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# ADVOCATE

The City University of New York Graduate School and University Center

Photo: Ersilia Ferron

*Special section: CUNY in Crisis p.8*

# Peace, Safety, Protection, and Doublespeak: Big Brother Comes to the Graduate Center

Come June there will be a subtle change in the Grad Center decor. You may not notice it at first as you pass through the glass doors to the elevators, and you may not notice the quiet alteration in the social climate this change will effect. It won't make much of a noise when it happens, and it will quietly be taken for granted soon enough. And then it will be too late to make noise. Because with the new guard's pretty uniforms will come the not so pretty new guards.

## Editorial

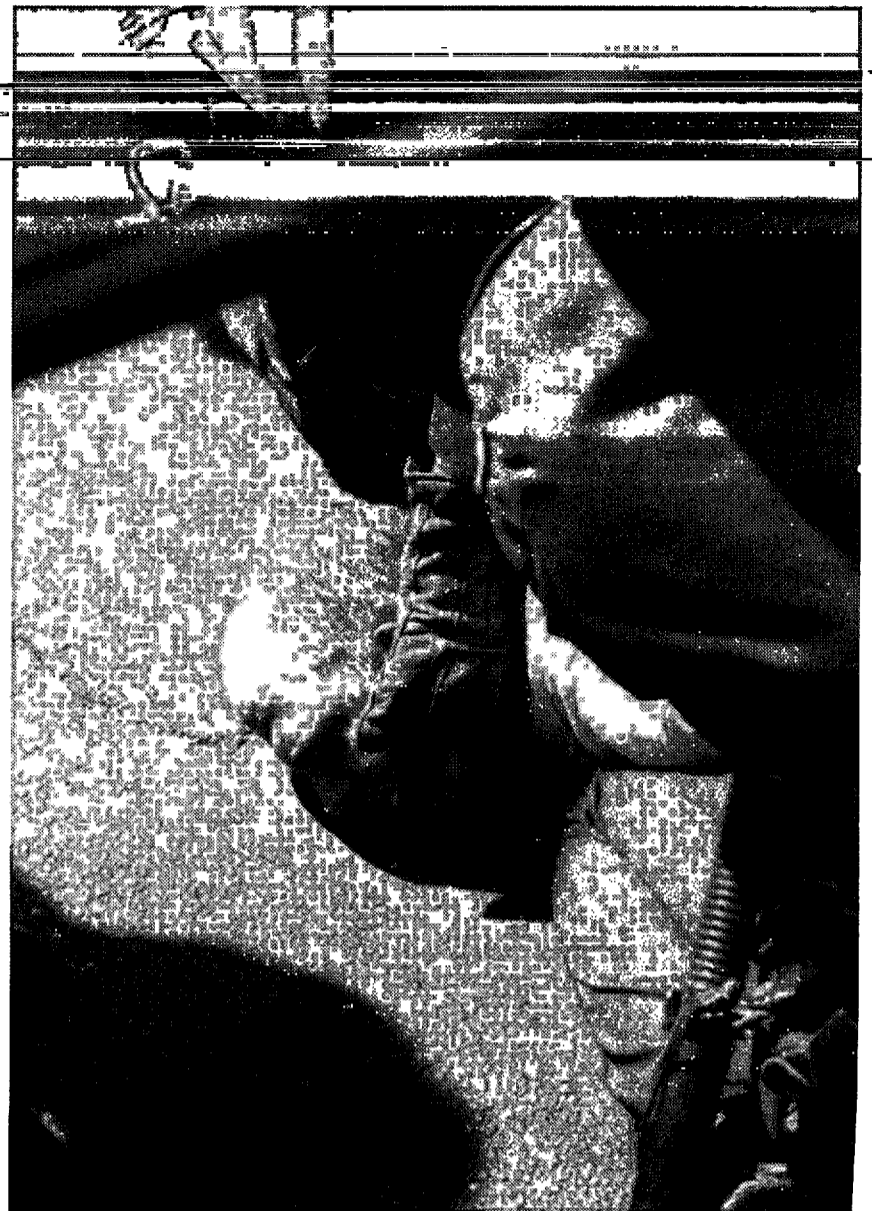
They will be trained in crowd control, these "peace officers", and carry pepper gas, a mace-like spray made from Cayenne peppers — all natural ingredients — that can cause severe asthmatic paroxysms as well as sting the eye (a mouthful is not bad if like really spicy food). They also have the power of arrest and license to carry firearms.

According to President Horowitz they are being brought here to protect us. She must know something we don't. We haven't heard any students clamoring for added security. We don't know of any faculty who have complained that the current security team doesn't offer them the safety assurance they need to cross the Mall. We don't know of any complaints about our current security guards.

The President seems to have forgotten the history of this security initiative. The Chancellor suggested introducing special on-campus security teams following the student take-overs in 1991. Later on, the trampling death of a CCNY student provided a convenient cover excuse for what originated as an attempt to quell dissent. Recent events have provided proof in case you had any doubts about what they are here to do.

Or maybe President Horowitz hasn't been keeping up with current events. Forty-three students held a hunger strike in a twenty-four hour access building at City College on April 11 to draw attention to the budget cuts. For this peaceful and imaginative attempt to serve the CUNY cause they were arrested by the special security force. After being held at the police precinct all night they went back up to CCNY not to take over buildings or throw rocks in windows — they went back up and continued their peaceful hunger strike where it had been interrupted.

President Horowitz may pretend not to know the purpose of these guards, but we do. They are there not to protect us but to protect the administration, particularly the Chancellor, from the voice of free protest. And a wise move it is, from her perspective. Appointed by Albany to oversee the downsizing of the University, the Chancellor has good reason to fear the voices of the students she's cheating out of an education and an opportunity for the future.



Hunter College student being arrested at campus protest.  
For whose benefit? Photo: Ersillia Ferron

We also know this: The presence of these deputy cops will have a chilling effect on free speech and freedom of assembly at the university. They are not likely to be tolerant or flexible in the execution of their orders. Like the police they are trained by, they will use force as the easiest means of control. They will not be friendly members of the Graduate Center community on a par with the rest of us. The rest of us don't carry guns to enhance the persuasiveness of our discourse.

The university is one of the few hold-outs of open debate in our society. People outside the university are often isolated in their jobs and in their domestic lives. The university as an intellectual gathering place has traditionally been the hotbed not only of alternative ideas, but of organized dissent. The Chancellor's initiative militates against one of the crucial political functions of the university by which it serves social well-being.

Albany's plans to dismantle the University naturally provoke protest from the students and faculty. 80th Street's response to our protest is force — guns and cuffs. The irony is that beefing up security is an ineffectual and disingenuous response to the policy of austerity. Here the doctor is treating the symptom of a problem she has herself created. The tactic is an old one of the repressive state: to cure the screaming of the victim, you cut out her tongue. Then you can watch the death-throes undisturbed. Here the victim is CUNY.

So the President says they are coming to protect us. Given the thinly disguised threat of the SAFE (Special Assistance for Events) team, it does seem as if we are endangered — by these armed "peace officers." Instead of hiring a SAFE team for our protection, why not just distribute guns and mace to the faculty and students? Let us protect ourselves. What would the President say if we came to school armed with mace and guns for our own protection? "Revolution! Sedition!" Well, the institutionalization of force on the campus does make you angry enough to want to arm yourself against an administration that already at CCNY has shown clearly that it will take up arms against students for the protection of a central administration that is at enmity with the university itself.

### How many college/universities in Manhattan have security guards ("peace officers") with power of arrest and license to carry firearms?

Manhattan colleges	Arrest power and license to carry firearms
City University	YES
Cooper Union	
Columbia	
Fordham	YES
FIT	
Marymount	
New School	
NYU	
Pace	
School of Visual Arts	
<b>Total</b>	<b>2 YES</b>

NO  
NO  
NO  
NO  
NO  
NO  
NO

# Letters

## No Exit: A Play in the Park

Dear Editor:

I would like to supplement your reportage of the CUNY-wide rally at the park in front of City Hall on the afternoon of May 23. Based on my observations, I can only conclude that the police assigned to the area had an agenda to incite the crowd to riot.

**12:00-1:00** A crowd gathered in the park, mostly students and faculty of various CUNY colleges coming together to exercise their constitutional right to peaceful assembly.

**1:45 p.m.** The speakers had given their various spiels and the rally was officially over.

**2:00 p.m.** The police announcing "single-person exit" by bullhorn near where I was (somewhat to the left of the stage) began sending people away. The exit was suddenly no longer an exit. There were people who needed to leave for class or work. (Contrary to Giuliani's information, many of us held our classes on the day of the event, myself included). People were mildly frustrated, wandering around the park to seek another exit.

**2:15** A parade of about 25 mounted police circled the park in a rather military formation.

**2:20** We tried to exit from several places, all of which were closed and guarded by at least 20-30 policemen. All of the policemen were wearing riot helmets and holding their billy clubs in their hands, not wearing them on their person, before anything occurred.

**2:30** I politely asked an Officer Burke stationed on the northeast side of the park where my friend and I could exit. He accused me of trying to provoke him and then directed me toward Chambers Street, where I could see that people trying to exit were being turned away. We walked away slowly, realizing that anything we said would be misconstrued.

**2:35** We tried to exit on the west side of the park, but police were already beating groups of people who were trying to exit en masse. There was a certain degree of panic as people realized there was nowhere to exit. Clusters of people clashed with the riot police.

**2:35-55** Groups of people trying to exit clashed with police, who were using clubs and mace against them. Panicking clusters of people would break into a run when this happened, rushing toward another part of the park only to realize there was no exit.

**3:30** We found some other people we knew. With the would-be exits closed off, those of us from the Graduate Center worried how we would get to work, to the classes we teach and attend. We observed police violence, found out that people had been maced, and saw and heard the horses used to frighten the protesters—and those now just trying to exit.

The scene was absolutely military, and designed to confuse, disperse, and terrify. I wonder if we are not ruled by an administration with no concern for the laws which exist on the books of the State of New York. I am very concerned about the handling of this demonstration, which seems paradigmatic of a certain present climate of disregard for peaceful assembly, the needs of the people, the future of education, and of the law.

Elizabeth Pallitto, Comp. Lit.

## Opinion Forum: Replies to Steve O'Brien

### Domestic Partnership: What's Really at Issue

Dear Editor and Fellow Students:

I would like to respond, albeit indirectly, to Mr. O'Brien's letter from the *Advocate's* last issue, which raised a few eyebrows (and pulse rates) to say the very least. Initially I was struck by the fact that Mr. O'Brien's argument is so heavily weighted with appeals to authority. I, for one, would not presume to take on Plato and the Catholic Church in the space of a letter to the editor. Neither will I address the idea of a 'natural law', which, I think, is so widely misunderstood (often for biologism) that the concept does not provide a good foundation for discussion. Nevertheless, in the interests of respecting opinions and addressing the issue, there is one thread common to Mr. O'Brien's sources which may generate helpful dialogue on a very practical basis, that is, the notion of a "common good."

We all know that social attitudes have changed much over the past couple of decades, and the growing acceptance of domestic partnership reflects this fact. But I think there is a fine line — always hard to draw — between "social acceptance" and "social privilege" as there is between the "common good" and the "personal good." Legislating is a sticky business; we all

personally. But if the first two are guaranteed by the constitution, the third, unfortunately, cannot. "You can't please all of the people all of the time" applies here. What is "justice" or "fairness" anyway? Every decision has its considerations and contexts; and if we don't have some idea of "promoting the general welfare," our society would disintegrate and splinter into a social-Darwinian or Marxist nightmare of competing "self-interests" — and I certainly hope (and believe) that there is more to living together than a power struggle for survival. With concern for our common humanity, governing bodies have a responsibility to provide for the underprivileged.

I have always assumed that insurance policies for married couples reflect other kinds of modest economic privileges granted to those who take on the dreaded task of changing diapers. In some way, bureaucracies acknowledge that married couples are performing a beneficial service to the state not only by giving us more huggable human persons, or future Lincolns, Einsteins, and Martin Luther King Jrs., but by contributing to the future tax base. And if a married couple does not have children, one could at least account for a percentage who are trying to save money before doing so (or who are recovering from former 'nuclear' disasters). The responsibility of protecting this vulnerable class of citizens is primary, but equally important is the investment in our society's future. For these reasons I have always seen such perks as supporting families rather than policies aimed against other couples or social groupings.

Now it seems to me if others were to argue that they too deserved the same privileges but without the same function or goal,

### Naturalized Sex

To the editor:

In reply to Steve O'Brien's letter to the editor (*March Advocate*):

I take Steve to be arguing from three premises to a conclusion: 1) the state is responsible for the well-being of society, 2) the family is the foundation of social well-being, 3) domestic partners do not qualify as "families," 4) therefore the state should intervene to discourage domestic partnerships.

As stated, the conclusion cannot follow from those premises. Steve provides no argument to the effect that domestic partnerships are detrimental to the family nor demonstration (or an added premise) that families cannot co-exist with domestic partnerships. Neither their alleged sinfulness, nor their violation of 'natural moral law' suffices to establish that such partnerships are a positive and destructive evil for society. That they are not crucial to the promotion of social well-being does not imply that they are harmful.

Steve might have claimed, as some do, that queer relationships' example of sinfulness jeopardizes the family because it encourages sinfulness within the family. I doubt that there is any evidence for this claim. I have happily, despite their association with queer couples. The children, by the way, for better or worse, have not turned out to be queer. On the contrary, the example of systematic repression and doctrinaire judgementalism in Steve's attitude towards queer partnerships would be at least as likely to harm the family and its members.

Tolerance and open-minded acceptance of difference are healthy for families. Difference is the rule among family members, not the exception. After all, we don't get to choose our parents or our children or our siblings. Why force physically related but otherwise random house mates to be what we want them to be rather than what they are? Parenting ought to be viewed as a responsibility towards recognition of difference, not the presumptuous enforcement of one rule, as if any one of us could know what is best for us all. Adopting narrow rules is just an easy evasion of the difficult burden of parental responsibility.

It may be that Steve feels he knows what is best for us all because he has scriptural authority. But the evidence of that authority comes solely from that scripture itself. That the bible says it's written by god may be enough for Steve, but is not enough for me. You wouldn't believe me were I to say "Mickey Mouse created the universe," if the sole grounds for the assertion were that I claim to have been told this by Mouse himself. Would you? You'd be a fool to. Yet such is faith. I grant anyone the right to whatever foolishness seems comforting or helpful, I just don't want another person's nonsensical strictures to be applied to me. Life is tough enough not to have to deal with someone else's institutional neurosis.

I must quibble with the third premise as well. It is hard to pro-

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