

The Graduate Student Advocate

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Behind the Bookshelves: CUNY Libraries & the Budget Crisis

By Caroline Pari

For CUNY college libraries, it seems that budgets are designed with the intention of maintaining, not expanding, their collections. When students seek new publications at various CUNY libraries, they often do not find what they need, because the budget deficit has forced librarians to impose a freeze on the purchase of books and periodicals.

The fiscal year begins July 1. At this time, the presidents of the CUNY colleges submit their budget requests. By mid-summer these requests are consolidated and budget decisions are made. For example, the City University budget report shows that decreased enrollment for certain senior colleges, including Baruch and Hunter, is projected for the 1990-1991 academic year. Because the budget allotment to CUNY libraries is based primarily on the enrollment in the individual departments of each college, the libraries of these schools will endure a loss of funds.

Kristin McDonough, the Chief Librarian of Baruch College, admitted to feeling budget angst during a recent interview. "There is the sense that there is no money at the beginning. It is the time to process requests. If the state's estimates are low, they impose freezes which affect the payroll at the end of the fiscal year." The City University is currently operating under a freeze which was imposed in February and will last until June 30th. Dr. McDonough emphasized that in the beginning it appears that money is unavailable, although this often proves not to be the case. She believes that "the financial situation is not bleak," but she does not want to be called a "Pollyanna," because the outlook could be much better.

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CUNY Professor's Opinions Denounced

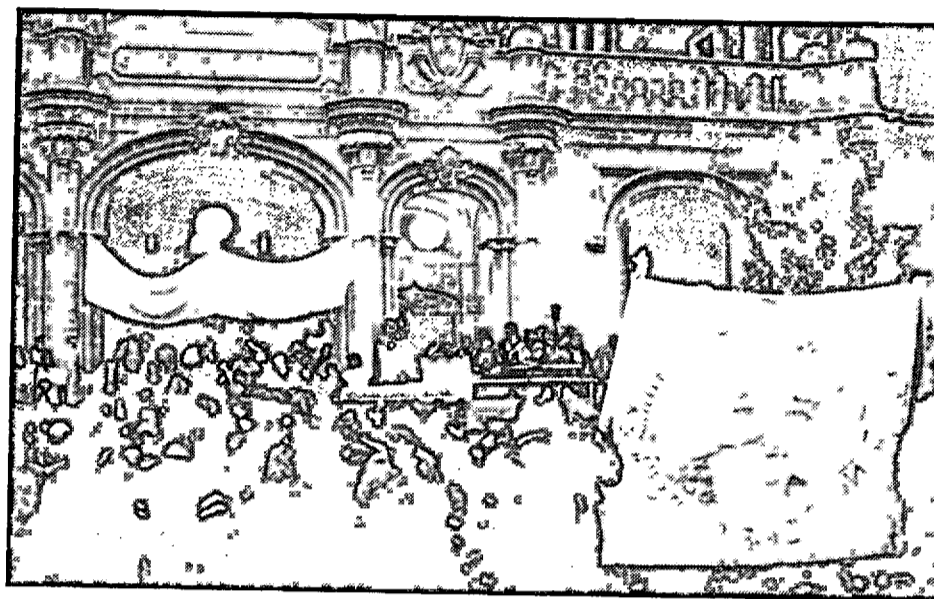
Graduate School Philosopher Accused of Racism

By Christine Hutchins

Dr. Michael Levin, Professor of Philosophy at City College and the Graduate School, has sparked what has become a highly-publicized controversy. Professor Levin became the center of a furious debate over the limits of academic freedom when his views on racial discrimination came to the attention both of the students at City and of the general public.

The Friday, April 20th edition of *The New York Times* featured a lengthy article on Professor Levin and Dr. Leonard Jeffries Jr., Chairman of the Black Studies department at City College. Professors Levin and Jeffries both subscribe to theories of racial superiority which have elicited varying degrees of controversy in the academic community. Levin has published several studies in which he argues that blacks are intellectually inferior to whites. Professor Jeffries, according to the article in the *Times*, subscribes to the belief that "an abundance of the skin pigment melanin gives blacks intellectual and physical advantages over whites." Professor Levin's views in particular have become the focus of wide-spread attention, prompting W.C.B.S. News to include a brief interview with him in their Friday night report.

The debate surrounding Professor Levin is based on his contention that the under-representation of women and minorities in disciplines such as philosophy and engineering is due not to discriminatory practices, but rather to a disparity between their innate intelligence and the intellectual abilities of white males. Professor Levin has espoused the view that academia, and society at large, has suffered from recent attempts to promote the participation of women and minorities. According to Professor Levin, intellectual standards have been lowered in order to make such pursuits accessible to these groups. In a recent letter



Students on strike at John Jay College, Spring 1989.

CUNY Student Strike? See page 3.

to the *American Philosophical Association Proceedings*, Professor Levin responded to the APA's survey of minority enrollment in the profession by stating, "Unfortunately, such findings in the current climate of opinion generally lead to calls for 'affirmative action,' i.e. preference for blacks, accompanied by media campus on the part of whites participating in the activity from which blacks have been found to be excluded. It should therefore be good news that whites are not responsible for this under-representation. It has been amply confirmed over the last several decades that, on average, blacks are significantly less intelligent than whites."

Professor Levin has published similar opinions in the past. His classes were picketed in 1988 by the International Committee Against Racism (INCAR) and the City College Faculty Senate voted 61-3 to censure his opinions; in 1989, he was forced to withdraw from teaching introductory philosophy classes mid-semester. Nevertheless, his letter to the *APA Proceedings* is the impetus for much of the recent publicity he has received.

Professor Levin's theories on intelligence and affirmative action have generated a significant amount of anxiety at City College, whose student body is nearly 40 percent African-American. At the beginning of the semester, Dr. Paul Sherwin, Dean of Humanities at City College, mailed a letter to students informing them of Professor Levin's "controversial views on such issues as race, feminism, and homosexuality" and announced that, "wishing to permit informed freedom of choice

for students," another section of his introductory course would be opened for those "who choose to switch" sections. Nine students withdrew from Professor Levin's philosophy course.

Students also staged a protest last month, marching across the campus and disrupting Professor Levin's class. The City College student newspaper, *The Campus*, has run several articles about Professor Levin, and called for his resignation in the March 12th issue. The editorial attacked the philosophy professor for his "generalizing, superficial approach" and for drawing his conclusions "not based on reality, but on existing stereotypes." The editorial also stated, "Since you insist on propagating white supremacist values, you should think about teaching at a college where there aren't any 'intellectually inferior' students."

There has been no suggestion that Professor Levin has actually engaged in discriminatory practices in the classroom. The philosopher has limited the majority of his statements to published opinions. The *Times* article describes the Professor Levin as "enormously popular" with students and states that "even [his] black students said he is a brilliant and riveting teacher." The front-page article in *The Campus* of March 12th, however, expressed student outrage, as well as fear that Professor Levin's opinions necessarily influence his ability to teach. One student is quoted as saying, "From what he has written, my understanding is that he is a racist. Don't you think he would carry those

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Heaviest Element Discovered

The heaviest element known to science was discovered a few years ago at the Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory, and the news should be officially released sometime in 1992. The element, tentatively named Administratium, (Ad), has no protons or electrons, thus it has atomic number 0. It does, however, have 1 neutron, 75 associate neutrons, 125 deputy associate neutrons, and 111 assistant deputy associate neutrons. This gives it an atomic mass of 312. The 312 particles are held together in the nucleus by a force that involves the continuous exchange of meson-like particles called memons.

Since it has no electrons, Administratium is inert. Nevertheless, it can be detected chemically, because it seems to impede every reaction in which it takes part. According to Dr M. Langour, one of the discoverers of the element, a very small amount of Administratium made one reaction, that normally takes less than a second, take four days to go to completion.

Administratium has a half-life of approximately 3 years, after which time it does not actually decay. Instead, it undergoes an internal reorganization in which associates to the neutron, deputy associates to the neutron, and assistant deputy associates to the neutron all exchange places. Some studies have indicated that the atomic mass actually increases after each reorganization. ☞

—From the newsletter of the Department of Biology, University of Utah.

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Around & About The Center

An Open Letter from Art History Students

April 2, 1990

The students of the Ph.D. Program in Art History of the CUNY Graduate Center oppose the proposed addition of specializations to the current program. Since its formation just two decades ago, the Ph.D. Program in Art History at the Graduate Center has established an international reputation for its concentration and excellence in areas of scholarship neglected by other institutions. According to the minutes of the meeting of the Board of Higher Education of December 28, 1970, the program:

...is the result of an exceptional growth of interest in Modern and American Art. Universities have not yet made adequate adjustments to meet the demonstrated need in these two areas of concentration. Consequently there is an acute shortage of scholars and teachers in these fields.

Far from diminishing, the need for scholars and teachers in these areas of concentration has grown dramatically in recent years. The Ph.D. Program in Art History trains many of the professionals who fill prestigious posts in museums and universities across the nation. Nevertheless, the Program has yet to fulfill its original mandate to meet the "demonstrated need" for scholars in Modern and American Art and Criticism. In fact, the strictures of the current system-wide budget crisis severely limit the program's ability to expand its curriculum in areas essential to the fulfillment of this original mandate.

The Program is now being asked by a small committee drawn from the art history faculty of the senior colleges to consider expansion into other areas of art history, areas which have long been richly served by other institutions in the region. Moreover, while funding for the existing Graduate Center Art History Program is already limited and certainly could not be stretched to support the additional faculty, students, and educational resources that expanded specializations would require, the committee's proposal does not address budgetary considerations. The lack of a funding plan naturally is a source of grave concern to faculty and students alike. We are further concerned that prematurely implemented specializations would undermine the program's current stature.

The distinguished faculty and students of the Ph.D. Program in Art History are deeply committed to preserving and strengthening the concentrated scholarly focus of our program whose unique contribution to the discipline of art history is internationally recognized and clearly enhances the Graduate Center's institutional standing.

—Students of the Ph.D. Program in Art History
City University of New York

Distinguished Professor Linda Nochlin Bids Adieu

Ph.D. Program in Art History

April 16, 1990

Dear Students:

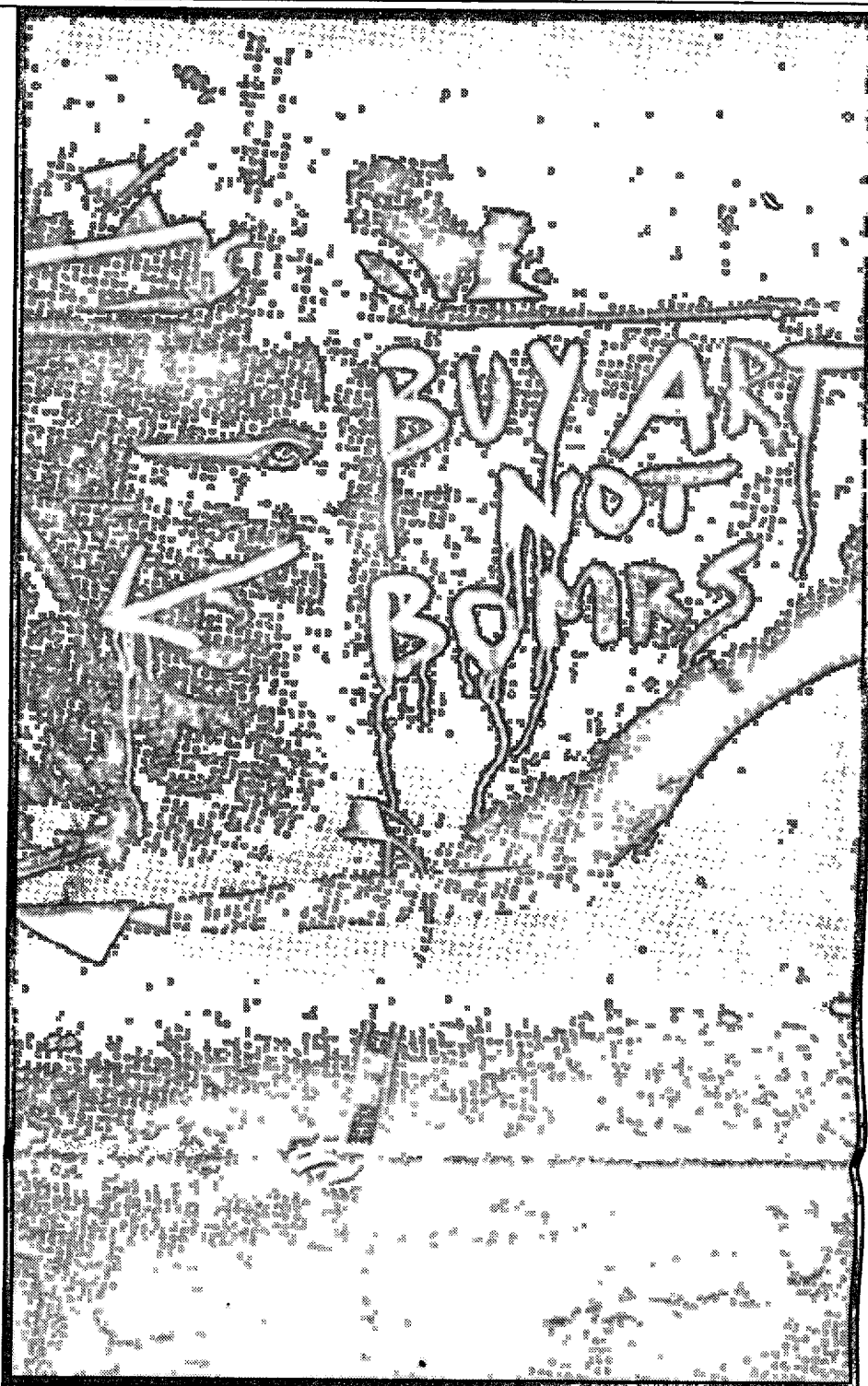
As you have probably heard, I am leaving the Graduate Center next year to take up a professorship at Yale. The decision was a very difficult one and took a long time to make. Finally, however, I decided that, after ten years, it was time for a change; also, it seemed to me important to establish a beachhead for feminist art history at one of our major universities, on the undergraduate as well as the graduate levels.

What made it especially hard to decide on Yale was of course my attachment to my students at the Graduate Center. I have loved being here because of the high quality of the graduate students in the art history program and my feeling that we were engaged in a common enterprise of the intellectual exploration, criticism and discovery. When I say that I learned a great deal from you, I am not merely repeating a cliché; I mean it very seriously, just as I mean it seriously when I say that your friendship and support has meant a great deal to me and my work over the course of the years: many of you, whether you know it or not, have had a profound impact on the shape and direction of my own work. I doubt that I will ever find a group to equal the variety, intellectual and political engagement and sheer interesting-ness, of the students here.

Contributing to the uniqueness and high quality of the art history program at CUNY has of course been the fact that it is a program specializing in the art of the 19th and 20th centuries in Europe and America, theory and criticism. Students who came here did not come here for a general education, although of course they were expected to be familiar with art history as a whole, but for a particular kind of specialization and a more adventurous methodological approach which only the Graduate Center could offer. It is no accident that at a time when all art history programs are experiencing a greatly increased enrollment in the modern field, a growing interest in new and divergent methodologies, and in non-Western field [sic] of art and a commensurate decrease in demand for the earlier periods of Western art history, our institution should attract the outstanding group of students that it has.

I certainly do not intend to sever my connection with the program. I will, of course, continue to work with those students whose doctoral dissertations I am already committed to directing until these dissertations are completed. I hope to maintain an informal relationship with many of you and with the program as a whole. The Graduate Center has been an important part of my life and I will miss it very much.

Sincerely,
Linda Nochlin
Distinguished Professor of Art History



C.C.S. \$

The Committee for Cultural Studies has four non-renewable Cultural Studies Fellowships for doctoral students, and is accepting applications for the 1990-1991 academic year. Candidates are expected to demonstrate a serious interest in Cultural Studies and to participate in the intellectual life of the Cultural Studies community, as well as to perform various administrative tasks. The intellectual commitment is very important for sustaining many of the activities of working/reading groups, and for providing a certain stability to the sometimes fluid formations of these groups. The administrative work includes arranging conferences, preparing the C.S. newsletter, participating in committee meetings and providing copies of important documents to all interested C.S. members.

Although the amount of the C.S. Fellowships will not be determined until after the 1990-1991 budget is approved, the fellowships are expected to pay from \$4,500 to \$5,000. Any matriculated level II student who does not already have a Grad. A, Grad. B or other fellowship may apply. Students should include a statement of purpose, as well as a resume and curriculum vitae. The deadline for applications is April 27th. The fellows will be selected in May. ☺

Correction

Last month, due to an editorial error, Michael Shenefelt's article [Newsweek, 3/5/90] was misquoted in an aside entitled "Educated Bias." The quotation should have read: "The most disturbing trend now is the the [sic] demand that students should read the literature of non-Western civilizations. The very idea of it fills me with dread."