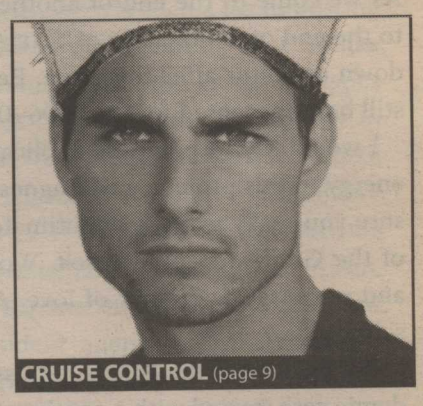
RACE AND ETHNICITY — SPECIAL ISSUE

CUNY GRADUATE CENTER

Advocate



CRUISE CONTROL (page 9)

The Newspaper for the CUNY GC Community | May 2006 | http://web.gc.cuny.edu/advocate

Racism in Education Funding?

Examining the SUNY and CUNY Funding Gap

ANDREA SIEGEL

Is the New York State Legislature engaged in discriminatory racial practices when it comes to funding the state's students?

While racism is difficult to prove, funding statistics are easier to analyze. In 2005 the legislature funded the 80% white SUNY students at $10,677 per student; meanwhile, CUNY students (about 70% of whom are people of color) received $5,046.

Whatever the reason, the legislature is repeatedly cheating New York City children and adults out of their basic right to an education. The State Constitution says that the "legislature shall provide for the maintenance and support of a system of free common schools, wherein all the children of this state may be educated." But the state legislature has endeavored to shirk their duty to uphold this law for years. This has especially hurt New York City, depriving students of a chance at a basic education.

In 1995, the New York Court of Appeals ruled that the state is obligated to teach all children "the basic literacy, calculating, and verbal skills necessary to enable children to eventually function productively as civic participants capable of voting and serving on a jury," and to provide "minimally adequate physical facilities and classrooms which provide enough light, space, heat, and air to permit children to learn," "minimally adequate instrumentalities of learning such as desks, chairs, pencils, and reasonably current textbooks," and "minimally adequate teaching of reasonably up-to-date basic curricula such as reading, writing, mathematics, science, and social studies, by sufficient personnel adequately trained to teach those subject areas."(1)

The state's response? For years, the New York State Legislature has denied New York City the over $4.7 billion dollars the Court determined the state owed New York City's public schools.

What about higher education? In his 2006 budget address Governor Pataki said, "Our funding per student is now among the highest of any state in America.... My budget provides a record level of operating support for SUNY (the State University) and CUNY (New York City's University)...."

From first-hand experience I know about teaching at CUNY. After my interview at Baruch Continuing Education, when I was offered the teaching job, my supervisor handed me an eraser and told me that this was my benefits package. "You're going to need it. The classrooms often don't have them." But

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Proposed Contract Bittersweet for Long-Suffering CUNY Employees

DAN SKINNER

After several (long) years without a contract, Professional Staff Congress (PSC)/CUNY has reached a tentative agreement with the powers that be at CUNY. The contract, which still remains to approved by both the PSC rank and file and the CUNY Board of Trustees, includes several important provisions which will affect GC students adjuncting at the colleges. The agreement also provides some insight into the general trajectory that CUNY is likely to take if the current labor climate remains unchanged.

In her April 28 communiqué announcing the deal, PSC president (and lead negotiator) Barbara Bowen characterized the final contract as a pragmatic victory. "The PSC bargaining team believes that we negotiated the best settlement possible within a hostile political environment that we have not yet succeeded in changing. This is a principled, imaginative agreement that maximizes the available funds for CUNY faculty and staff," she said.

> Bowen seems to recognize that, for adjuncts, this contract is picking meat from already ravaged bones.

The contract includes modest salary increases, increased pay for sabbaticals, and increased benefits (including dental) for full-time faculty and staff, as well as the following provisions for part-time/adjunct faculty:

- **Pay increases.** Currently, CUNY adjuncts receive $2,843 per three-credit course taught. If the contract is approved, this would increase to $3,084 (retroactively to May 1, 2006) and, on September 19, 2007, it would increase further to $3,113.
- The creation of a new $500,000 fund for **professional development grants for adjuncts**. This includes an Adjunct Professional Development Fund, with a $3,000 maximum grant.
- The contract would establish **100 new full-time lecturer positions** "for which only experienced CUNY adjuncts would be eligible to apply." *As Bowen's communiqué* noted, "Nationally, this will make our contract one of the few in higher education that creates new full-time positions and goes against the grain of increasing contingent labor." Pay for this position, the PSC told THE ADVOCATE, would be at the fulltime lecturer rate.
- **Paid sick days** for non-teaching adjuncts and adjunct CLTs.
- Ability for adjuncts to claim **back pay** from the beginning of the semester in case of underpayment.
- Adjunct access to **college e-mail** and voice-

See CONTRACT, page 3

PHOTO BY SPENCER SUNSHINE

Immigrants rally in Union Square

Tens of thousands of immigrants and their allies, including a number of GC students, marched from Union Square to U.S. Immigration offices downtown as part of a national "Day Without Immigrants."

Would the Real Hoverer Please Sit Down?

ELLEN ZITANI

Andrea Siegel isn't the only one at the Graduate Center who is obsessed with the bathrooms. Generally, toward the end of the day (either on the 5th or 7th floor) you will find me entering the ladies room, opening a stall door, then another, then another, only to curse under my breath – not the wonderful people who clean the bathrooms, but the not-so-wonderful people who improperly utilize them.

Women of the Graduate Center: stop hovering! This is not a bar or a ballpark, nor are ours the nasty toilets found at a public beach or park. This is the Graduate Center. You either work here or attend classes here or both. Either way, you spend a lot of time here – if you're like me, probably almost as much time as you spend at home. And I know you don't hover at home. Besides, even if you did, you would get out the Windex and clean up after yourself. As Ms. Siegel relayed (see "The Joy of Plumbing," THE ADVOCATE, March 2006), the GC staff does an impeccable job of keeping this place far cleaner than *many of our own homes – there is* certainly no need for you to go and pee all over it. It's just plain rude.

Most women understand the all-too-familiar "hover" that is necessary in most public restrooms. Whether executed facing the wall or the door, holding one's self up on the metal bar or the toilet paper dispenser, the hover is always awkward, sometimes painful and can be downright dangerous. The main problem with this tricky maneuver is that 99% of the time the hoverer will pee on the seat. And 80% of these hoverers will not even bother to clean up after themselves. These statistics are proven and I did, in fact, get IRB approval for this extensive and conclusive study.

Chew on this. Does your butt cheek ever touch a newspaper? The handle on a subway? The door to Dunkin Donuts? No. It stays neatly inside your jeans or your J.Crew khakis, never to be exposed to dirt or germs. The only time it is even exposed to light in public (in most cases) is when you drop your drawers to use the toilet. While this may be too intimate of an example for some, I believe that the point is clear. The average NYC butt-cheek is far cleaner than its corresponding hands or face or feet (feet that are made especially nasty in the summer months, when New York women are happily parading around the city in flip-flops). And yet we have no problem shaking hands, kissing each other on the cheek or even walking barefoot across the office…yuck. Seriously, have you ever thought about the nastiness that is trapped in those carpets after hundreds of shoes stomp around on them day after day, depositing the scum of New York City on our floors?

In case my point has not come through in this well-intended tirade, I'll say it explicitly: I am not a germ-o-phobe. I am simply pointing out that the fear of using the public restroom is completely unfounded when, and only when, the toilet is used as it was designed: and that is to be sat upon. So please, hoverers, I beg of you: sit down! Get comfy! Yes, your two pristine butt-cheeks will be touching the same surface that someone else's pristine butt-cheeks touched three minutes before, but this is New York people! We are all exposed to so much filth on a daily basis – all I ask is that you not subject me to your urine. I don't think that is too much to ask.

Ellen Zitani is a Ph.D. student in the History program.

CONTRACT

From page 1

mail and listings in college faculty directories.

Bowen seems to recognize that, for adjuncts, this contract is picking meat from already ravaged bones – not much of a victory at all. Bowen said, "There is still a long way to go before CUNY offers anything like parity to the thousands of part-timers whose underpaid labor has kept the university afloat as funds were being slashed. CUNY's abusive reliance on part-time labor hurts all of us; it's clear that we will need an even greater level of mobilization in future contracts to break them of this bad-employer habit."

In evaluating the contract, many have pointed to the fact that, despite a strong show of support and solidarity at rallies and meetings, the so-called Taylor Laws (which prohibit state employees from striking) were successful in reducing the PSC's leverage. CUNY Chancellor Matthew Goldstein's repeated threat of penalties for such job actions, which included steep fines and even the possibility of reconsidering tenure, was said to have a chilling effect on the rank and file.

Although Bowen seems satisfied with what her negotiating team accomplished, she also understands that broader structural questions must now move front and center if real gains are to be made. Securing CUNY's future as an institution that respects both its full and part time employees, she notes, lays not necessarily in the negotiation of contracts such as this, but in changing the environment in which bargaining takes place.

FUNDING

From page 1

enough about me, let's look at the facts.

In 1990, New York state government funded the SUNY students at the rate of $7,885 per student and CUNY students at the rate of $7,023 per student. CUNY was still being ripped off, but we were almost even. Today, New York State funds SUNY at the rate of $10,677 per student and CUNY at the rate of $5,046 per student.[2]

That is not a typographical error. CUNY students are funded at half the rate of SUNY students.

Is this a result of state-sanctioned racism? What does skin color have to do with it? I don't know. But here's some data. Maybe you can make some sense of it.

According to www.censusscope.org, as of 2000, in all but four of New York State's 62 counties, more than 64% of residents were white. By contrast, whites are minorities in four of the five New York City boroughs/counties: the Bronx is 14.58% white, Queens is 32.88% white, Brooklyn is 34.67% white, Manhattan is 45.76% white. CUNY's student population reflects New York City's diversity. Thirty-one percent of CUNY students are black, 29% white, 25% Hispanic, 14% Asian, and the rest are mostly Native American.

What is SUNY's racial mix? The most recent statistics posted on the New York State Department of Education web site were from 1996. While I do not know why there is such a lag in posting this data, I am assuming that, unlike the funding data, the racial statistics have not changed that dramatically in the last ten years. Governor Pataki, *please* tell me I'm wrong. In the SUNY system in 1996, 79.9% of the students were white. 7.8% black, 4.5% Asian, 4.9% Hispanic and the remaining few are resident aliens, Native Americans and others.

So, in 2005, New York State funded the 414,201 SUNY students (approximately 79% of which were white) at $10,677 per student. And in 2005, the 220,486 CUNY students (71% of whom are not white) had their education funded at $5,046 per student.

I don't really know if racism is causing New York State to grossly underfund the education of New York City's children and adults. Maybe the legislature in Albany just hates and cheats New York City for no reason. But the result looks like racism. And discrimination is not only illegal, it's disgusting. Please bear in mind: Correlation is not causation. You've seen some of the facts. Go out and do some more digging. You decide. Then act.

(1) For more information see Michael Dorf at http://writ.news.findlaw.com/dorf/20060329.html.
(2) Figures from *The Chief*, the civil employees' weekly paper (12/23/05).

Andrea Siegel is a Ph.D. student in the Sociology program.

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THE ADVOCATE YEAR END OVERCAP

From the Editor

As we come to the end of another school year, we also come to the end of another era of THE ADVOCATE, as I am stepping down as editor after this issue. Be aware that applications are still being accepted for the 2006–07 editorial helm.

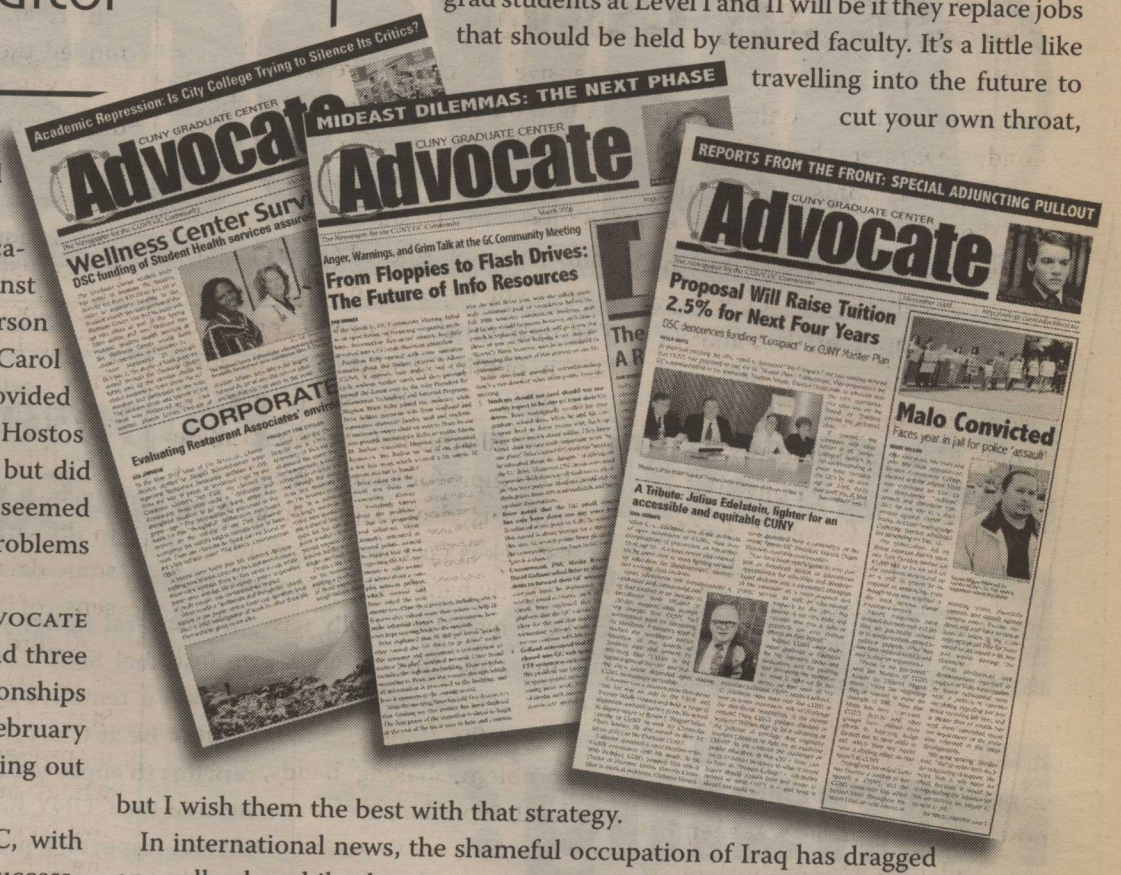
I would say to potential applicants: be sure to bring lots of energy to this project, a willingness to commit time, and make sure you really want to be intimately involved in the workings of the Graduate Center itself. Work at THE ADVOCATE, for all intents and purposes, is a labor of love. And you might also want to not mind selling ads.

But enough of the adieus, let's start with the year-end overcap: this academic year started with a continuation of the spring 2005 witch hunt against radical and progressive professors. THE ADVOCATE featured first person accounts by harassed professors and employees such as Andy Smith, Carol Lang, David Graeber, Robert Jensen and Michael Bérubé. We also provided news coverage about repression, including the ongoing saga of CUNY Hostos College student Miguel Malo, who was eventually convicted of assault, but did not receive any jail time. Although bad for copy, this wave of repression seemed to lighten as time passed; we received very little information regarding problems people had in spring 2006.

Other than coverage of academic repression, I also tried to focus THE ADVOCATE on the everyday lives of Graduate Center students. As part of this, we had three special theme issues: on Adjuncting (November 2005), Sex/Love/Relationships (February 2006) and this one, on Race and Ethnicity. Needless to say, the February issue proved to be our most successful, even if we missed our goal of being out before Valentine's Day. We were, uh, otherwise occupied.

Bill Kelly successfully navigated his first year as president of the GC, with few complaints. The DSC successfully forwarded a referendum to raise student fees in order to keep the valuable Wellness Center open. After a huge tuition hike of almost 20% that affected students this year, our tuition was thankfully frozen for at least a year. Nonetheless, hikes are now planned for the next four years. Public education is not what it used to be, but then, what is after the demise of Fordism? In any event, New York City has always been both a little European and a little Third World. Meanwhile, over at NYU the students are still having high-profile demonstrations, after their union lost its recognition following an NLRB ruling that allowed private universities to ignore grad unions.

At home, at presstime the PSC appears to have finally agreed upon a contract with the high level wonks at CUNY. The contract seems to guarantee that the only funding for grad students at Level I and II will be if they replace jobs that should be held by tenured faculty. It's a little like travelling into the future to cut your own throat, but I wish them the best with that strategy.



In international news, the shameful occupation of Iraq has dragged on endlessly, while the current administration rattles sabers for war on Iran. Seeing the political impotence of the massive domestic opposition to Bush has made myself (and undoubtedly many other politically-aware Lefties as well) downright despondent regarding the possibilities of anything good happening in the near future. The only exception seems to be the recent massive immigrants rights demonstrations.

Back at home, we are still stuck with the incredibly poor IT network at the Graduate Center. While it was nice that they distributed flash drives to students, I didn't realize until afterwards that it was a band-aid to try and alleviate the burn of network instability. On a happier technological note, plans to have wireless installed at the GC are going forward. Minimally, the plans are to wire the library, C1 and C2, the 5th and 8th floors. (If you can't read between the lines, this means that the 5th floor DSC offices and the student lounge, and the GC administrative offices on the 8th floor, will be privileged.) Hopefully this will give students alternatives to the network (as well as decreasing traffic on it, which may make it more useful). Now, if the administration would only fund free laptops with airport cards, those of us nursing antique computers could fully benefit from this scheme.

And last, but not least, the bar came and went. After 22 days. Oh, sadness.

— Spencer Sunshine

CUNY GRADUATE CENTER **Advocate**

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CUNY Graduate Center, Rm. 5396
365 Fifth Avenue,
New York, NY 10016
Tel: 212.817.7884
Email: gcadvocate@gmail.com

EDITOR-IN-CHIEF
Spencer Sunshine

MANAGING EDITOR
Dan Skinner

LAYOUT EDITOR
Mark Wilson

ONLINE EDITOR
Abigail Schoneboom

MEDIA BOARD CHAIR
David Hamilton Golland

CONTRIBUTORS
Anonymous, Nazreen Bacchus, Roderick Graham, Kimora, Tony Monchinski, Heather Royce-Roll, Jason Schulman, Andrea Siegel, Chong Wojtkowski, Ellen Zitani.

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THE ADVOCATE is published 3 times a semester, in September, October and November; and February, March and April. Submissions should be in by the beginning of the month, and print copies will be on the stacks around the 15th.

JOB OPENINGS
FOR THE 2006-2007 SCHOOL YEAR

EDITOR-IN-CHIEF, THE ADVOCATE

Applications are now being accepted for the position of Editor-in-Chief of THE ADVOCATE, the DSC-funded student newspaper of the CUNY Graduate Center. All applicants must be GC students. Applicants should have strong writing and editing skills, be comfortable with managing a small staff, and be willing to commit time to this project. Responsibilities will include editing and writing news, features and editorials; attending DSC Media Board meetings; soliciting and developing writers; and handling financial affairs.

THE ADVOCATE appears three times a semester; the pay is $700 an issue. Please send resumes (clips and a cover letter are optional but suggested) to: dgolland@gmail.com or slip them under the door of room 5491. The deadline is May 12.

ADJUNCT PROJECT COORDINATOR

The main job of an Adjunct Project Coordinator is to advocate on behalf of adjunct issues faced by students at the Graduate Center. The adjunct project coordinator should be a liaison between students/adjuncts and the Professional Staff Congress, and should expect to work closely with the PSC.

Responsibilities include: three hours per week in the office at the Graduate Center; attendance at monthly DSC Plenary Meetings; outreach to adjuncts at the undergraduate campuses; attendance at PSC meetings and functions; monthly reports on activities; any other activities/projects initiated by the coordinator in consultation with the DSC Steering Committee. $350 per month. To apply send resume to: dgolland@gmail.com.

DSC WEBMASTER

The Doctoral Student Council is accepting applications for the position of webmaster for its new website, which is located at www.cunydsc.org. Applicants should ideally be proficient in Dreamweaver, HTML, PhP and PhP MyAdmin, Perl, Photoshop CS, and Fireworks. Compensation is $18/hour. To apply send resume to: dgolland@gmail.com.

— RACE AND ETHNICITY —

The Function of Prediction: Race, Fried Chicken, and Prostates

RODERICK GRAHAM

THE BLACK MAN AND THE CHICKEN

I am a very black man. In fact, I think that I am one of the blackest men at the Graduate Center. I am so black that sometimes, when the sun is shining just right, I appear navy blue. As a kid, I was often teased by other black kids because of my color – I was called Dark Vader. Now that is black!

But no matter how dark I am, no one would make a serious claim that my greater pigmentation necessarily leads to a greater practice of cultural traits traditionally connected with African-Americans. Take the stereotype of blacks loving fried chicken, for example. Just because I have very dark skin does not mean that I want three pieces of fried chicken with my biscuit instead of the usual two!

The stereotypes that connect black people with this particular fowl can be explained structurally – most likely because the hearty and fertile bird prospered in the agricultural South, and the continuing low prices of chicken up to the present day made possible through American subsidies to behemoth corporate chicken producers. It is no wonder that a perpetually impoverished people would structure their family meals around the economical meat. And it is no wonder that they would find the highest caloric method of cooking – frying – the most satisfying. One needs a lot of energy to pick all that cotton. Indeed, one could even use the African-American experience to formulate a prediction about general human behavior, and assert that a group of people under similar conditions will be predisposed to develop a similar affinity to a similarly economical food, and that through cultural transmission this predisposition will appear in later generations until structural conditions make this behavior less advantageous (i.e., Colonel Sanders keeps raising the price of a chicken snack).

My darker skin does not make a difference in this matter, and only muddles the situation. Yet, it happens quite frequently. For example, a standard explanation for eating preferences would explain differences through income, geography, age, occupation, and, of course, race. By including race in the explanation, a conclusion would be generated positing, that on average, black people eat 15 more buckets of chicken than white people. The social scientist would be satisfied in concluding that race "explained 15 percent of the variance."

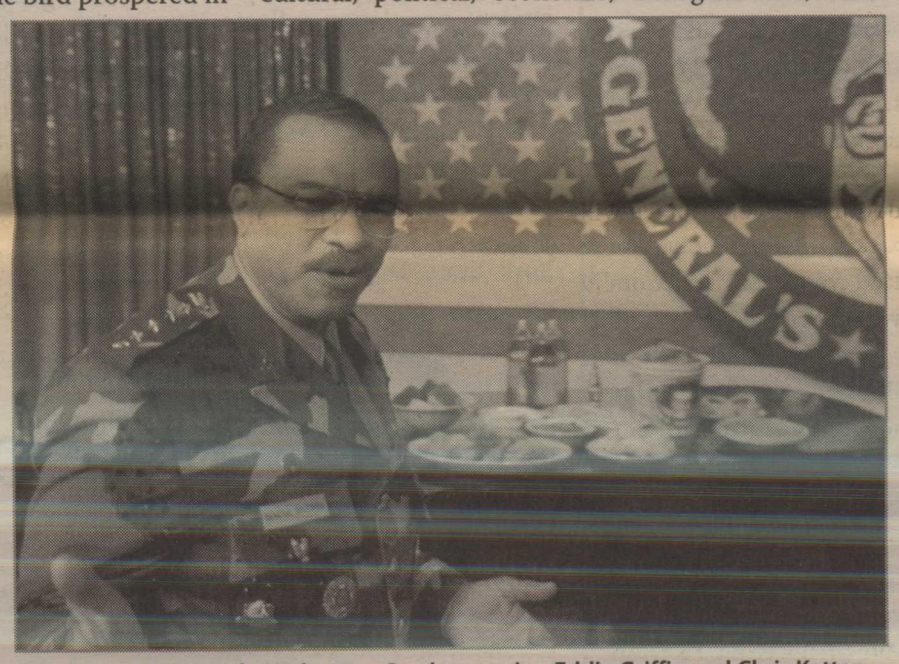
It would be safe to argue that there is nothing inherently chicken-loving in black people, and that the better explanation would be that under certain structural conditions (economic, agricultural) certain structural behaviors will occur. This type of explanation has the added benefit of being able to make predictions. Thus under said conditions we would expect not only the Jackson clan, but the Patels, the Martinezes, and the Weinbergers to make chicken a large part of their consumption.

The above is ridiculous. But my hope is to present an easily objectifiable scenario for analysis so we can distance ourselves from the political correctness of race and ethnicity studies, making it easier for us to see the questionable logic that holds similar, more real examples together.

MAKING PREDICTIONS

I have more to say, but before delving into the issue further, it may be necessary to draw some boundaries – create a few rules of engagement, if you will. For, if past experience is any indicator, my present remarks will be misinterpreted. The boundaries are an effort to pre-empt as much misunderstanding as possible.

First, there are many ways of approaching the understanding of race relations in this country: social, cultural, political, economic, biological and, most commonly, varying mixtures of the aforementioned. Each model generated by these ways of understanding is equally valid and reliable in its own right. I even think that the local knowledge people have used to navigate racial structures are just as useful as any other. For example, my grandmother was able to navigate Jim Crow South Carolina fairly successfully. She had developed a model of behavior which allowed her to generate as much comfort and self-esteem as possible within a context designed to systematically strip her of any dignity whatsoever. The type of knowledge she used was valid indeed. And if it were not reliable she may not have made it to her 80th birthday. Thus, whatever I write later will not make the assertion that it is somehow inherently better. I will only assert that its function is different.



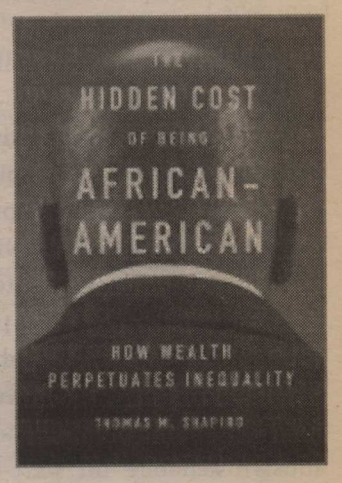
From the 2002 comedy *Undercover Brother* starring Eddie Griffin and Chris Kattan, which employs stereotypes to get laughs. In the above, a mind-controlled Billy Dee Williams (a Colin Powell clone) surprises everyone by electing to open up a fried chicken restaurant instead of announcing his run for president. "I used to work for the Pentagon — now I help you get your chicken on. Order an eight-piece Nappy Meal and get a 32-ounce malt liquor absolutely free!"

Second, a distinction should be made between explanation and prediction. This is important. Most of the discourse about race and ethnicity (and any social problem for that matter) is directed towards explaining prior phenomena. Volumes have been dedicated to explaining the ideological justifications the South used to support past slavery, and equal amounts have been dedicated to explaining current racial inequality. We have all seen those statistics in the news which begin with "A recent study showed that..." and invariably ends with "African-Americans, sadly, rank at the bottom of this category." Explaining prior phenomena has never been a problem in social science. Indeed, the social sciences have made tremendous strides in debunking essentially conservative biological and economic views of racial inequality by explaining those differences through structural inequalities. They have shown that these inequalities are endemic of the way in which our legal and economic system has been constructed. Now, I propose that alongside the explanations of the past, we also need to construct theories that predict what will happen if and when these structures are modified.

Now, with the rules stated, let me make my central claim: I think that the way in which race is generally studied could strongly benefit from a collection of social scientists who emphasize the scientific understanding of general human behavior. This means making empirically based predictions about our world that are testable. The function of this way of understanding is to provide some predictive power to the explanatory data that has been uncovered in the social sciences.

We need practitioners who make accurate predictions; otherwise we will be forced to listen to all kinds of intellectuals who have no background in the social sciences speak on racial issues simply because they too can explain: see Shelby Steele (literature professor), Cornel West (philosopher), Deborah Dickerson (lawyer), and John Mchworter (linguist). These people, none of them social scientists, are given undo legitimacy in affairs where scientific understanding is vital. Their only qualification is that they are black and are intellectuals. Let me give an example. In a few years it will be time for me to begin getting periodical check ups for prostate cancer. I am not going to find a porn star and ask him or her to do my checkup simply because they have had a lot of experiences with male bodies. Both my prostate and society are serious matters that should be handled by experts who can make accurate predictions based on solidly empirical data.

THE POWER OF PREDICTION



Maybe I should add some meat to the bones of all this speculation. In *The Hidden Cost of Being African American: How Wealth Perpetuates Inequality*, Thomas Shapiro has done a fine job in explaining the processes that allow individuals who have wealth assets to find better housing and better education for their kids. He posits that while income between black and white has narrowed, the wealth gap in the form of savings and other assets continues to grow, and this gap creates inequality because the wealthier are able to buy homes in better school districts and send their kids to better schools.

— RACE AND ETHNICITY —

Would you like this man to perform *non-recreational* checkups on your prostate? Yes, he's probably accumulated much experience, but people would not assume that he is a credible man of medicine (though some think his checkups might be more fun).

Similarly, Dr. John Mchworter, a respected linguist now employed at the conservative think-tank Manhattan Institute, links African-American's low achievement to their culture, thus denying the need for any progressive reform. Conservatives love him. But his legitimacy is no more earned than that of Mr. Studly there. His specialty is linguistics, and more importantly he doesn't support his ideas with data. He simply "explains".

The book is a showcase of social science prowess and pitfalls. The explanation is elegant in its simplicity and impressive in its accuracy. Shapiro derives a "cost" related to being an African-American – around $94,000 – which he computes by figuring the difference between the average amount of wealth generated by a white person's income versus that of a black one. The explanation *is* exemplary.

But there is a problem. There is no reason why black skin should be the focus of the book. By my reading, wealth inequality affects any person who comes from a family with no money in the bank (Shapiro admits as much), and the uniqueness of black individuals derives mainly from the consequences of racism in the form of housing redlining. It is not their skin color that is unique – it is the symbolically conditioned reactions of individuals in power (money lenders) to their color that determines this racism and redlining. This is subtle, but the distinction is tremendous. Theoretically (and in historical reality as well), any minority group in a society who faces these symbolically conditioned reactions will end up the same as blacks in the US.

Shapiro could have just as easily written his book about inequality for all people who meet the conditions he has outlined. The fact of being black should not be the focus of the study. It is unwittingly racist, implying that only those who have dark skin experience wealth inequality. Furthermore, because the emphasis is on explaining the inequality, and no predictions were made, any conservative with an inclination to disprove Shapiro can simply select whatever data he wants and construct his own explanation of past events. Making an accurate prediction would make such a strategy increasingly difficult.

DOOMSDAY

Let me paint a doomsday scenario – a suggestion of the worst that could happen. People in the commanding heights will return to consulting evolutionary psychologists and sociobiologists for answers to our social dilemmas not unlike the 19th and early 20th century, because they already attempt to use the power of prediction to understand human behavior.

In this doomsday scenario, we will be right back were we started some one hundred years ago: essentially conservative explanations that will blame the victim for their plight instead of looking at the social structures which have influenced and molded them. This is a battle of ideas, fellow chicken lovers. There is no truth lying out there waiting to be discovered; but there are certainly more and more accurate ways of predicting what's going to happen tomorrow.

I would be the first to argue that it is fruitful to look at particular ethnic groups' experiences. The black condition is unique in certain ways from the condition of those we color white, yellow, brown, and red. Each should be studied accordingly. But there is a place for prediction in social sciences as well. If we truly believe that human behavior is general, and that it is social, legal, and economic structures that lead to racial and ethnic inequality, then we should not shy away from identifying those structures and working towards making accurate predictions that do not privilege one group over the other. Making predictions gives social science the power to pre-empt ideological claims by conservative elements in society who are not amenable to an equal and just society.

So, who is going to predict who eats tomorrow's chicken?

Roderick Graham is a Ph.D. student in the Sociology program.

Assalamulaikum GC

NAZREEN BACCHUS

Living as a Muslim American woman goes beyond media depictions of Muslim identities. The lives of American Muslim women are understudied, and the assimilation challenges we experience navigating American culture often go beyond the expectations of most Americans. With that said, I would like to share my personal journey of survival in "American" society.

After 9/11, I decided that concealing the Muslim part of my identity might allow me to escape the discrimination of Muslims around the world. I witnessed the physical assault of a South Asian woman in Queens shortly after 9/11 and initially felt that I made the right decision to keep my religion "private." Around 7:30 pm, I was in my car waiting at a red light when I noticed a South Asian woman, wearing a sari, carrying groceries. All of a sudden, two men pushed her down to the floor, causing her groceries to spill onto the sidewalk. It all happened so fast! I did not know if her attack was related to 9/11, but I made that connection because of the media attention regarding attacks against South Asians. The traffic light changed and I drove home. I wanted to help her, but I was afraid of being assaulted as well. On my drive home, I thought "there must be another way to reach out to the American public and introduce them to 'real' Muslims (particularly women), not the stereotypical 'terrorist' image of Muslims endorsed through American media."

Negotiating differing expectations of my racial/ethnic identity is an endless cycle in my daily life. As a second-generation Indo-American Muslim, the value system emphasized by my family and religious community often conflicts with cultural norms acceptable in mainstream American society. For example, arranged marriages continue to occur within my family, and my choice to delay or even dismiss marriage provoked my extended family to disown me. Although my parents are supportive of my decision, I sense their uneasiness when attending family events because of the usual probing or interrogation they receive from family members for information about my life. My grandmother's famous comment about me is "When is Nazreen ever going to finish school?" Though she agrees that education is important, my grandmother is also growing increasingly impatient for me to get married and have children – irrespective of my personal goals.

Excommunication from my extended family in 2000 exacerbated the internal confusion about my identity. I had just started college at Pace University and I was determined to create a positive identity that included Islam and my understanding of Indian and American rituals. Refusing the urge to internalize my family's view of my unauthentic "Indian-ness" or "Muslim-ness," I started researching identity issues affecting second-generation South Asian American Muslim women. I discovered that other second-generation South Asian American women shared similar assimilation and identity concerns (even women from other religions such as Hinduism).

I decided that extending my training in Sociology with a graduate education would enable me to depict the experiences of "real" American Muslim women to larger audiences. Starting my graduate education at GC in fall 2005 changed my life forever. For the first time in my life, I was not afraid or embarrassed of being a Muslim woman. It was easy for me to "pass" for a non-Muslim because I do not wear my hijab (veil) outside of the Mosque. I could either continue to "pass" or embrace being a Muslim as part of my identity. *My first sociology class at the* GC, Transnational Feminisms (taught by Hester Eisenstein and Karen Miller), set the stage for my religious "coming out." After reading Saba Mahmood's Politics of Piety, I decided to share my Muslim identity with my professors and fellow classmates. I was relieved and grateful that I encountered people who listened to my views about Muslim women's portrayal in American society.

After overcoming my apprehensions about my Muslim identity, I realized that I am fortunate to attend graduate school and learn about how Muslim American women negotiate their identity. I have the opportunity to bridge the gap between the American media's perception of Muslim women and American Muslim women's identity negotiation tactics. Using ethnographic and qualitative research methods, I am determined to eradicate misconceptions of Muslim women in America and to uncover the dynamic complexity in all cultural groups.

Nazreen Bacchus is an M.A. student in the Liberal Studies program.

— RACE AND ETHNICITY —

Race Education, One Comeback at a Time

CHONG WOJTKOWSKI

In a crowded Roman discotheque, one of the locals approached me, Peroni in hand, and began to play the "What's Your Nationality" guessing game. "*Cinese*?" "No" I replied. "*Giapponese*?" he asked. "No!" Having exhausted his list of Asian countries, he said, "*però tu...*" and with that, using his finger, pulled the corner of his eyelid to the temple, a cruel imitation of the "Asian eye." Not to be made a fool of, I promptly held up my thumb and index finger, as though demonstrating the length of a peanut shell, and said, "*sí, e tu, Italiano*!" as I then gestured towards the man's genitals.

As amusing as it was to imply that this asshole had a miniscule dick, reliving it has stimulated anger, and the flow of the pen. The jerking of the eyelid skin at the temple is but one example of the racism against Asians and Asian-Americans prevalent in Western society and culture. Moreover, it is a symptom of the ubiquitous incidences of "social" racism – whereby ignorant people interrogate, mock, or deride people who "appear" to be of another race. Some use race as a springboard for a perfectly banal, thoughtless conversation, perhaps because they continue to feel that everyone who does not have sandy brown hair and light eyes must be from "somewhere else" and therefore wish to talk about it (i.e., "where are you from – *no, really, where are you from?*"). Although none of my offenders has deposited a flaming cross on my lawn as of yet, I believe we Asians (and everyone else who suffered an incident like this) need to get angry, fitfully angry, to police this type of behavior whenever it occurs. I direct this column towards Asians and biracial Asians in particular, who are often singled out and called upon to "answer" for their racial/ethnic/national background and composition. What's more, Western culture's constant nagging about "where are you from?" demonstrates the wish to divide and conquer, as a very subtle warning that you, my silky-haired, almond-eyed beauty, are not like "us."

I am reminded of a passage in Maya Angelou's *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings*; during a visit to a white dentist, he tells her and her grandmother that he'd rather operate on a dog than a nigger. In response, Maya's grandmother musters up the most poised, humiliating Shakespearean language and delivers an eloquent diatribe shaming the dentist, striking fear into his heart, and making him aware of his own despicability. The reader feels triumphant at the victory over the loathsome bigot. However, it is clear that Maya's grandmother did not in fact respond this way. In reality, they merely left the office without further ado and went to another dentist; the dentist's racism went unpunished. Not responding to a racial taunt results in a feeling of hurt and powerlessness. One is paralyzed with a cold rage; too shocked to speak, the words don't come to the throat fast enough; the wrongdoer changes the subject – the distance has passed – the racism forgotten, but not by you.

That passage makes me think about the power and courage that victims of racism must assume in order to teach people, one person at a time, that these types of comments and behavior are unacceptable. From now on I propose that all Asians equip themselves with a few key, hostile retorts. Much of the racism I, and many Asians encounter, is not blatant and obvious like that of the white dentist's. For instance, the "race game."

Another name for it is the dreaded, "where are you from"/ "what's your nationality" question. It's not that I am at all ashamed of my background, but the idiocy that follows is often unbearable. I believe these people are playing the game of "making connections," using race as a conversation starter, hinting at that I might not be as "American" as they. Now, I know I may have almond-shaped eyes and dark hair, but why are these somatic features considered acceptable fodder for conversation, when I would never dream of starting a conversation by asking you, "My, you have saggy, pendulous breasts. Where are you from?" Or "you have a one hell of a honking nose! What's your religion?" (See how reprehensible this is?) After all, there must be *some* reason why Asians get asked where we're from, and not freckle-faced Ted or mousy-brown Suzy? It is one thing to be carrying a tennis racket and then get politely asked if you play tennis. An idiotic question, but fair enough. But most biracial people don't wish to "carry a racket" when it is clear from lack of an accent, normal dress, and normal acting, that they are just as American as you, whose ancestors probably, much to your dismay, came here around the same time as mine. So think of another pick-up line, please.

I would never dream of starting a conversation by asking you, "My, you have saggy, pendulous breasts. Where are you from?"

Part two of the Race Game involves the Ignorant Interlocutor making a repulsive comment that demonstrates that he or she considers Asians to be mere curiosities. People immediately assume I will be grateful that you, too, know another Korean-American person. For instance, I remember being asked by the secretary, while signing up to take my GRE exam, what my "nationality" was. (This was after she saw my NY State ID). When I replied, "Korean," the lady said, "Oh! My nephew married an Oriental girl." How is this information of any use or interest to me? Should I have replied, "Why yes, I know her, since of course, all Asians are related and we are all friends"? Or, "And what's your nationality? Oh wait, you're unattractive and obese... must be American." Her callow words still haunt me today, though I am sure she has long forgotten, so unaware she was. Please, for once and for all, we Asians are quite indifferent to the fact that you know other Asians. I know plenty of white people, a lot of them unfortunately, so I don't care. Another moronic comment made towards Asians, especially mixed-race ones, was one I have heard too often: "Oh, you're half-Asian? Was your dad in the military?" I can't think of anything more derogatory than to imply that I am the love child of some Vietnamese me-love-you-long time prostitute and a horny G.I.; besides, what difference does it make how my parents met? To this comment I usually quip, "well at least they didn't meet at a family reunion, like your fucked-up, inbred parents!" but I confess that this is as lame as the comment that inspired it...well, almost.

Finally, a smorgasbord of inappropriate, racist remarks that further demonstrate the underlying antipathy and fear of Asians in society – so much that they must be categorized, classified, and made to feel different. I get asked a lot what my first name means. I find it droll to quip either "blindingly gorgeous" or "warrior-queen." Do most Americans pick out baby names based on adjectival value and meaning? I figured people pick out names they like, or ones that have familial significance. But then I remember how people assume Asians to be mystical, superstitious people whose names reveal dark Oriental secrets. My mother did not climb to the top of Mount Paegam and go on a ginseng fast in order to name me "Waterfalls of Grace." I also detest being called "exotic." I know this word is problematic in academia, for many reasons, but I would like to remind everyone (black and white) who has said this about/to me: Asians make up a quarter of the world's population. We are taking over, almond eyes and all. You, my fair-haired and/or chocolate-skinned friend, are the exotic one.

Lastly, a word to students: when your (Asian) teacher walks into the room, please do not shout, "what's your nationality?" as your first utterance. I often think these people are surprised that I am not a member of the Physics or Mathematics faculty. I can make *noo roon ji* as bad-ass as anyone in Flushing, but acting surprised that I speak French is insulting: white people are not the only ones allowed to study African art or German language or Cajun cuisine and not have to answer for it.

Basically, some people need a big "fuck you!" when they act this way. I am not advocating this for institutionalized types of racism like that of the job market, political system or our national educational system. There are better, more effective ways of educating people about racial and social issues which I am sure a qualified sociologist could speak to. But as far as the ignoramuses who tell you all Asians look alike; who mock the shape of your eyes or the sound of your first name; who mock your religious attire or how your pronounce your 'r's; these people deserve a big, booming, resonant "Fuck You!" If you are feeling gracious, perhaps (and for their benefit), you may also wish to add an explanation of the behavior they just demonstrated was unacceptable, and why it warranted your response. Hopefully, after hearing the magic words enough times, these people will begin to realize that it is *not* OK to interrogate Asian people about their "race" or make callous, injurious comments about eating dog or being "exotic."

Think of a new topic.

If, as an Ignorant Interlocutor, you meet an Asian and you are dying to categorize this person, and will simply explode if you don't find out from what Far Eastern nation they or their parents hail, then just wait for them to offer the information – after all, that is the point of social interaction, isn't it? To get to know others and therefore more about oneself?

So: allow me to settle a score: To the fat secretary, the drunken frat boy who asked me if my parents were in the military, and the Roman: fuck you, fuck you, and *va fungulo*!

Chong Wojtkowski is a Ph.D. student in the French program.

On the Uses of Hipsters

ANONYMOUS

When my dad visited me recently, from Eastern Europe, we often took the L train between Brooklyn and Manhattan. While we traveled I'd amuse and surprise him by picking a spot to stand where (I would tell him) a seat would open within a station or two. I was never wrong about which passenger would exit between the Bedford and Grand stations – I couldn't tell exactly when they would get out but I knew that a seat where I was standing would open at Grand Street at the very latest. Such are the benefits of recognizing hipsters.

But it wasn't always this way. My initial reaction to hipsterism was confusion and shock. Here was a group of young people, obviously literate (they often peruse books and other printed matter) who deliberately, it seems, choose to dress in what my grandma would classify as "shmata" – a kitchen cleaning rag being the closest translation of that term. The clothing items consist of pajama-like fabrics, lots of polyester with geometric shapes and styles that were popular in the previous epochs. Of course, it would not suffice to just wear authentic vintage clothing, because it needs to be slightly modified to fit the hipster look. I found out that "shmatas" were available not just at the Salvation Army, but also at a variety of so called "vintage stores" that peddle old clothing for highly inflated prices. Other items include creatively cut off t-shirts with what I am sure the wearer considers creative messages such as "Jesus is my homeboy" (although that one is no longer cool), "Brooklyn sucks," or the name of some old high school sports team from Minnesota. (While I am all for "Do it Yourself," these are too commercial to have been done at home.) Sweaters are often too small for the wearer. Old school Pumas or Converse All Star shoes accompany trucker hats (again, those hats are "so two seasons ago") and tennis bracelets. Skulls and pirate paraphernalia on clothing, mismatching colors and patterns, and tattoos all seem popular. Some hipsters wear what you might call "old people's clothing" – you know, those suit pants and sweaters worn by very old Russian men and ladies around East Village apartment complexes by the river. Haircuts need to be very specific: shaggy and non-symmetrical. Bangs are "in" for girls. The "I just got out of bed" hair look is still "in" (I think). Mustache and facial hair for boys is recommended but not required. Buttons may adorn bags and jackets, but rather than simple anti-Bush statements, they should project belonging to an exclusive group of those "in the know," or brave enough to claim allegiance to what the culture at large chewed up and spit out, as in: "Jack was here," "Andre lives" (that's about the late Andre the Giant), "I hate Brooklyn," "Madonna rules," "New Kids on the Block," and others.

> Jonathan Safran Foer is almost always a dead giveaway.

Other behaviors associated with hipsterism are predictable yet hard to explain. Many of these college-educated middle class kids (most are white), with professional parents, trust funds, and even corporate jobs choose to drink piss-like concoctions, like a beer called "Pabst Blue Ribbon," which happen to be very cheap. This attraction to things cheap – by association, though not necessarily by actual price – and the imitation of a "trailer trash" aesthetic and taste is a common feature of this subculture. Yet, the association with simpler, cheaper, more down-to-earth type establishments and things, is superficial. In fact, hipsters frequent bars and restaurants that look a certain way, but charge hefty prices for fare served in a decor that is seen as "authentic." Of course there is also the trend of going to establishments that are über-fashionable, very eccentric and completely modern. The hipster world strictly delineates acceptable hobbies, activities and music – those that are "in." Naturally, no self-respecting hipster would ever characterize something as being "in."

In fact, when you want to get a seat badly you can try your luck identifying them by their reading material – Jonathan Safran Foer is almost always a dead giveaway – you'll be resting comfortably by Bedford or maybe Grand Street. Others include David Foster Wallace and *McSweeney's* writers. But authors do fall in and out of favor frequently, and once they do, there is no coming back, so careful research is recommended.

The trend has become globalized: you can now visit any major city in the first world, and happen upon shaggy-haired youths wearing pink spandex and "ironic" tee-shirts. Often, when you ask one of these creatures about their interests, they might say something like, "I am into a fusion between architecture, literature, urban studies and fashion." If you are visiting any European capital, and you would like to find their natural habitat, look for sleek advertisements for coffee shops serving lots of organic stuff or nightclubs promoting "electroclash parties" and serving "delectable cocktails of vodka fused with [insert local drink of choice]." New Zealand, for example, has a "happening" scene, with bands like the Red Hot Bitches who gyrate to a mix of 1980s hair metal and Top 40. The *New York Times* recently reported that even places like Merida, Mexico and Kingston, Jamaica have local hipster scenes. I guess this makes them as safe for democracy as Coca-Cola and Arnold Schwarzenegger.

The work that hipsters put into scenesterism deserves some applause. In a society so obsessed with individuality it cannot be easy to submit to conformity so completely. The enthusiasm put into embracing ever changing fashions and the unanimous endorsement of fads carefully devoid of allegiances or principles, all while keeping up with adolescent style, must be exhausting.

Don't get me wrong, my hipster friends often burn me CDs of this months' band du jour, and I enjoy gawking at a skinny, shaggy-haired boys wearing Metallica t-shirts just like everybody else. I also know that the hipster look is not easily assembled; just putting on real vintage clothing and cutting off random strands of hair will not do the trick. It involves expensive hairdressers and shopping at places like Anthropologie or Urban Outfitters, without actually admitting that one is shopping at Anthropologie or Urban Outfitters. Because, while brand names are not generally welcomed, some have been befriended, like Brooklyn Industries, American Apparel, and Manhattan Portage a few years ago. Overall, my slight contempt (and a pinch of jealousy) for hipsters is fairly innocent, but not entirely.

That is because hipsters, just like their close cousins, the yuppies, are not entirely harmless. Every New York neighborhood I've ever lived in spewed me out when hipsters invaded. I am soon to be priced out from the boring Slavic neighborhood where I live now. There are already groups of them walking (or skateboarding) around to try the "funny" kinds of food served in local ethnic diners. A local deli's shop keeper tried to charge me more for a product I usually buy there, until I reminded him I have been here over two years and he knows me. Hipsters have more disposable income and are willing to part with it, making it impossible for first generation immigrants, and many natives, to survive in the city. Their tastes indirectly mock people like me who are stuck wearing boring clothing from those $10 & under stores and sweaters made by my nearly blind grandma, which look similar to those found for $40 at Cheap Jacks. Affordable greasy spoon joints in the neighborhood begin to charge more for Mexican Jarritos, so beloved by hipsters, and as sounds of The Strokes play in what were formerly neighborhood bars, rents across the city continue to climb.

But anyway, this article was not meant to analyze the role of late capitalism in fetishizing commodities or the way consumerism and ad agencies orchestrate tastes creating the illusion of personal choice and creativity. This is not an article about bourgeois guilt and the search for lost authenticity or about class and race markers in a modern society. This is not meant to blame hipsters for bringing back all things "kitsch," which were better off buried. This article is not meant to single out hipsters as bearers of doom, mediocrity, ugliness, and unbearable soulnessness. This article is simply meant to help you find a seat on a crowded L train.

The author is a student in a social sciences program at the GC.

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Teaching at Sing Sing Has its Rewards for Prof

KIMORA

Although I am a professor of criminal justice at John Jay College of Criminal, I am also a prison educator. For the past 17 years, I have taught courses to incarcerated men and women in prisons, jails, drug treatment centers, and halfway houses in Minnesota, New York, and Canada. Since 2004, I have taught violent offenders who are about to be released from Sing Sing prison, located in Ossining, New York.

Below are some of the questions I am often asked about my work at Sing Sing. My responses are specifically about men (since Sing Sing houses only male offenders), but much of this can apply to women offenders as well.

Why would you want to teach in a prison? It is truly amazing to see how alert, smart, and interested in learning the students become after just a few minutes. Now, you might think that the offenders are manipulators. They may be, but in the end, the student has to prove to me that he has learned the material through *positive actions*. Years of experience and learning have made me aware of when students are trying to con me. It is rewarding to see some of the residents of Sing Sing making positive changes. And... this may surprise you, there are many talented *leaders* in prison. They have the potential to build strong, healthy communities if they are given positive role models to follow. I have met few people in prison who do not have the capacity to learn how to become a productive member of society.

Do you think that inmates can be rehabilitated? Some inmates can be rehabilitated. However, the offender has to discard his numerous cognitive distortions (examples: all or nothing thinking; maximizing, minimizing, dropping the negative thoughts, etc.). In addition, the inmate needs to deal with his addiction to drugs, power, sex, "the fast life", etc. Rehabilitation is a full-time job requiring that the offender be thinking about ways to transform his life in a positive way 24 hours a day. Rehabilitation is not possible if the offender is not interested in change. Rehabilitation is also not feasible if the offender suffers from a mental illness and is not properly treated.

Why do some inmates resist changing their life? Many inmates have no interest in changing their lifestyle; they need incentives. For some of them, having a family to take care of changes their outlook on life. For others, they want to make changes because they are "...sick and tired of being sick and tired...." One of the reasons many offenders resist changing their life is because they are addicted to "the fast life" – "fast cars, fast women, and fast money."

How do you provide an incentive for them to change? Oftentimes this is extremely difficult. Many incarcerated individuals suffer from "learned helplessness"; they always have excuses for NOT doing something, let alone something positive. But this doesn't mean that they are lazy. They have been conditioned to think they cannot make a positive difference in the world, but they can unlearn this "learned helplessness." They weren't born thinking that they were a failure. People gave them that idea. It is my job as a prison educator to teach students how to believe in themselves.

The key is to educate the offender so that he feels that what he does helps himself and others. This is a difficult task. I spent a tremendous amount of time teaching the students at Sing Sing the value of education. I tell them that education is power and that power leads to control of one's own life. But I also caution the student not to use power against people, but FOR people. Building community is stressed in all my classes. When people connect with one another, they are less likely to violate that other person.

Why would an inmate at Sing Sing want to get an education? The incarcerated individual wants to get an education to pass the time, become more aware of the world around them, get a degree, feel a sense of accomplishment, and fulfill a lifelong goal of educating themselves. Many folks at Sing Sing want to improve themselves. It is wonderful to see how many residents at Sing Sing go to the school on the grounds each week. They take classes on re-entry skills, reading, writing, cognitive skills, anger management, theology, and more.

Why should inmates get an opportunity to take classes? I believe that if the offender is educated about cognitive skills (social skills, rethinking emotions, especially anger, problem-solving skills, negotiation skills, creativity, values enhancement, and critical thinking skills), they will be less likely to commit another crime after they are released. This helps offenders realize the power of rationally arriving at a decision, without violence. Education helps everyone. If we are committed as a society to diminish crime, we have to realize that all citizens deserve a decent education to empower them.

Do inmates really change for the better? Aren't they just conning you? There is no question that many inmates do not change, but it is also clear that many DO change, and become more productive members of society through education. *I know who is conning me.*

See SING SING, page 10

AAARI is CUNY

Asian American / Asian Research Institute

The City University of New York

CUNY Conference on The Well-Being of Asian American Senior Citizens

Date: Friday, May 12, 2006 **Time:** 8:00AM to 5:00PM

Place: Newman Vertical Campus – Baruch College, CUNY
55 Lexington Avenue (E. 25th Street), Room 14-250, between Lexington & 3rd Avenues, Manhattan

Admission: $10 (General Public) | $5 (AAARI / AAHEC Members & Students with ID)

Asian American senior citizens are a growing population. Many of them live in poverty, with arrangements that render them alone, and without strong social support. There is a prevalence of depressive symptoms, yet cultural and language barriers limit their access to care. In the crowded urban setting, many also become victims of crime and pedestrian traffic casualties. Coming from a tradition where the elderly citizens enjoy typical respect, how can a support system be built for the immigrant community? How can intergenerational communication be improved across cultures?

Conference Program
Session 1: *"Overview to the Needs of Asian American Elderly"*
Session 2: *"Pedestrians Safely Issues: Research, Promotion and Education"*
Session 3: *"CUNY Response to the Educational Service Needs to the Elderly"*

Co-sponsor: Asian Americans For Equality; AAHEC; Brookdale Center on Aging - Hunter College, CUNY; Chinese Consolidated Benevolent Association; NYC Dept. for the Aging; Organization of Chinese Americans - NY Chapter; Transportation Alternatives & Weissman Center for International Business - Baruch College, CUNY

2006 CUNY Asian American Film / Media Festival

Date: Friday, May 19, 2006

Time: 6:00PM to 8:00PM

Place: CUNY Graduate Center
Martin Segal Theater
365 Fifth Avenue, Manhattan
(Corner of 34th Street)

Admission: Free

In order to promote the artistic visual talents, and to stimulate communication among CUNY students who are separated by the different campuses spread across the five boroughs, the festival was created to provide a central location to display their creative works, and to network among colleagues involved in the same field of study.

Friday Evening Lecture Series

Time: 6:00 PM to 8:00 PM
Place: 25 W. 43rd St., 19th Floor, between 5th & 6th Ave., Manhattan

04-28-06 **Sheau-yueh J. Chao** (Baruch College, CUNY), "Chinese Names and the Genealogical Records for Jiapu"

05-05-06 **Eugenia Oh Yan Yau** (BMCC, CUNY), **Jean Kim** (BMCC, CUNY), **Ming Mei Yip** & **Judith Thatcher**, "Sound of Silk"

06-02-06 **Xiaoping Lin** (Queens College, CUNY), "A Dispassionate Logic in Contemporary Chinese Art and Cinema"

06-23-06 **Terry Axe** (Educational Testing Services), "TOEFL iBT Update"

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MI IV: LIFE IN THE FAMILY CRUISE

TONY MONCHINSKI

For all intents and purposes, Tom Cruise is the new Michael Jackson. The gloved one is off in Bahrain, working on a new album and living with the royal monarchy while his Neverland Ranch hits the auction block. Tommy Boy has risen to the occasion, more than adequately meeting our desired daily dose of inspired celebrity insanity.

The rumor mill has long swirled around Tom. Unsubstantiated are the stories of his supposed homosexuality; that the marriage to Nicole Kidman was one of convenience; and nothing less than outrageous and slanderous as the canard that Tommy is top gun when it comes to underage Filipino boys. Who can't wait for his and Nicole's adopted children Isabella and Connor to grow up, hit hard times and release tell-all autobiographies detailing the day to day chronicles of life in the family Cruise? However, for the sake of this essay, we can stick to what is known of Tom and criticize him for that alone.

Forty-three year-old Tom and 27-year-old girlfriend Katie Holmes are now the proud parents of daughter Suri. They're not married, although they say they'd like to be shortly. I begrudge them none of this. Childbearing is a wonderful in and of itself, and marriage is an overrated institution. But Tom is a Scientologist, and that opens a whole can of worms.

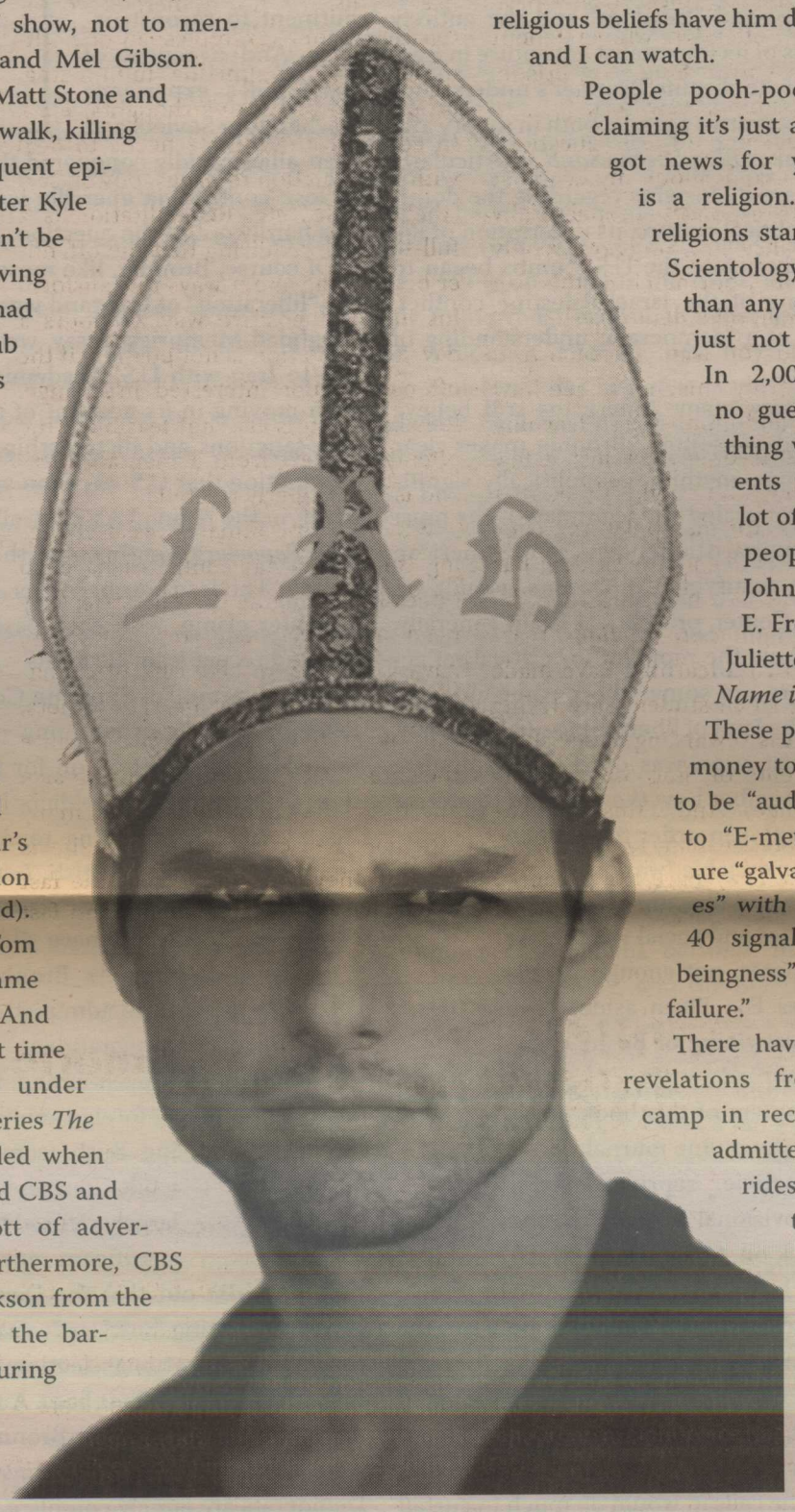
What message is CBS sending? That it's okay to offend Catholics and Christians, but we've got to take baby steps around Muslims and Scientologists. Give me a break!

Scientology is the brainchild of L. Ron Hubbard. This religion holds that we are all "thetans," spiritual beings, basically good but misformed by pain and unconsciousness in life. Scientologists adhere to a belief in reincarnation of sorts, believing that thetans have existed in various forms for tens of trillions of years. Believers hold that extraterrestrial interventionist Xenu implanted Jesus and other deities into humanity's collective memory some 75 million years ago.

So far it all sounds just as wacky as any other organized religion, right? Claiming on Diane Sawyer's show that he and Katie have a "spectacular sex" life, Cruise (who also characterized newborn Suri as spectacular) denies that Holmes was forced to suck on some giant adult pacifier during the birth of their baby. He also denies that Katie wasn't able to see their baby for the first week following her birth. If true, then Cruise is breaking with orthodox Scientologist practice. Scientology posits the necessity of "silent birth" less children hear "negativity" (their mothers struggling to pass them) and develop "psychic scars." Tom's ex, Nicole, would not allow Isabella and Connor to attend the birth as Tom had requested, thinking it might be too traumatic for them.

America is a relatively free country and we're allowed to adhere to and practice a whole range of beliefs and behaviors, bizarre or otherwise. None of these Scientology shenanigans would normally bother me, except for Tom's latest forays into Comedy Central's Wednesday night programming. Warning Paramount that he would refuse to promote *Mission Impossible III*, Cruise was successful in having the March 15 *South Park* episode "Trapped in the Closet" yanked. Hyper-conglomeration aided and abetted this arrangement, as Paramount is owned by Viacom, which owns Comedy Central.

"Trapped in the Closet" mocked Cruise and his religion. Isaac Hayes, the voice of character Chef and a Scientologist himself, resigned from the show after the episode originally aired. Hayes claimed he couldn't stand *South Park*'s irreverence to religion, when in fact he's been involved in nine seasons that have poked fun at everything and everyone from the Super Best Friends (Buddha, Krishna, Moses, Joseph Smith and other religious icons) to Jesus with his cable access TV show, not to mention Terry Schiavo and Mel Gibson. *South Park* creators Matt Stone and Trey Parker let Chef walk, killing him off in a subsequent episode wherein character Kyle laments, "We shouldn't be mad at Chef for leaving us. We should be mad at that fruity little club for scrambling his brains."



Stone and Parker are not allowed to comment on Cruise's influence in putting the kibosh on the rerun (there is also talk that the episode will not be included when this year's ninth season edition DVD is released). But shame on Tom Cruise and shame on Viacom. And this isn't the first time Viacom has caved under pressure; the mini-series *The Reagans* was cancelled when right-wingers lobbied CBS and threatened a boycott of advertisers' products. Furthermore, CBS dis-invited Janet Jackson from the Grammys following the baring of her breast during the Super Bowl.

Viacom also caved and wouldn't allow Stone and Parker to show an image of the prophet Muhammad on the show. Muslims consider images of Muhammad sacrilegious. Instead, that disputed episode was allowed to go ahead with a scene of Jesus voiding his bowls on President Bush and the US flag. What's wrong with this picture?

For the record, these decisions come under Leslie Moonves' watch. Les came up in THE ADVOCATE last issue when I discussed CBS's frivolous lawsuit against Howard Stern. Moonves and CBS-Radio have fired David Lee Roth and rumor has it they're looking at ways to get out of paying him the eight million dollars for two years his contract promised. Mornings in New York will be taken over by Opie and Anthony, currently on XM-Satellite Radio. The duo, you might recall, were fired four years ago from the same radio company for a prank in which a couple had sex in St. Patrick's Cathedral live on the air.

What message is CBS sending? That it's okay to offend Catholics and Christians, but we've got to take baby steps around Muslims and Scientologists. Give me a break!

Tom Cruise is a fine actor, but Tom Cruise is out of control. He hops up and down on Oprah's couch like I jumped on my bed when I was six. His religious beliefs have him believing he can cure someone of a heroin addiction in three days. His religious beliefs oppose psychiatry and psychology and led him to scream at *Today Show*'s Matt Lauer that people have not been helped by prescription drugs. Now his religious beliefs have him dictating what you and I can watch.

People pooh-pooh Scientology, claiming it's just a "cult." Well, I've got news for you. Scientology is a religion. All "respected" religions started out as cults. Scientology is no wackier than any of the others, it's just not as well known. In 2,000 years there's no guessing where this thing will be. Its adherents seem to draw a lot of rich and famous people, including John Travolta, Doug E. Fresh, Kirstie Alley, Juliette Lewis and *My Name is Earl*'s Jason Lee. These people pay a lot of money to be believers and to be "audited," hooked up to "E-meters that" measure "galvanic skin responses" with a "tone scale" of 40 signaling "serenity of beingness" and a -40 "total failure."

There have been delicious revelations from the Cruise camp in recent weeks. Tom admitted he used to hitch rides from gay prostitutes through the Holland Tunnel when he was a young, struggling actor. Tom's intelligence was called into question when he named Suri, believing her name to be Hebrew for "Princess." Linguists are now chiming in to say that the name actually means either a person from Syria or a way to tell a woman to go away. Tom can always name his daughter Bubbles.

Mission Impossible III hits theaters soon. Tom left his Suri and Katie shortly after the birth to go promote the film in Rome. I'll probably wind up going and seeing it or catching it on DVD at the very least. Again, Tom is a good actor and his handlers place him well. What's next for the new Michael Jackson? Will some unheard of skin disease turn him black? As he journeys through his fourth decade will he go berserk with the cosmetic surgery? The real mission impossible will unfold in the coming months and years as the relationship between Tom and Katie and the possibility of little "go away" having a normal life fly out the window.

Tony Monchinski is a Ph.D. student in the Political Science program.

The 'War on Terror' and the Class War at Home

JASON SCHULMAN

Book Review

- *Blood in the Sand: Imperial Fantasies, Right-Wing Ambitions, and the Erosion of American Democracy* by Stephen Eric Bronner. Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2005. 207pp.

There has been a plethora of books on U.S. foreign policy since 9/11, but Stephen Eric Bronner – Professor of Political Science, Comparative Literature, and German Studies at Rutgers University – has written what may be the best. Few ADVOCATE readers will argue with most of Bronner's judgments regarding the hollow nature of Bush administration's rhetoric about "democracy" and "freedom" and the entirely predictable results of its imperialist adventure in Iraq. Few of us are likely to dispute Bronner's understanding of the neoconservative agenda, both in theory and practice. What makes *Blood in the Sand* a particularly worthwhile read are its insights regarding the dominant American political culture, its description of life in Baghdad shortly before the U.S. bombs began to drop, its traversing of the Israel/Palestine conflict, and its outlining of a "democratic understanding of foreign policy."

One wonders how many Americans still believe that "9/11 changed everything." Bronner makes clear that it didn't change anything geopolitically significant, save that it congealed and legitimated "the most reactionary and militaristic tendencies of American history." Without justifying Al Qaeda's assault on the World Trade Center, or Political Islam generally, Bronner decries how the moment for critical reflection on "why there are some who do not view the United States as the land of liberty" passed so quickly. The Bush administration was quick to manipulate public fears – remember how the colors of the terror alerts kept shifting? – in order to whip up support for an interminable "war on terror" and to both justify and obscure a domestic war on civil liberties and social welfare. As Bronner rightly notes, not enough people (the GC's Frances Fox Piven aside) have explained the intertwining of Bush's agendas at home and abroad.

Most of the chapters of this book originally appeared in the online journal *Logos*. In one online article, reprinted here, Bronner gave "provisional support" to the U.S. military attack on Afghanistan, which he argues was a legitimate response to the World Trade Center attack, given that the link between the Taliban and Osama bin Laden was "crystal clear" and "negotiations were not being carried on in good faith." Perhaps not. But I believe that Bronner offered too much faith in the likelihood that this particular "police action," as he calls it, would do much to curtail terrorism. (Ironically, he does this in an essay that discusses Ghandi.) Terrorist operatives are extremely decentralized and their cells, if American intelligence is correct, are extremely autonomous; as Joseph Schwartz once put it, "sleeper cells" do not wait for orders from Al Qaeda central. Hence, it was never likely that military force in Afghanistan was going to contribute to American safety. Bronner himself notes the revival of the Taliban "amid the armed conflicts between tribal chieftains and drug lords" and the lack of a deep American commitment to reconstruction. And a repeat of the USSR's experience – where the Soviets and their allies rapidly conquered the cities in 1980, only to lose control via guerrilla war in the countryside – is hardly out of the question.

Of course, Bronner, like most of the Left, opposed the "liberation" of Iraq, and was correct to do so. His "Baghdad Memories" essay, written after a weeklong trip to Iraq with U.S. Academicians Against War, is both moving in its account of a country ravaged by war, sanctions and dictatorship, and sagacious in its expectation that U.S. invasion would lead to "a maelstrom in the region." As Bill Gallagher of the *Niagara Falls Reporter* recently put it, there is no "good news" in Iraq. The Iraq war becomes a greater tragedy, and a greater crime, with each passing day. The much-vaunted recent Iraqi elections – which resulted in the pro-Iranian-mullah Supreme Council for the Islamic Revolution in Iraq assuming office – can provide no retroactive justification for the war and occupation. Over 2,000 U.S. soldiers have been killed and, according to Andrew Cockburn of the British *Independent*, the "conservative" estimate is that 180,000 Iraqis have died as a result of the war. As Bronner notes, all of the Bush administration's assertions and expectations regarding Iraq have proven wrong, the CIA has acted as a "foreign ministry of spin" protecting Bush from domestic criticism, while Congressional Democrats have largely refused to serve as a source of significant opposition. Bronner is right to point out that the Democrats' pathological fear of appearing "soft" or "weak" will not help them to win a single national election; all it can do is undermine the loyalty of their base. And as the U.S. appears more and more like what Bronner calls "a one-party state ruled by shifting administrative factions," the Democrats are largely complicit.

> One wonders where these ostensibly critical-minded intellectuals lost their intellectual faculties.

Of course, the Democrats are traditionally the "pro-Israel" party, even as much has been made of neoconservatives as supposedly representing a wing of Likud in the Republican Party. Bronner is no Zionist, but his belief that any negotiated solution to the Israel-Palestine conflict "will undoubtedly use the Geneva Initiative as its framework" and will not sit well with certain quarters of the Left and the Palestine solidarity movement. But Bronner, taking into account left-wing criticism of the Geneva Initiative, believes that there is no way to make the dream of a binational state real. Sadly, he is probably right, even as Israel's status as a "Jewish state" becomes increasingly untenable as its Arab population continues to rise and Israel's refusal to discuss the Palestinian right of return, as well as its refusal to retreat to its pre-1967 borders, prevents the possibility of a just peace.

The most enjoyable chapter of *Blood in the Sand* is co-written by Kurt Jacobsen, author of *Maverick Voices: Conversations with Political and Cultural Rebels* (2004), and it deservedly rips the liberals and social democrats who supported the Iraq War to shreds. Given how obvious it was to most Leftists that the war was going to be a humanitarian disaster, one wonders where these ostensibly critical-minded intellectuals – a number of whom, it must be said, belong to the editorial board of the erstwhile socialist journal *Dissent* – lost their intellectual faculties. For most of these "liberal hawks," Al Qaeda and Hussein – regardless of the presence or absence of a connection between the two – represented the barbarians at the gates: it was 1939 all over again. Never mind that any sane Leftist understood that the idea of the Bush administration liberating anyone was a cruel joke. Never mind that Islamists will never, ever come to power in liberal-democratic societies (least of all the United States!). And never mind that all the fuss about the "new" anti-Semitism is really so much blather. Bronner, who knows a little something about anti-Semitism (he wrote *A Rumor About the Jews: Reflections on Antisemitism and "The Protocols of the Learned Elders of Zion"*), makes it plain: "there is no anti-Semitic movement in any of the democracies with any serious possibility of attaining power." To argue otherwise is to end up in bed with reactionaries in both the U.S. and Israel.

Admittedly, Bronner has no grand strategy for beating back hard-right governments in the U.S. or Israel. Here in the U.S. the immediate task is to hammer the Democratic Party from the left to prevent it from selling out its base and to demand transparency in the making of foreign policy, and in our political institutions generally. But Bronner's explication of this need for transparency – for the subordination of foreign policy to democratic norms, as he puts it – is alone enough to justify *Blood in the Sand*. If nothing else, in a world filled with "cruise missile liberals" and "socialists" making alliances with Political Islamists, it represents an anti-imperialist worldview which is both genuinely democratic and Leftist.

Jason Schulman is a Ph.D. student in the Political Science program and is on the editorial board of New Politics *(newpol.org).*

SING SING

From page 8

Those inmates get told (in a loving way) that they are not ready to be released, that they need to work on developing their cognitive skills. I would like to see legislation that requires that offenders pass a cognitive skills test before they are released. That makes more sense than just releasing some people "because their time is up."

Do you feel safe when you work at Sing Sing? Yes, the correctional officers at Sing Sing are professionals, and they protect us. The superintendent adheres to professional standards that enable me to work and thrive in this environment. Furthermore, I am aware of my surroundings, having worked in prison settings for many years. It's true that if you let your guard down, you can get hurt; some Sing Sing residents wait for that moment when people slip. I treat everyone with dignity and I demand that of everyone in return. I have never been assaulted or insulted in prison. If it happens in the future, it will be my own fault. Let me stress that prison is a dangerous place. If I don't come out some day, then I figure it is my time to go. I also believe that it is worth the risk because the human beings who are in there need help. They need strong mentors who can provide them with the courage to change for the better.

I would like to become a prison educator. What should I do to prepare for that career? If you are seriously interested in becoming a prison educator, be sure to get an undergraduate and/or graduate degree in fields like Psychology, Social Work, Criminal Justice, Law, or Education. Learn as much as you can about mental illnesses, especially Antisocial Personality Disorder (ASPD). Learn how to establish clear boundaries with anyone you encounter. Avoid thinking that you can "save the world" by working in prisons. That is distorted thinking! Learn to believe in yourself. Feel free to contact me – I will put you in touch with professionals who can aid you.

Dr. Kimora is a prison reformer/prison educator and an adjunct professor at John Jay College of Criminal Justice. She has designed and taught courses for inmates for the last 17 years. She welcomes your comments: kimora@jjay.cuny.edu. Her website is kimora.org.

Tuition Remission, ADA Doors, Lockers and More

TUITION REMISSION SECURED FOR ALL WHO QUALIFY!

Acting Provost Linda Edwards delivered the good news at the March DSC plenary meeting. Starting in September, tuition remission at the in-state level will be available for all GC students in their first ten semesters of study employed in the university. See your APO or EO for more details.

ADA DOORS – DSC TRIUMPHANT!

Thanks to the continued pressure of the DSC, President Kelly ordered the installation of the "man-trap" (airlock-style) system for the ADA-compliant doors to the front lobby. Once again the control of the ADA doors is in the hands of the user. This is a victory for students, other members of our community, and visitors who need to use those doors. No longer will they be dependant on others to buzz them in.

DSC LOCKERS

On August 31, 2006, the lockers in the DSC rooms (GC 5409 and 5414) will be emptied and made available for students by annual application to the DSC. If you have a locker, please be sure to clear out your items by that date or you can claim your property in September during regular DSC office hours. Signs will be posted on the lockers shortly.

NEW DSC WEBSITE & FORUMS

The DSC website has migrated to our new URL, http://www.cunydsc.org. Be sure to check us out and try out our new features, including the all-new DSC bulletin board forums, which you can reach directly at http://cunydsc.org/bulletinboard/index.php. We hope that this will become the online location of choice for members of our community. The bulletin board includes forums for general discussion (funding, health, etc.), student classifieds (jobs, housing, and shopping), chartered orgs, and the DSC plenary and committees. Anyone can register and start posting. We hope to see you there!

COUNCIL STUDENT PARTICIPATION A SUCCESS – LET'S KEEP IT UP!

The March meeting of Graduate Council achieved quorum, due in no small part to the presence of students. (The availability of beer and wine may have been a contributing factor.) The next meeting of Grad Council will be on Thursday, May 11, from 3:00-4:00 p.m. (2:30 for refreshments) in GC 9206/7. If you're a student program rep to Grad Council, please show up. If you can't, please let your DSC reps know so that one of them can serve as your alternate. Please note that the DSC and Grad Council are separate organizations; the DSC is student government: Grad Council is the governing body of the Graduate Center.

DSC TO HELP SAVE DARFUR – RALLY TO STOP GENOCIDE IN WASHINGTON

On April 30, SaveDarfur.Org held a Rally to Stop Genocide on the National Mall in Washington. The DSC sent a GC student contingent, coordinated by the ad hoc DSC Darfur Rally Committee. Contact DSC Co-Chair for Communications Dave Golland at dgolland@gmail.com if you are interested in attending future similar events.

STEERING COMMITTEE COORDINATOR POSITIONS RE-EVALUATED

In May, 2005, the DSC passed a new bylaw stipulating that four of the six at-large members of the Steering Committee would be designated "coordinators" of particular areas of doctoral student life: disabilities, off-campus issues, international students, and office management. The other two would, with the agreement of the whole committee, take on other projects, such as chairing of the health committee. As the year draws to a close, Steering Committee members have been asked to report on their activities as coordinators so that the DSC can re-evaluate the new bylaw. The responses follow:

Students with Disabilities – Brenda Vollman: The goal of the Coordinator for Students with Disabilities is to be a strong voice and advocate for the concerns of all students, with particular focus on addressing unmet or insufficiently met needs of students with disabilities. Additionally, the Coordinator hopes to foster an environment within which students with disabilities can comfortably and effectively contribute to their academic disciplines.

This has only happened within my own program, as we had a specific student with unmet needs and I was made aware and asked to advocate. I met with Sharon Learner and offered to be a part of programs and events, and my offer was never taken up. There was to be something in April - but nothing has occurred to date.

International Students – Chong Wojtkowski: As the International Students Coordinator I found that the needs of international students are not very different from those of the student body as a whole. All of us are under-funded, overworked, and under-supplied. I noticed during my office hours that students – international or not – would stop by to reserve rooms for their professional and social needs, to buy movie tickets, to ask questions about grants and funding and especially travel and research funds. I did not find that students felt it necessary to indicate that their being "international" meant that they needed specific attention. Certainly, international students might be in slightly more dire situations, due to the fact that they cannot simply take up another job to earn money, for instance. However, neither can non-international students – what with the typical CUNY teaching and class workload.

Students who are from out of state, even from across the river in NJ, pay higher tuition as well – and I certainly don't think a coordinator position would really help them.

I feel the DSO could best be served by considering all students as equal – and not single out those who are "international." The GC does have an office for international students to help with specific questions that the DSC Steering Committee is not qualified to answer (I, for one, would not know how to give someone advice about citizenship status or rights). The DSC is a strong voice for the entire graduate community, and if an international student has a specific issue or problem, it affects us all, international or otherwise.

Health Committee Co-Chair – Ericka Calton: As health committee co-chair I arranged monthly meetings with a committee of dedicated GC students to talk about what health care issues GC students thought were most important to them. The DSO's passing of the referendum to increase the student activity for health services insured that the Wellness Center will stay, but as co-chair I wanted to find out what services GC students actually use and what services they appreciate, or what they had problems with. Therefore I created an on-line survey as well as one in paper form which we distributed at the plenary. We received some feedback such as what hours the DSO is on campus the most, and what services they found most helpful, in order to recommend to the Wellness Center the best ways to serve us. We also collected data on what types of insurance GC students have/would like to have; our next activity for the committee is to communicate the results to the administration.

Office Management – Celia Braxton: The need for a Steering Committee Coordinator for Office Management is questionable and seems to depend on the talents, abilities, and interest of the Co-Chairs, particularly the Co-Chair for Business, and other members of the Steering Committee. For a number of years, the DSC paid someone a part-time salary to "run" the office. In my first year on the SC (2003–04), it was decided that this was not necessary, as the Steering Committee members were running it fine (although no filing was really done), with the help of the Co-Chairs. During 2004–05, there were a number of problems between members of the Executive Committee, and the Steering Committee as a whole, and it appeared that a Coordinator for Office Management was necessary. I have found that this year, 2005–06, most of the duties I arrogated to this position have been carried out by the Co-Chairs themselves as a part of what they felt their jobs were. I would suggest this not be a standing Coordinator position.

Off-Campus Students – Lee Hachedoorian: The Coordinator for Campus Outreach is responsible for advocating for and increasing the involvement of CUNY Ph.D. students who are in Ph.D. programs based at the non-Graduate Center campuses of CUNY. I did not undertake any efforts toward fulfilling the responsibilities of this position.

HELP WANTED! EDITOR, ADJUNCT PROJECT COORDINATOR, AND WEBMASTER NEEDED

We are now in the annual hiring cycle for DSC paid positions. The DSC will be interviewing candidates for ADVOCATE Editor-in-Chief, DSC Webmaster, and Adjunct Project Coordinator during May. To apply for THE ADVOCATE Editor position or the DSC Webmaster position, please your CV to Dave Golland at dgolland@gmail.com and state in the subject line which position you are applying for. Candidates for Adjunct Project Coordinator should contact Tina Lee at tinalee85281@yahoo.com. Current employees are encouraged to apply for reappointment.

IMPORTANT UPCOMING DSC DATES

Plenary Meetings (room GC 5414):

- Friday, May 12, 5:00 p.m. (6:00 p.m. for 2006-7 reps)

Steering Committee Meetings (room GC 5489):

- Friday, May 5, 6:00 p.m.
- Friday, May 19, 6:00 p.m.

Important Announcement from the Co-Chair for Student Affairs!

The DSC chartered organizations listed below will be dechartered by the end of this semester unless at least one of their leaders contacts the Co-chair for Student Affairs, Stephanie Domenici, with all the required membership rosters for this year. Contact Stephanie at stephanie.domenici@gmail.com by the fifth of May. This announcement has also been made a DSC plenary meetings and is on the DSC website.

ACM (Association for Computer Machinery) · Black Students' Alliance
Democratic Socialists of America (DSA) · Culture Club
Language Studies Organization · Postcolonial Studies Group · 20th Century Studies Group

GRAD STUDENT ASTROLOGY

What do the stars hold in store for you?

HEATHER ROYCE-ROLL

ARIES

March 21 to April 20

By using as much showmanship as possible, become a true leader. Sacrifice any petty personal issues that keep you from uniting all your friends and foes to bring about what you want. Try daring, try original, try outlandish. But be firm and be gracious all the while.

TAURUS

April 21 to May 21

You continue to need to use your diplomatic and intellectual skills to bring about the changes you need to see. Luckily, fate is blowing a nice wind that will help carry you, break old habits, and remind you of whom you truly are. Stay vigilant. The strains of being smarter than your obstacles will soon reap benefits. There will be your new self, in the heart of an old self once forgotten.

GEMINI

May 22 to June 21

There is love (either romantic or communal) between a man holding great authority and genius, and a woman of practicality and wealth (spiritual or material). You may be one of them. You may know them both. Either way, that love is a joy for you and you should feast on it as much as possible.

CANCER

June 22 to July 22

Everything you have spent so much time working towards now comes to fruition. The world will be a perfect place, with all your dreams manifested. Congratulate yourself on a job well done. Rely on your deep inner wisdom to still light the way and be courageous enough to follow. This is the cosmic time for you to show how your instincts were indeed right.

LEO

July 23 to August 23

So many outdated things in your life that kept you from happiness are being removed, perhaps nicely, perhaps with you kicking and screaming. It's all because of that awful woman who loves pleasure, who dreams of art, and reads your mind. The worst thing is she is bringing you happiness in the form of parties, love and sensual joy. Damn her. (Oops, is she you?)

Heather Royce-Roll is a Tarot reader, astrologer and freelance writer living in Los Angeles. Visit her site at www.earthless.com/tarot.

VIRGO

August 24 to September 22

Really, things are great. I just want to tell you that, because you might be so busy doing your very best and proving how talented and smart and skilled you are, you haven't the time to see that you're actually happy. I tell you, you're happy.

LIBRA

September 23 to October 23

You're going to initiate some changes. I say that tentatively since I know you hate doing anything halfcocked, but the amount of grief and sorrow that is being caused by others right now, topped with having to always play the pacifier role, is going to force you to make some new plans, with a serious dose of will power to carry them out. The victim role wasn't very becoming anyway.

SCORPIO

October 24 to November 22

This is your big change: Stop doing what isn't fun and do what is fun. Stop doing what doesn't work and do what does work. Stop being with people who cause you pain and start being with people who bring you joy. Stop looking for challenges and start looking for ease. If this sounds simple, it is. If it sounds too simple, it isn't.

SAGITTARIUS

November 23 to December 21

There is this woman. She's passionate and of great help to anyone's career she chooses to bless with her enthusiasm and connections. I suggest you make her a mentor or even a patron if you can get that lucky. And then it all falls into place. I don't like to put it all on this woman's shoulders, I'm just saying, why not?

CAPRICORN

December 22 to January 20

Finally, finally, there is a stalemate to the constant hardship with which you've been forced to deal. The wolves may be baying at the door, but at least you've got your spirits up enough to laugh and pretend it is the wind for now. The best part is competition and struggle right now will seem more like fun than a curse to bear.

AQUARIUS

January 21 to February 19

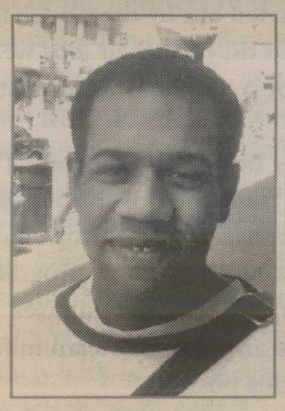
Look very closely at your lover(s), past and present. Their immaturity may make you grow up and take a stand. I hope. They also may be alienating you from those who may love you and clean out your saving account. This is a time for you to discover what love really is and all your issues could neatly be observed if only you'd try. (Try.)

PISCES

February 20 to March 20

A very strong woman, autonomous, fair, smart and sharp in every sense of the word is your guide through the unconscious today. Follow your inner rhythms, the dreams that guide you, and make the unknowable about you knowable. From that comes work you can be proud of. Oh it's such a perfect Pisces horoscope.

What are you planning to do for the summer break?



Writing and, since my wife and I bought a house recently in Brooklyn, doing yard work.

Gregory Pardlo,
English

We will probably be taking a road trip across the country to some national parks, for example Smoky Mountain National Park and Arches National Park.

Patricia Herrera,
Theatre

Working at an academic summer program for teenagers, and I'm also going to do some traveling.

Brook Orosz,
Mathematics

Working, taking comp exams, and going to the beach.

Richard Beck,
Educational Psychology

Traveling to Nova Scotia and Panama, where my wife is from.

Rob Collins,
Music

Doing a research project on influences of zoos on people's responsibility towards the animal world, with an emphasis on environmental justice.

Jason Douglas,
Environmental Psychology