

Michelle Massé, English, Louisiana State University

Candidate Biography

Education: Anna Maria College, B.A.; Brown University, Ph.D. in English

University Jobs: George Mason University, Assistant Professor, 1981-85; Louisiana State University, Assistant Professor 1985-1992; Associate, 1992-2001; Full, 2001-

When I first joined AAUP, the dues seemed like a lot of money. My working-class background made me keenly aware of the importance of shared governance and equity; being a female graduate student during the first Title VII lawsuits honed that knowledge. Paradoxically, arriving at a large Southern university with a very small AAUP chapter underscored the importance of continued membership. AAUP defined "the profession" for me, and made it the obvious source for data and best-practice information.

As the first woman hired for expertise in women's and gender studies, I quickly started getting calls asking what *I* was "going to do" about violations of faculty rights. AAUP's reports helped me to find answers then, and they still do. As Founding Director of Women's and Gender Studies during those same years, AAUP's models helped me and others to set up a unit built upon shared governance, fair policies, and guidelines that weren't the norm for the university at large.

I learned more about administration because of my belief that policy changes are the most effective way to assure open governance, fair personnel practices, and equitable guidelines for men and women on a campus.

This belief in the importance of structural change at university and national levels, as well as in enacting theory through administrative praxis, has led me to serve on--and often to organize or chair--myriad committees, task forces, and commissions that support AAUP-related goals, both on campus and at the national level, most conspicuously in my work for the Modern Language Association. I can think of no place where I would rather continue that work than the AAUP Council.

Candidate Statement

I've found that my understanding of what my job is, as well as my understanding of the holy trinity of teaching, research, and service have become increasingly complicated over time. In *In the Name of Love: Women, Masochism, and the Gothic*, I argued that ideology persuades women to yield voice, autonomy, and agency for the chimerical promise of a love that makes sacrifices worthwhile, and that not getting the glass slipper is our fault, not the system's.

I think that we're playing a similar skill game in academia, in which we're getting the boot, not the slipper, the pink slip and not the contract. And yet we're still drawn by the fantasy that if we're smart, persistent, and committed enough, we'll succeed. Our training as disembodied rolling cerebrums can turn our best energies against ourselves rather than against employers.

A recent collection I co-edited, *Over Ten Million Served: Gendered Service in Language and Literature Workplace*, examined how we can become accomplices in our own devaluation, "feminized" by a academic culture in which our work can be dismissed as "caregiving," freely given off the clock. My publications and

presentations increasingly focus upon our internalization of academe's strictures, our role in replicating them for graduate students, and the compelling need to understand ourselves as workers who must organize.

Dealing with the devastating impact of hurricanes Katrina and Rita in Louisiana through AAUP was painful. The impact of hundreds letters of termination having been issued in the last year on my campus alone to NTT faculty is far more difficult when the reasons for the destruction, the extent of the damage, and the route to reconstruction are so much less clear. Cary Nelson has written about how Louisiana's new disaster, the BP oil spill, impinges upon academic freedom. Yet I strongly believe that Louisiana is not unique but instead a symptom for the rest of the country. By serving on the AAUP Council, I want to help clean up the toxic waste that threatens to poison academia for generations to come.

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AAUP member status: active