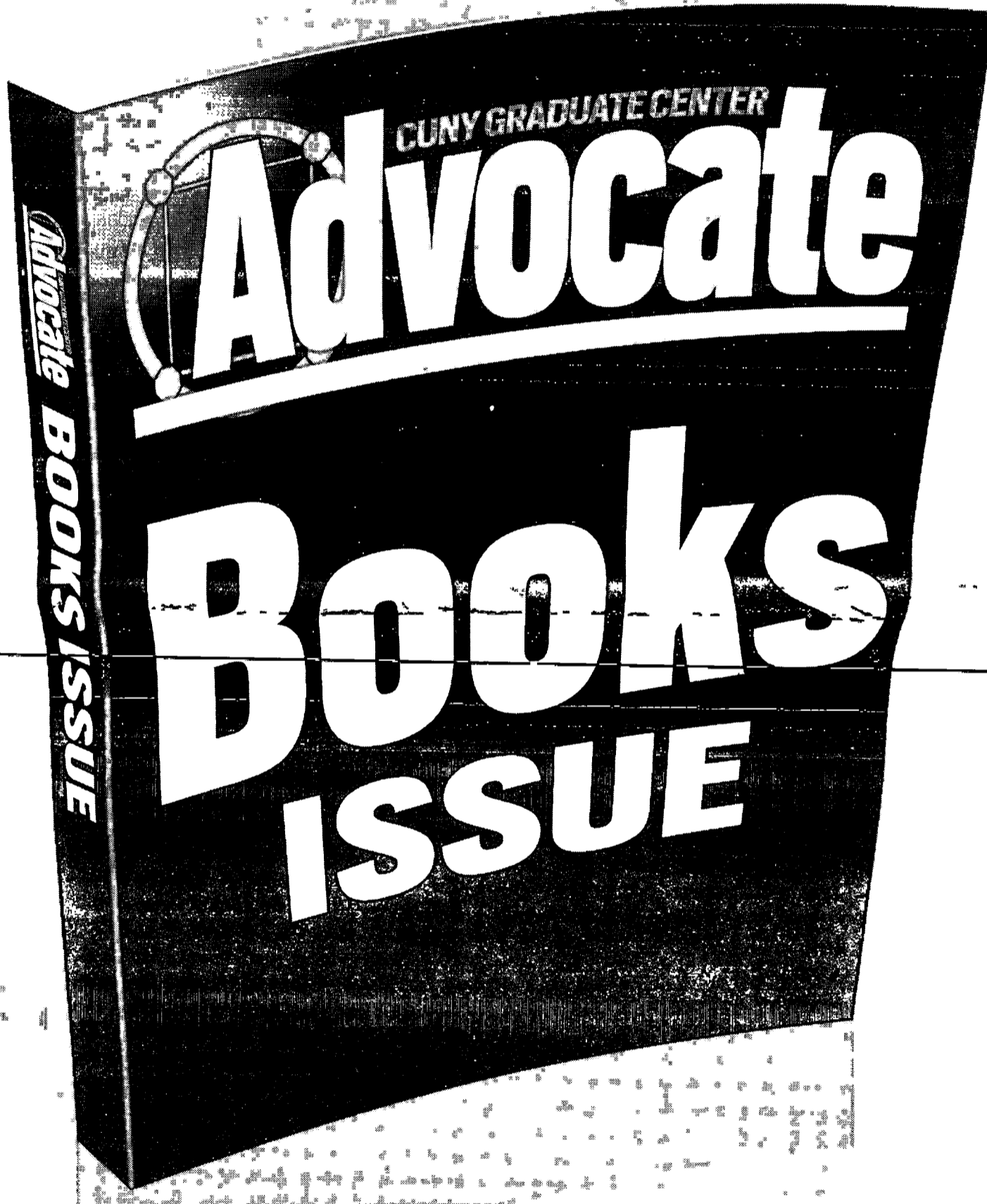


CUNY GRADUATE CENTER  
**Advocate**

December 2008

<http://gcadvocate.org>

[advocate@gc.cuny.edu](mailto:advocate@gc.cuny.edu)



ALSO INSIDE

**What's Happening to America?:**  
**Mark Engler, Noah Mackert,**  
**Grace Lee Boggs and Scott Kurashige** (page 23)

**Christian Parenti on the New Afghanistan War** (page 8)

# Shut It Down

December 2008

<http://gcadvocate.org>  
[advocate@gc.cuny.edu](mailto:advocate@gc.cuny.edu)

CUNY Graduate Center  
Room 5396  
365 Fifth Avenue  
New York, NY 10016  
(212) 817-7885

**EDITOR-IN-CHIEF**

James Hoff

**MANAGING EDITOR**

Michael Busch

**LAYOUT EDITOR**

Mark Wilson

**MEDIA BOARD CHAIR**

Rob Faunce

**CONTRIBUTORS**

Grace Lee Boggs  
Mark Engler  
Frank Episale  
C. Alexander Evans  
Jesse Goldstein  
Sean Grattan  
Tim Krause  
Matt Lau  
Natasha Kurchanova  
Scott Kurashige  
Noah Mackert  
Renee McGarry  
Danny Nasere  
Sarah Outturson  
Christian Parenti  
Naomi Perley  
Lavelle Porter  
Alison Powell  
Justin Rogers-Cooper  
Nichole Wallenbrock  
Harriet Zanzibar

**PUBLICATION INFO**

The *GC Advocate* is the student newspaper of the CUNY Graduate Center and is published seven times a year. Publication is subsidized by Student Activities Fees and the Doctoral Students' Council.

**SUBMISSIONS**

The *GC Advocate* accepts contributions of articles, illustrations, photos and letters to the editor. Please send queries to the email address above.

Articles selected for publication will be subjected to editorial revision. Writers who contribute articles of 1,000 words will be paid \$50 and those who submit longer articles requiring research will receive \$75. We also pay for photographs and artwork.

The *GC Advocate* is published seven times a year, in September, October, November, December, February, March, and April. Submissions should be sent in by the middle of the month. Print copies will normally be on the stacks around the end of the month.

Those who profess to favor freedom and yet depreciate agitation are people who want crops without ploughing the ground; they want rain without thunder and lightning; they want the ocean without the roar of its many waters. The struggle may be a moral one, or it may be a physical one, or it may be both. But it must be a struggle. Power concedes nothing without a demand; it never has and it never will.  
—Frederick Douglass

If recent events are any indication of what's to come, it appears quite possible that CUNY is poised on the verge of a significant and powerful grassroots student movement, the likes of which have not been seen since the early nineties, when students across the university occupied buildings and shut down campuses at 11 of the 21 CUNY colleges. Then as now, students were fighting against a series of harsh budget cuts and tuition increases proposed by Governor Cuomo that threatened to undermine the University's founding mandate to provide an affordable and quality education to the children of the working class, black, and immigrant families of New York City. From City College to BMCC to Hostos, Hunter, Lehman, and Brooklyn Colleges, a relatively small group of students took their futures into their own hands and stood up to the administration and the governor.

Once again, seventeen years later, another Democratic Governor has proposed to slash the CUNY budgets and increase tuition at all of the CUNY senior colleges by \$600 a year, and once again, students are waking up to the realization that their collective future and the future of their University—just might be at stake. Since Governor Paterson chose to balance the state's budget by recklessly, and I would argue indiscriminately, cutting state services across the board, including huge cuts to Medicaid and the operating budgets of both SUNY and CUNY, students and faculty members from campuses all across the university have responded with a series of increasingly large and militant protests aimed at stopping the cuts and tuition hikes.

This new wave of protests began almost immediately after Governor Paterson's proposed budget cuts to CUNY were announced on November 12, when (only an hour after the Governor's announcement) over 200 students, organized by CUNY Contingents Unite—an organization of rank and file PSC union members—gath-

ered to speak out against the budget cuts and the proposed tuition hikes in front of the Hunter West Building on Lexington Avenue. Students at the protest chanted "No Budget Cuts, No Tuition Hikes," and "Layoff Goldstein, Not Adjuncts." They also spoke passionately and intelligently about how the tuition hikes would impact them and how their educations and their livelihoods would suffer if the tuition hikes were approved. Watching them step up to the makeshift podium that day—which was nothing but a milk crate borrowed from the Hunter Starbucks outlet—one could feel the sense of excitement and purpose that was animating these students, many of whom had probably never before spoken in public with such confidence and authority.

On November 18th, only six days after the Governor's proposed cuts were officially announced, CCU called an emergency organizational meeting to bring together students and faculty who were opposed to the cuts. Organizers were expecting a good turnout, but no one expected to see the more than 120 students who came out from several campuses packed into the small conference room on the 8<sup>th</sup> floor of Hunter West, eager to discuss what to do about the budget crisis. Since then, momentum has continued to build and students across CUNY have started to organize themselves in small groups on campuses all across the University. As the *GC Advocate* goes to press yet another demonstration, organized by students and faculty, is taking place at the Baruch College vertical campus, where the Board of Trustees is expected to approve all of the tuition hikes proposed by the Governor.

In addition to these growing protests, several student and faculty organizations, including the Professional Staff Congress, CUNY Contingents Unite, and the CUNY Student Union, are calling for a massive mobilization on December 16 in front of the Governor's offices on Third Avenue and 41 Street at 4pm to protest the Governor's new budget (due that day), which is expected to include significant cuts to CUNY, SUNY, Medicaid, and other vital state services.

As promising and exciting as these protests are, the Governor has made it clear that "noisemaking" will not be enough to deter him from what he narrow-mindedly sees as the necessary solution to the state's increasing budget deficits. Claiming that the Wall Street "well has run dry,"

(as if Wall Street has ever paid their fair share to New York State) the Governor is ready to fight tooth and nail to get his cuts approved by the State Assembly and it seems clear that any real attempt to resist these cuts and tuition hikes is going to require more than chants and slogans, petitions, and postcards to state legislators. Indeed, if the protests of 1991 have anything to teach us today, it is that it's also going to require more than just taking over a few buildings. As successful as the students were in mobilizing against the cuts and closing down campuses in April of 1991, they were far less successful in actually affecting the outcome of the state budget. Legislators battled over funding for CUNY, but at the end of the day, the \$500 a year tuition hike and the cuts to CUNY were passed with minimal changes.

If we are going to be successful in resisting this round of budget cuts, and believe me, it is important that we resist, it is going to require a larger grassroots movement than the CUNY activist community. Winning this struggle will require the efforts of ordinary students and faculty members as well as the larger CUNY and city community. There are plenty of other ways to balance the CUNY budget than taxing the poorest and most vulnerable members of our community and other state agencies that aid the poor, the sick, and the elderly. If we are going to successfully convince the Governor and the assembly to pursue a more equitable path that truly puts the burden of these cuts where they belong: at the feet of the corporations and wealthy citizens of the city and state, it is going to require not only that we shut down campuses and protest in the street, but that we join forces with other city workers and citizens to resist these cuts across the board. Not only must we shut down CUNY, but we should recognize these cuts for what they are: a direct attack upon the working class families of New York, and seek to shut down the city as well. Since almost no city unions are willing to risk breaking the Taylor law with a strike, this will require the organizational skills of the rank and file members of the city's unions, from the PSC and the UFT, to the TWU and the NYSUT. Now is the time for the students and workers of New York City to recognize they share the same interests and fight these cuts together. Ⓐ

# DON'T SUBMIT CONTRIBUTE

Turn the musings of  
your mind into manna  
for the masses. Write  
for the *Advocate*.  
[advocate@gc.cuny.edu](mailto:advocate@gc.cuny.edu)