

Speech police
shut down satirical event | 2

College drops investigation
after FIRE pushes back | 4

Exodus from Egypt:
Censorship at American University in Cairo | 5

FIRE QUARTERLY

FALL 2019

FIRE turns 20!

Sir Salman Rushdie headlines 20th
anniversary gala | 6

CALLING ALL ATTORNEYS!

Join FIRE's Legal Network to defend
student and faculty rights | 11



Speech police shut down satirical event in Illinois

More than 16 years after Western Illinois University announced it was “immediately” eliminating its free speech zone, students are still feeling the bite of a zombie policy — one the university declared dead long ago but still lives on in university speech codes.

FIRE called on WIU to get its policies in order, ensure that its campus police know they can’t enforce a long-dead policy, and put a stake through the heart of this speech code once and for all.



“WIU was ahead of the pack in 2003 when they said they’d eliminate their unconstitutional free speech zone,” said Adam Steinbaugh, director of FIRE’s Individual Rights Defense Program. “Now it’s time they put their laudable words into action — by finally removing the restrictions that still stifle student expression today.”

Earlier this year, student Dylan Crowl and other members of the student group Young Americans for Liberty gathered in an open area of campus to discuss their views on the decriminalization and legalization of marijuana, which the Illinois legislature was debating at the time. They also held out a sign promoting “Free ‘Pot’ Brownies” — a metal pot full of brownies (sans marijuana, as the use of quotation marks made obvious).

Within minutes, the students were stopped by two members of WIU police, who told Crowl that the officers were “going to give [him] an education” on the repercussions of bringing marijuana to campus. At least one of the officers noted his personal disagreement with the positions advocated by the students and

On that note...

In late October, FIRE hosted a regional conference in Chicago for over 40 students from colleges across the country. The conference focused on how the First Amendment relates to student journalism. Mike Masnick, founder and editor of the popular blog Techdirt, as well as the founder of Silicon Valley think tank The Copia Institute, delivered the keynote address exploring defamation, anti-SLAPP laws, and the importance of knowing your rights as a student journalist.



asked them to remove the word “pot” from the sign. Crowl refused.

The officers further explained that the students were “outside of the free speech zone.” For that reason, literal speech police shut down the event.

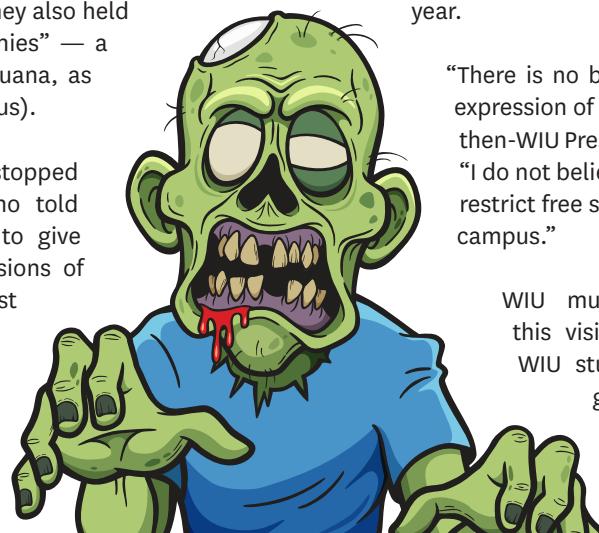
“I was four when this policy was supposedly eliminated, but the unconstitutional free speech zone somehow still lives on,” said Crowl, who has been trying to meet with administrators since February to address the lingering speech code. **“It shouldn’t take 16 years for a college to live up to its promises and obligations to protect free speech.”**

As a public institution, WIU is bound by the First Amendment, and its continued use of a free speech zone is unconstitutional. Further, police intervention over a “free ‘pot’ brownies” event violates students’ First Amendment right to engage in political expression.

FIRE contacted WIU regarding the continued use of a free speech zone. WIU responded that it would remove the policy from its website “as soon as possible.” However, as students returned to class in August, the policy remained — and students can still be punished by a policy that remains published online and referenced as recently as this year.

“There is no better place for free and open expression of ideas than a public university,” then-WIU President Al Goldfarb said in 2003. “I do not believe that we would ever want to restrict free speech to a specific area on the campus.”

WIU must immediately live up to this vision that has been denied to WIU students for more than half a generation.





Police said he should've been 'smarter' than to exercise his free speech rights. Now he's suing.

When Mike Brown tried to poll his fellow college students about legalizing marijuana, he hoped to spark a dialogue about civil liberties. Instead, he was deprived of his own: The campus police chief hauled him into his office and told him he should've been "smarter" than to exercise his First Amendment rights without the college's permission.

With FIRE, Brown sued Jones County Junior College in September over policies that deny students their First Amendment rights.

The public Mississippi institution twice stopped Brown from exercising his free speech rights when he tried to recruit fellow students for a campus chapter of Young Americans for Liberty.

In April, Brown, accompanied by two others, held up a sign designed to poll students on the legalization of recreational marijuana. But a Jones College administrator quickly summoned campus police because the group hadn't filled out the proper paperwork — which requires administrative approval a minimum of three days before "gathering for any purpose" anywhere on campus.

Brown and another student were taken to the police chief's office while their friend, a non-student, was escorted to his car and told to leave immediately and not return, or he'd face arrest. Back in the chief's office, the police chief told Brown he should have known better than to blatantly exercise his free speech rights on campus without administrative approval.

"Some people get in trouble for smoking weed, but at Jones College, I got in trouble just for trying to talk about it," said Brown. "College is for cultivating thought and learning and encouraging civil discourse with your peers. That's not what's happening at Jones College."

This wasn't Brown's first experience having his First Amendment

rights threatened at Jones College. In February, Brown and a friend set up a "free speech ball," an inflatable beach ball on which students could write messages of their choice while YAL representatives talked to them about the importance of free speech. An administrator informed them that they were not permitted on campus since they didn't have Jones College's explicit approval and called campus police to come put a stop to their speech.

Brown was deflated, and so was his beach ball.

"Students shouldn't have to seek permission — then wait three or more days — before they can exercise their First Amendment rights," said Marieke Tuthill Beck-Coon, FIRE's director of litigation. "If a ball threatens the administration so much that they call campus police, no speech is safe at Jones College."

FIRE wrote to Jones College President Jesse Smith on May 16, offering assistance with bringing the college's unconstitutional policies into compliance with the First Amendment. Smith failed to respond.

Public colleges like Jones College may put in place reasonable restrictions on student expression, but they cannot maintain blanket restrictions on all student speech. Brown's lawsuit calls on Jones College to immediately revise its unconstitutional speech policies so the thousands of students attending the college can reclaim their First Amendment rights.

On that note...

While Jones County Junior College fumbles, universities across the state are working to earn FIRE's highest speech code rating, held by only 51 colleges nationwide. Students at five institutions in Mississippi enjoy FIRE's "green light" rating. Mississippi is now home to more green light schools than any other state except North Carolina.



350,000

The number of students who've been helped by FIRE's ongoing Million Voices Campaign, which aims to strike down unconstitutional speech codes nationwide.

College drops investigation of professor after FIRE pushes back

Academic freedom at The New School? Expect a fight if you quote an iconic black writer.

Author James Baldwin wrote that Americans need to conduct an “unflinching assessment of the record” in reckoning with the nation’s racial past. But when a professor used Baldwin’s writing to do just that, her university launched a racial discrimination investigation against her.

In August, FIRE called on The New School to stand by its laudable but broken “legacy of academic freedom, tolerance, and free intellectual exchange” by immediately dropping its investigation of professor Laurie Sheck. The school relented the following week.

Sheck, a poet and novelist who is white, teaches a graduate course on “radical questioning” in writing. The course includes works by prominent African-American writers that examine racial discrimination, and Sheck prefaces her course with a warning that active engagement with literature involves a sense of unease and unsettlement.

Early in the semester, Sheck assigned “The Creative Process,” a 1962 essay in which Baldwin argues that Americans have “modified or suppressed and lied about all the darker forces in our history” and must commit to “a long look backward whence we came and an unflinching assessment of the record.” In her graduate seminar, classroom discussion involved Baldwin’s statement, “I am not your nigger,” and Sheck noted how the title of an Oscar-nominated 2016 documentary, “I Am Not Your Negro,” alters Baldwin’s words. She asked her students what this change may reveal about Americans’ ability to reckon with what Baldwin identified as “the darker forces of history.”

Months later, Sheck was summoned to a mandatory meeting with The New School’s director of labor relations due to “student complaints made under the University’s discrimination policy.”



“We increasingly live in a culture of intimidation, name-calling, and a disrespect for and misunderstanding of genuine intellectual curiosity and striving.”

Laurie Sheck

She was not provided with any details about her allegedly-discriminatory conduct.

“We increasingly live in a culture of intimidation, name-calling, and a disrespect for and misunderstanding of genuine intellectual curiosity and striving,” Sheck said. “On this 100th anniversary of its founding, it is chilling to see The New School lean in this direction rather than stand bravely and with great integrity against it.”

As FIRE noted in its letter to The New School, Sheck’s quotation of Baldwin does not violate the university’s racial discrimination policy. Further, The New School’s policies make clear it will not punish speech protected by the First Amendment and basic tenets of academic freedom. In a one-paragraph response to FIRE’s letter, the school said it does not discuss personnel matters.

FIRE then made the case in the media. Following coverage from the BBC, Inside Higher Ed, The Washington Times, The Guardian, Reason, and others, the school backed down and dropped its investigation. Sheck herself penned an op-ed for USA Today.

“If I have a hope for what can come out of this, it is for a university community that seeks to open itself in the deepest and most informed of ways to the exchange and contemplation of ideas about which there is genuine urgency and concern but not consensus,” said Sheck. **“It is crucial that the right to do this be protected.”**

Exodus from Egypt

Professor flees country after censorship, intimidation at the American University in Cairo

Professor Adam Duker puts his faith in faith.

Specifically, the transformative power of teaching world religions to students who've never been exposed to them.

Hired in 2016 as the endowed Abdulhabib H. Taher Chair of Comparative Religions at the American University in Cairo, Egypt, Duker had the unique task of building the first religious studies program of its kind in the Islamic world — one dedicated to exploring all faiths.

That's no small feat at AUC — even though its students are some of the most elite in Egypt.

Duker's classes tackle a much broader range of faith-related issues than his majority Muslim students are used to. Educated predominately in Egypt's religiously-segregated K-12 classrooms, and in a country where converting from Islam or proselytizing for other religions is prohibited, students say Duker's classes were nothing short of a revelation.

"Outside of my Comparative Religions classes, it is extremely rare in Egyptian society for Muslims and Christians to explore and debate commonalities and differences in a free, safe, and open setting," Duker said.

But Duker's faith in AUC to help him meet that challenge was misplaced.

After nearly three years unsuccessfully battling both the university and the family of an influential donor over control of his course content, Duker left AUC this spring. He also fled Egypt altogether, citing concerns for his life, after he was seized by a group of men with machine guns during a class field trip. Duker thinks they were Egyptian state security agents. And while he can't confirm it, he suspects an AUC administrator — among the very

few who knew his whereabouts that day — may have tipped those agents off.

This summer, FIRE wrote the university about its treatment of Duker. AUC's response did not challenge the factual allegations in FIRE's letter, but failed to admit any wrongdoing either.

Duker's case at AUC highlights a growing problem FIRE has documented facing students and faculty at a number of American-affiliated or accredited institutions. They promise American-style freedoms, but — set in significantly unfree countries like Egypt — can't deliver.

AUC is incorporated in the U.S., has a New York office, and is accredited by the Middle States Commission on Higher Education. MSCHE requires a commitment to academic freedom, intellectual freedom, and freedom of expression. In its policies, AUC agrees to provide students and faculty all of those freedoms. But that's not the reality.

'NOT DOING ENOUGH TO PROMOTE ISLAM'

Concerns over the fate of Duker's chair began in January 2017, when he was asked by AUC administrators to meet with Tarek Taher — the son of the late Abdulhadi H. Taher, the namesake of Duker's professorship — at his Malibu mansion. Taher was concerned Duker was not doing enough to promote Islam in his classes. He also complained Duker was using a disfavored translation of the Quran, and that the professor had students interact with Jews. He asked to pre-approve all of Duker's lectures.

Duker refused to cede control over his lectures and syllabus, but felt the meeting ended amicably. Yet, that summer, Duker received an unexpected notice from the provost informing him his position had been canceled at Taher's behest.

Story continues on pg. 10



FIRE turns 20!

A snapshot of FIRE's 20th anniversary gala with Sir Salman Rushdie

Hundreds of FIRE's closest allies gathered

Oct. 24 at New York City's Mandarin Oriental Hotel to commemorate FIRE's 20th anniversary. During his remarks to the gathering, FIRE co-founder Harvey Silvergate noted that he was careful to call the event a "commemoration," not a "celebration," for a very particular reason.

When Harvey co-founded FIRE in 1999 with then-University of Pennsylvania Professor Alan Charles Kors, he predicted FIRE's life to be 10 years: "The maximum time, surely, that would be needed to solve the free speech and due process problem on campus." The violations of student and faculty rights were so absurd, he thought, that once exposed, most would disappear and FIRE's assistance would no longer be necessary.

Not so, unfortunately.

Today, the threats to these core American values are just as pernicious as they were in 1999. Since then, FIRE has secured over 650 victories at almost 370 colleges and universities with a combined enrollment of 7.7 million students. In that sense, the evening was bittersweet: an opportunity to reflect on the victories while reminding ourselves of the challenges ahead.

The evening featured a keynote address about the importance of free expression from famed author Sir Salman Rushdie, an

artist whose 1988 novel, "The Satanic Verses," put a bounty on his head and sent him into hiding for years.

"Before the 'thing' happened to 'The Satanic Verses,' I was always kind of in favor of free speech but I'd never really thought there was any point in making a big fuss about it," said Rushdie. "Why would you make a fuss about the importance of having air to breathe if you have air to breathe? What happened to me back in 1989 was the sudden feeling that somebody was trying to turn off the air supply."

Brooklyn College professor KC Johnson discussed his 2001 case involving his college's efforts to fire him for not being sufficiently "collegial." FIRE helped him and, ultimately, he ended up getting tenure. But, he quipped, since then, he's been "something of a regular customer of FIRE." Former Congressman and House Judiciary Chairman Bob Goodlatte described FIRE as "one of those rare organizations that truly understands just how critical it is to work with people across party lines — and keep the conversation going."

Attendees also heard from some of the students FIRE has represented, including Kevin Shaw, who sued Pierce College with the help of FIRE after administrators told him he couldn't hand out copies of the U.S. Constitution outside the campus' free speech zone.

"Thanks to FIRE," he said, "the entire campus of Pierce College, and all the other campuses in



APRIL 1999

Following the publication of their book, *The Shadow University*, Alan Charles Kors and Harvey Silvergate founded FIRE to defend individual rights and promote civil liberties on campus.



NOVEMBER 2001

In the wake of September 11, FIRE tackled a number of cases revolving around the national conversation over terrorism. That included an infamous case at Central Michigan University, where students were told to remove American flags from their dormitory doors because they could be "offensive."



2017

In March 2017, FIRE launched our in-house litigation program, the Million Voices Campaign.

TODAY

FIRE has won a total of 23 litigation victories.

JUNE 2003

Legal Network members filed suit against Citrus College challenging policies that had quarantined free speech to small and remote parts of campus. That same year, winning suits were also filed against Shippensburg University and Texas Tech University.

the Los Angeles Community College District, are now ‘free speech zones.’”

FIRE’s two longest-serving employees, President and CEO Greg Lukianoff and Executive Director Robert Shibley, rounded out the evening by addressing the challenges that remain ahead. “While FIRE has made amazing progress ... the censors’ ambitions have grown,” said Robert. “Having flexed their muscles in the world of academia, they have begun to squeeze our society in the same way.” This is why advocates for free expression need to inculcate and defend “a culture of free speech,” said Greg.

After all, to echo Alan Charles Kors, **“A nation that does not educate in liberty will not long preserve it and will not even know when it is lost.”**



Karith Foster, Emcee of the Evening



Michelle and Darrah Parker | Zach Wood



Jeffrey Wyant



Marvin Lesser | Wayne Olson



Jonathan Rauch, Special Guest Speaker

JANUARY 2005

We released our flagship publication, FIRE’s Guide to Free Speech on Campus. The backbone of a five-book series of Guides to Student Rights on Campus, the guidebook has become a staple of FIRE’s educational materials. More than 300,000 copies have been distributed nationally.



2018

In order to support faculty members who are committed to campus reform, we launched our FIRE Faculty Network in 2018 and have hosted three successful conferences.

APRIL 2007

FIRE launched the Campus Freedom Network, a coalition of students committed to promoting free expression and individual rights on campus. Just a year later, the Network hosted its first summer conference, bringing nearly 50 students to downtown Philadelphia for workshops and networking.



In 2008, FIRE had 16 employees and a \$2M budget.

TODAY

Now known as the FIRE Student Network (FSN), the program hosts three conferences every year and offers more than 40 resources on its webpage.



2017

In 2017, we launched the Student Defenders program, which trains students to become peer judicial advocates. The program now boasts established chapters with strong connections to FIRE at 12 schools nationwide, with eight more schools close behind!



Thank you!

A message from FIRE President and CEO Greg Lukianoff

To that end, for most of our history, FIRE has taken up the strenuous work of evaluating the speech codes at the top 450 schools in the country to demonstrate how many of them have unconstitutional policies. One of our most successful programs, FIRE's speech code database, has helped reduce the share of campuses that maintain blatantly unconstitutional or restrictive speech codes from 75% to 28%.



"There is no free speech problem on campus."

"Campus speech codes died years ago."

"Free speech on campus is just a partisan concern."

These arguments were common when I started at FIRE back in 2001. As we celebrate our 20th anniversary, I almost never hear someone argue that there is no free speech problem on campus.

That is because FIRE changed the conversation. And how did we do it? Through the difficult, patient, fastidious work of fighting for individual students' and professors' rights while painstakingly documenting incidents of abuse. Before FIRE, many of the abuses of individual rights on campus were hazy anecdotes; what we offered was real-life evidence.

While people who wanted to believe there was no campus free speech problem could dismiss dozens of cases and codes as "outliers," as FIRE racked up years of work and hundreds of examples, that became harder to do. And then, once we got into thousands of well-documented cases and codes, those still determined to deny that there was a problem sometimes decided to dismiss the validity of examples altogether. They argued instead that only "hard data" would convince them.

Recently, FIRE also commissioned its own surveys of campus attitudes about free speech, which have provided even more data and are now cited by advocates, scholars, and critics across the country.

So what do you do when you have the stories and you have the data? You work tirelessly to show the public what you know. We've done this by persistently making our argument in media outlets from MSNBC and Fox News to The Huffington Post and National Review, and, for example, in a popular and ahead-of-its-time documentary about the threat posed to comedy by what is now called "cancel culture," and also in one New York Times best-seller.

This media coverage has helped FIRE to show the faces of those hurt by censorship and the widespread policies enabling it, and to paint a nuanced picture of what is really happening on campus. Through our principled and consistent hard work, we've demonstrated that people across the political spectrum are harmed when free speech is not protected. I'm proud to say: We have been able to change hearts and minds.

2015

In August 2015, spurred by FIRE, Congressman Bob Goodlatte wrote to public colleges and universities that received FIRE's "red light" rating for speech codes, urging them to bring their policies into line with their First Amendment obligations. Since then, the percentage of such institutions has fallen by more than 25 points.

MAY 2014

FIRE released a formal report on the phenomenon known as "disinvitation season" on campus, which showed the number of these incidents had skyrocketed.

JANUARY 2015

FIRE endorsed the free speech policy statement produced by the Committee on Freedom of Expression at the University of Chicago. The "Chicago Statement" has become a gold standard and ideal rallying point for campus free expression.

MAY 2011

FIRE wrote an open letter to the Department of Education in response to their April "Dear Colleague" letter, which had instituted a series of new federal guidelines that seriously jeopardized due process rights on campus. That letter was just the first step of our then-newly-established Legislative and Policy Project, which has gone on to become an integral component of our advocacy.

OCTOBER 2012

FIRE President and CEO Greg Lukianoff published his first book, *Unlearning Liberty: Campus Censorship and the End of American Debate*. The book earned critical acclaim and helped draw even greater attention to FIRE's work.

JULY 2015

FIRE helped Missouri become the first state to pass our Campus Free Expression Act (CAFE), which creates "no speech zones" at all public and universities in the state.

FIRE celebrates 15 years!



FIRE has done great things in 20 years, but today's threats to free speech on campus point to problems beyond campus. Increasingly, it is falling to FIRE to be the organization that teaches people, both young and old, about the deep philosophy behind freedom of speech, academic freedom, and due process.

We still need to do the critical work that has made us so effective up to this point, but each new year requires us to be more creative, ambitious, and resolute.

It's a massive and growing undertaking, and it's only possible thanks to our spectacular staff and, crucially, the support of donors and allies all across the country. Without you, our work never could have gotten off the ground in the first place. Thank you for helping so many students and professors whose stories never would have been told without FIRE, and thank you for helping us protect freedom of speech so that it remains intact for generations to come.



TODAY

Since FIRE first began promoting the Chicago Statement, nearly 70 institutions have endorsed a version of it.

TODAY

more states have passed similar campus free speech legislation.

JANUARY 2017

i to become the
r Campus Free
(E), prohibiting
strictive "free
public colleges
ne state.

FIRE launched our SOAR Project, made possible by a \$2.5 million grant from the John Templeton Foundation. The ambitious three-year project conducted polling on campus attitudes, engaged in legal and social science research, and coordinated outreach to high school, faculty, and alumni constituents.



2019

The SOAR Project's high school initiative was launched as a stand-alone project in 2019. This High School Network offers a curriculum package, essay contest, comic book, and more.

In 2019, FIRE has 48 employees and a \$10M budget.



SEPTEMBER 2018

Greg Lukianoff published his second book. Co-written with renowned social psychologist Jonathan Haidt, *The Coddling of the American Mind* examined the new "safety culture." The book was a *New York Times* bestseller and prompted widespread national discussion.



'INFIDEL COFFEE'

By Duker's own account, and those of his former students, his pedagogical choices — when free from administrative meddling — were wildly successful. In a region where religious tensions are high, even discussing other religions in beneficial terms can be considered blasphemous.

"By spending a semester actually engaging in these big ideas," Duker said, "I've seen students who wouldn't shake a non-Muslim hand come up and give them hugs at the end of the semester."

Duker had a similar experience himself, with a Hijabi student who came to his office during his first days at AUC.

“I’ve seen students who wouldn’t shake a non-Muslim hand come up and give them hugs at the end of the semester.”

Adam Duker

"She told me she wouldn't shake my hand because she assumed I was an infidel," Duker said. She even turned down his offer to make her a cup of coffee.

"She said that, no, she wouldn't drink my 'infidel coffee,'" even after, Duker says, "I explained to her that coffee is neither faithful nor unfaithful. It's just coffee."

However, something about their interaction that day seemed to have affected her. Duker said she became one of his best students.

Toward the end of the semester, she went to check on her grade in Duker's office and greeted Duker with "one of these sort of awkward half hugs," he remembered.

Then she asked for a cup of coffee.

"That episode will always stick out in my mind because over the course of the semester, by learning about Jews and Christians and other sorts of people, she came to be able to interact with me, someone who she assumed was an infidel originally, on a more human level."

'THEY KNEW WHERE I LIVED...'

Duker's troubles at AUC came to a head in November 2018 during a field trip to Cairo houses of worship. He was

detained in a synagogue by about 20 men with machine guns, accompanied by several Hijabi women claiming to be from the Ministry of Antiquities. Duker believes they were state security agents.

"They [said they] just happened to be passing by and they thought I was doing something wrong. But at the same time, they knew my name, they knew about the Tahers, they knew my wife's name, and they knew I recently had a son," Duker said. "They knew his name. They knew my phone number. They knew where I lived."

Though Duker said he received permission in advance from both AUC and local Jewish leaders to visit the synagogue, the agents insisted he was there illegally. One asked Duker to go with him to an "interrogation room."

"We're going to let you go," Duker recalls the man saying, "but first, we just need to have a quick little conversation with you away from your students."

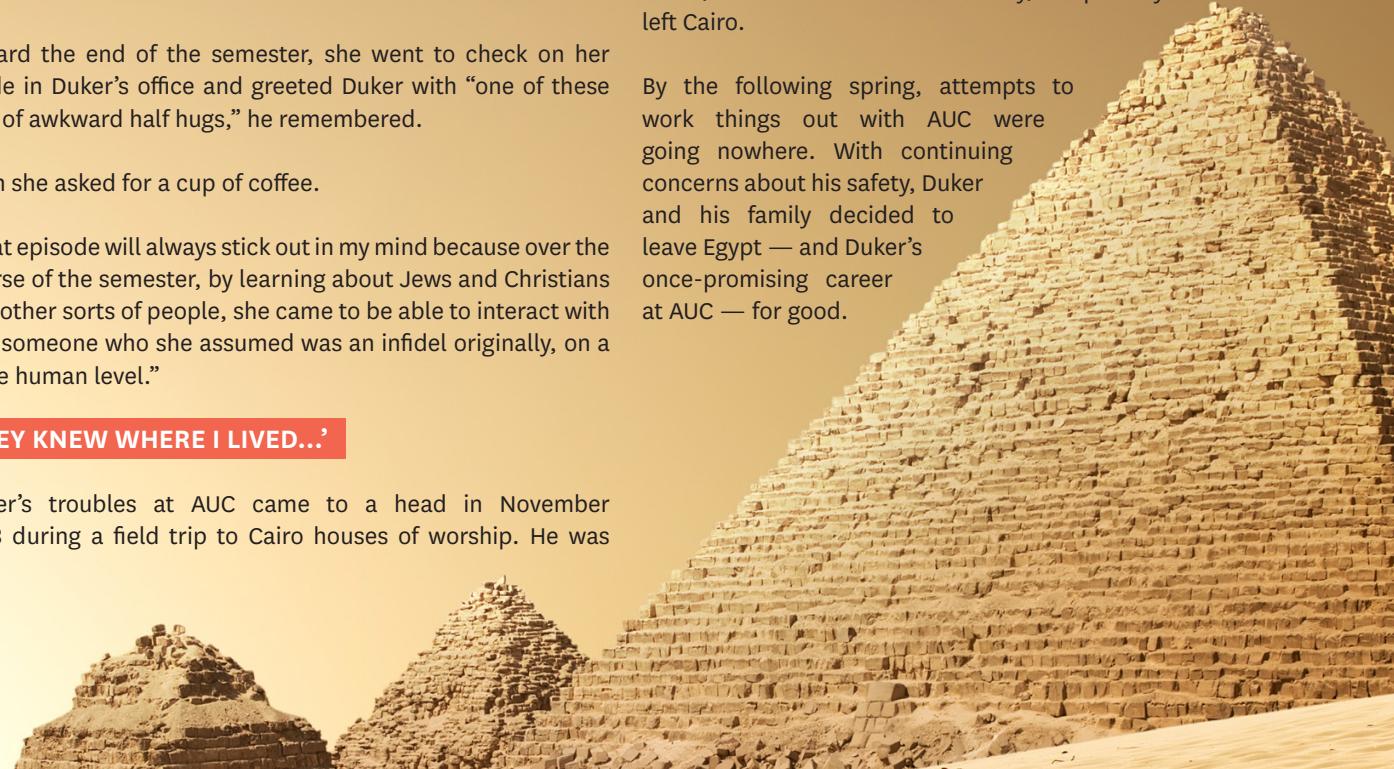
Duker refused and told his students to go to a nearby cafe to wait for him. Several larger male students refused to leave his side, convincing the armed guards they could help translate Arabic for Duker.

Ultimately, it was those students, and the ones at the cafe, who Duker says were his heroes that day. While the incident was unfolding, the students at the cafe contacted AUC, as well as Duker's lawyer and some of Duker's contacts at the U.S. Embassy and the U.S. State Department.

After those influential calls came in — and after 45 terrifying minutes — Duker was released.

Duker, on the advice of his attorney, temporarily left Cairo.

By the following spring, attempts to work things out with AUC were going nowhere. With continuing concerns about his safety, Duker and his family decided to leave Egypt — and Duker's once-promising career at AUC — for good.



'UNRESOLVED TENSIONS'

Duker says he is not just concerned for the tenuous state of his once tenure-track career, but for the fate of his former students. They're left, he says, without a permanent professor to teach in a critical field at a juncture when international political discourse is growing even more unproductive.

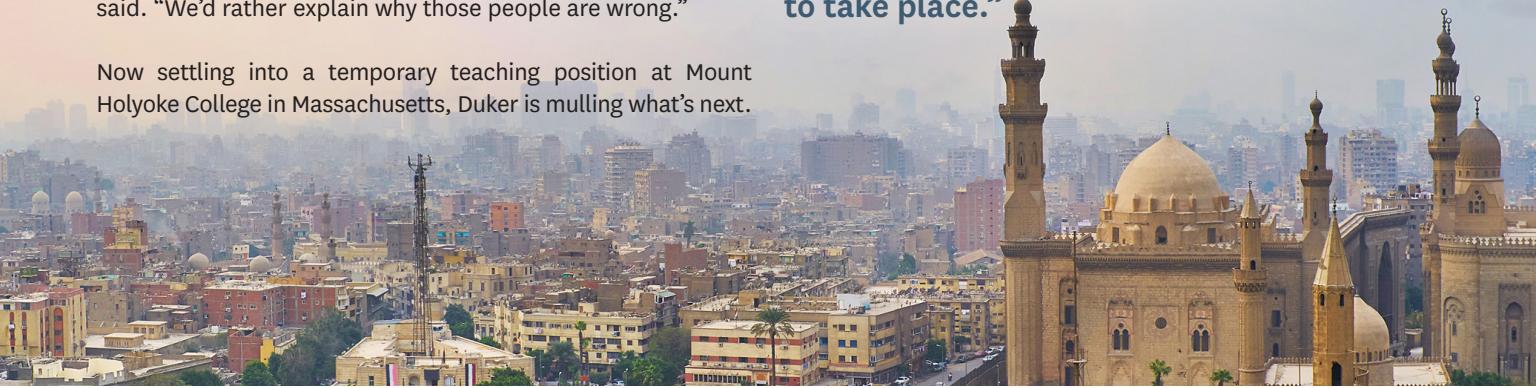
"I think a large segment of our society has lost faith in dialogue and understanding what other people believe by actually sitting down and listening to them speak, to listen to their voices, to understand people on their terms, to walk a mile in their political, social, ethical, environmental shoes," Duker said. "We'd rather explain why those people are wrong."

Now settling into a temporary teaching position at Mount Holyoke College in Massachusetts, Duker is mulling what's next.

He'd like compensation from AUC, an apology, and a restoration of the comparative religions endowed chair — even without him at the helm. All he asks is that it be free from meddling by donors or administrators who would seek to control pedagogical choices.

"The trauma caused by AUC's sustained campaign against me didn't just go away as soon as the plane lifted off from Cairo airport," he said. "It is a long process."

"But for any closure to be reached," Duker said, "there's still an accounting that needs to take place."



Calling all attorneys!

Join FIRE's Legal Network to defend student and faculty rights

Two decades after its founding, FIRE receives about 1,000 case submissions a year. While FIRE has helped secure free speech and due process rights for students and faculty nationwide, we are not winning these victories alone. The FIRE Legal Network is a nationwide group of attorneys who partner with FIRE in its litigation efforts or take on clients referred by FIRE for cases that require special expertise or additional resources.

"FIRE Legal Network members are our greatest partners in challenging unconstitutional speech codes in court," said FIRE Director of Litigation Marieke Tuthill Beck-Coon. "Colleges and universities can't ignore FIRE's lawsuits, and our growing list of successes serves as a reminder to schools across the country that they need to respect student and faculty rights."

Aiming to connect with more attorneys who share the Legal Network members' talent and commitment to student and faculty rights, FIRE relaunched its Legal Network program this year, offering additional resources like legal news updates, conference calls, and networking opportunities.

FIRE Legal Network attorneys are behind some of FIRE's most epic cases and landmark victories. In 2015, Valdosta State University agreed to pay \$900,000 to settle a lawsuit brought by former student Hayden Barnes, who was expelled without a hearing for a collage he posted to Facebook protesting a campus building project. That lawsuit was coordinated by FIRE and led by Legal Network member Robert Corn-Revere of Davis Wright Tremaine. In 2017, Legal Network member Arthur Willner of Leader Berkon Colao & Silverstein LLP joined with FIRE attorneys and student Kevin Shaw to challenge the minuscule "free speech zone" at Los Angeles Pierce College.

The community college district agreed to revise several speech-restrictive policies and pay \$225,000 in attorneys' fees last year after a ruling in Shaw's favor by a federal district court.

Attorneys interested in joining the FIRE Legal Network are encouraged to fill out the form on FIRE's website: thefire.org/legal/fires-legal-network.

FIRE looks forward to welcoming new members to the battle for student and faculty rights.



Kevin Shaw, Student Plaintiff



510 Walnut Street, Suite 1250
Philadelphia, PA 19106
T: 215.717.3473 F: 215.717.3440
www.thefire.org



FREE SPEECH ZONE

The following messages were sent using FIRE's Text to Pledge program during the 20th anniversary gala:

\$100 to support future interns who can be transformed by the experience, like I was, and emerge motivated and dedicated to supporting individual rights on campus. - **Konrad Thallner**

20 years ago, I thought my association with FIRE would be brief, after all, how could the opponents of free speech survive with the light of FIRE on them? Alas, as we know, the fight goes on. I am very proud of FIRE and to be a part of its fight for free speech. Tonight I pledge \$5,000. - **Joe Maline**

Happy to pledge \$250. Keep the flame of Freedom glowing bright! - **Paul J. Kelly, III, CPA**

Have something to say about FIRE's work? Exercise your free speech rights: fire@thefire.org.

BUT WAIT! There's more...

FIRE HOSTS FIRST AMENDMENT TRIVIA AT VONNEGUT MUSEUM

On Sept. 27, FIRE's brand new Targeted Advocacy team hosted a First Amendment trivia night in honor of Banned Books Week at the Kurt Vonnegut Museum & Library in Indianapolis. The trivia featured rounds on general First Amendment knowledge, banned books, and campus speech. In addition to testing their knowledge of the First Amendment, attendees were treated to live jazz and a preview of the museum's new space. FIRE is partnering with the museum to create interactive quizzes for their new exhibit on free expression. Check out the exhibit at the grand opening this fall!

\$20,000 IN SCHOLARSHIPS UP FOR GRABS FOR HIGH SCHOOL JUNIORS AND SENIORS

FIRE is accepting submissions for our annual high school essay contest. Nine winners will win up to \$10,000 for an essay stemming from FIRE's comic book, "Finding Your Voice." View the comic for free online, download it, or request a free copy to be mailed directly to you. (Even the shipping is free!) Submissions must be between 700–900 words, and we must receive them by Dec. 31. More details at thefire.org/contest.

FIRE TO UCONN: DROP THE CHARGES AGAINST STUDENTS FOR CONSTITUTIONAL SPEECH

FIRE sent a letter to the University of Connecticut in late October after two students were arrested by university police for saying a racial slur loudly enough for others to hear. The off-campus incident, captured on video, sparked protests at the university and criminal charges under a rarely-used, unconstitutional state law prohibiting "ridicule." Public universities, let alone their police officers, should not be pursuing or praising criminal charges under clearly unconstitutional statutes. Doing so will only expose the university — including its leaders and police officers — to legal liability, while doing little (if anything) to remedy social ills identified by students and society at large.