not to fall into that place of being the archetypal, frustrated composition instructor. If only the word understood and the world is not going to understand, so we need to bring understanding to the world. And that's a hard thing to do.

31:15

**Mike Palmquist, Associate Vice Provost Learning and Teaching, Colorado State University:** You have to be thinking about rhetorical arguments, the things that we can use to make real changes.

31:21

**Cary Nelson, Professor, University of Illinois, President of AAUP:**

The appeal to, I think, tenure tracked faculty is not only based on professionalism and ethics. It's also based on the self-interest of the faculty in maintaining its traditional areas of authority so that they can guarantee the quality of education. I think that's it's also potentially an appeal to students and parents that they can understand. They may not care that much that contingent faculty are poorly treated because so are many other employee groups, but they might care that if faculty are contingent, if the majority of faculty are contingent, the control of the faculty to make good decisions in its area of expertise is jeopardized. That's the big price for higher education to pay.

32:08

**Peter Brown, Professor, SUNY New Paltz, "Confessions of a Tenured Professor":**

Most students are not aware of this whole issue of contingency, so we can start with the students, the student newspaper.

32:18

**Matt Williams, Adjunct, Vice President, New Faculty Majority:**

They buy fair trade coffee, how about fair trade education?

32:22 - 32:27

**Seth Kahn, Associate Professor, West Chester University:** The 4C's have its statement, MLA has its statement, NCTE has its statement and everybody's got their statement about why the treatment of adjunct faculty is unjust. We need to figure out more ethical ways to handle the situation and you know, everybody knows. I don't think there are very many people in our field who don't understand how bad the situation is.

32:45

**Bronwyn Williams, Professor, University of Louisville:** If the larger culture in the culture within the university still thinks when you give them assignments and you correct the grammar and you give it back to them...Why should they pay for it? Right? If they don't really understand what we're doing and why we need to do things like have writing conferences and work through multiple drafts and the amount of time that takes and so forth. If we haven't made the first case we can't make the second case. What we need to do is show them how it's in the interest of the way that they want to think about education to have students who are thoughtful, critical, rhetorical savvy readers and writers and that's what we're doing. It's not just an instrumental kind of transcription that we do when we teach writing, but this is a fundamental, core function of a university in every way.

33:33

**William H. Thelin, Professor, University of Akron:** So, we as compositionists really need to ban together and make a national assault on the media about what good composition instructors should look like.

33:43

**Christopher Dean, Lecturer, UC Santa Barbara:** What I've tried to do and move more towards is sort of action. It's nice to theorize about these things, but at the end of the day I don't think that does a damn thing. We've got like rhetoric over here and we've got this action over here. We bring them together and we've got reaction, baby. I mean, like, whoa.

34:01

**Peter Brown, Professor, SUNY New Paltz:** It came about slowly. A lot of us weren't paying attention and now there's this huge problem and it's going to take a while to rectify it, but I think eventually it will be changed. It's going to take a huge effort, though.

34:16

**Maria Maisto, Adjunct, President, New Faculty Majority:** It is our duty to stand up and to speak out about when there is injustice in the work place in our society and when we refuse to do that out of our own fear then we're actually contributing to the problem.

34:35

**Christopher Dean, Lecturer, UC Santa Barbara:** Until you have a lot of contingent faculty as sort of part of the process, they're going to have their identities made for them by people who don't share the same sort of material conditions.

34:45

**William H. Thelin, Professor, University of Akron:** The first thing that I think adjuncts must do is they have to stop thinking of themselves as these professionals who are privileged, who should be happy they're working in the university because of the luxury or flexibility of the situation. They've got to start thinking of themselves as labor, as the working class of the university.

35:09

**Christopher Dean, Lecturer, UC Santa Barbara:** If we're working people we need a lot of working people and I think that's what we are. Academic workers, but working people nonetheless.

35:17

**William H. Thelin, Professor, University of Akron:** In the history of labor struggles, the workers have had to take action to make things better. I can't think of one labor struggle that was averted because the management said, you know, you guys are just working a lot harder than we're giving you credit for. We need to give you guys raises and better benefits and better work conditions. We're going to get right on that.

35:38

**Cary Nelson, Professor, University of Illinois, President of AAUP:**  
One of the obvious things a union can do is say, no more than x

percentage of courses on this campus will be taught by contingent faculty. You can have that written into a contract, otherwise, what've you got? A hope and prayer of doing that kind of work. I think, actually, unionization has become practically the only way of sustaining instruction as the primary function of the university.

36:06

**Jennifer Lee, Adjunct, English Department:** I pay union dues, but I don't know what I pay them for. My sense is that the full time faculty are much more participatory in the union.

36:20

**Christopher Dean, Lecturer, UC Santa Barbara:** I think the one way that you make your labor matter sometimes to management is you withhold it.

36:25

**Ross Borden, Lecturer, SUNY Cortland:** I wish you could, as a generation, hold the line. You could say I'm not going to accept a position on these terms. It's insulting.

36:35

**Jennifer Lee, Adjunct, English Department:** If all of the adjuncts across the country went on strike, then the colleges would have a very big problem. Everything would shut down.

36:48

**Seth Kahn, Associate Professor, West Chester University:** I want to be able to say, stand up and scream and yell and stomp your feet until people get it, but people get fired for doing that. I want to be able to say organize, unionize, collectivize. You get fired for that.

37:01

**Jennifer Lee, Adjunct, English Department:** If the laborers go out and are the ones to picket, then will they still have a job the next semester?

37:11 - 37:21

**Sue Doe, Assistant Professor, Colorado State University:** Thanks to really some leadership on the part of tenured people, who were willing to stick their necks out...I got involved at sort of a different level. I don't think I would have, frankly, done that independently because I had certainly gotten the message over the years that these were not issues that you challenged because, of course, you were contingent and at any moment could be asked to go.

37:40

**Maria Maisto, Adjunct, President, New Faculty Majority:** I know many, many, many tenured faculty who are absolutely appalled at the working conditions of contingent faculty and are not afraid to say so, but more need to speak out.

37:52

**Christopher Dean, Lecturer, UC Santa Barbara:** We need to be maybe a little more locally focused and actually look around and say, huh, that group of people down the hall, who are they? What are they doing? Maybe I should talk to them for heaven's sake.

38:04

**Seth Kahn, Associate Professor, West Chester University:** There are active ways to support people who need the support and if we are in a position that is yes, privileged with a capital P, enough to be able to do it, then why aren't we? But I don't think a great deal is going to happen until people, like me, who are tenured and promoted, and what have you...are willing to say, no I will not ask for reassigned time for research. I will not ask for reassigned time for parts of my job that don't directly support my department and the faculty in my department because I'm a whole lot more concerned about the people who are working here than I am about whether I get to publish this article in one year or two.

38:43

**Bronwyn Williams, Professor, University of Louisville:** We need to certainly be unified as tenured faculty, but what we need to do is take the game to the people with the money and the people who set the larger policies. That's where things have to change.

38:57 - 39:04

**William H. Thelin, Professor, University of Akron:** If people were to engage in collective action, which is actually just individually asking out of contracts, they can get more salary. I know if I were the WPA and I had that happen to me, I'd be screaming at my dean, I'd be resigning from my position. I'd be saying, no, I can't do this. You need to find some money and you need to find it now so that we can hire back these people who are dependable, who do their job as well as they possibly can and perhaps, if we pay them better, they can do their job even better.

39:26

**Bronwyn Williams, Professor, University of Louisville:** But when I think about my work as director of a composition program, my number one goal was to raise pay for the adjuncts--a goal at which I failed miserably. It's like being the manager of a restaurant. You don't own the restaurant, you can't set the menu, you can't set the pay rate for the waiters, all you can do is run the day-to-day operations. It's middle management and middle management is almost always and very often justifiably unpopular for those very reasons...because you're carrying out the orders of people you often disagree with and exploiting people with whom you may have a lot more sympathy and feel you have more in common, but you can't really do anything for them.

40:12

**Christopher Dean, Lecturer, UC Santa Barbara:** The people at the higher levels of university systems...you want to make them a little bit ashamed even--that they are trying to sort of exploit a class of



people. And sort of not talking about it, not making public, just allows it to keep on going as it is.

40:33

**Bronwyn Williams, Professor, University of Louisville:** The contingent problem is a problem of gender. It's a class problem, but it's also incredibly a problem of gender. If we don't attack it as such...and I think that's another political statement we could be making to departments. I think it's another political statement we could be making to presidents, to boards of trustees...to say, you have a huge gender inequity here.

40:58

**Mike Palmquist, Associate Vice Provost of Learning and Teaching, Colorado State University:** But here's the issue: we've got very bright people in contingent positions, who have not seen a pay raise in a while, who are likely to start organizing, unless the university does something to show that they care, and are concerned about their positions. What are we going to do? Are we going to wait until this blows up? Are we going to start putting people into longer-term positions? Are we going to start increasing salaries? And the answer actually has been at my institution to put people in longer-term positions and start raising salaries. They're not at a level that's adequate yet, but it's better.

41:35

**Bronwyn Williams, Professor, University of Louisville:** I may continue to agitate for a lot of things at different levels, but there's also the case of what you can try to achieve and what you can get. I'm sure there are other people you're talking to who will say this is the wrong tactic, but at some level I'm pragmatic about it. What can we get now?

41:54

**William H. Thelin, Professor, University of Akron:** If you can put some more bucks into each adjunct's pocket, that could be done tomorrow. There's money on those campuses. You can't tell me the football stadium, or reconstructing it, or putting more seats in it is more important than paying the people teaching.

[42:10](#)

**Sue Doe, Assistant Professor, Colorado State University:**

Renewable contracts have been a strategy that many colleges and universities have undertaken. Certainly we can go back to Wyoming and the idea of the humane lectureship...the idea that with some degree of continuity, that people could at least enjoy the sense of job security, if not the reality of it. While that hasn't been entirely successful, it certainly offers something more than the semester-by-semester contract or the year-by-year contract, which still remains a very common practice.

[42:48](#)

**Maria Maisto, President, New Faculty Majority:** Providing some sense, some job security, continuing contracts.

[42:53](#)

**Seth Kahn, Associate Professor, West Chester University:**

Offering longer-term contracts.

[42:55](#)

**Mike Palmquist, Associate Vice Provost of Learning and**

**Teaching, Colorado State University:** I think the most likely solution is going to be specialized positions. We haven't been successful in higher ed for arguing for more tenure lines and with the economic situation the way it is, it's likely that we'll continue to be put off on that for a number of years. So, I think we need to look at alternatives that sort of debunk this notion of the two-tier system and say we have about a twenty-five-tier system.

[43:19 - 43:27](#)

**Bronwyn Williams, Professor, University of Louisville:** There are a lot of places now that have been able to turn most of their positions into term positions. Term positions meaning, the terminology varies, but by that I mean not tenure track, but full time with benefits, and so forth. I think that places like, you know, Doug Hesse, what he said at the University of Denver, has really been amazing and I think those are really good jobs.

[43:42](#)

**Sue Doe, Assistant Professor, Colorado State University:** Places like Penn State and Duke have something called the professor of practice, which is a very interesting idea. These are non-tenure track positions, but they carry rank and they have a degree of sort of credibility and distinction associated with them. They're legitimate positions. They're term positions.

[44:04](#)

**Marc Bousquet, Associate Professor, Santa Clara University:** If you look at what's happened with the ameliorative strategies over the past thirty or forty years, what you've seen is a massive growth in full time, non-tenure track, teaching only appointments. That represents nearly twenty percent of the academic workforce, which is to say, roughly the same number of people who are tenured. If you wanted to double, double overnight the percentage of faculty who are in the tenure steam, one strategy would be to move all of those people into teaching intensive tenure track appointments for a relatively modest cost over what they're being paid right now.

[44:42](#)

**Bob Samuels, Lecturer, UCLA, President, University Council–AFT:** I think the federal government, which provides so much financial aid, and pell grants, and different type of funding...should have a certain kind of requirement that seventy five percent of the

faculty are full time. There should be some effort by the federal government to involve themselves in this.

44:59

**Mike Palmquist, Associate Vice Provost of Learning and Teaching, Colorado State University:** We need to get our professional organizations even more involved in this. They need to be doing some research on what are the effects of long term, of the long-term growth of non-tenure line positions. What are we giving up by not putting people into positions that are secure? That allow them to grow as teachers? To allow them to contribute to the life of the department. I think that's one of the issues we really ought to be looking at.

45:21

**Christopher Dean, Lecturer, UC Santa Barbara:** Universities can change and sort of tack in the same way that oil tankers can. It's a very slow process, but if we start turning the wheel now, eventually the ship will turn.

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MUSIC

48:12

And if you would organize and start to walk, I won't hire anybody. What's the worst they could do? Make me not be comp director anymore? Wouldn't that be sad?

48:22

As, you know, the great southern comic says, let's get 'er done. Let's start doing something.

48:28

I have two polar extremes of creating writing assignments, then I try to find some middle ground. One extreme is to have a very vague writing assignment and then I'll do something very specific that comes out of a reading and students hate both.

48:43

I picked up the evaluations and the first one on the top of the 105 said, big, bold handwriting, "this class sucked" and I thought, oh, wow, and so then...the person wrote down why he or she thought the class sucked. So, I looked at the others and they were fine and so forth, but I thought about this and then I tried to decipher the handwriting and said, now who was that?

49:12

I am at Louisville's... Rick Pitino, is the basketball coach. He's been there eight years. I don't think I've ever heard him say the word education once. Put that in.

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