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Political Science Club decides to bring Klan leader

By Vince Bailey
Assistant Editor

Members of the Fort Lewis College Political Science Club announced their decision to extend a speaking invitation to Colorado Ku Klux Klan leader Shawn Slater despite a storm of controversy that has divided the college since the club revealed its intentions three weeks ago.

At a heavily attended press conference held in the office of the *Independent* on Monday, club member Heather Saig read a prepared statement reaffirming the club's original position on sponsoring the 25-year-old Aurora resident as a guest lecturer representing the radical right during Racial Awareness Month in February.

The statement, in its entirety read as follows:
"Let it be made clear today that no member of the Political Science Club, faculty, or administration of Fort Lewis College approves of or respects the views and activities of the Ku Klux Klan. At no time did any member voice support for that organization.

Nevertheless, because this institution is an academic one, and because the mission of this institution is to foster serious debates and in recognition of the fact that racism is an increasing problem of the United States, the Political Science Club is prepared to extend an invitation to Shawn Slater and four other individuals

representing various minority perspectives to appear on a panel in a racial law awareness forum during the month of February. We will be able to confirm the names of these individuals and a specific date before the conclusion of this trimester.

The Political Science Club is considering alternative ways of financing security, including but not limited to co-sponsorship, admission fees, and legal action."

FLC President Joel Jones told the *Rocky Mountain News* that he may yet prohibit Slater's appearance. Jones commented at a recent faculty meeting that the college's legal counsel cannot commit to a position on the matter. Administration officials had previously placed the financial burden for providing security on the club's budget, \$400 of which is on unallocated status.

The Pro-Sci Club and its advisor have said this week that they have retained the services of American Civil Liberties Union attorney Jim Joy in a move to defend against possible challenges. Club members explained that the panel discussion format was created to present a fair representation of various perspectives on racial topics and to foster an atmosphere of enlightenment. Jones said "I'm not surprised [at the decision], but I will be surprised if Slater agrees to appear as part of a minority panel."

Slater, however, responded positively to the club's decision. "I'm all in favor of a panel. I have no problems with that."

"The panel discussion format was created to present a fair representation of various perspectives on racial topics and to foster an atmosphere of enlightenment."



THE "EXULTED Cyclops" makes a point. Vince Bailey, *Independent*

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EDITORIALS

Letters to the Indy

A special issue devoted to giving the campus its voice

Editors note: Due to the vast amount of responses to the Political Science Club's decision to invite Shawn Slater the Independent is devoting this week to publishing as many of the letters to the Indy as possible.

To the Editor,

Various officers and members of the Black Student Organization, the Washita Oia Indian Club, the Hispanic Club, the Gay and Lesbian Alliance, the Math Club, the Historical Society, the Political Science Club, the A.S.F.L.C., the Scarlet Letters, and the Pre-Law Club, have formed a United Coalition Against Prejudice (UCAP).

UCAP has unanimously decided not to attend the racial awareness forum that the Political Science Club at Fort Lewis College is organizing. Furthermore, we will not attend, in any way, with the Political Science Club in including them as a part of the forum. We are all members of the community not to attend the forum put together by the Political Science Club, and not to work with the Club in any way. We believe that the Political Science Club has shown insensitivity toward the minority population at Fort Lewis by extending an invitation to Shawn Slater, a member of the Ku Klux Klan. This decision will affect students of all ethnic backgrounds. The KKK is only a part of a more disturbing element that has resurfaced in colleges across the United States, racism. Racism is a disease that only has one cure, which is education. UCAP has decided to work hard-to-ward in putting together education workshops dealing with racism in an attempt to educate all Fort Lewis students. We believe this will bring about a better understanding of a problem, a chance for a solution becomes attainable.

By using education as a major tool, we believe that we can combat the hatred that the KKK chooses to spread. Equality, love and harmony can only be achieved with and understanding and participation of all groups of people, collectively working together to better understand one another. We hope that anyone who favors our approach will work together with us in facing this serious problem. We invite any input and participation in a case that must be fixed. A great deal has been said about a dialogue between all races of people. To achieve this dialogue, open channels of communication are essential.

Submitted
Harry Hollines

input. If college professors are instructing college students to act first and get input and think later (as this advisor is doing and has done) in colleges and universities across America, then the problems of America have been uncovered here at the Fort. The problem would be that we are doing things backward.

I specifically was told by the advisor that I could not do anything other than to try to persuade the eight voting members on changing their vote. Only those that voted to bring Shawn Slater could do something about the issue. In other words, I was left out of the process. Never was there a question on what I thought of the situation as the President of the Club and/or being a Native American. Let us get one thing clear, the Indian does not go around telling people what he thinks, rather waits until asked. On the other hand, where does it state that the power to rescind rests only with those who originally voted for an issue that became controversial.

Lastly, all of sudden eight students and an advisor are concerned about racism when it is known among the student government, some students, and faculty members that these eight students never talked about the issue or showed up at past presentations. The student was the topic. They easily could have said no to inviting Shawn Slater, but they got too far into this mess and their egos will not let them back out. They have learned well in one sense. That is to put sweet words in their mouths on a cable that is not fully heated. This practice known in the political world is to make the best of something when it does not turn out the way a person expected.

My conclusion is that inviting is null and void because of the actions of pressing officer. The power of the advisor should be looked into by her superiors.

Ernest Begay
Political Science Club President

To the Editor:

On Monday, December 2, the A.S.F.L.C. passed resolution 91-97. This resolution strongly urges the political science club to reconsider their invitation to Shawn Slater. It also calls for the "irreparable damage" that can be done to the students and the "unacceptable" whether it be physical, emotional, or emotional, to the campus community. The questions of legality and constitutionality were brought up by the advisors to the senate an eventually ignored. The voting process of the senate was totally emotion based. Legal and constitutional issues were pushed aside by the individual emotions of the senators. The student body does not need emotional bodyguards to tell us how to feel about the issues. The student body does not need an emotion based student government who feigns concern while pushing their own views and feelings. To those senators who sign up to account the facts and the legal

*I may not agree with what you say,
but I will defend to the death
your right to say it -- Voltaire*

issues, I commended you. I respect the way you stood your ground in the face of a lot of pressure. To those senators who took into account only their own emotions when voting, I ask that you reexamine your position in student government. The student body does not look to you for emotional hand-holding and protection. You passed a resolution without even postponing it a week to research whether there could be a legal problem or not, you didn't even hold a caucus to reword it so that it would hold no unconstitutional phrases. What we want is a government who makes informed decisions based on the facts. Is that too much to ask?

Theresa Harold

To the Editor,

I am shocked and angered by an article I read in the Rocky Mountain News last week. It seems that the Political Science Club at Fort Lewis College is considering inviting Mr. Shawn Slater a Klansman who represents and encourages neo-nazi and white supremacy to be a guest speaker at their racial awareness council. I'm sure the students who are promoting the appearance of this revolting individual think it's exciting. The last amendment does afford him the right to speak regardless of his views; however, by giving Mr. Slater a platform from which to speak they are validating the very concept of the Ku Klux Klan and all that it stands for.

This has to be a slap in the face for Native American students and to experience the attitudes that permeate the world outside the classroom one does not have to invite an individual or group who promotes hatred and violence against fellow students.

As a graduate of Fort Lewis College, class of 1973, I was fortunate to hear the great Jesse Owens give the commencement address concerning the need for human equality. This possible invitation eighteen years later to a Klansman to speak about the need for white supremacy is a step backwards for Fort Lewis College.

The Political Science Club in their zeal to explore many viewpoints on racial awareness do not realize the long term damage to Fort Lewis College's image outside the halls of education.

I request the recanvassment of your motives for the possible invitation to Mr. Slater. As a political science club, I would like to see you explore equality amongst all races, creeds, religions and sexes. There has to be a better way for your motives and efforts to be directed to elevate racial awareness. Don't hurt yourselves or Fort Lewis College.

Sincerely,
David B. Peak

To the Editor,

The media throughout the Ku Klux Klan controversy at Fort Lewis has reported that the Political Science Club as a whole invited Shawn Slater of the KKK to speak on campus. That is not the case. It was done by only eight members of the club. There are more than 15 members. While the concept of majority is understood, the sensitivity of the issue should have required the eight members, and specifically our advisor, to see that a more thorough discussion take place. I will make known to all some of the things that have been kept under the table during this chaos caused by a few students and an advisor.

I did not attend the meeting where Shawn Slater was invited because of an emergency, nor was I aware that the issue of inviting Shawn Slater was on the agenda. If I would have known that the issue of Shawn Slater was to be discussed, I would have still not attended (because of the nature of emergency). I would have directed the Club to wait on a decision. Upon reviewing the minutes of the meeting where Shawn Slater was invited (the meeting took place on 11-13-91), it shows that the Vice-President Karlene Van Pelt presided. There are no problems with that since the constitution of the Poli Sci Club states that, "in the absence of the President, the Vice President can preside." However, the problem is when the presiding officer makes a motion to bring the KKK to FLC. The motion is then seconded and there is no discussion. The presiding officer then moves again to call for the vote. The vote is then unanimous. That is clearly an act of dictatorship. To me, these are grounds for the meeting to be declared null and void.

Who decides on the validity of a club meeting? If it is to be the Student Court it will not work because Antonio Acello is the Chief Justice and also one of the eight who supported bringing Shawn Slater. I believe the Constitution committee of the Senate and/or the Senate as a whole can decide the validity of a meeting. It will be rough because the advisor to the Senate is the same advisor to the Poli Sci Club. Nevertheless, the action of the presiding officer during the Poli Sci club meeting where Shawn Slater was invited needs to be studied to determine the validity of the meeting. It has to be done by the Senate.

It is obvious that upon that vote there was a tremendous uproar. When pressured by the uproar, the advisor called meetings which she termed advisory meetings, and stated that it was a concern of only those that voted to bring Shawn Slater. It was to be closed to the public. The eight members would then bring in minority members and concerned individuals secretly to state their opinion. Upon the input of concerned individuals, clubs, and organizations, the eight members would then vote again. This action illustrates an advisor who is advising college students to do things backward. The advisor would have from the start advised that input from minorities and concerned individuals be heard first before the vote. Furthermore, if a discussion were to

The balance weighs against the Klan

The decision's been made. **Politics says at FLC.** This piece of news would be a paydirt issue right now if it hadn't been overshadowed by another piece of news—The Klan's coming to the Fort. That statement alone brings a certain amount of fear and hesitancy on the part of the student body. How much is hesitancy, but certainly more than any



Ken Eckhardt
Independent

...the Political Science Club accepted the invitation to invite Shawn Slater to Fort Lewis College as one of several speakers in a "academic forum" during Racial Awareness Month. Yes, it's possible the title could be "Racial Awareness," but that depends on the other speakers the Political Science Club invites.

To my knowledge, the club has not decided on who those other speakers might be, and I wonder if their original plans included other speakers. Just the same, whether Slater or any of a speaker shows or not, the communication this issue has caused is enough to make any "I-wish-it-was-the-sixties-and-we-had-something-to-do" type of student wake up from a nostalgic coma and shout a business slogan.

It seems a number of business have profited from the "Klan on campus" issue, but I doubt any minority groups have. The Political Science Club, making such a big splash, must certainly be happy. Considering all of the free and unselected publicity he and his organization has received, I don't think Slater and his fellow Klansmen could be happier. And the Media has squeezed a good bit of mileage out of it as well. All in all, no one could be happier.

That is, except for minority and FLC students in general. Something about this entire issue, how it came about, how it grew has bothered me. It seems to be a case where the needs of many have been sacrificed for the desires of a few. I can't help but feel the entire campus is being pulled into something by a few people—maybe for better, maybe for worse.

I suppose the motivation for asking Slater to speak at FLC could be in an effort to raise the question of racism in America. If this is the case, the effort may be worthwhile. Racism is a disease that has fed off of our nation for the

eventually eliminate racism in our society, then this forum has a place on this campus. Does Slater fit into this? Or will he only help to sustain the polarization between races and cultures?

For the past few weeks, I've heard and read countless opinions about Slater and the Klan. In every case, the opinion has been predicated with a statement about the right to free speech. In each case, the speaker or writer made it clear that they did not believe in the Klan's views, but felt the Klan, like anybody else, has a right to express its view. Besides that and some stickers, I don't think I've seen any support for Klan activities on campus.

Slater, like anybody, has certain rights that include the freedom to express his beliefs. The question is not whether he has a right to deliver his message. The question is if his message is of any relevance to the FLC student body. Does he have anything to say that is of value to the student body?

I understand the Klan has changed over the years. Supposedly, it's a "kinder, gentler" Klan. The days of lynching and cross-burning have given way to political activism (except in Debouque). The rhetoric of hate has been replaced by a carefully planned, carefully worded ideology. But the message remains the same. Although the Klan may pursue its goals in ways different from the past, their motives and their goals have not changed. While the organization may appear different than in years past, make no doubt about it, it is still the Klan.

If there is a message that should come out of this affair, I think it will be aimed at the White students and will be this: Racism is a festering wound deeply entrenched in American society. While minorities absorb the pain and injustice of this disease, ultimately it is White America that possesses it. If we learn anything from Shawn Slater, it will be because we see a little of ourselves in him. While racism exists, our ideals of freedom, justice and democracy will never be fully realized.

It is time to eradicate this sore from ourselves, our communities, and eventually from our society. The time has come to not just open this wound, but tear it apart. Expose it so that the lies, fear, hatred and ignorance can drain away.

Can Shawn Slater help in this regard? I have my doubts. Is the FLC campus ready to accept such a challenge? I have my doubts.

While I question the motivation of the Political Science Club, I commend them for their courage. I hope they know what they're doing.

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A.C.L.U. president to address first amendment rights



By Jennifer Feldman
Independent

Monday, November 9th, SUB Lectures will be presenting Nadine Strossen, national president of the American Civil Liberties Union.

Strossen has an enthusiastic interest in the First Amendment, which may shed light on the decision by the political science club to invite Colorado KKK leader, Shawn Slater, to speak during racial awareness week in February.

In January of 1991, the A.C.L.U. elected Strossen to be the first female president in the organization's 71 year history. Strossen is a professor of constitutional law, Federal courts and human rights at New York Law School. She has served on the A.C.L.U. as a board member since 1983 and as general counsel since 1986. She has taught at Columbia and New York University law schools and practiced commercial litigation at several New York firms.

Strossen was the editor of the Law Review while she attended Harvard Law School and graduated magna cum laude in 1975. Throughout her education, her belief in the Constitution and human rights increasingly grew stronger.

Strossen's stance on issues is described as a neutral position, although she insists on defending the rights of people regardless of their politics. "I think this is the most important organization in the country, if not the world," Strossen says of the A.C.L.U. "To say what we're doing is controver-

sial is to say the Bill of Rights is controversial. I want to emphasize the American in American Civil Liberties Union."

Strossen has written numerous articles and book reviews that reflect this position as well as her concentrated belief in the Constitution of the United States.

Strossen is also a strong advocate of involving young people in the process of protecting civil liberties. She helped found a student A.C.L.U. chapter at New York Law School. Most recently, she has spoken at Duke University and the University of Virginia where she has made a notable impact.

Strossen plans to discuss Amendment Rights Monday evening with an emphasis concerning all the controversy surrounding the KKK and Fort Lewis College.

Andrea Doe, SUB Lectures Chairperson said she "thought it was really relevant to this campus to hear about First Amendment Rights."

Doe also said that Strossen is an extremely busy person and that she only had one day open on her calendar for the month of December, yet she made the time to come to FLC. "I think it's amazing she made time to come to Fort Lewis," stated Doe.

The lecture will be in the Fine Arts Auditorium at 7:00 p.m. There will be a \$1 charge for students and \$3 for non-students. The lecture is sponsored by the Student Union Board Lectures Committee and the Political Science Club.

Minority students speak out on Klan issue at Fort Lewis

By Kenneth Andre Cantu
Independent

The recent speaking invitation extended to Colorado KKK leader Shawn Slater has stirred up a lot of feelings among the FLC minority population.

Melissa Frank, a member of FLC's black community, offered that, "I think them coming here is a lot different from them being in 'the South' because [I] was used to seeing them. Here, because of the Native American group, the Hispanic group, the Oriental people, it's a lot different. I think [the Klan's presence] will have a negative impact, in that people will feel frightened or inhibited in some way," she explained.

"In my personal opinion," offered Michelle Graham, of FLC's Asian community, "I think that if the Klan comes it would be detrimental to the student body here."

Some students would be interested in Shawn Slater's appearance at FLC. "I actually want to hear what [Shawn Slater] says" said Warren Lee of FLC's Native American Indian community.

Many students who expressed their opinions were in agreement that the Klan should have the right to speak freely here on campus.

"I believe in the right to free speech," said Frank, "but what the Klan is all about and what they say is inhibiting another group. So, I don't think they should speak at FLC."

"I think we will have people coming out-of-the-closet about racial issues."

"Free speech is the constitutional right of all Americans," Graham explained, "but, all the 'right to free speech' says is that we can't ban them. As far as I understand it, the K.K.K isn't asking to come here-[FLC] is asking them."

Whether or not the Klan's presence on campus would interfere with the students' education is an issue that was touched at an open forum last month. While there are people who think that the Klan's presence wouldn't interfere with the students education, the majority of those who expressed their opinions felt the Klan's presence be an interference.

Graham offered that, "I think [their presence] would do both, because [the students education] is already interrupted by the issue. But also, if the Klan comes, it can enlighten certain people who don't

know what [the Klan's] philosophies are."

"The Klan's visit to FLC will probably make people more aware of how people feel about each other," said Lee, "and make students more conscious of how people are viewed."

Another concern that some people have are the after-affects of the Klan's visit to Fort Lewis. "Certain students may agree with the Klan's philosophy, and join their movement. That could be really detrimental for the minorities on this campus. But, also, some good after-affects might be that some people listen to the Klan and disagree with the Klan's philosophy which might enrich [those students'] education here."

"I think we will have people coming out-of-the-closet about racial issues," offered Frank.