CUNY GRADUATE CENTER
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Solo Soul
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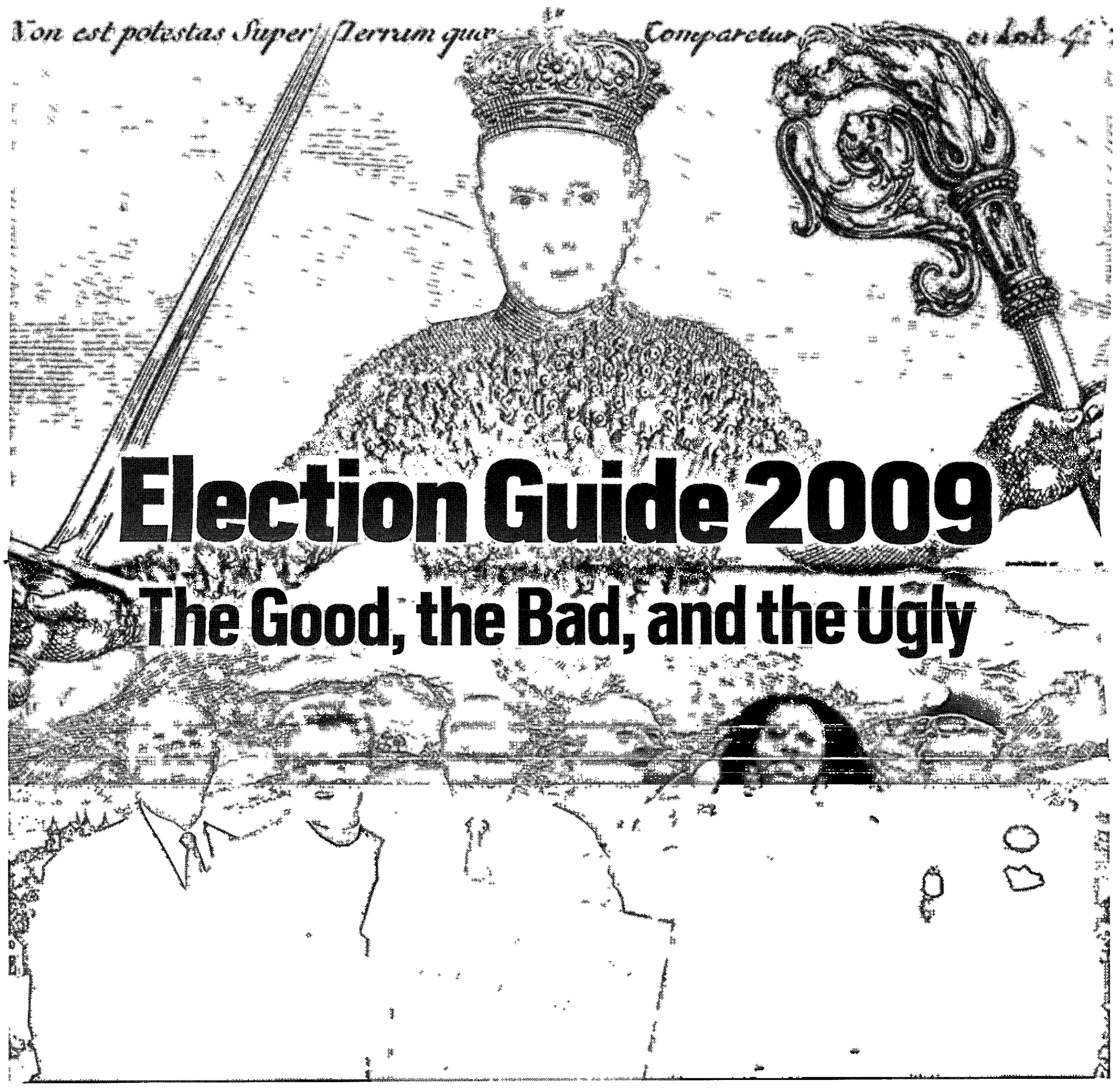

Election Guide 2009
The Good, the Bad, and the Ugly

ALSO INSIDE

CUNY Graduate Center
Advocate

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FROM THE editor's desk

Back to Basics

"Bill Gates says, 'Wait till you can see what your computer can become.' But it's you who should be doing the becoming. What you can become is the miracle you were born to work—not the damn fool computer." —Kurt Vonnegut

"To go into solitude, a man needs to retire as much from his chamber as from society." —Ralph Waldo Emerson

Last semester I picked up a $1,000 check from City College for a faculty development workshop that I participated in over the winter break. The workshop was designed to introduce interested faculty to the uses of technology in the classroom and was, no surprise, sponsored by Verizon. As a struggling graduate student who finds himself consistently behind on the rent, I was delighted to receive the money, but part of me feels bad (well almost) since it turns out I really have no intention now, nor did I ever, really, of using any more technology in my classroom than I normally would. In fact, instead of instilling in me a sense of possibility and excitement, the workshop made me deeply suspicious of the supposed pedagogical value of technology in general. Although it helped me realize that there are, indeed, several kinds of fascinating and interesting things you can do with web applications both in and out of class, I remained unconvinced that using those technologies would actually help my students to better learn the things that matter: how to be, for instance, a thoughtful and contemplative person capable of formulating, analyzing, critiquing, and communicating difficult and original ideas.

The leader of the workshop was, I am quite proud to say, an old student of mine from Hunter College who is now getting his PhD at the Graduate Center and is the head of the Writing Center at my campus. For the entire eight hours, he led the faculty members present that day through a series of exercises that were meant to introduce us to web-based applications that we could use to "help students learn." While I was familiar with most of the applications and platforms that were being introduced, I had never thought of using any of them in the classroom. From Google and Wikipedia, to YouTube, Flickr, Twitter, Wordpress, and Facebook, we talked about the potential pedagogical value of these various information, publishing, and social networking platforms. It was a stretch, but we did our best to articulate the different ways we might use these programs or services in our classrooms. The idea of using blogs and Facebook pages was especially popular, as was the idea of using YouTube videos as learning tools.

After the workshop I felt obligated to think more about the ways that I could use some of this technology to help my students learn better, and, since I had to write a report on precisely that subject in order to qualify for the stipend, I spent a good amount of time contemplating my options. The more I wrote and the more I reflected on my thoughts, however, the more I realized that I didn't want to use any technology in my classroom: not this semester, not next, and if I could help it, not ever. In fact, the more I tried to justify and find a place for technology, the more I kept thinking about what was being lost. Sure, showing a YouTube video is a fine way to generate conversation, but it is the conversation, and not the act of watching a video that really matters, and in an English class, where the subject is language itself, does it really make sense to show a video? Technology, no doubt, provides a vast array of new options, but do we really need more of these kinds of options, and do any of them actually aid in the learning process or simply provide us with a temporary distraction from it? What are we sacrificing when we introduce new technologies into the curriculum? And what kinds of messages are we sending to our students?

In an age of increasing technological innovation and scientific breakthrough it is easy to get caught up in the idea that, as educators, we must prepare our students for the brave new worlds that await them. As our lives and our relationships with others become more and more mediated through the use of technology, it only seems reasonable that we should teach our students how to use those new technologies to their advantage. To question this assumption, to ask why seems like a selfish, almost churlish endeavor, designed to actively cheat our students out of their right to self-empowerment. Nonetheless, once the question is asked the answers become increasingly complicated.

First of all, the use of this kind of technology in the classroom not only assumes that it will remain a viable and useful tool (rather than, say, going the way of the Dewey Decimal system and the card catalog) but that the use of such technologies are a societal good. The idea that the university or academy, funded by Verizon, should feel obliged to keep pace with the entrepreneurial fits of the World Wide Web, or that we should feel ashamed not to be on top of the latest marketing device disguised as a communication platform, seems shortsighted.

Indeed, one of the things that frightens me most about the often uncritical embrace of technology in the classroom is the way that it potentially dehumanizes the educational experience, where students spend more and more time both in and out of class looking at video screens, computer monitors, Blackberries, and iPhones, rather than looking at the world around them, talking to each other, or most importantly, spending time alone with their thoughts. Sure, constant e-mail, tweeting, texting, and ironic Facebook updates may feel like meaningful communication, but what's really being communicated besides a desperate desire for the type of community that without the distance digital communication makes possible would already exist?

What concerns me most, however, is not what we are introducing into our classrooms—after all, I admit a preference for polished, word processed documents instead of smudgy handwritten ones—but what we might be losing. I'd like to make the argument that, despite our increasingly technological lives, or perhaps because of them, the creation and conservation of technology-free spaces where people can, and are encouraged, to communicate face-to-face, free of distraction, with nothing more than their unique temperaments and their private store of knowledge and eloquence, seems more and more important to me. Our students are already attention-deficit [illegible] Internet, especially to privately owned, for-profit websites like Facebook and YouTube, as part of their schoolwork, seems at best counterproductive, and at worst incredibly irresponsible, even unethical. Instead, shouldn't we be encouraging our students to carve out spaces of time for themselves that are free from the distractions of the market and the market driven popular culture that typifies the Internet. Shouldn't we be encouraging them to be skeptical and critical of this mass culture, or better yet, encouraging them to ignore it completely. Should we not be inviting them instead to think in full sentences; to write more than 140 characters at a time; and to have the self reliance and self sufficiency to be alone with themselves and their thoughts for more than the seven or eight hours they spend unconscious each night.

As a profession we seem to have thoughtlessly embraced the idea of technology precisely because we see it as a way of making learning easier and more accessible for more of our students. Obviously—the logic goes—our students are comfortable using the Internet and social networking tools, so why not allow them to use those skills to learn? This kind of thinking is common among instructors who embrace popular culture because they think it will help their students "relate" to the course material. These are the same teachers who spend class time screening Hollywood versions of Shakespeare because students are supposedly incapable of understanding modern Elizabethan English or who teach rap lyrics or song lyrics as poetry, because it's easier for students to get the difference between a tenor and a vehicle when it's Tupac or Bob Dylan speaking rather than Dylan Thomas or Wallace Stevens. But our calling as educators extends beyond merely providing our students with opportunities to learn material. As educators we are also responsible for providing our students with experiences which they would not otherwise have access to, such as the experiences that result from finding solutions to difficult problems, engaged and thoughtful conversation, and collegial argument. But even more than this, it is important that we offer our students alternatives to the kinds of experiences provided by the technology of mass media. If we are going to insist on teaching them how to get by in the corporate world they've been given, we need to at least teach them that other worlds are still possible. Ⓐ

Bed Bugs and Budget Cuts

Putting the Criminal Back in Criminal Justice

Hats off to the John Jay College of Criminal Justice who made this month's most significant contribution to ensuring CUNY's enduring track record of cooking the books. A recently released audit by the State Comptroller's Office finds that a handful of CUNY colleges aren't bothering to report campus felonies. John Jay leads the way, failing to report nineteen of twenty felonies, followed closely behind by Queens, Baruch, Hunter and Medgar Evers Colleges, who collectively buried a whopping 73 percent of campus crimes during the period under State review. According to the *Gothamist*, "John Jay administrators are also accused of keeping two sets of crime logs, one created two weeks before auditors arrived."

Students, unsurprisingly, were upset by the news. Speaking to the *New York Post*, John Jay sophomore Deana Kelley pointed out that "I think it's unethical. It's like if there's a crime in your neighborhood, you want to know what's going on." A graduate student at the college, Juliana Velazquez, added, "It's shocking to hear you attend a criminal-justice school and there's still crime." Yeah, imagine that.

In case you were worried that CUNY couldn't care less about the safety of its students, university spokesman Michael Arena reassured anyone who'd listen that the colleges were taking concerted action to remedy the situation. An emergency two-day training session for every campus security director was immediately convened. What, exactly, these crime-fighting professionals were being trained *in* remains unclear, but CUNY officials contend that the problem has been meaningfully addressed.

Of course, as in all things, despite CUNY's impressive capacity for internal corruption, the university once again failed to beat out New York University for top honors in the city. You thought our numbers were bad? NYU failed to account for nearly 90 percent of its campus crime last year. When all crimes committed in the NYU's residency halls and classroom buildings are tallied up, the school ranks as the second most dangerous campus in the country. And here we were thinking those kids by Washington Square were just a bunch of poseurs!

Bed Bugs

While authorities at John Jay are busy covering up campus crimes they pretend never happened, students are falling victim to another kind of assault—this time, from bed bugs. Towards the end of September, the school announced that an army of bedbugs had taken up residence in John Jay's class-

rooms and administrative offices. But don't be alarmed: just as there isn't any crime at the school, John Jay officials assure their community that the bugs aren't a major problem, describing the situation as a "condition." "Infestation is when you can see them swarming," college spokesman Jim Grossman told reporters.

This bit of nonsense was followed by more of the same from the college president, Jeremy Travis, who attempted to allay fears by noting that "no bites had been reported, only skin rashes." That's reassuring! All the same, the school has a significant problem on its hands. According to the *New York Times*, a "crowd of about 200 faculty and staff members and students let out a gasp when school officials showed a map of affected areas. Evidence of bedbugs was found in roughly half of the rooms on the second floor, and the inspection had not been completed on the third or fourth floors of North Hall, though evidence was found on the third floor. Officials said that other buildings would also be inspected." And then what?

It Takes a Pillage

Just to make sure that he seals his legacy as "WORST GOVERNOR EVER" of New York State, David Paterson has ordered yet another rape and pillage campaign against the state budget, unsurprisingly proposing to slash $53 million from allotted funds for CUNY. This, of course, instead of, uh, we don't know, maybe increasing taxes on the rich by ½ a percent? In case other educational institutions might have been feeling left out, the governor also proposed cutting $90 million from SUNY's annual budget, and hacking off $35 million from monies allotted to the Higher Education Services Corporation which administers student aid.

> "CUNY cannot absorb any more cuts."
>
> CUNY PSC President Barbara Bowen

Paterson's proposed cuts come on the heels of the $44 million he cut earlier this year, which followed $68 million in downsizing in 2008. Meanwhile, CUNY students were also squeezed for an additional 15 percent tuition raise to make up for Paterson's unwillingness to go after other areas of the budget or raise taxes on New York's wealthiest. What a coward.

According to Professional Staff Congress president Barbara Bowen, "CUNY cannot absorb any more cuts. The University is already cramming students into overcrowded classrooms and squeezing sixty adjunct faculty into a single office. Enrollment is the highest it has ever been; the demand for a CUNY education has never been greater. It makes no sense—economically or morally—to cut the University now." The PSC, she announced, "calls on the legislature to reject this destructive proposal. Now more than ever, when the recession continues to hit New Yorkers hard, CUNY represents the only chance for a college education for thousands of ordinary people. A cut of this size could force the University to reduce its student population and deny thousands of people an opportunity for a better life. That's the wrong choice at any time, and especially the wrong choice now."

CUNY Research Foundation Workers Walk Out

The *Advocate* reported last month on the one-hour CUNY Research Foundation (RF-CUNY) walkout on September 14. Fed up with a seemingly intractable contract dispute, PSC members at the Research Foundation Central Office walked out of their offices and began picketing along the West 41st street headquarters of the RF.

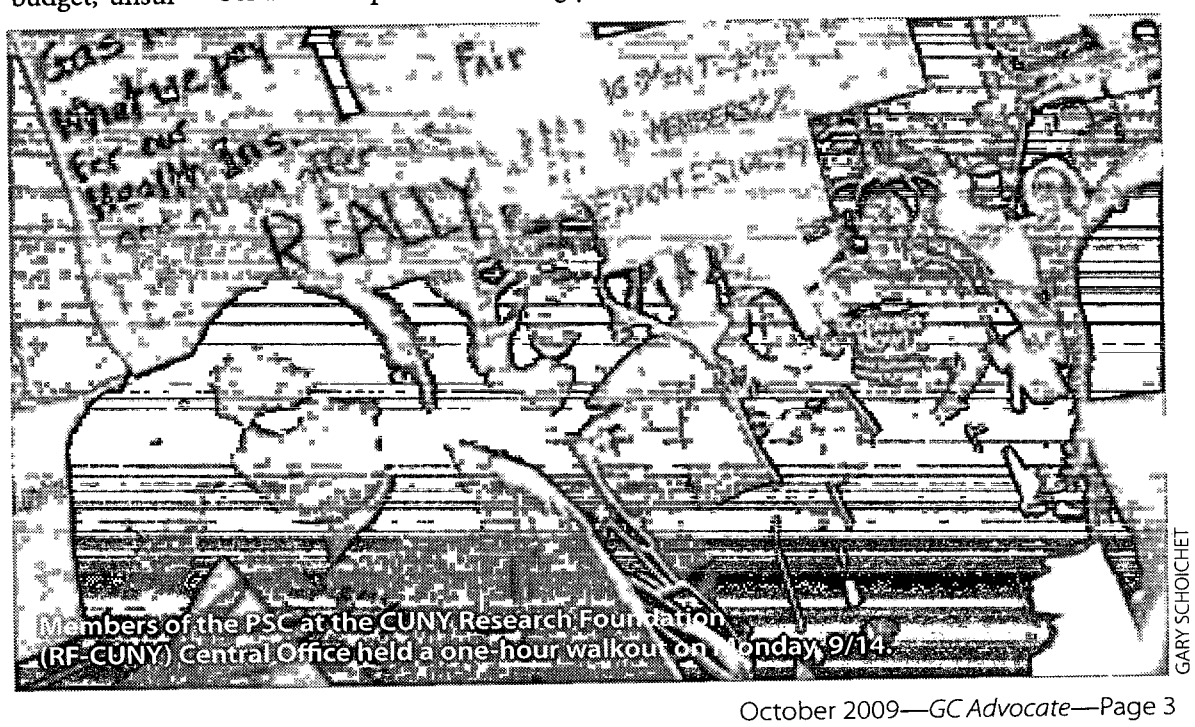
The action began at 8:30 when the PSC began picketing at the front and back entrances to the RF-CUNY's West 41st Street headquarters. After an hour of boisterous chanting and marching, the workers entered the building with PSC President Barbara Bowen to seek a meeting with RF-CUNY President Richard Rothbard. But the RF turned off the elevators to prevent Bowen from reaching Rothbard's office.

PSC members ratcheted up the pressure shortly thereafter. The PSC's *This Week* reports that "members at the RF-CUNY Central Office voted 91 percent "yes" for a strike authorization on Thursday, September 24 with 83 percent of the workers voting.

"'This is about respect,' explained Chapter Chair Tony Dixon. 'By all indicators, RF-CUNY has plenty of money. It's hard for us to watch as they spend it on a 44 percent raise for President Rothbard and on an expensive anti-union law firm, when they could be putting that money toward a fair contract for us. So it's really about respect.'"

The vote authorizes the bargaining committee to call for a strike at any point of their choosing moving forward. Since then, "PSC members at the central office of RF-CUNY have met RF-CUNY management at the bargaining table once since the union members voted to authorize a strike. RF-CUNY made some encouraging moves, but maintains its proposal to increase the employee contribution to the health insurance to 19 percent in the third year and keep it at 19 percent in a newly proposed fourth year."

The PSC goes on to announce that "there are two more bargaining dates scheduled for this month, and PSC members continue to mobilize for a fair contract…To join other PSC members in supporting the RF workers, or with any questions about their mobilization, please email Kian Frederick at kfrederick@pscmail.org or call her in the PSC office, 212-354-1252." Ⓐ



Members of the PSC at the CUNY Research Foundation (RF-CUNY) Central Office held a one-hour walkout on Monday, 9/14.

GARY SCHOICHET

Correction:

In our September issue we accidentally attributed the book review "Our Perfectionisms, Ourselves," to Mia Chin. Mia's last name is, in fact, Chen. *The Advocate* regrets the error.

political analysis

Defending the United Nations

ANDREW BAST

Like beauty, the value of the United Nations lies in the eye of the beholder. Case in point, David Rothkopf's recent screed on *Foreign Policy.com* ("You Can't Spell Unproductive Without the Letters U and N") against the world's largest multilateral organization, the latest in a long line of vitriolic—and largely misinformed—attacks on the institution.

Only a few years ago, John Bolton, at the time the US ambassador to the UN, declared that taking ten floors off the secretariat would make little difference in its operation. Superfluous or not, those ten floors managed to survive Bolton's UN tenure largely unscathed. Although Rothkopf's rant, too, will likely dissolve away into the digital archives of misguided foreign policy analysis, his argument deserves a second, serious look.

That Rothkopf should be the source of this broadside is unfortunate, because he otherwise seems to be, on the whole, brilliant. His credentials are top-notch: head of a global consulting firm, appointment to the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, author of the enjoyable read, *Superclass* (which drilled into the networked elite pulling the powerful levers behind the machinery of globalization) and another widely praised book on the National Security Council.

All of this makes his piece all the more confounding. Apparently Rothkopf, like many others (including many US policymakers), doesn't know what the UN is.

Rothkopf makes three bold claims. First, that the "UN" has lacked a backbone since its inception and, what's more, was actually designed to be "invertebrate." Second, that the ideas underlying the Security Council are, literally, elementary: "Basically the organization was designed along the lines of the conflict resolution sessions my daughters' elementary school used to use when students got into a fight." And third, that the organization is not even worth the building it occupies.

Rothkopf's condemnation is a clear echo of Bolton, reflecting more the criticisms thrown around at Turtle Bay than what the UN actually does. He suggests shutting the place down and renting the building out as condos because "even in a down New York real estate market it is almost certain to be a better return on investment for the dollars poured into that white elephant on the East River than 'outcomes' like the proposed sanctions on Pyongyang."

This kind of argumentation is worse than scorching a straw man, ignoring the ways in which the UN is a positive tool for the exercise of US power, designed in the image of the US ideal.

To begin with, Rothkopf repeatedly refers to the "UN," when it's clear that he's talking about just the Security Council, the body that handles matters of international peace and security. But to reduce the United Nations to a mechanism for conflict resolution, as Rothkopf does, misses the point. The theory underpinning the composition of the council, rather than elementary, is a rather nuanced and

David Rothkopf

high-minded concept in international relations known as collective security. Put simply, an attack on one member state constitutes an attack on all. The logic behind the theory is to create significant disincentives for aggression, thereby increasing stability among the society of states. The best example of collective security at work was the council's response to Iraq's 1990 invasion of Kuwait.

Rothkopf has a point, inasmuch as during the Cold War, the Security Council remained deadlocked, with the United States and the Soviet Union able to wield their vetoes to effectively block any action against their interests. But to suggest that the body was designed without a spine or that it was founded on facile ideas is ludicrous. If anything, it traces its origin directly back to one of the finer US presidents, Woodrow Wilson.

Worse still, to talk about the UN as if it were only the Security Council, though disturbingly common, neglects the reality of the last six decades. Bluntly stated, today the UN is essentially a service organization. One could argue, and I probably would, that the UN is doing more than any other state or international organization to satisfy "the obligations of the social contract in the global era," as Rothkopf phrases it. After the United States, the UN today exercises command control over the world's largest number of deployed military forces. UN peacekeeping missions currently number sixteen, with nearly 100,000 uniformed personnel deployed.

UN agencies also feed the hungry, house the displaced and save the lives of children on an unparalleled scale around the world. The World Food Program will feed 105 million people this year. The UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR) cared for 25 million people last year, most of whom had fled war and chaos. UNICEF works in the poorest countries to provide children fresh drinking water, immunizations and equal access to education, among other things. Imagine that: an organization committed to serving those from whom the least benefit is to be gained—namely, the poor, the dispossessed, the desperate. And most of its programs fight to sustain funding every year.

This is to say nothing of agencies like the UN Development Program (which has been working to strengthen governments in the developing world for decades), or the international criminal tribunals for Yugoslavia and Rwanda, or the International Atomic Energy Agency, or the World Health Organization, which has served as the global coordinator in the rather impressive response to the swine flu.

Even the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund, both of which provide American foreign policymakers with concrete mechanisms to extend influence around the globe, technically fall under the UN umbrella.

None of this should be interpreted as some blind faith in the UN as an organization. Without a doubt the UN secretariat and assorted agencies are poorly organized—even disastrously so—and almost institutionally geared for waste and inefficiency. A management chart of the entire place would elicit shudders, if not outright shouts of terror, from a Fortune 500 executive. There's also no question that the Security Council looks like a plan drawn up by the victors of World War II, not by the major and emerging powers of today. And yes, there are disasters, such as the Human Rights Council, which has made a mockery of its name.

But throwing stones at "the UN" in order to criticize the latest resolution on North Korea as toothless is not only shallow, it's simply wrong. Because a deliberative body exists does not mean that the United States will always get its way. And when you actually try to make sense of other states' actions, in this case Russia and China, it becomes clear that they may actually be coming around toward a more muscular condemnation of North Korea's nuclearization. That is, they are increasingly approaching the US position.

Arguing that the politicization of the Security Council justifies ridding the world of the UN is not just intellectually dishonest. It's at odds with US interests. Ⓐ

Young But Not Invincible

KIMBERLY LIBMAN

The current debate on health care reform and its rapidly changing policy landscape leaves open a number of problems and ignores or dismisses several populations. Understanding the current policy recommendations and the concerns surrounding them were the subject of a recent forum on the politics of health care reform in the United States, co-sponsored by the DSC Health Issues Committee on October 8. A series of speakers offered academic and practice-based perspectives on the Barack Obama administration and Congress's most recent efforts to pass a reform bill that is rapidly dwindling to little more than new regulations on private health insurers and a health insurance mandate, which aim to close the widening gap of uninsured Americans and wrangle escalating health care costs.

Most uninsured people make too much money to qualify for Medicaid (less than $706/month for an individual; less than $1,217/month for a family of four) but cannot afford coverage on their own. Young adults occupy a unique niche in this health insurance demographic. Within the debate on national health care reform people between the ages of eighteen and thirty-four are continually labeled as "young invincibles." The bill sponsored by Senator Bacchus (D-Montana) includes mandated health insurance for everyone with a discounted 'young invincible' policy for people under the age of twenty-five. A far cry from the left's calls for a single payer plan, or centrist calls for a public option. Baccus's bill offers little more than some basic tinkering with the for-profit insurance market. It proposes giving financial support for creating health care cooperatives and creating exchanges (regulated marketplaces) where small businesses and the uninsured can buy into government vetted health plans. There are regulations on what plans must cover, but these are rolled out in tiers (literally going from "bronze" to "platinum") and maintain structured inequity in terms of access to care. These reforms will do little for most of the young adults here at the Graduate Center. We are far from invincible and most of us are not under any illusions about this. The label is problematic because it is inaccurate and it positions us unproductively and unfavorably in the health care reform debate.

The label "young invincibles" paints us unfavorably by describing us as willing risk takers when it comes to health coverage. It thinly cloaks our elected representatives' assumptions that we don't want health insurance; that we are actively choosing to remain uninsured; that we would rather spend our incomes on other things; and that we do this because we are somehow unaware of our own vulnerability. From this perspective, young adults are not only threats to our own health but we become a big piece of the escalating insurance cost problem. By not buying into the private health insurance system we fail to help disperse the costs that insurance companies pay for care, presumably because we don't require the same amount of care that older adults do. If more young healthy people like us paid up for insurance, the argument goes, it would be cheaper for everyone. This logic is a paternalistic way of saying we are too dumb and reckless to do what's good for us and too selfish to do what's good for our country.

This is where the term young invincibles and the assumptions behind it become politically and practically unproductive. By positioning us as needing to be forced into buying insurance, it provides a rationale for legal mandates on having health care coverage, not for the altruistic goals of protecting us from illness, injury, and the threat of financial ruin before age forty—but rather to disperse risk for private in-

Continued on page 23

How to avoid the Flu this season

- Get vaccinated: vaccination is the best protection against contracting the flu
- Practice good hand hygiene: wash with soap and water for twenty seconds, use hand sanitizer
- Cover your mouth with a tissue when you sneeze or cough. Throw away the tissue after one use
- Know the signs/symptoms of flu
- Stay home if you have the flu or flu-like symptoms
- Wipe shared work surfaces (keyboards, telephones) with antiseptic

This flu season (2009-2010), there are more uncertainties than usual because of the emergence of a new 2009 H1N1 influenza virus (previously called "novel H1N1" or "swine flu") that has caused the first influenza pandemic (global outbreak of disease) in more than forty years.

Severity is uncertain. Many people do not have immune protection against this new and very different 2009 H1N1 virus, which has spread worldwide quickly and has been declared a pandemic by the World Health Organization (WHO) scientists who believe the 2009 H1N1 virus—along with regular seasonal viruses—will cause illness, hospital stays, and deaths this flu season in the United States. There is concern that the 2009 H1N1 virus may cause the season to be worse than a regular flu season—with a lot more people getting sick, being hospitalized and dying than during a regular flu season.

Thus far, the Centers for Disease Control reports influenza activity in the United States during the last week of September/first week of October at above normal levels, primarily due to the H1N1 virus. Activity in New York State specifically, however, has been reported at "normal" level. To date, the Student Health Service at the Graduate Center can report that no cases of influenza like illness have been diagnosed, but we will need the participation of all members of our academic community to prevent the spread of this illness.

Below are a few suggestions for avoiding getting sick this season.

1. Get vaccinated. Vaccination is the best protection against contracting the flu. Encourage your family, your roommates, students, classmates, coworkers to be vaccinated. If uncertain, talk with your health care providers about whether you should be vaccinated for seasonal and H1N1 flu. If you are at higher risk for flu complications from 2009 H1N1 flu, you would be considered in a "priority group" for receiving the H1N1 vaccine when it becomes available. People at higher risk for 2009 H1N1 flu complications include pregnant women and people with chronic medical conditions (such as asthma, heart disease, or diabetes). For more information about priority groups for vaccination: www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu/vaccination/acip.htm.

   Please note that this year the CUNY administration has thus far been unable to provide seasonal, as well as H1N1 vaccine and they are therefore currently not available on CUNY campuses, including the Graduate Center. Since these vaccines are not being currently offered at the Student Health Service, please visit the following websites to find a location to obtain flu immunization, visit: https://a816-healthpsi.nyc.gov/FluPublic *(free and low cost centers, NYC Department of Health);* http://flu.gov *(CDC flu vaccine locator). There will also be a listing available at the Health Service office (room 6422), as well as on our website.*
2. Practice good hand hygiene by washing your hands with soap and water, for at least 20 seconds, especially after coughing or sneezing. Alcohol-based hand cleaners also are effective.

   It is suggested that you carry pocket sized bottles of sanitizer, and make use of wall sanitizer dispensers that are being installed on the Graduate Center campus. (Currently there are dispensers located in the main lobby, outside the Library, as well as outside the 8th floor cafeteria.)
3. Practice respiratory etiquette by covering your mouth and nose with a tissue when you cough or sneeze. After using one tissue, discard it; do not keep the contaminated tissue in your pockets. If you don't have a tissue, cough or sneeze into your elbow or shoulder, not into your hands. Avoid touching your eyes, nose, or mouth; germs are spread this way.
4. Know the signs and symptoms of the flu. A fever is a temperature taken with a thermometer that is equal to or greater than 100 degrees Fahrenheit or 38 degrees Celsius. Look for possible signs of fever: if the person feels very warm, has a flushed appearance, or is sweating or shivering.
5. Stay home if you have flu or flu-like illness for at least twenty-four hours after you no longer have a fever (100 degrees Fahrenheit or 38 degrees Celsius) or signs of a fever (have chills, feel very warm, have a flushed appearance, or are sweating). This should be determined without the use of fever-reducing medications (any medicine that contains ibuprofen or acetaminophen). Don't go to class or work.
6. Maintain a clean work environment. Keep shared surfaces such as telephone receivers and computer keyboards particularly clean with antiseptics or wipes containing alcohol or chlorox.

What Services Does the Student Health Service Offer?

Health information and updates regarding influenza are available in our office and on our website (gc.cuny.edu/wellness) which has links to other websites with more extensive information.

Although it is advised that you remain at home if ill with influenza-like symptoms, the Health Services Center can examine, diagnose, treat and offer prescriptions for those who have symptoms, should you not respond to home remedies (applicable to eligible, registered GC students only).

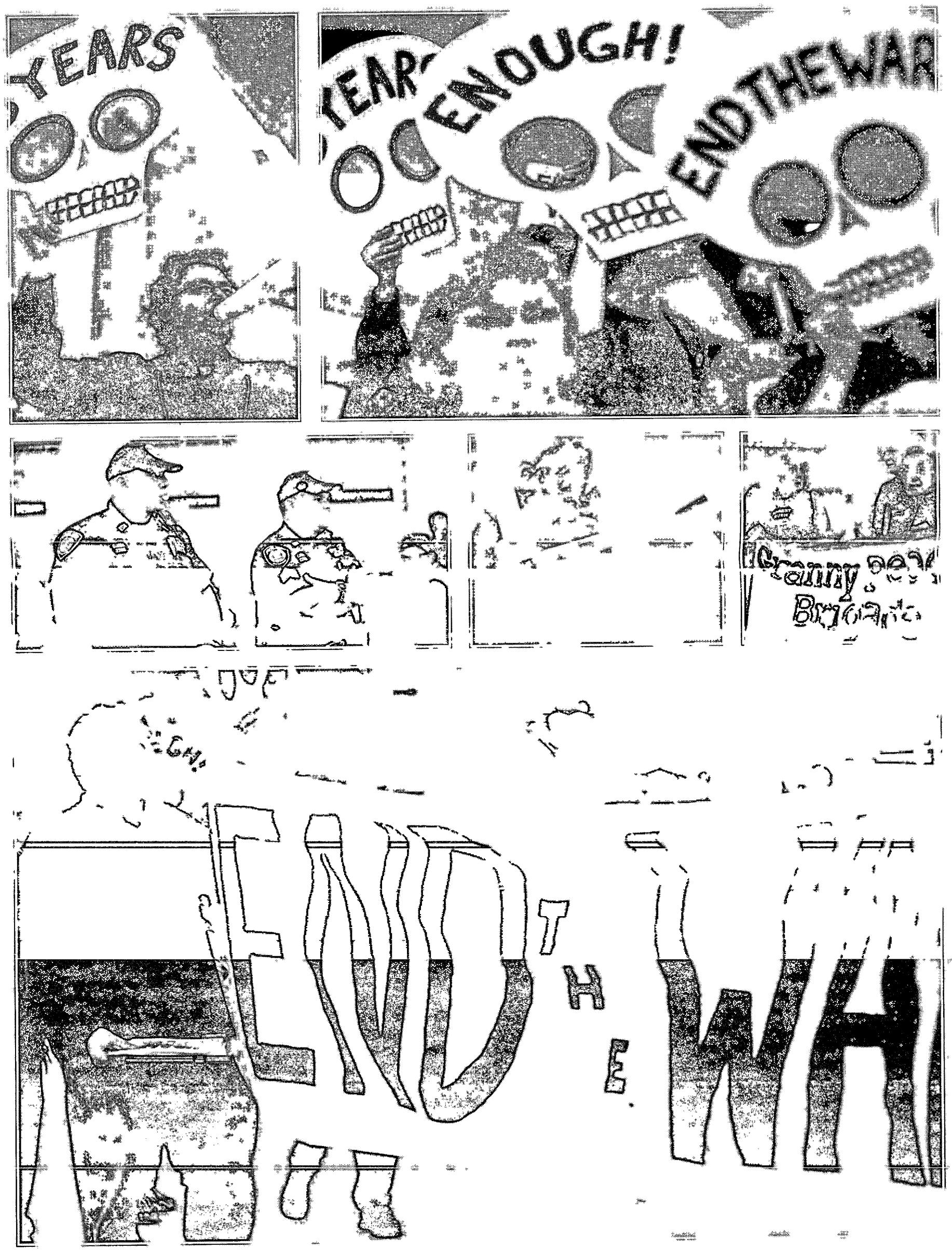
Diagnostic laboratory testing is not available onsite, nor is it recommended routinely for influenza by the Department of Health or the Centers for Disease Control. If indicated, however, in rare circumstances, the Health Service can refer you to an appropriate site that does testing.

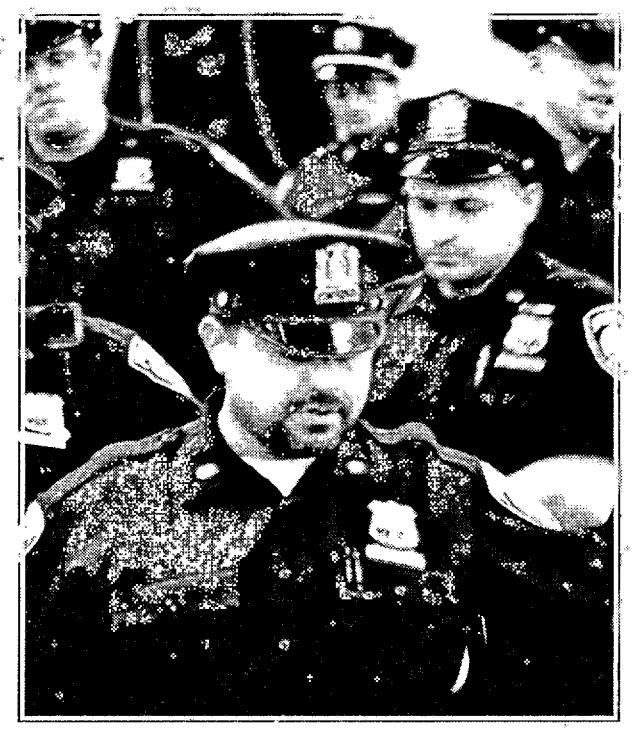
The Health Services Center can also provide referrals for immunization, as described above, as well as advice and information regarding both seasonal and H1N1 immunization.

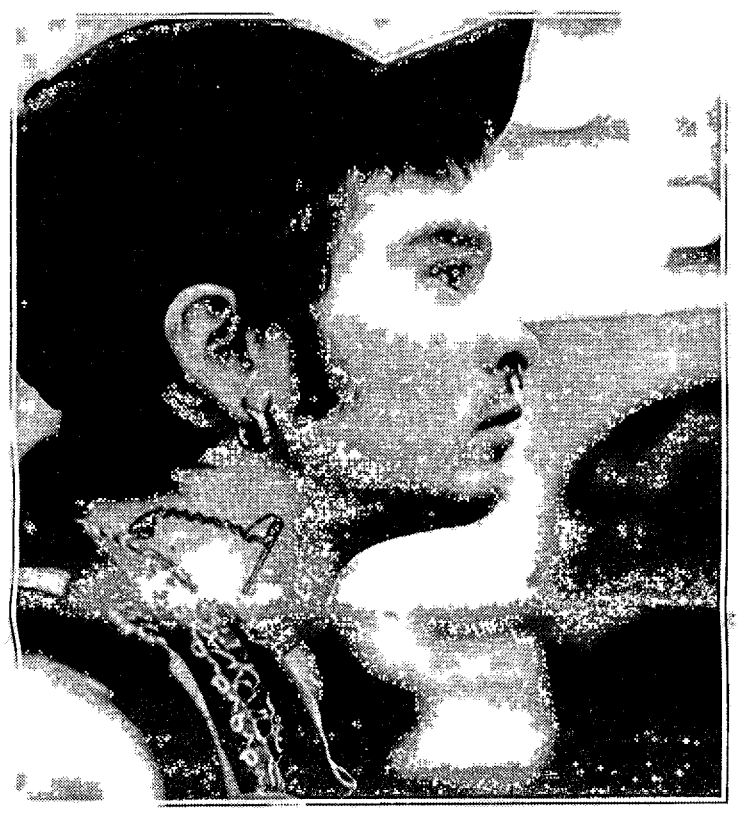
For further information please contact: the Student Health Service at wellness@gc.cuny.edu or telephone 212-817-7020; or access the following web sites, http://flu.gov; http://nyc.gov/flu.

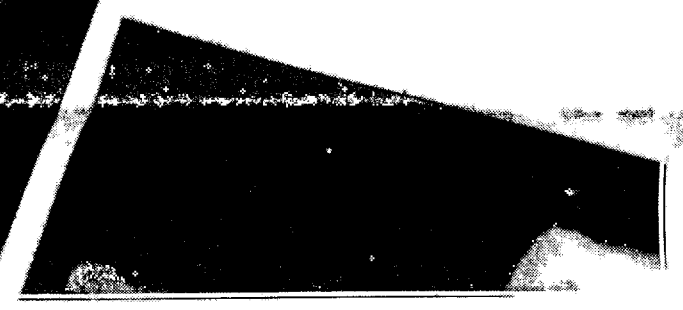
GC Students Join Protest to End Afghan War

Wednesday, October 7, Grand Central Station—Several Graduate Center students, including Carl Lindskoog and Geoff Johnson, joined the War Resister's League, Veterans for Peace, World Can't Wait, the Granny Peace Brigade, and mayoral candidate Reverend Billy to protest the eight-year anniversary of the War in Afghanistan. **Photographs by Antonia Levy**









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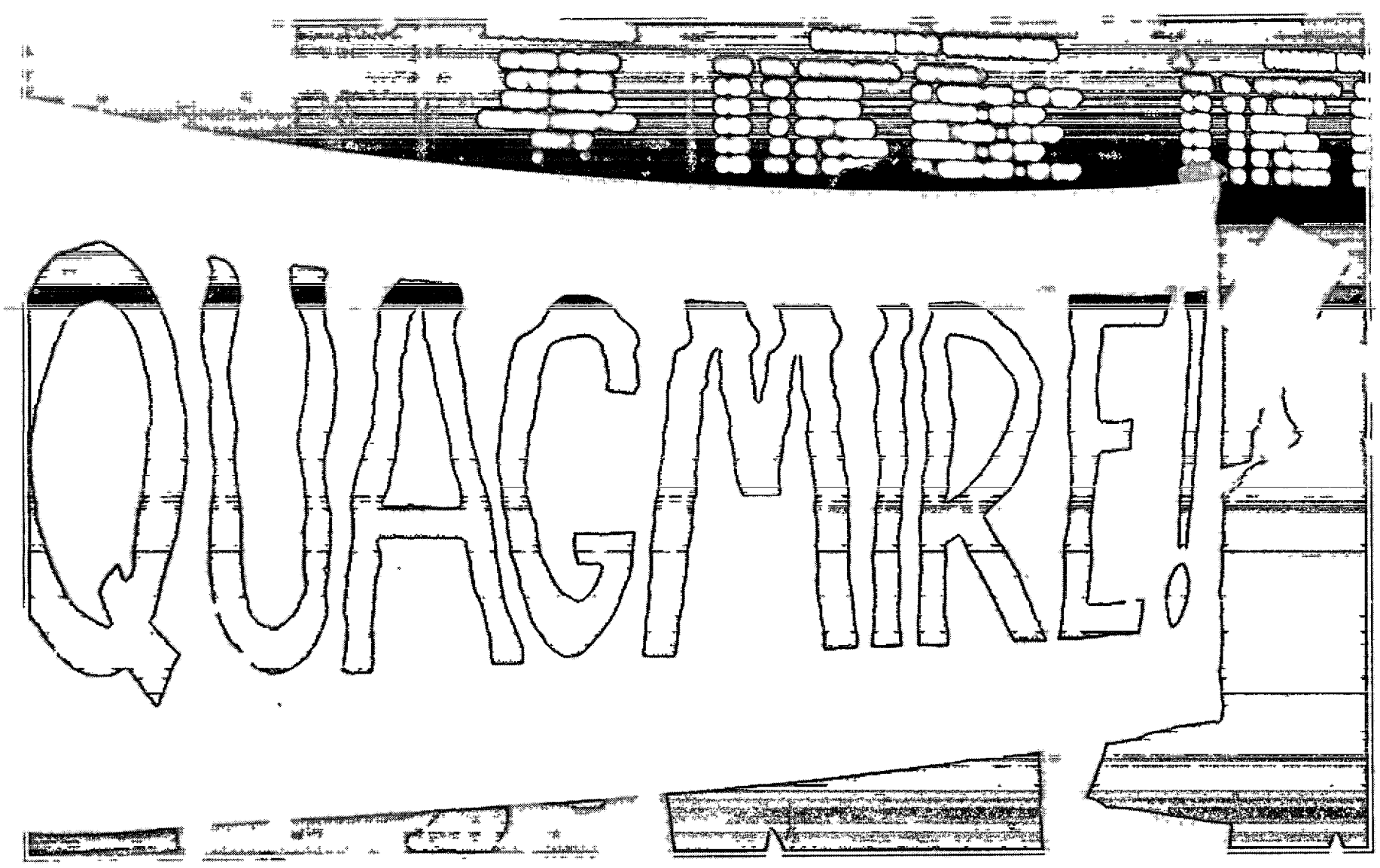


adjuncting

Where's the Anger?

RENEE MCGARRY

Forgive me if you've heard this one before: On September 11, 2009 I passed my second exam and advanced to candidacy. On September 10, 2009, I was told I wasn't going to receive my first paycheck until October 8, 2009. I also discovered that about 150 graduate assistants—through no fault of their own—were in the same situation.

Rather than spending the morning of my second exam vacillating between pulling my own hair out and wanting to vomit, I spent it first on the phone with payroll trying to resolve the issue. Frankly, even now, I am more concerned with the impact that missing paycheck had on my professionalism than it did on my finances. It wasn't just disappointing not to get paid—it was also disheartening. How could CUNY have so little respect for me as an academic that my paperwork couldn't even get processed?

This problem certainly has everyone's attention now—largely because it impacted a large number of graduate students. It's pretty impossible to recruit top-tier graduate students when word gets out that they might not (or probably won't) get paid.

But this problem isn't new. Any one of us who has taught as an adjunct on any college campus knows that this problem is familiar—and it's systemic. Again this semester it impacted adjuncts and new faculty members on every campus (except one.) Setting conspiracy theories aside, this might not be on purpose, but it certainly isn't an accident.

When questioned about this, the school administration often blames the employee: did you turn in your human resources paperwork on time? What forms are you missing? What did you do wrong?

Oftentimes nothing. Particularly at the Graduate Center this semester, those 150 of us who missed one or two paychecks did everything right. Our paperwork was in on time, but, according to university officials, there was a backlog that made it impossible for them to pay us on time.

And apparently they didn't realize it until September 9. When I haven't been paid at other campuses, it's been a similar situation—either I was hired too late to be paid during the first pay period, or I was missing a form I was never given, or my chair held all of the adjunct paperwork until it was "finished" to hand it over to human resources.

As Jesse Goldstein pointed out at the October 5 community meeting with President Bill Kelly, this points to the precarious position of adjuncts throughout the CUNY system. We don't make enough money, and if we aren't paid on time we suffer.

This isn't our fault, but what is our responsibility?

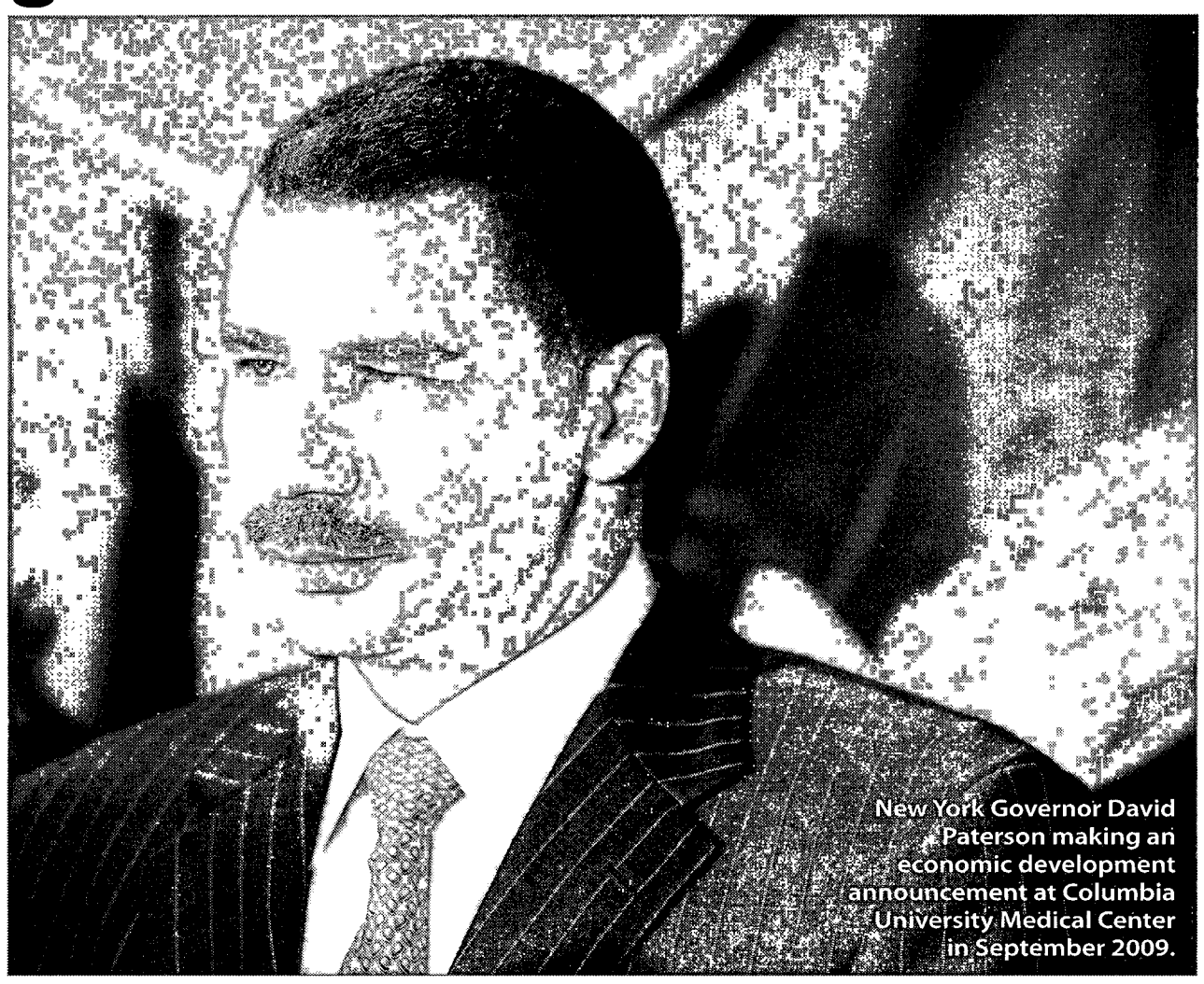
When the Adjunct Project suggested that graduate students talk to their classes about not getting paid, I was personally surprised at the response. A lot of graduate students are embarrassed to do so—perhaps because it highlights the fact that we are students and we are often in similar situations to the ones we teach. Other students were angered by the suggestion, equating it to an adolescent temper tantrum in the classroom.

Maybe if we threw temper tantrums more often we'd have more money in our bank accounts.

Maybe if we followed the lead of the University of California students, faculty, and staff, we'd have an impact on CUNY. We all know our problem is bigger than two missed paychecks—our problem is a system that treats us like disposable employees rather than respected academics. It is our responsibility to demand that respect not just for ourselves but also for our students, our colleagues, and staff throughout the system.

This is our struggle.

On October 6, Governor David Paterson announced an additional $53 million dollars in cuts to the CUNY system. This isn't a surprise—the state already balanced the budgets on our back last year, with $68 million in cuts in 2008, $44 million in cuts already in 2009, and a 15 percent increase in tuition for students on every campus.



New York Governor David Paterson making an economic development announcement at Columbia University Medical Center in September 2009.

And, the question remains, why aren't we angry about it? Is it because the Graduate Center is thoroughly removed from college life at CUNY? Maybe if we did talk to our students about our missing paychecks, we'd begin to understand how a 15 percent increase in tuition impacts them, or how they're doing with higher enrollment and fewer services. Maybe if we talked to our students, we'd learn from them. Maybe if we talked to our students—or staff members—as equals, we'd stop performing authority and start actually having solidarity.

And if we are angry, why aren't we doing anything?

The University of California system is faced with steep budget cuts this year, as California attempts to—yet again—balance its budget by slashing education across the board. Schools are faced with a 20 percent budget cut this year and are planning to increase student fees by 32 percent. On July 16, the Board of Regents approved an emergency plan that would force 80 percent of the system's employees to take unpaid furloughs of between eleven and twenty-six days over the next year.

At individual campuses, this doesn't just mean that people aren't getting paid; it means that there will be fewer student jobs, fewer teaching assistants, a virtual elimination of lecturers (who often teach up to 30 percent of undergraduate classes in some departments) and the risk that top faculty will leave for more lucrative positions.

Before we sit back and think about how lucky we are that this isn't happening to us (or that it's happening more slowly and more quietly), let's ask the question: are we next?

On September 24, University of California students took action to make sure that their voices were heard. Thousands of students across the ten-campus system participated in a Day of Action to protest the de-funding of the system. While they were out there protesting for themselves, they were speaking for all of us. Public education is being systematically de-funded nationwide—and two missed paychecks are just one of the small consequences.

This is a wake up call to all of us, and it's time to take action.

But how do we build solidarity across a twenty-three-campus system? I say this all of the time: we can start by talking to each other. I think it's obvious that we need to talk to our students, but what about talking to other faculty members? When tenured and tenure-track employees started hearing the story of how I didn't get paid, I got to hear their stories too—and they were surprisingly similar. They missed paychecks, taught classes with over 100 students in them, and felt overworked and exhausted. When I talked to higher education officers—more popularly known as HEOs—and college assistants about what their offices looked like, they had four times as much work and the same number of employees.

And what about the cafeteria workers at Hunter? The cafeterias were sold to a company, AVI, which refuses to honor the worker's old contract. AVI is threatening to slash health benefits (by following the national pattern of making employees pay more each year for their insurance) and do away with their pension plans (many employees have been paying into this for decades!)

The workers are already underpaid—and their raises are at risk, despite an existing contract. A boycott is scheduled for October 29 if AVI refuses to respect the standing contract.

While it seems unrelated to budget cuts, this struggle is part of the ongoing corporatization of CUNY. Money is more important than people, and the struggles of those working in the Hunter cafeteria, or at the CUNY Research Foundation, all prove this.

Just like missing a paycheck, the corporatization of CUNY isn't our fault, but it is our responsibility. We can choose to follow the lead of those in the Hunter cafeterias with protests and boycotts. We can choose to follow the lead of Research Foundation employees who walked out on September 14 to demand a contract settlement. We can choose to follow the lead of those at the University of California. Whatever we do, though, we cannot be quiet, and we cannot hide. Whatever we do, we must do something. Ⓐ

Intellectual Leadership:
Plato's Dream, Popper's Nightmare

C.A. PASTERNAK

Author of *Quest: The Essence of Humanity* (John Wiley, 2003; paperback 2004)

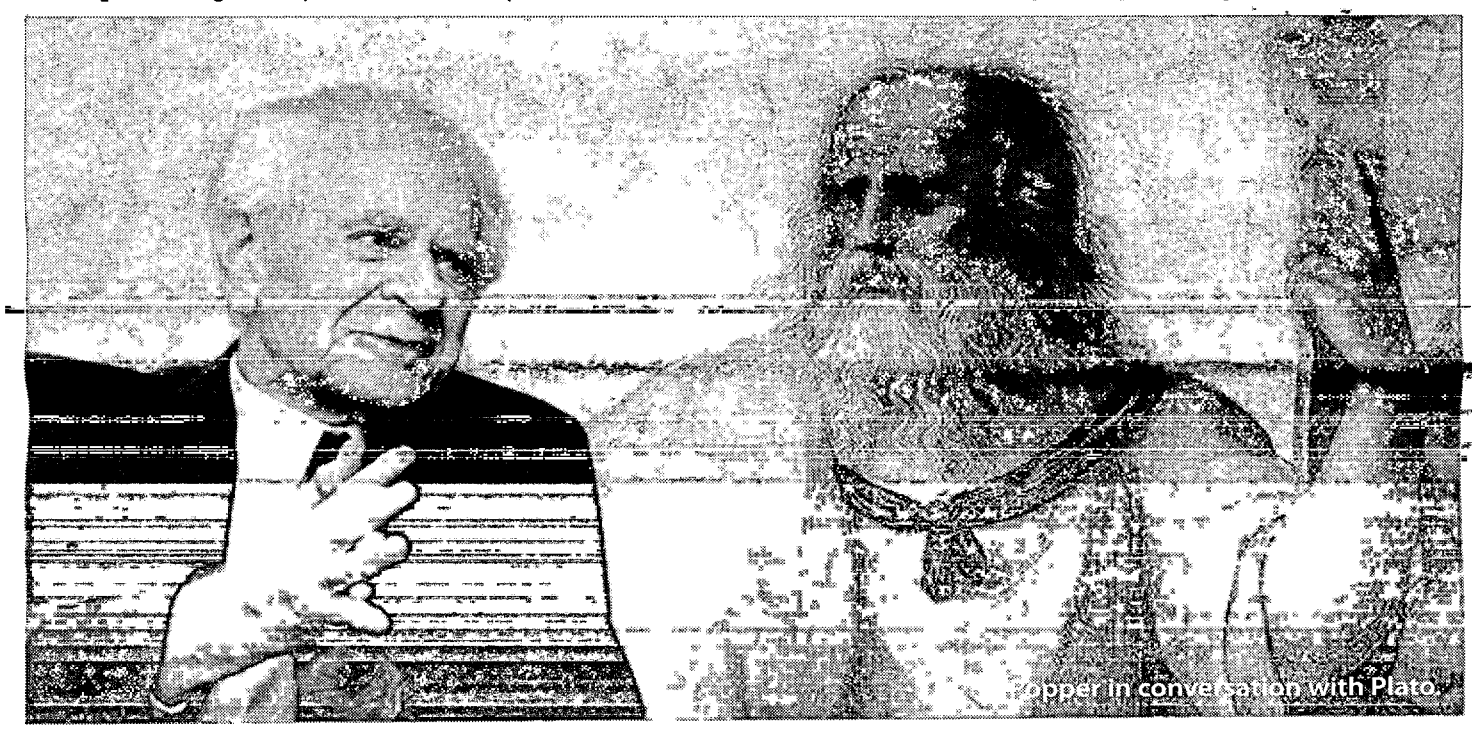
> Mens cuiusque is est quisque
> (*What a man's mind is, that is what he is*)

Good leadership, the world over, is in short supply. Terrorism or its threat lurks everywhere; the problems in the Middle East grow by the hour; central African chiefs continue to practice genocide instead of agriculture; meanwhile, in Brussels, overpaid bureaucrats dream up yet more ludicrous directives that will render the European economy as uncompetitive as that of Burkina Faso. It is clear we need good leaders as never before.

The dilemma is not, of course, a new one. In 1960, when, despite the Cold War, much of the world was in a more stable mood than now, then Senator John F. Kennedy remarked that "We need leaders who will accomplish two great objectives. First, they will awaken responsible citizens out of their mood of acquiescence and drift, showing them that only timely, determined action can create a better future; and second, they will discuss our problems in constructive terms, or at least terms that clarify the possible solutions." Today's responsible citizens of western democracies, disillusioned with the performance of their leaders, display even more apathy than their 1960s counterparts: barely half bother to go to the polls and most no longer see their leaders as role models. The "possible solutions," to war with Iraq in 2003, for example, were not clarified by US President George W. Bush and UK Prime Minister Tony Blair precisely because they failed to consider the aftermath of their actions. The Iraqi nation may have been grateful for the removal of Saddam Hussein, but insurgency and terrorism ensued instead of peace. In Islamic countries from Algeria to Indonesia, there has been little of what Kennedy called "determined action" on the part of its leaders, and "a better future" has not been created for its citizens. The peoples of sub-Saharan Africa have fared even worse: having thrown off the yoke of European colonization half a century ago, their leaders have not shown signs that they are ready to discuss their "problems in constructive term[s]," but have instead delivered only corruption and human misery. Ethiopia, Sudan, and Zimbabwe are but three obvious examples of this failure of intelligent leadership.

Too many of today's leaders fail to accomplish the objectives that Kennedy proposed, in large part because they simply lack good judgement: their intellect is not up to the job. But is not a strong intellect incompatible with sturdy leadership? Is not an intellectual an introvert, whereas a leader needs to be an extrovert? There has been much debate about this issue, but I will try here to show that intellectual prowess and leadership are not necessarily incompatible. Plato, for example, was in favour of the idea of a "philosopher king." Karl Popper, on the other hand, considered philosophers to make poor leaders.

Plato, one of the West's earliest political philosophers, espoused governance by an aristocracy: in other words "rule by the best," who would be selected on the basis of examinations, not by virtue of birth or wealth. While leaders would be chosen based on merit and ability, such a ruler, once in office, would have the powers of a king. To Plato the checks and balances of democracy implied a state subjected to an irresponsible or criminal will. So in the *Republic* he argues that it is philosophers who are the best equipped to rule—thus the idea of the philosopher king. The fact that he acknowledged that it is unlikely that such a person would actually emerge in the society of his day makes his aspiration a bit of a dream. Yet others nonetheless continued to follow in the same vein.



Popper in conversation with Plato

Erasmus –"the greatest intellect in 16th century Europe"—followed Plato's vision, arguing that a monarchy was the best form of government, provided the monarch or prince is well-educated. In the 19th century Friedrich Nietzsche echoed these aspirations in his own strident style saying: "The real philosophers ... are commanders and lawgivers; they say: 'Thus *shall* it be!'" Nietzsche did not have in mind actual rule by philosophers, but merely that those in power should follow the counsel of philosophers. In that sense this is a somewhat different, rather more Germanic, version of Plato's philosopher king.

On the other side are philosophers such as Immanuel Kant, who was dismissive of Plato: "That kings should become philosophers, or philosophers kings, is not likely to happen; nor would it be desirable, since the possession of power invariably debases the free judgement of reason." Perhaps to protect his own position, he also pointed out that "It is...indispensable that a king—or a kingly, i.e. self-ruling people—should *not suppress* philosophers but leave them the right of public utterance."

Following Kant, Karl Popper takes issue with Plato on two counts. First, he dislikes the proposal of a monarch with total power over his subjects and, second, like most people, he simply cannot envisage philosophers as leaders. In *The Myth of the Framework: In Defence of Science and Rationality* Popper says: "In a famous and highly dramatic passage of his chief work, Plato demands that philosophers should be kings and, *vice versa*, that kings—or autocratic rulers—should be fully trained philosophers.... I do not find it an attractive proposal. Quite apart from the fact that I am against any form of autocracy or dictatorship, including the dictatorship of the wisest and best, philosophers do not seem to me to be particularly well suited for the job." He takes as a specific example the case of Thomas Masaryk, "the creator, first president and, one might say, the philosopher-king of the Czechoslovak Republic. Masaryk was not only a fully trained philosopher, but was also a born statesman and a great and admirable man. And his creation, Czechoslovak Republic, was an unparalleled political achievement. Yet the dissolution of the Old Austrian Empire was also partly Masaryk's work. And this proved a disaster for Europe and the world. For the instability that followed this dissolution was largely responsible for the rise of Nazism and finally even for the downfall of Masaryk's own Czechoslovak Republic... The fact that an admirable man and a great statesman like Masaryk was led by certain philosophical ideas to commit so grave a blunder...amounts to a strong argument against Plato's demand that philosophers should rule".

Have I perhaps overstated the actual possibility of a philosopher king? Is the ideal really just a dream? Possibly. If we interpret "philosopher" in the sense used by Kant and Popper this may be true. Yet even Popper acknowledges that such people mount the stage of governance from time to time. It is the effectiveness of the combination that he criticizes. Philosopher-rulers fail only if their goals are, as in Masaryk's case, flawed. So it behoves me to provide other examples. If my argument is true, that cerebral rulers are not only possible, but preferable to our current rulers, then there should be many instances of persons, scattered throughout history, who were endowed with a fine intellect and a simultaneous ability to lead.

My belief, then, is that the qualities of leadership and a good intellect are *not* incompatible. However I do not wish to imply that leaders should be "intellectuals" as such. Apart from the fact that 'intellectual' as a noun has a slightly derisory meaning, there is Albert Einstein's wise remark that "We should take care not to make the intellect our god. It has, of course, powerful muscles, but no personality. It cannot lead, it can only serve." I am instead using the word intellectual as an adjective to mean "blessed with a good intellect," which the leader applies to the benefit of his people. Charisma is an important element, but not if used improperly. So tyrannical warlords who brought nothing but death and destruction (Attila the Hun, Genghis Khan and Tamerlane, Stalin, Hitler and Mao) I do not consider. Instead I will offer as examples four rulers who—blessed both with a good intellect and the qualities of leadership—contributed positively to the people under their sway. To illustrate the fact that time and geography play no role in their emergence, my examples are taken from ancient Rome, from Western Europe and North America in the 18th century, and from the Middle East in the 20th.

Hadrian (76-138) has been considered the most

remarkable of all the Roman emperors. His intense energy drove him to practically every corner of his empire so that he became better known, to more of his subjects, than any other Roman ruler. He personally led his troops into action, a born leader; yet he was also astute enough to consolidate the empire by limiting its extent in the northern and eastern provinces. According to Larousse encyclopaedia, Hadrian's "intellectual qualities were unrivalled, his curiosity omnivorous and his memory astonishing. He was a connoisseur of the arts, and also possessed all the abilities of a great statesman."

If Elizabeth I of England was Europe's most intellectual monarch of the sixteenth century, then Frederick II, known as "Frederick the Great" (1712–1786), fulfilled that role in the eighteenth. Frederick's energies were devoted to intellectual pursuits, to reforming life within Prussia, and to turning it from an insignificant backwater into a major nation through the acquisition of new lands. If that meant war, so be it. He succeeded in all his objectives. When Frederick met Voltaire in 1736, in Strasbourg, they were, within minutes, discussing "the immortality of the soul, liberty and Plato's androgynies." Thus began a friendship and literary collaboration that would last, despite constant bickering, for over forty years. Voltaire was positively effusive about Frederick, calling him: "a man who gives battle as readily as he writes an opera; who takes advantage of all the hours that other kings waste following a dog chasing after a stag; he has written more books than any of his contemporary princes has sired bastards; and he has won more victories than he has written books."

Under Frederick's rule torture of civilians ceased and in 1763 Frederick tried to abolish serfdom. The law was reformed, and judges left it alone. Death sentences needed to be ratified by Frederick, but these were rarely signed and then only *for extreme cases of murder*. Punishment that should have been meted out to offenders was often withheld. Newspapers were not censored, nor were peoples' views. No constraints were placed on religious worship, and Frederick (who was a protestant) built a Roman Catholic cathedral in Berlin, despite his hatred of that faith. He even considered building a mosque to encourage Turks to come to Prussia, as he felt that mixed races produce intelligent people. In 1757 the Holy Roman Empire expelled Prussia and declared war on it. The three largest nations in Europe—Russia, Austria and France, aided by Spain and Sweden—now set out to annihilate the upstart Prussia. But they were in for a surprise.

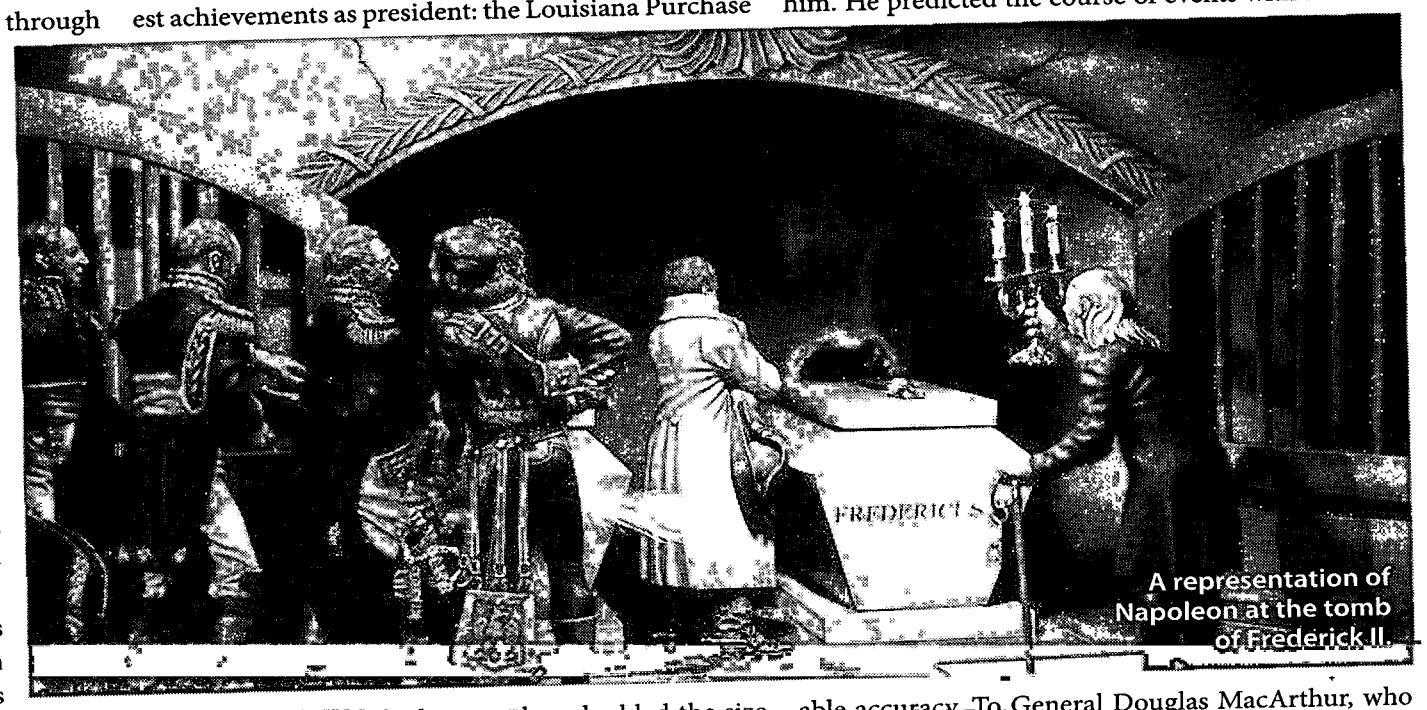
Determination and astute tactics won Frederick two great battles. Napoleon remarked that "it was not the army that defended Prussia for seven years against the three European powers, it was Frederick the Great." And when standing next to Frederick's coffin in the Garrison Church at Potsdam, he said "Hats off, gentlemen—if he were still alive we should not be here." What Frederick II did was to set a climate in the German-speaking world that was fair to the people and conducive to culture. If ever there was a philosopher-king, it was Frederick: Plato would have recognised him instantly.

Thomas Jefferson (1743-1826) could read Latin and Greek with ease. His innate inquisitiveness was honed at William and Mary College in Williamsburg by his teacher Dr. William Small. According to John Dos Passos, "it was Small who first opened his mind to the philosopher's world ... Young Jefferson had application. He had energy and vast curiosity ... In his walks and talks with Small he established a connection with the main currents of the adventurous intellect of Europe which was not to be interrupted throughout his long life." By 1774, Jefferson was putting his views on colonial rule into print: *A Summary View of the Rights of British America* was read not only in Philadelphia (eagerly), but also in London (less so). Two years later, Jefferson ('the pen') was drafting the Declaration of Independence with John Adams ('the voice'). Jefferson spent the five years between 1784 and 1789 in France. He watched the rumblings of revolutionary activity (not yet those of the tumbrils), and he liked what he saw. As he wrote in a letter to a colleague, "The tree of liberty must be refreshed from time to time with the blood of patriots and tyrants. It is its natural manure." Ahem. In France, Jefferson's eclectic interests were given free reign. He studied everything concerning agriculture—for future use on his own plantation—from the production of wine to the growth of a special sort of rice that he had seen in Vercelli during a voyage to Italy.

Jefferson's style of leadership as President—"government is best which governs least"—was somewhat like Washington's: he left the able ministers he had appointed to get on with their departments, exercising personal control only occasionally. An example that illustrates both aspects is also one of Jefferson's greatest achievements as president: the Louisiana Purchase (for $15 million), which more than doubled the size of the nation. Conceived by Jefferson in Washington, it was negotiated by Robert Livingston and James Monroe in Paris. And what did the restless sixty-five year old Jefferson do in his retirement? True to his enquiring and restive mind, that can only be compared to that of Leonardo da Vinci, he threw himself into a continuous bustle of building and farming, developing a new estate, fabricating nails and cloth, trying his hands at milling, and launching a state university for Virginia. Raising the necessary finance would have daunted a younger man, but the eighty-two year old founder could gaze with pride at the buildings as the first students arrived in 1825. And yet the one flaw in Jefferson's concept of reason remained. Asked ten years earlier to lend his support to an antislavery clause, Jefferson demurred "this enterprise is for the young; for those who can follow it up, and bear it through to its consummation." Had he thrown his weight behind emancipation, the Civil War might well have been avoided. On the two-hundredth anniversary of Jefferson's birth, Franklin Roosevelt inaugurated the Jefferson Memorial in Washington with the words: "Thomas Jefferson believed, as we believe, in Man. He believed, as we believe, that men are capable of their own government, and that no king, no tyrant, no dictator can govern for them as well as they can govern for themselves."

The American Revolution was fired by commanding intellectuals; the French and Russian revolutions were ignited by intellectuals without much command. What was unique about the Ottoman Empire at the start of the 20th century is that revolution was brought about by an intellectual commander, Kemal Atatürk (1881-1938). In his youth he read Rousseau and Voltaire, as well as John Stuart Mill. During World War I, Kemal found himself stationed at Gallipoli. A joint force of British, Australians and New Zealanders had managed to land in an attempt to knock Turkey out of the war. This was not what the high command had expected, but it was precisely what Kemal presumed they would do. In the confusion, he was given temporary command of the defence. At last he could show his mettle, and he did. According to Patrick Kinross in *Atatürk: The Rebirth of a Nation*, "by his flair, his sense of urgency, the sureness of his decisions and the insistence of his leadership he had, at the outset of an invasion on the lines he had predicted, saved the Turks from a defeat which might well have opened the road to Constantinople."

After the war, Kemal realised that the Ottoman regime was no longer viable. The time had come to change his role from soldier to statesman. By 1922 he was President of the new republic of Turkey. This he now began to modernise. First to go was the fez. Next the veil. Women began to enter the professions. By 1928 he set about replacing the script of the Ottoman Turks, which was that used by Arabs and Persians. He was now an internationally known leader, with an interest in the affairs of other nations. A German colleague's comment, that whereas Hitler had enslaved a free people, he had freed an enslaved nation, pleased him. He predicted the course of events with remarkable accuracy. To General Douglas MacArthur, who visited him in 1934, he expressed his fear regarding the influence of Germany over the rest of Europe. "The moment these seventy million people, who are industrious and disciplined and have extraordinary dynamism, get caught by a new political element which will stir up their nationalist ambitions, they will have recourse to the liquidation of the Versailles Treaty." He predicted that war would break out between 1940 (later revised to 1939) and 1945 that the British would be unable to rely on the French. The Maginot Line he considered useless, as anyone could circumvent it, which is precisely what the Germans did. He forecast that Germany would occupy all of Europe except Britain and Russia, but that eventually America would enter the war, which would result in Germany's defeat. It is hard to imagine a more prescient and intellectual commander, both in war and in peace.



A representation of Napoleon at the tomb of Frederick II.

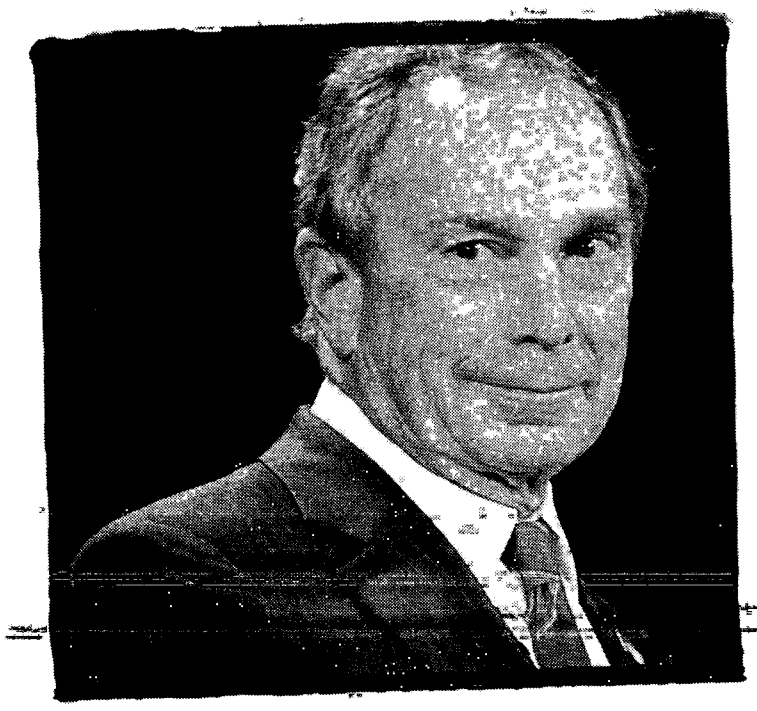
Politics is the only profession in the world where second-raters reach the top. Their course is driven not by intellectual substance, but by ambition, self-aggrandisement and spin. One of the most important challenges of our time—as significant as those of climate change and energy supply—is to ensure that our politicians possess the right qualities of intellect and leadership. Although largely innate, some honing of skills is undoubtedly possible. Intellectual prowess is more difficult to acquire than leadership skills: one's IQ, for example, stays much the same from birth to death. So how might a budding politician learn the necessary skills? Not in the practice of law, nor even in the participation in party politics at the grass roots level. Instead I propose the setting up of "statecraft academies," similar to business schools or military staff colleges, where potential, high calibre, leaders can improve their skills. It is from such a pool of aspiring politicians that the public should elect its leaders. Charisma, TV ratings, and other indices of popularity should play second fiddle to intellectual rigour. What we need are leaders with a little less pugnacity and more intellectual ability. As the French political philosopher Joseph de Maitre observed, "Every nation has the government it deserves." Ⓐ

The Good, the Bad, and the Ugly:

The *GC Advocate* Guide to the 2009 NYC Mayoral Elections

Let's face it. The pickings in this year's mayoral race are pretty slim. Bloomberg has outspent every other candidate in the field by a good $60 million, and the Democrats have hardly put their best foot forward by nominating the lackluster underdog Bill Thompson. Meanwhile, the Greens have chosen a celebrity candidate who may or not actually want to be mayor, while most of the other voices in the fray are either slightly wacko, inexperienced, or completely invisible to most voters.

Although their candidate Jimmy McMillan has no real chance of winning, at the end of the day The Rent is Too Damn High Party might actually be the best vote this year since it would at least send a message to both Bloomberg and Thompson, the Democrats and the Republicans, that something radical must indeed be done about the cost of living in NYC. Despite all of this, or perhaps because of it, the *GC Advocate* offers you this guide, somewhat tongue in cheek, to the 2009 candidates for the mayor of New York City.



"I am what I am and, you know, I'm a very lucky guy."

—MIKE BLOOMBERG

Current Mayor—Michael Bloomberg

Mayor of New York from 2002 to the present, Bloomberg is the multi-billionaire (currently ranked seventeen among the world's wealthiest billionaires) owner of Bloomberg LP—an information, news, and media company that provides information services to investment firms such as Merrill Lynch. Bloomberg also owns a substantial radio network whose flagship station, WBBR reaches thousands of New Yorkers every day. His great wealth has made it easy for him to abstain from the standard mayoral salary and accepts just $1 a year for his services.

The Good:

Although his critics say his policies have contributed to gentrification, out of control rents, and the loss of neighborhood culture, many would argue that the mayor has made the city a much more pleasant and arguably safer and much healthier place to live (if you can afford it).

GUN CONTROL: The mayor has been a staunch advocate of gun control ever since his election in 2002, recently funding a highly reported private investigation of out of state gun shows (where guns are often sold without background checks or waiting periods). Bloomberg blames the illegal practices uncovered at these shows for contributing to gun violence in the city, and has argued that such shows should be outlawed. Bloomberg is also the co-founder of "Mayors against Illegal Guns," an organization of city mayors dedicated to the elimination of illegal gun sales. Although some speculate the Mayor's recent investigation was a political stunt designed precisely to influence liberal voters, other candidates would nonetheless do well to take up the mantle of gun control advocacy the way that Bloomberg has.

ENVIRONMENT: As those who like to bike to the Graduate Center already know, the mayor has been as active as any previous mayor in making New York City a safe city for bicycle commuters as well as a much safer and more pleasant place for pedestrians. Under Bloomberg, who is a large contributor to the Central Park Conservancy, the city has created more green spaces, more pedestrian malls (including several pedestrian malls on Broadway), and more dedicated bike lanes than any mayor in recent history. Bloomberg plans to continue to create as much as fifty miles of new bike lanes every year. Bloomberg was also the man responsible for outlawing smoking in New York City bars and restaurants and implementing a ban on the use of trans fats in New York City Restaurants (both of which, unless you're a smoker or really like Krispy Kreme, are good things in the end).

311: Say what you will about Bloomberg's methods or his emphasis on employing tactics and procedures from the private sector, but the creation of the official 311 city information line was a thoughtful and constructive way to help city residents find help and answers to pressing needs and questions about city services. In addition, 311 has helped residents become more directly involved in reporting upon issues such as unsafe working conditions, graffiti, garbage dumping, and other low level city nuisances.

The Bad:

Following Giuliani's lead, Bloomberg seems more concerned with making New York a thriving international metropolis than an economically sustainable, livable, and affordable city. In the process the mayor has prioritized corporate interests, gentrification, and development over job creation and housing.

AFFORDABLE HOUSING: Although the *New York Times* reported that Bloomberg increased affordable housing units by 165,000 between 2002-2007, under his leadership—and in part because of his pro-market policies—the city lost more than 200,000 low income housing units during that same period, for a net loss of 35,000 units. This loss is in large part due to the mayor's privileging of private interests over the public good and his intense gentrification and development efforts, which have resulted in the conversion of several formerly rent stabilized communities, such as Stuyvesant Town, into luxury condominiums.

GOOD JOBS: In his 2009 state of the city address, Bloomberg noted that he had created 227,000 more jobs from 2002-2009. But it turns out that most of those new jobs will be in the growing but low paying dead end service sector. The *New York Times* reports that New York City lost 43 percent of its manufacturing jobs under Bloomberg from January 2002 to August 2009. "In 2008, these jobs paid on average $52,758 a year." As the city increasingly gentrifies, there will surely be a greater call for waiters, bartenders, baristas, salespersons, cashiers, and pedicurists, but few of these jobs actually provide a wage consistent with the cost of living in NYC, and most provide very limited benefits, if any.

The Ugly:

Bloomberg may want to be Mayor for life.

THIRD TERM SCANDAL: Despite his reassurances at the recent mayoral debate (from which all candidates but Bill Thompson were barred) that he would not seek another term after his third, Bloomberg has had a hard time allaying fears that he's playing out some regal fantasy where he has been anointed King of New York. Locals aren't concerned yet about a fourth term; they're still fuming about the way in which Bloomberg rewrote the law to allow him to run for reelection this time around. When former mayor Rudolph Giuliani tested the same waters in 2001 to accomplish the similar ends, Bloomberg labeled the idea of extending term limits a "disgrace." Yet in the aftermath of the financial crisis, Bloomberg experienced a change of heart, apparently motivated by the belief that he alone could save the city from financial disaster. His henchmen in the city council apparently agreed, and in a single act of municipal disgrace voted to override two public referendums where voters clearly expressed their opposition to term limit extensions. Since then, the mayor has poured tens of millions into a campaign where he faces no serious challenge, increasing speculation further that Mayor Mike is more concerned about his legacy than honoring the basic principles of local democracy.

"Let's not downplay the simple fact that the President has made a decision to endorse me as the next mayor oif the City of New York."

—BILL THOMPSON

Democratic Party—Bill Thompson

Bill Thompson has served as both the president of the New York City Board of Education from 1996 to 2001 as well as the New York City comptroller from 2002 until the present. Thompson defeated his primary opponent Tony Avella in a landslide victory to win the Democratic Party nomination for mayor in September. Thompson is running as a Democrat but also has the backing of the Working Families Party.

The Good:

As comptroller, it is Thompson's job to oversee the use of the city's finances, and on that count Thompson appears to have done a good job defending the city's funds against the corruption and graft of private interests.

EDUCATION: As city comptroller, Thompson exposed several endemic problems at the board of education including an audit of the no-bid contractors Alvarez and Marshall, which exposed excessive overcharging to the city. Thompson has also proposed, if elected, to fire schools chancellor Joel Klein, and to end the privatization of NYC's public schools.

LABOR: Thompson also investigated several labor abuses, including an investigation which led to a $750,000 settlement against JC Mandel Security who had been underpaying their employees. According to his own campaign statements, Thompson claims to have "initiated more cases and penalized more contractors than any comptroller before. Thompson also has the endorsements of several labor unions, including the Transportation Workers Union local, which Thompson has vocally supported. This endorsement, however, may have as much to do with the union's anger at Bloomberg's criticism as it does with Thompson's potential as mayor.

The Bad:

Thompson has been characterized as a career machine party politician, and while he has been a staunch defender of the city's coffers, he has not always been as good at making them grow as much as they should.

POOR MANAGEMENT: Perhaps the biggest criticism of Thompson's performance as comptroller is the repeated claim that he mismanaged the New York City Employees' Retirement System, which, over the last seven years has performed in the bottom third among similar large pension funds. All of this happened even as Thompson was receiving large campaign contributions from several of the fund's money managers. "In some cases," reported the *New York Times*, "the executives gave to Mr. Thompson just months before the pension funds hired them to manage tens of millions of dollars, according to interviews and public records."

BIKE LANES: Thompson seems to be ambivalent about the idea of further increases in bike lanes and pedestrian plazas. In a debate with Tony Avella, Thompson said: "I favor bicycle lanes; however, you are hearing the complaint all over the city of New York, because the communities have not been consulted. They've been ignored. Bicycle lanes have been dropped upon them and there has been no discussion. That's wrong and that shouldn't continue." Thompson also told a group of Chinatown residents that were he elected he would tear up the dedicated bike lane on Grand Street.

The Ugly:

Even with Obama's "endorsement," Thompson doesn't stand a chance against Bloomberg's $65 million campaign.

OBAMA OBSESSED: Thompson has shamelessly attempted to ride the coattails of Barack Obama's popularity by insisting that he had received the president's blessing and support in the mayoral race. In fact, Obama has never spoken publicly on the issue, but his spokesperson said that the president supports candidates in the Democratic Party. He refused, after being pressed, to pronounce Bill Thompson's name. Thompson, though, took it as nothing less than a ringing endorsement, issuing a press release stating: "Yes we can in New York: Barack Obama supports Bill Thompson for mayor."

"Neighborhoodalujah!"

—REVEREND BILLY

Green Party—Reverend Billy

Reverend Billy (a.k.a. Billy Talen) is a veteran political activist and performer and is the charismatic and irreverent leader of the Church of Life After Shopping, which preaches an anti-consumer gospel based on a gift economy of love and community. Talen announced his bid for mayor at a Union Square rally in March of this year.

The Good:

Talen's platform, though not terribly detailed, focuses on the creation and reinvigoration of greater community space and a greater emphasis on local neighborhood control.

LOCAL CULTURE: Like a twenty-first century Jane Jacobs, Reverend Billy supports the promotion of local culture against what he calls the "developer invasion" and "upzoning" taking place in New York City today. Were he to be elected Reverend Billy vows that "all new developments must be community-driven and community-approved." Talen also supports providing incentives for the creation and promotion of locally-owned small businesses, which he argues help to keep money within the local economies and to create a sense of place and community. One interesting plan to improve local control laid out in Talen's platform would be to "disengage Community Boards from the appointive powers of Borough Presidents. In Brooklyn we have seen summary purges from Community Boards by Marty Markowitz, usually of people who didn't support his position on the Atlantic Yards and Forest City Ratner."

GREEN PARTY: Talen is running on the Green Party ticket and all votes for Talen are a vote for the continued relevance and power of the greater Green Party.

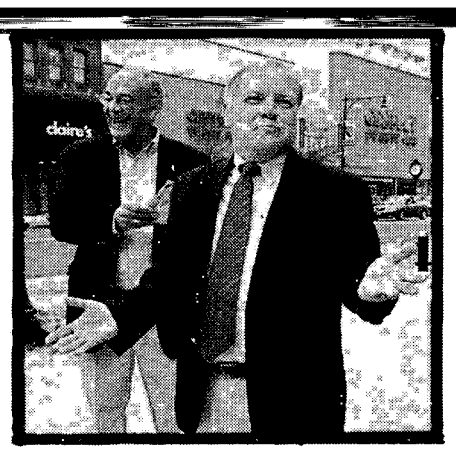
The Bad:

Reverend Billy is a seasoned activist but not a politician.

THEATRE OR POLITICS?: While Talen's campaign and party affiliation make him appear like a serious, even legitimately viable candidate for the office, it is hard to know how willing Talen would be to really set aside his Reverend Billy persona and get down to the serious business of running the largest city in the United States.

The Ugly:

His hair.



"If you think healthcare is expensive now, wait until it's free!"

—STEPHEN CHRISTOPHER

Conservative Party—Stephen Christopher

Christopher is the Pastor of the Memorial Baptist Church in Brooklyn. He also ran unsuccessfully for the New York State Senate in 2008.

The Good

Supports restrictions on use of eminent domain.

The Bad:

He's a conservative, and his bid for mayor is probably nothing more than an attempt to keep his name alive in the Conservative Party and among conservative circles.

The Ugly:

His platform is retrogressive and dangerous. Christopher and the conservatives are primarily concerned with issues of taxation, but he also advocates for a fully privatized health insurance system, wants to restore the death penalty, prohibit stem cell research, roll back abortion rights, not recognize transgender peoples as special categories of human beings in human rights law, etc. etc. etc.

"My first day in office I am going to lock up Ray Kelly!"

—FRANCES VILLAR

Socialism and Liberation Party—Frances Villar

One of City University's very own, Frances Villar has been a presence on the activist scene in New York City since 2006. The Dominican-born Villar is a student at Lehman College where she helped organize students to support the Jena Six, and to resist tuition increases in 2008. The 26-year-old Villar is running as mayor for the newly formed Socialism and Liberation Party whose platform advocates an explicitly revolutionary politics.

The Good:

She's a socialist; she has a pretty radical platform

The Bad:

No real plan for how to implement change. Like many revolutionary parties, the SLP emphasizes revolution at the expense of actual change with all problems traced back to the capitalist system. Because of this, Villar's platform is filled with complaint but almost devoid of any solutions to the problems outside of overthrowing the capitalist system.

The Ugly:

Villar's party, the SLP, is the offspring of a split from the Worker's World Party and is a largely a sectarian organization.

"I'm not a candidate for New Yorkers; I'm a candidate for workers of the world."

—DAN FEIN

Socialist Worker Party—Dan Fein

Dan Fein is a 64-year-old sewing machine operator.

The Good:

He's a socialist, and we're not talking about the Obama variety of socialism.

A MAN OF THE PEOPLE: As a member of the Socialist Worker's Party, Fein's platform includes guaranteed unemployment compensation at union scale, an increase in the minimum wage to union scale, and an end to all income taxes on workers.

The Bad:

He's a socialist: too much in the way of tired rhetoric, not much in the way of clear priorities for a better New York.

The Ugly:

Has not bothered to limit his agenda to issues actually having to do with New York City politics. Issues of national politics and the Iraq and Afghan wars is a higher priority, for example, than nuts and bolts solutions to issues directly affecting New York working class folks.

"Rent is too damn high!"

—JIMMY MCMILLAN

Rent is Too Damn High Candidate—Jimmy McMillan

What can you say about Jimmy McMillan's platform that you can't put into five simple words: "Rent is too damn high!" McMillan, who is a retired postal worker and a Vietnam vet, has been a perennial candidate for mayor and has been running on this same platform since at least 1993, when he was arrested for scaling one of the cables on the Brooklyn Bridge with a "Rambo knife" demanding that a television crew be brought to broadcast his message.

The Good:

McMillan is officially on the ballot this time around.

The Bad:

"Rent is too damn high."

The Ugly:

"Rent is too damn high." Ⓐ

book REVIEW

Our Planet, Our Selves

- *The End of Food* by Paul Roberts. Houghton Mifflin (2008)
- *Threshold: The Crisis of Western Culture* by Thom Hartmann. Viking Press (2009)

JUSTIN ROGERS-COOPER

As we move closer to the tipping point of climate change, where we'll lose control of our ability to influence atmospheric conditions on Earth, it's probably time to reevaluate how our everyday habits got us here. As a polemic argument, it might be instructive to see those habits as different kinds of addiction. Until a few years ago, the idea that we might measure our diet and consumption of consumer goods through the lens of addiction would have been laughable. After all, drugs like tobacco and alcohol were the obvious public enemies to most Americans health throughout the 20th century. It wasn't until medical and public policy restricted the enormously toxic epidemic of nicotine addiction to acceptable levels, for instance, that public health advocates, social scientists, and intellectual crusaders could turn their resources to other public illness industries that privileged shareholder wealth over common health. By specifically trying to harm human beings, these companies will become common targets that those seeking to reform the current capitalist system might focus on. This reform is necessary for the health of human beings specifically, not to mention the biosphere more broadly.

Perhaps surprisingly, the most recent group of industries to feel the spotlight from this network of activists and advocates has been the food industry. As Paul Roberts narrates in his fluid and indispensable book *The End of Food*, this turn toward food represents a far larger and far more ambitious campaign than the one mounted against the tobacco industry in the 1990s or the alcohol industry during the Prohibition era in the 1920s. A number of factors will influence any successful reform of the food industry, which is intricately interlinked with global trade markets and crucially supported by fantastic sums of federal spending, mostly in the form of farm subsidies. But more importantly, this urgent and widespread turn toward such a basic part of our daily life raises profound and disturbing questions about the role our everyday life plays in our health and our happiness. Eventually, these questions will conflict with our freedom to pursue the tasks that human beings have enjoyed since we began to store grain, create cities, manipulate symbols, and reinvent the chemical codes found in the biosphere in order to better suit our needs—and perhaps most perilously, better fit our desires. Our daily cravings for "tasty" food—whether cheap protein, luscious fat, or year-round organic produce—have become habits responsible for helping to create, in the words of Kenyan palaeoanthropoligst Richard E. Leaky, the sixth planetary mass-extinction in the history of the Earth. To first understand and then possibly moderate these desires requires us to navigate their complex intersections with our culture, our economy, and our neurobiology—in short, we must restyle, reconfigure, and reimagine every part of how we live. And we will not do this because of lifestyle choices, such as "going green." We will do this because our very lives are at stake; the existential crisis of the species has arrived.

Thom Hartman's *Threshold* also informs readers that the habits degrading life everywhere on Earth reflect horrific shortcomings in the stories we tell ourselves to justify our biocultures, or what we might call our cultures of living. The word bioculture calls attention to the way the common economic and ideological patterns of global culture reflect the similar reproductive agendas stored in the evolution of the human brain. Even more specifically, it serves to contextualize the bodily practices of eating, sex, and laboring within the larger ecologies of chemicals and biomass that make all life possible. There have been vast transformations in human biocultures in the last 10,000 years, of course, but no transformation really sets a precedent for the purposeful evolution of the human relationship to the planetary ecosystem that's now necessary, and necessary primarily because of attitudes that have basically served to reproduce the species for a thousand millennia.

In his attempt to narrate the biocultural patterns that produced our potential extinction, Thom Hartman first travels to what he calls a biological "edge" in the Darfur region of southern Sudan. He believes that in Darfur we can encounter a "threshold" that provides us a glimpse into the future of human conflict. In Darfur, the genocidal violence frames a constellation of "macro" issues that can serve as a microcosm of larger global stresses: peak oil, low water resources, excessive human population, and hot atmospheric conditions. This combination of resource scarcity, extreme temperature, and genocidal violence presages the conditions that will appear with more frequency and on greater scales as politically managed resources collapse under the weight of planetary ecocides. Along with the great loss of human life decaying in the desert, Hartman is also adamant about confronting the substantial loss of human knowledge deteriorating along with it in the sand. He likens the disappearance of indigenous knowledge in places like Darfur to the great rape of cultural memory that vanished during European colonization and within American slave economies. More than half of all the drugs we use in hospitals, Hartman reminds us, came from indigenous knowledge of plants.

Our daily cravings for "tasty" food—whether cheap protein, luscious fat, or year-round organic produce—have become habits responsible for helping to create, in the words of Kenyan palaeoanthropoligst Richard E. Leaky, the sixth planetary mass-extinction in the history of the Earth.

Also like Roberts, Hartman is quick to frame the current industrial food regime as one of the most consequential experiments in all human history. Whereas Roberts so engagingly traces the interconnected agents that comprise that industry, Hartman makes his point by summarizing the effects of it. When Europeans first arrived in North America, the average depth of the topsoil was twenty-one inches. Today it's six. In 1948, there was 158 milligrams of iron in the average 100 grams of spinach; when they stopped measuring it in 1973, that figure had dropped to 2.2 milligrams. He cites a recent article from Science on the oceanic collapse of fish ecosystems in order to explain that 29 percent of all fish species are in collapse—a term used when describing a species that has fell to 10 percent of its original population, and from which scientists do not usually observe a recovery. Of the sixty-four largest marine ecosystems across the planet, most were nearing collapse. Endangered commercial fish species alone include sea bass, Atlantic cod, king crab, Atlantic flounder, grouper, haddock, and halibut. He quotes president of the World Resources Institute Jonathan Lash, who in 2006 said, "in a single generation, we have essentially exhausted the wealth of the seas."

He's also very good on waste. Although he begins a chapter with an unexpectedly informative anecdote about German toilets and a short history of poop-worms, he's even better on the pollution of atmospheric carbon dioxide, the main driver of climate change. Since he summarizes the intersecting contributors to the planetary emergency quite well, let me give him ample space here to make his case:

> We have four colliding 'linear' systems, all pushing against the 'circle' of our blue marble floating through space, planet Earth: human population exploding; increasing levels of fossilized carbon being consumed, with its waste (mostly CO2) put in our atmosphere; increasing numbers of food animals for all us humans producing unsustainable levels of waste that is also altering the environment; and an atmosphere absorbing all of this about to trip over into an unstable state, which could render life on the planet uninhabitable for us and most other complex life forms.

While his prose here seems somewhat unremarkable, no other writer I've come across better compresses and connects the separate lines of crisis into the tangled strand of our biocultural DNA better than Hartman.

Just as readers of *The End of Food* are certain to rethink any steady diet of beef and chicken, Hartman offers a lot of cultural explanations and solutions for the climate crisis. For one, he reports that if Americans cut their consumption of meat and dairy products by a fifth it would "have more impact on global warming than if every jet plane and car in the world were to fall silent forever." Going further, however, Hartman places a significant amount of blame on the economic and religious ideologies underpinning messianic beliefs in both the human dominance of the biosphere and the righteously privileged place of 'free-market' capitalism within it. He traces the degradation of government by the free market economy back to the American Revolution, and in particular President John Adams' belief in the power of a small ruling elite where wealth and power can be concentrated. He follows the power of this political idea into the post-war Chicago school of capitalist economics that influenced former Federal Reserve Chairman Alan Greenspan's neoliberal faith in the perfection of unregulated economic markets. As he levels now-familiar numbers about the control of resources in the United States, where the top 1 percent of families hold 49 percent of the wealth, he alleges that acolytes of neoliberalism have staged a successful "coup" over the will of the American people, and it's one that most Americans "don't even know happened."

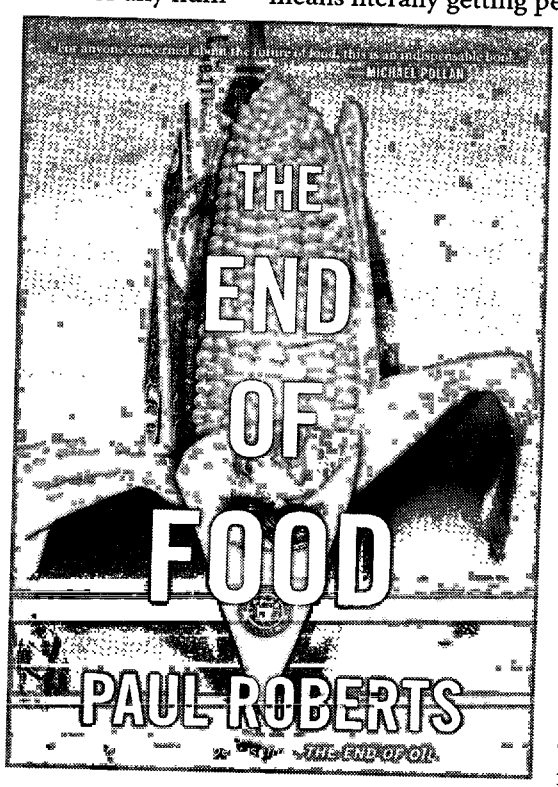
Hartman is very good at locating the contemporary philosophical source of this coup in its free market mythology. The resurgence of this myth comes from the shared popularity between fiction readers and economic elites with the radically libertarian and objectivist ideas of Ayn Rand, who advocated the "virtues of selfishness" and with whom Alan Greenspan was a close friend. Anyone interested in neoliberalism, Glen Beck, and the Republican Party would be advised to read this chapter. Hartman challenges this myth by being blunt about the role of the federal government's historic and contemporary subsidies, through the taxpayers, to authoritarian corporations. "When the corporate oligarchy reaches out to take over and merge itself with the powers and institutions of government," he writes, "it becomes the very definition of Mussolini's 'fascism': the merger of corporate and state interests." This fascism is the force that preserves the strength of those institutions that organize our biocultural war against the biosphere, even as it claims only to be servicing life's "growth." Hart-

man sees this force as explicitly connected to older biocultures of religious patriarchy, and he believes the evolution of our global biocultures as necessitating a new planetary ethics of gender and human reproduction.

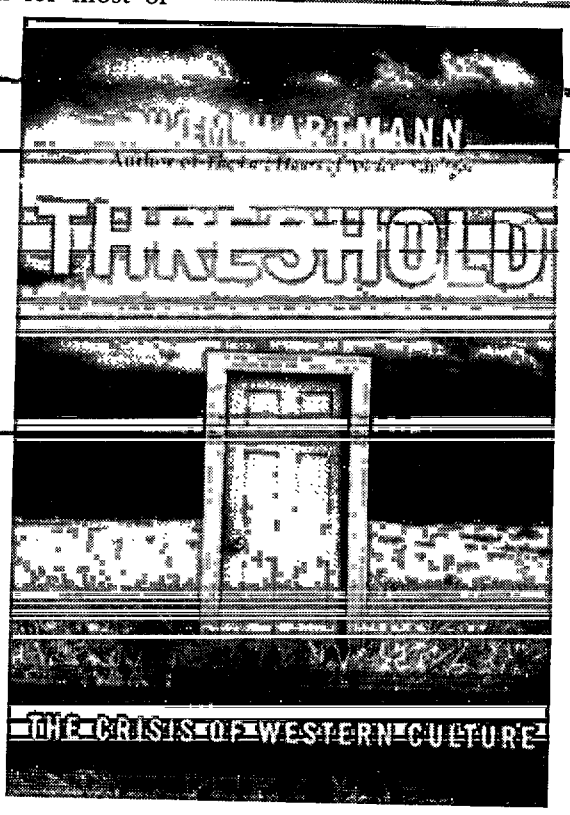
Indeed, the transition from *Threshold* to *The End of Food* occurs at the nexus of fascist government, human reproduction, and oil consumption. Each of these systems are predicated on infinite growth, and each depends on the other to achieve it. The fascism of an infinitely expanding capitalism has replaced religiously mandated reproduction as the primary ideology justifying human dominance of the world, and has in turn constructed a food production system that has successfully supplied enough calories for ever more reproducing humans. A golden billion of these humans materially benefit from that fascism, even where it directly degrades life for the bottom two or three billion. Still, the exponential conversion of the planet's inorganic and organic matter into edible plants and flesh has already become perhaps the single largest event on Earth since the meteor that killed the dinosaurs some sixty-five million years ago. The system that makes this possible isn't bigger than us; it is us. "The biggest driver of all these processes that are tearing our planet apart and putting all life at risk," he writes, "is the increase in human biomass. There is roughly one trillion pounds of human flesh on the planet right now." Hartman recruits a familiar graph of population numbers to illustrate where this trillion pounds came from, but he uses it with far more insight than most by linking it to our shrinking era of cheap oil. The growth in human population was a result of cheap oil, cheap fertilizer, cheap pesticides, and a food distribution system that "lets a person in Iowa have a lunch of Tilapia fish grown in ponds in China, lettuce and tomatoes grown in Mexico, wine imported from France, and a fruit cup of berries imported from Chile and strawberries from Nicaragua." Since the human population relies so much on oil, he parenthetically points out that, "indirectly, most of us are actually eating oil." Similarly, Michael Polan argues in *The Omnivore's Dilemma* that we are always also eating corn; Roberts would argue that oil helps us to grow a lot of that corn.

And since most of the profits from this oil consumption-human reproduction nexus goes to elite private corporations, Hartman sees the best possible movement to regain control of the situation as one that radically renews our commitment to democracy. In this new democracy, the primary function of government would be to protect "the commons," or what Hartman calls "the stuff we all share," including the air, public places, and public institutions. In order to accomplish this, he pragmatically suggests that government revoke a law granting "corporate personhood," which legitimized the legal right of corporations to shift control of common resources to privately held wealth. Corporate personhood stems from an 1886 US Supreme Court decision, *Santa Clara* v. *Union Pacific Railroad*. In that decision, court reporter and former railroad president J.C. Bancroft Davis added a note to the case claiming that Chief Justice Morrison R. Waite had said "corporations are persons," and thus should be granted human rights under the Fourteenth Amendment—the one that, of all things, promised equal protection and due process under the law after slavery. For Hartman, the first legal step toward a real democratic system might begin by inserting the word "natural" before the word "person" in the Fourteenth Amendment.

Given this logic, the key to understanding fascism in the United States isn't to study the government, but to study the economy; and if one studies the economy, one must turn to the production of "superabundance" through the modern food system. The success and health of this system is the key to understanding the popularity of fascism in the United States. If you are what you eat, then eating in this system is a significant lever one pulls for either fascism or democracy, even though, quite perversely, the less choice one has about what one eats the more likely one is eating in a system built on a fascism of cheap oil. This is the case because, in effect, the cheaper one's food the more likely the food is the product of authoritarian corporations that have used cheap methods of "just-in-time" production to get that cheap food to one's home. This food comes from cheap oil, cheap labor, and cheap animal life. Furthermore, it has "externalized" the costs of waste like carbon dioxide out of the price one pays at the store. The price of this carbon pollution comes in addition to other forms of pollution: toxic water, increased mutations in human-animal diseases and viruses, and the destruction of vast ecosystems for the monoculture fields of corn, soybeans, and cattle. Consumers don't pay for these costs in the price of a Coke, but they pay a price by breathing fouler air, by destroying diverse forms of life, and by paying higher medical costs for any number of visits and treatments for one's bodily degradation from the consumption of the cheap food, or from the cancers that appear as human biofeedback within the toxic ecosystem.



This whole strange tangle of superabundance, corporate politics, and biosphere pollution is the brilliant story told by Paul Roberts in *The End of Food*. Roberts tells the story by identifying the agents that made the transportation, infrastructure, and the chemical and genetic redesign of fascist food possible. This "rationalized agriculture" developed at the end of the 19th century and arguably culminated in the last third of the 20th century. Instead of the comparatively inefficient small farms that drove human food consumption for most of our history, by the end of World War II "a vast network of commodity buyers and processors had arisen to convert grains, animals, and other farm products into inputs for the food industry." By 1957, the Harvard economist Ray Goldberg was calling it "agribusiness." Today it has become one of more powerful corporate sectors of economy; arguably, it's as powerful as the oil and pharmaceutical companies. Food manufacturers generate $3.1 trillion in revenue a year. They do this by cutting costs at every step of the food production process. Wal-Mart accounts for 21 cents of every food dollar spent in the United States. Retailers like Wal-Mart subsidize the low cost of food by under-pricing its actual cost because they can make up that money through non-food items sold at its stores. Since 1985 Wal-Mart alone has drive down the price of food in the United States by 9.1 percent (it's driven down wages 2.2 percent in the same period). Suppliers to those retailers like Wal-Mart ask for more value from farmers. Farmers respond by planting more profitable crops, cutting labor costs, and investing in new technology and fertilizers. This has the cyclical effect of producing ever more quantities of food at even cheaper cost, which causes small farms to fold against larger agribusiness farms. This consolidates the food industry even more into corporate hands, who must now market ever more food to ever more populations for ever cheaper costs. As agribusiness developed more efficient ways to produce calories, the amount available for an American to eat increased to about 4,000 calories by the year 2000. "For all the staggering output and perpetual oversupply," Roberts explains, by the turn of the century "there were troubling signs that our capacity for such superabundance was limited."



This superabundance was limited, in part, because the main drivers of food consumption and production weren't necessarily "food" in conventional terms. Converting "real" food into more expensive food "products" requires adding "value" to make it more profitable. Companies must also market those cheap calories for consumption. In the United States, and ever more frequently in the developed world, this means literally getting people to eat more food products. US breakfast cereal companies alone spend $800 million a year in advertising.. Nestle has a research center in Lausanne, Switzerland where scientists "pore [sic] over sensory maps, sift through sales data, and dissemble competitors' products." Companies engineer food tastes according to demographics. They thicken and repair foods damaged during "manufacturing" through all kinds of flavors, and also by using techniques like hydrogenation, where they can "thicken and preserve vegetable oils by injecting them with hydrogen atoms." Demand for grape flavor for sodas, gum, and candy "now exceeds the quantity of grape flavor produced naturally... by a factor of ten." These techniques also changed meat production. After the explosive success of chicken nuggets in the 1980s, demand for chicken overall rose dramatically. American preference for white meat meant companies like Tyson and Perdue had to design bigger birds with bigger breasts. They also had to find cheap ways to generate and handle more birds. In 1980, poultry processing plants handled sixteen million birds a year. Today they handle two million birds a week. US chicken output has tripled to thirty-seven billion pounds a year.

Ninety percent of the grain Americans consume goes to feed cows and chickens. The grain to feed all those chickens—not to mention cows and other livestock—is a product of intensive farming and the critical application of chemicals, particularly nitrogen, into the soil. This has led to soil erosion and groundwater pollution. As oil becomes more expensive, so does nitrogen, which requires oil for its production. In the context of rising populations, it's becoming unclear how even this current food system can continue, even without a catastrophic emergency like a food-borne illness outbreak. Roberts gives numerous examples of the ways these pressures fit together, and how they pose questions about "the sustainability of current food systems and practices, and, more specifically, about whether dramatic improvements in diet—and the spectacular rise in meat consumption in particular—that occurred during the last century can be maintained during the next."

As companies expand into new food markets, like China and India, they are converting eaters there into those with tastes similar to those in the west. This contradicts how many the planet can really feed, particularly in terms of meat. According to the Earth Policy Institute, the average consumer can sustainably eat

Continued on page 17

book REVIEW

The End of Print—or Something More?

▶ *Losing the News: The Future of the News that Feeds Democracy* by Alex S. Jones. Oxford University Press (2009)

DANIEL DOUGLAS

"I don't read the newspaper, I get my news online" is a phrase heard so often, it could be considered the battle cry of the digital-age. And as with any battle, this one is not without its casualties. Today it seems as if the entire country is declaring the passing of the newspaper industry. Newspapers are seen simultaneously as outdated relics and another victim of the multi-headed hydra known as the economic recession. In a particular stroke of irony, in the first nine months of 2009, the *New York Times* Business/Financial desk has published between ten and twenty stories documenting the downfall of papers both large and small, including the *Times* itself. There is even a website, newspaperdeathwatch.com, started in March 2007, which is doing an unofficial body count of papers that have fallen by the wayside.

What the online generation may not be aware of is that most of the news they find on web sites such as Google, Yahoo, and MSN is drawn, in whole or in part, from the major national newspapers which they claim not to read. What would happen if news as we know it simply ceased to exist?

From this point of departure, Alex Jones, a newspaper reporter since childhood (a story which figures prominently in his account) brings us *Losing the News*. He sets the scene with a moment in his career as a journalist whose beat was the press itself. He broke a story about a Kentucky newspaper family who decided to sell their papers in the face of family turmoil. That story was written in 1986, long before the current 'crisis' of the news industry came to the fore, though it had been facing the all-too-common consolidation process that was characteristic during the Reagan years and has only increased since.

This introduction, though it was about the selling of a newspaper, was more illustrative of the journalistic process that Jones and others like him prize as the essence of a trade. The story was in depth—6,500 words in the *New York Times* business section—took a lot of time and resources to write, and kept the reporter away from his desk where he could have been covering other stories. Nonetheless, the story was deemed important by the editor and the paper covered it. From the introduction, it is clear that the author is certainly nostalgic about his work, and he makes no effort to hide that fact. But, to simply cast this as a swan song of a bygone age would be to misrepresent why it seems to have been written. The author is wholly concerned with the implications of the loss of independent journalism for a democratic society.

The book makes the case that while news and newspapers will certainly persist, the nature of journalism is undergoing fundamental changes due to the circumstances facing newspapers, which Jones argues do the majority of original reporting on which other news media base their content. In his analysis, then, simply focusing on saving the newspapers as businesses will not be sufficient to save the news. "The news" as Jones conceives of it is more about standards of objectivity than the medium of columns and newsprint. He observes that, at their genesis, newspapers were often directly financed by unions and political parties; thus any thought of objectivity or verification would have been laughable. Professional journalism, Jones argues, was the result of both an increased financial stability which provided editorial independence as well as the establishment of a set of best practices. As journalism found its way into the academy, standards of objectivity were incorporated into a professional code, a sharp contrast from the days of William Randolph Hearst and "yellow journalism."

The news is also determined by what is covered. His first major discussion outlines the different types of news one sees in a paper, be it a daily owned by an old newspaper family like his in Greenville, or one owned by a large conglomerate like the Gannet Company. At the center of any real newspaper are the "accountability" stories which range from the coverage of international affairs to policy debates in the congress and statehouses to local issues. Under the umbrella of "accountability news" are "bearing witness" stories, which are descriptive accounts of events, "explanatory" pieces which offer analysis of events and provide historical and/or present context, and finally investigative journalism, which is done against and in spite of powerful interests who would rather that certain events remain secret or covered in a very superficial fashion. Since the advent of professional journalism, these types of stories have been the lynchpin of any good paper and are thus called the "Iron Core" of news.

Though these stories are often the least entertaining to read, they inform the reader of things that will affect their lives, be it directly or indirectly. However, the impact of these stories does not end with their publication. Accountability news has a second life in the subsequent analysis, which forms a second tier of reporting that is largely based on opinion. Editorials and other forms of "advocacy news," in all the different media ranging from magazines to television programs to blogs are largely reactions to the accountability news produced by the paid reporting staffs of newspapers. Writers and orators on all sides of the political spectrum thus depend on the steady stream of information that newspapers provide. Political and social thinkers at least as far back as the founding of our country have seen a free and independent press as indispensable to our democratic practice. This is at the heart of the link between news and democracy envisioned by thinkers such as Walter Lippman and John Dewey, who Jones references in his chapter on "Media and Democracy." Though Lippman and Dewey had different ideas of who 'the public' was and therefore who needed the news, the purpose remained consistent: to inform the citizenry for their more effective participation in self-governance.

The primary problem facing the news today is a financial one. Newspapers were at their zenith from the 1960s until the 1980s. Profits were high even at many small papers and so were investments in the quality of news; reporters were hired en masse and compensation for the work was handsome. The pursuit of truth was a prized value among the best of the profession, regardless of political persuasion. But, as Jones points out, truth is expensive and time consuming. The journalistic maxim of verification requires maintaining relationships with many sources and often protecting those sources under pain of prosecution and lawsuits. If papers like the *New York Times* and *Washington Post* weren't financially stable, they would surely have caved under pressure from the federal government at notable moments such as the Watergate scandal and the publication of the Pentagon papers. More often, however, it is smaller local incidents that show the value of an independent press, whose role has time and again been to hold government and industry accountable for their practices.

Profitability is thus an essential element of providing the most objective news. Since the 1980s, and at an accelerated pace since the passage of the 1996 Telecommunications Act, newspapers, along with television and radio, have been consolidated into an increasingly small number of hands under the umbrella of large corporate media conglomerates. With the switch to a corporate model, newspapers have come to expect larger profit margins in the short term and are no longer as concerned with news as with attracting larger audiences and greater advertising revenues. In this model the iron core of news has taken a back seat. Sensational content such as entertainment coverage more commonly seen in magazines now finds its way into serious newspapers and is ubiquitous among local tabloids. Opinion pieces and syndicated columns replace locally oriented stories, leaving a paper with a local reputation but little local coverage. Likewise, content provided by government and business public relations desks, often unedited, have become a more common feature in news media of all forms.

Shorenstein Center director Alex S. Jones with Franco Ordonez and Ames Alexander of the *Charlotte Observer*, at a 2009 panel on the future of reporting.

While the new business model engendered a shift in the choices made by newspapers from within, top-down technological shifts further affected changes from without. Advertising, which has accounted for the viability of newspapers nearly since their introduction, has been adversely affected by web-based services such as craigslist and autotrader. The lower (and sometimes nonexistent) cost and increased visibility of internet advertising has created a serious obstacle for newspapers, which were once unparalleled in their ability to reach consumers. Falling advertising revenues forced papers to cut back on labor in the form of reporting and to increase pressure on the remaining staff. Jones gives numerous accounts of once-mighty newsrooms throughout the country that have been reduced to thin staffs of amateur reporters forced to fill quotas of content. The shift is perhaps most evident in the orientation of editors, who had erected a metaphorical wall between

the advertising and news desks of their papers. Many of the same editors now must divide their time equally between these two tasks.

A third aspect of the crisis is the declining circulation of papers large and small. This is again connected with technological shifts that make print seem antiquated. While he imagines that there will always be some who prefer a print form newspaper, the availability of online editions, often for free, makes economic and practical sense for an increasing numbers of readers. That many people read *New York Times* stories through search engines such as Google News, which does not pay anything to the *Times* for its content and keeps the ad revenues for itself, renders the online editions of even large papers redundant, not to mention self-destructive, since it is precisely from these sites that Google gets its content. A compounding problem for circulation is the public faith in newspapers. Because so much of today's journalism in all media is advocacy and opinion-based, a fact which bloggers and television pundits make no attempt to hide, the public has come to see news in all media as inherently biased. In sum, he sees newspapers being caught, and often lost, in a glut of news media without being set apart for their central contribution and particular ethos of objectivity and verification. The end result, for Jones, is that regardless of the work that goes into reporting, people see any story that they don't agree with as a result of intentional skewing by the source. While there is discussion of some recent breaches of media ethics, such as the Jayson Blair case, more often than not journalists make an attempt at verification. If anything, Jayson Blair made the *New York Times* re-evaluate its scrutiny.

The casualties of this multifaceted crisis are laid plain in Jones' book. *The San Francisco Chronicle* and to a lesser extent the *Los Angeles Times* and *Boston Globe* are all major market newspapers which have been forced to shed significant portions of their newsrooms. Medium-sized papers like the *Rocky Mountain News* and the *Baltimore Examiner* have been forced to close their doors, while others such as the *Detroit Free Press* and the *Seattle Post-Intelligencer* have moved to online and hybrid print-online formats. The *Washington Post*, *New York Times* and Gannet conglomerates have seen their share prices fall a great deal, out of proportion even with the precipitous market drop of October 2008. Considering these circumstances, it is unlikely if not impossible for newspapers to continue along on their old model.

The book concludes on a somewhat hopeful note, as Jones remains optimistic about the future of the news, if not with newspapers as its primary source. As the problem was framed as primarily financial, the question of "saving the news" gets tangled up with concerns around financing the news. He looks at exemplary cases of newspapers which, faced with the crisis, have devised creative strategies for engaging readers and remaining viable.

Obviously, news agencies of all sorts need to increase their web traffic in order to compensate for lost advertising revenue in print. Though newspapers do have relatively reliable names, the size of their operations has made their transition to the web slow. Jones is skeptical about the recent phenomenon of "citizen journalism," where readers become collaborators and contributors to the news they read. The problem he sees is that though writing content is easy enough, citizen journalism is not beholden to the same standards as professional journalism. The blogosphere, though he points out some of its brighter spots, is equally suspicious because it is flooded with interested voices above which it is hard for even the best of them to rise. He is also, at best, ambivalent about a nonprofit model for newspapers, where donors and foundations would support newspapers instead of advertising revenue and circulation. Though in rare instances there have been large donations of time and resources, it is unlikely that foundations or donors would enter into long-lasting commitments with newspapers.

Ultimately, the solution for Jones is for newspapers to find a way to reconnect with their readers while remaining economically viable. While he bemoans the loss of reporting staff in newsrooms throughout the country, he recognizes that this may be a response to overexpansion while times were good. Newspapers must find ways to cut costs and perhaps endure a period of lower profits. But, in the face of all this, the core of accountability news must not be sacrificed. With accountability news at its core, he feels newspapers can adopt new strategies that cater to the mediums readers prefer. Content can be provided for print readers, online consumers, and even those that prefer to read their news over their cell phones. This would allow papers to remain in print while capitalizing on new outlets and remaining relevant to the next generation. Regardless of the format, Jones is concerned with saving the news for what matters most about it, its role as an objective source of information for citizens in a democracy.

All told, *Losing the News* offers a breadth of information on a timely issue that is of critical importance. The author is a true insider who cares deeply about the future of the industry both economically and ideologically. As such, he is critical of the direction papers are heading and the motivations that have brought them there. Through his historical and contemporary discussions of the role of newspapers, an effective case is made for why we need news as a centerpiece of a democratic society. He frames the crisis and the solutions in terms of the principles of the industry, the journalistic ethos, and the economic strength that makes adherence to it possible.

With that in mind, the critical flaw of the book is its grounding in the industry. Perhaps, because the author is a professional journalist and a part-owner of a newspaper, he can't see beyond the profit motive to examine strategies that might exist outside of it. As such, it is easy to see why he is so skeptical of a non-profit approach to news. While it is certain that economic strength has had some positive impact on news coverage in the past, that might not be the way forward.

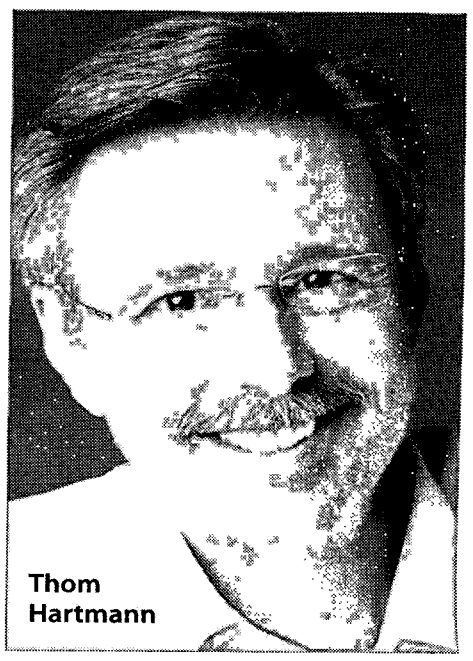
The book also doesn't do enough work highlighting the strengths in emergent online reporting. Though the *Daily Beast* and *Politico* may simply be "truth squads" who hold mainstream media like newspapers accountable through their tertiary reporting, sites such as *Salon.com* and *Slate* produce original investigative reporting that is severely lacking even among the best print sources. The point is well taken that the massive proliferation of the blogosphere can lead to sensory overload; but some standout sites have risen above the clatter to provide original and useful reporting that adheres to many of the same standards of quality that have characterized newspapers at their best.

A book written by an industry luminary during perhaps the greatest panic that industry has ever known cannot help but suffer from some flaws of judgment and even some name calling. Regardless of that, the history and the grounding in theory that the book provides is incredibly valuable. One can't help but heed Jones' warning that the news must be saved if democracy is to persist. If there is no effective way for the public, however that is defined, to obtain verified, objective information, democracy will surely suffer. Ⓐ

Book Review

Continued from page 15

only twelve pounds of meat a year—not the 217 pounds consumed by the average American. The current global grain supplies would not otherwise be able to feed the 9.5 billion people projected to soon be on the planet. And today's grain output is by no means assured. The World Bank claims that global erosion is so great that by 2050 the world may be trying to feed twice as many people with half as much soil. What's worse is nitrogen: since 40 percent of the world's population eats the calories produced by synthetic nitrogen, any disruption in the ability of oil markets to continually produce more nitrogen will lead to vast famines. Should countries begin making more nitrogen by using natural gas, those countries will turn to the two nations with the largest natural gas supplies: Russia and Iran. Meanwhile, the oil that allows the cheap production of, say, a can of Coke necessitates 2,200 calories of hydrocarbon energy from fossil fuels to make just 200 "real" calories of the stuff. The carbon emissions from that energy have already increased to 370 parts per million, and are on track to hit 550 ppm by 2050. Furthermore, every ton of grain we grow requires a thousand tons of water, and agriculture now accounts for three-quarters of all freshwater use. Unless there is a "silver bullet" breakthrough in the system, then the coming decade or two will revolve around unprecedented disruptions in the ability of the industry to feed the human population of earth.



Thom Hartmann

For many viewers, one of the lasting impressions from Morgan Spurlock's 2004 film *Super Size Me* was the surprising spotlight it placed on the way the human brain is hardwired for sugars and fats. In *The End of Food*, Roberts writes about how the food industry succeeds in getting eaters to eat more because they have exploited both the brain's desire for sweets and fats and because they relentlessly market food according to all kinds of human desires. It can't be a coincidence, Roberts writes, that "food companies create...opportunities in environments specifically chosen for proconsumption demographics—in malls, in airports, and in poor neighborhoods." They advertise snacks everywhere. They market food products as "me-time" indulgences. They put fast food in public schools. The human brain lacks the same chemistry for feeling "full" that it has for feeling hunger. As in Spurlock's film, the brain craves the chemicals food-releases for biological reasons, and these reasons have nothing to do with current bioculture.

What matters about this perspective is that it means we participate in the fascism of the corporate food industry against our best intentions because "rationalizing" agribusiness means attuning it to the irrationality, if you will, of our desires. Moreover, the production of an economy that values shareholder wealth above public health is successful both because the corporate manipulation of the political system is so effective, but also because it feels so good to eat this way in the short run. This means that in order to deal with the problem of food, as well as the problem of our entire bioculture, we have to deal with our brains and our habits. We are hardwired for addiction, and we are currently in denial about the larger effects of our addiction to eating.. The answer really can't just be one of radical democracy, or changing the constitution, or going organic. We may have to use our biotechnological breakthroughs not on new crops or methods of production, but on ourselves. We may need to rewire our brains, because in order to deal with the consequences of our addictions, we can't seem to quit on our own. Rather than have the planet shut itself down to stop us, let's shut ourselves down first. We can do this not by killing ourselves, but by changing our bioculture: we need to fight the hardwire that made us fascists. We can do it by engineering ourselves for democracy and compassion, but we must

Toward an Activist Curriculum

Andrea Batista Schlesinger

▶ *The Death of Why? The Decline of Questioning and the Future of Democracy* by Andrea Batista Schlesinger. Berrett-Koehler (2009)

NATE MICKELSON

Awakened just in time to watch the 2008 presidential debates, a modern-day Rip Van Winkle might have been forgiven for thinking he had watched a parody of some sort rather than an election in motion, SNL rather than USA. Since they were nothing more than a sequence of scripted questions and equally scripted non-answers, the debates added little to what we brought with us to voting booths later that fall. But however little information we gained, many of us felt more firmly convinced of our previous choices as a result of having watched. We heard what we expected to hear based on what we thought we knew, and because what we heard conformed to our expectations, we took it as evidence that our prior views were correct. Though we may not intend to, we pseudo-think in this circular way all the time because we have, or think we have, too little time to thoroughly consider our positions.

But isn't public education supposed to train us to avoid this kind of thinking and equip our children with the skills to stop this cycle? Andrea Batista Schlesinger, the author of *The Death of Why? The Decline of Questioning and the Future of Democracy* is not convinced. In fact, Schlesinger seriously doubts that schools teach students how to question what they find in the world, and she doubts that the meal the media has made of public discourse offers any opportunity for developing such critical faculties outside the classroom. In her view, we have become an answer-centered community rather than a question-centered one in all respects, from what we value in education, to what we read and watch online, to what we expect of our political leaders. Schlesinger has spent most of her life making change happen on a local scale, and her first book reads more like a handbook for training progressive activists than just another lament for the demise of American intellectual culture.

1.

In a moment not so different from our own, John Dewey claimed that the role of education in a democracy was to "give individuals a personal interest in social relationships and control, and habits of mind which secure social changes without introducing disorder." Schlesinger follows Dewey in claiming this as the main objective of public education and defines Dewey's "habits of mind" as the asking of "thoughtful questions" of those in power or those who would attain power. As she has in her work with the Drum Major Institute for Public Policy (DMI), she aims in *The Death of Why?* to offer opposition to the capitalist hegemony she sees as governing society by giving voice to the concerns of those most harmed by capitalist processes. Though she does see direct consequences in the late 2008 collapse of the financial system in particular—Schlesinger seems most concerned with the indirect harms such processes perpetrate through 1) media and 2) public education.

Before turning to public education, the side of the equation of harm to which Schlesinger devotes most of her attention and through which, exclusively, she sees avenues for opposition, a quick review of her account of Internet thinking is in order. Picking up from Nick Carr's 2008 article "Is Google Making Us Stupid?," Schlesinger argues that though we may be searching more and more and thus may seem to be asking more and more questions, our use of Google and other search engines actually ingrains in us and in our children new habits of mind detrimental to the asking of questions altogether. She describes watching classroom after classroom full of students clicking away, engaging information horizontally rather than vertically. Her complaint is not that today's students lack curiosity, it's that in the breadth of their engagement, they never reach deeply enough into a given article or blog post to form a genuine understanding of what information it presents. In the end, she concludes, young people navigate from place to place on the Internet, from search to search, questioning and absorbing nothing, until they find something with which they already have a demonstrable affinity. In most cases, that something has little to do with making the world, or our own country, a better or more equitable place.

She likens the grazing the young people do online to the voluntary partisanship of their parents' television-viewing habits. In an insightful turn, Schlesinger criticizes viewers for seeking and supporting entertainment as news in the first place rather than demonizing Fox News and other cable outlets for promoting a given political agenda while claiming to report "news."

Citing various surveys by interested and disinterested think tanks, she claims that a growing majority of Americans are choosing to listen only to voices from which they know exactly what they will hear, and within that set, only to voices with which they already agree. Not only that, but she finds many are also beginning to locate—or actively relocate—themselves, physically, within communities of others who share their views.

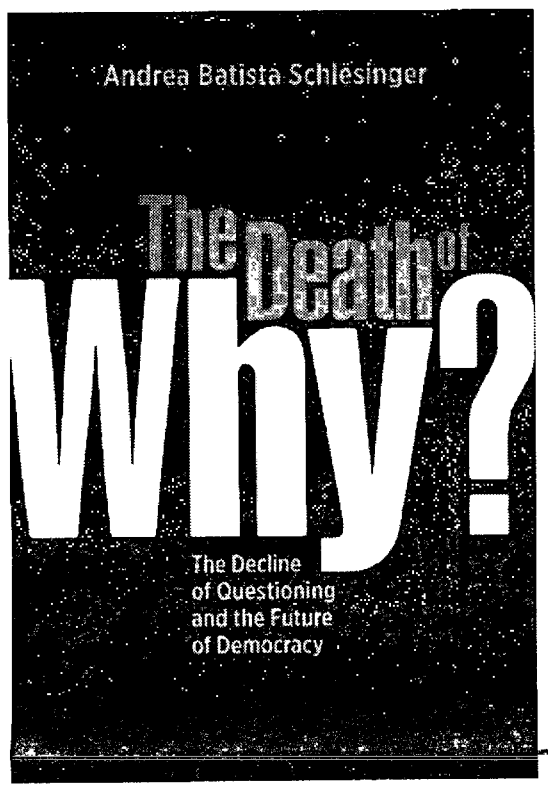
To combat these practices, Schlesinger requires her own students at the DMI Summer Institute to read and discuss two daily newspapers each morning. She argues that doing so helps students understand not only "what is happening in the world" but also to start to ask questions about "the role of the news [establishment] in interpreting and shaping [world] events." In her discussion of her work at DMI and throughout her discussion of contemporary media, Schlesinger assigns great importance to newspapers. While her preference for the newspaper method of learning about the world might owe more to nostalgia or habit than to any real benefits derived, the point she makes in preferring newspapers bears repeating. When she reads her newspaper and when her students read theirs, she claims, each is confronted with an object that must be navigated physically. It's not a coincidence that Schlesinger opens these summer reading sessions by teaching her students how to fold the newspaper for easiest subway reading. Managing the newspaper's physical form moves it from "out there" to "in here," from the ignorable noise of the outside world to the closer sphere of that which much be considered.

2.

Formed in 1999 in Hampton, Virginia, a mid-size city near the Chesapeake Bay, the Hampton Youth Commission provides a means for high school-age students to influence decisions taken by the city as a whole and to direct town funds to support student projects. Comprised of twenty-four student mem-

bers and an adult director, Gindy Carlson, the Youth Commission works with the Hampton City Council on issues that affect young people such as plans for a new vocational high school and teen center, and organizes forums where students question candidates for local office. Though it is not a school-based program, Schlesinger offers the Hampton Youth Commission as a model for the types of school experience she believes would better prepare today's students for full participation in the processes of their democracy. She argues that, in addition to providing hands-on experience, the commission gives students, especially underprivileged ones, the confidence they will need to seek change in the world they'll soon inherit.

Schlesinger contrasts the productive experiences students gain through involvement with the Youth Commission and similar projects—including the work done in schools by New Jersey's Center for Civic Responsibility, for example—with statistics from recent nationwide surveys of civics knowledge. In one 2006 survey, only 28 percent of eighth grader's could explain the historical purpose of the Declaration of Independence, while in another, just fourteen percent affirmed that criminal defendants have the right to legal counsel. As Schlesinger explains, while these results are terrifying enough in what they show about what our children don't know, they are even more terrifying in that they are trending downward at the same time that most national politicians claim education as a top priority. This latter point she reads as one result of the privatizing of schools and school functions carried out under the aegis of the stricter accountability standards of No Child Left Behind. While she rightly applauds the investments made through No Child Left Behind, she offers nothing but criticism for the testing regimes and the unprecedented degree of private sector influence the act has produced.



Schlesinger seriously doubts that schools teach students how to question what they find in the world, and she doubts that the meal the media has made of public discourse offers any opportunity for developing such critical faculties outside the classroom.

Schlesinger's anger and criticisms on these two fronts join in her account of the rise of "financial literacy education." Under the cover of ensuring that students leave high school with basic skills for managing their own finances, she explains, America's largest financial institutions, JPMorgan Chase, Bank of America, and Merrill Lynch, to name three, have invaded high school classrooms across the country giving lessons about savings accounts, securities, and other investment tools that explicitly promote their own products. Beyond voicing the obvious concern that time spent discussing theoretical investments with interested advisors is not time spent preparing critical thinking skills, Schlesinger argues that this kind of preparation measurably harms the students it means to prepare because it feeds their already primed appetites for quick answers to problems. In her view, the lesson these sessions teach is nothing more than "To buy more things, you need more money! Choose a JPMorgan Chase CD—don't worry what CD means, or how JPMorgan Chase makes money using your money for their own purposes." She argues that these programs simply install consumerist values rather than engaging students in conversations about the relative value of different forms of economic organization. The fact that the students she observed swallow the financial industry's lessons unquestioningly only heightens the contrast between the question-centered classroom Schlesinger demands and the answer-dominated ones we've created.

While she agrees that the Internet allows today's students more opportunities to connect with one another to resist this sort of indoctrination than ever before, Schlesinger views the current generation's embrace of networked social life with skepticism. Comparing web activism with the in-person variety, she says:

> Much has been said and written of late about the new ways that young people are expressing their commitment to changing the world: they are using the Internet, organizing their friends through online social networks, raising money for causes through Facebook. However, speaking as someone who started as a student school board member and has advised two candidates for mayor of New York, I know there is no substitute for involvement in politics at the local level. That is where we truly learn how to ask questions of those in power, develop the habits of mind of engaged citizens, and assume the posture of agents who have the power to make a difference—because we already have.

Her claims are certainly accurate. There is no substitute for experience, and in the convoluted world of policy and appropriations, even at the local level, past success is all but a requirement for future success. However much she doubts that the Internet will be the place where tomorrow's progressive activists cut their teeth, it seems equally unlikely that city council chambers will be the places they learn to ask questions about the society they inhabit. Before they step out politically, students should learn to think out, as it were, in their own minds. They need to ask "why?" as they learn, not just when they are directed to by teacher-activists interested in their mobilization.

3.

To say that I share Schlesinger's dissatisfaction with the shallowness of political discourse, on the one hand, and the overwhelming emphasis on test-based pedagogy, on the other, would be a vast understatement. Indeed, to say we should all be terrified of the current trajectories in both these realms and what they might mean for the next generation's American democracy probably doesn't overstate the case by much.

Given that more and more of us tend to value quick answers over long inquiry, the intervention that Schlesinger attempts is more than welcome. However, while she claims to offer both an assessment of and solution to this decline in the asking of "why?" at its source, she focuses most of her efforts on creating schools that will serve as seedbeds for activism rather than as places where inquiry-filled lives or learning might begin. She argues for schools as agents for encouraging direct political engagement among middle and high school students rather than advocating for teaching methods that foster broad consideration of ideas.

While there may be merit to encouraging students to involve themselves in movements for social change, Schlesinger pushes too hard. The proto-progressives and veteran teacher-activists she celebrates in Hampton might have found success in steering plans for a new vocational high school, but she offers no evidence that these students have learned any lesson but ones about the mechanics of local government and the collective power of students in such an arena. These are valuable lessons, but they do not promote the asking of questions as questions Schlesinger seems to value, and they do not assure the future of American democracy. Schlesinger is so focused on making change now that she confuses subject matter with method.

In his discussion of the proper subjects for school instruction, Dewey warns that, regardless of the subject, there is a fundamental difference in what that subject means to the educator and to the student. Rather than teaching "subject matter in itself," Dewey argues, the better educator will teach a given subject matter's "interaction with [her] pupil's present needs and capacities."

In a way, Dewey seems to call for exactly what Schlesinger calls for. What could be more relevant to the Hampton students' needs and capacities than the construction of a new vocational high school? But however much Dewey wants pedagogy to depart from rote instruction and insularity, he stops short of calling for direct political engagement, and for good reason. The real subject matter in Schlesinger's Hampton example is not a vocational high school and it's not even social change or progressive politics. Rather, it's local government in operation, the work of professionals who have been trained for, or at least elected to, their positions and who are burdened with maintaining the interests and fulfilling the needs of a population much larger than those who roam the halls of Hampton's high schools.

Hampton's teacher-activists, and Schlesinger herself, are trained political actors. They are experts in the subject matter of government in operation. Their senses of duty to the underserved should be admired, but their call for student participation in local government misses the mark. In calling for such participation as the ideal form of education under democracy, they confuse something that affects their students' lives with something that pertains to their "needs and capacities," in Dewey's terms. Not even Schlesinger's students at the Drum Major Institute, college students who have chosen to spend part of their summers learning to be better and more progressive citizens, qualify as experts in the subject of government in operation. Like the Hampton students—and, I would argue, like Schlesinger when she sat on the New York City school board—they don't know enough, or care to know enough, about the broader context of the policies they are encouraged to support or that they choose to support of their own volition. They are not experts; they are learners. They should be encouraged, as Schlesinger encourages students in her DMI summer sessions, to observe actively, but they should not be tasked with doing the work of experts.

To the degree that Schlesinger calls for more critical thinking on the part of all citizens as they interact with information they find on the internet, more criticism of private corporate influence on education, and more of actual debate in the media circus that serves as our politics, she succeeds and should be heeded. To the degree that she claims to provide a template for improving our system of education, and thereby, a template for returning "why?" to the center of public discourse, she will need to supplement her work here with less of the real world and more of the classroom.

There's no doubt that Schlesinger has and will continue to change our democracy for the better. And so will her students, but not because she teaches them activism. Rather, provided that she teaches with the same passion that comes through this book, her students will surely engage whatever they find in their studies and their lives because they learned with a model learner, with someone who values their ideas as the beginnings of critical thinking rather than as kindling that might flame into the fire of progressive politics. Ⓐ

theater REVIEW

Kings and Queens

- County of Kings. Written and performed by Lemon Andersen. At the Public Theater.
- *A Boy and His Soul.* Written and performed by Colman Domingo. At the Vineyard Theater.

FRANK EPISALE

I recently showed my students some clips of documentary and political theatre, including Moisés Kaufman's *The Laramie Project* and Anna Deveare Smith's *Fires in the Mirror*. One of the discussion-prompting questions I asked was about the function of Smith's solo format. Why play all of those characters yourself instead of bringing other actors in? I was hoping for answers to go in two directions: first, the economic advantages of a solo show. Single performers and modest production demands have helped monologists carve a niche for themselves in US commercial and not-for-profit theatre programming, and artistic directors love solo performers; there's very little overhead, they can easily perform in small spaces, and there are very few people who need to be paid.

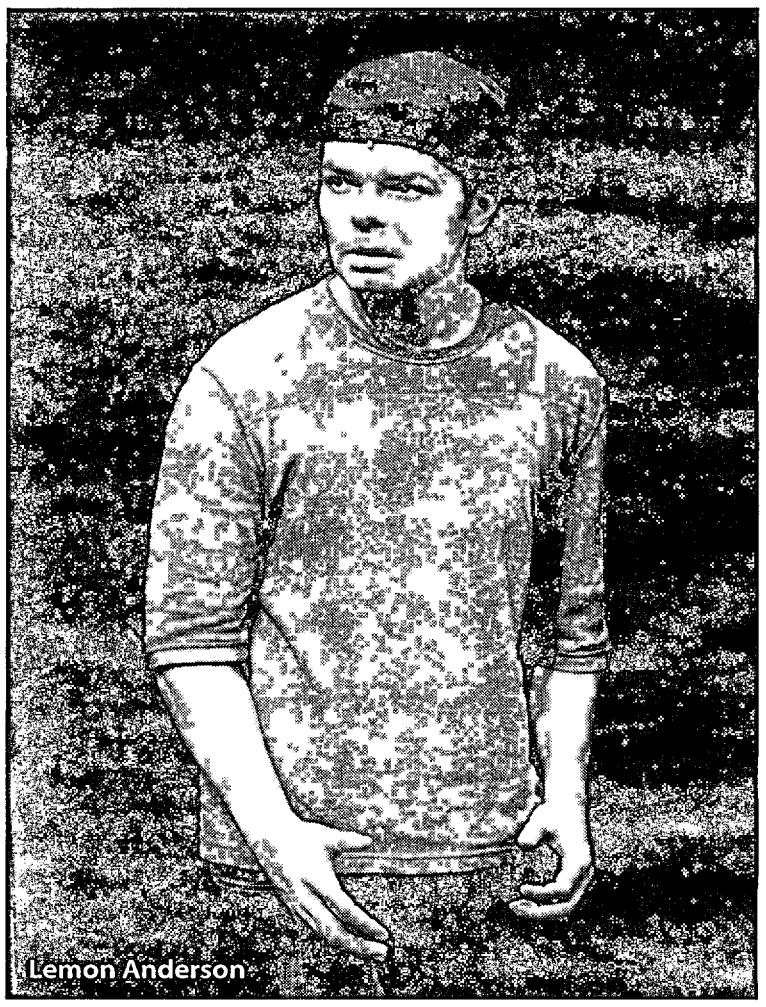
The other thread of conversation I was hoping for had to do with Brecht's idea of "alienation," which I have written about here before, and which my class had been introduced to a couple of sessions prior to our "political theatre" discussion. In Smith's work, the format highlights both the performer's virtuosity (she plays many characters) and the origin of the content (generated from interviews with a variety of subjects). This focus on the process of theatre making is, arguably, a distancing technique, a way to constantly remind the audience that there is an intelligence and an agenda behind the work they are seeing. This kind of awareness, ideally, encourages active engagement with the material rather than a passive, "entertain me" attitude.

With a little prompting, both of these benefits of Smith's solo work came up, raising the participation grades of a couple of students and allowing me a mental pat on the back. One student, though, asserted that the one-woman format seemed narcissistic, particularly in a show with many characters. While some argued that Smith might have felt that it was more practical to maintain direct control of the characterizations of her subjects, other felt that the format screamed "Look at me! Look at how great I am! Look at what important work I'm doing!" I don't find that characterization to be fair, but it does raise some interesting questions about the motivations and insecurities of solo performers, and about the ways they are perceived by audiences and potential audiences.

While it's no great revelation that ego and narcissism are often part of the mix of motivations that drives performers, the comments of my students were on my mind as I read the playbill for Lemon Andersen's *County of Kings*, now playing at the Public Theater. Andersen's bio describes him as "a critically acclaimed and award-winning renaissance artist," and waxes rhapsodic about "rave reviews," "sold out shows," "standing ovations," and "stellar performance[s]." A couple of days later, when I saw Colman Domingo's *A Boy and His Soul* at the Vineyard Theatre, I noticed that, according to his bio, he had never just "appeared" in anything; he had always "starred"; every role Domingo has ever had, it seems, has been a "starring role."

Such language in actor bios probably doesn't strike most audience members as strange or significant, but that's because most audience members don't realize that actors generally submit these bios themselves. If it's a publicist-embellished bio, it's because that's what the actor wanted. If someone is blowing smoke up the actor's ass, it's usually the actor himself.

None of which means anything. Vanity and a love of the spotlight, whether brought about by a surplus of confidence or by masked insecurities, are not universal among artists, but they're pretty common. It should come as no surprise that most performers want to be stars, that they want your applause and admiration. Whether applying their craft to the task of transforming themselves or to the task of revealing themselves, a performer *should* want to be on stage. Why ask hundreds of people to spend their time and money sitting in the dark watching you talk if you don't believe, or at least *want* to believe, that you are worth it. The figure of the humble genius is largely a myth.


Lemon Anderson

I don't know that I would call either Lemon Andersen or Colman Domingo a genius, but when each is at his best, he is a star indeed.

An HBO special waiting to happen, *County of Kings* is long stretches of pretty good punctuated by moments of brilliance. Andersen is familiar to fans of *Def Comedy Jam* as the performer with the most appearances on the broadcast version of that show. Drawing on that background, *Kings* is a hybrid of a spoken-word and more conventional memoir-style solo performance, and it is clear that Andersen is more comfortable with the former. The show's undeniable high points are when he is spitting and rhyming, exhibiting the angry bravado and hip-hop inflected energy associated with spoken word. During the more conventionally dramatic passages, the acting sometimes feels forced, as if the performer is struggling to convey the emotion he feels his story deserves.

The story itself is a traumatic coming-of-age tale that is often harrowing, if not entirely unfamiliar. A light-skinned Latino with a complicated family tree, Andersen grew up in Brooklyn with a loving but heroin-addicted mother who died of AIDS; his mother's boyfriend, who taught him how to break into cars to steal parts; and an older brother who wouldn't let him come along on graffiti-tagging adventures. Eventually, Lemon impregnated his too-young girlfriend, began to deal drugs, and landed in prison not once, but twice. Along the way he came into contact with the seeds of his future career as a performer: being cheered on by a crowd at Coney Island who watched him dance to disco outside an amusement park ride, a brief stint taking ballet classes with an outreach program run by Eliot Feld, the discovery of books, politics, and storytelling while he was in prison.

Colman Domingo's *A Boy and His Soul* begins as Domingo visits his childhood home, which is about to be sold. He discovers a box of records and, shocked that his parents would leave them behind, relives a series of memories linked to the songs he remembers best. Reminiscing about these songs and the memories they conjure, he paints a picture of the west Philadelphia neighborhood where he grew up, of his tight-knit but frequently at-each-other's-throats family, and of the challenges of growing up gay (and fem) in hypermasculine black America.

Domingo is a warm and generous presence on stage, and blends equal parts skill and charisma to keep his tale engaging. There are slack passages here and there, when the story becomes too internal—he almost seems to shut the audience out as he reminisces. Other moments have begun to take on the rote, slightly forced feeling of a show long in development, as if some of the monologues have lost their power over Domingo and he is now delivering simply because it is his job to do so, and no longer because they are personal to him. This would likely not have been noticeable were it not for a fortuitous technical problem that forced the performer to banter with the audience while his microphone was being replaced. The full force of Domingo's personality and spontaneity flooded the theatre like oxygen for those couple of minutes before he returned to the good, but not-quite-*as*-good delivery of his written text.

Neither Andersen's story nor Domingo's is entirely unfamiliar. Looking over my descriptions above I see how mere plot descriptions are almost irrelevant. The power of these stories is in how personal they are for the performers, and for segments of the audience. At each show, audience members here and there would laugh or shout out with recognition when the performer mentioned a place they knew from their *own* childhoods, or a personality that could have been *their* uncle or, most powerfully, a song that had always made *them* want to dance. Both of these remarkable performers are valuable in part because they bring distinctive talents and perspectives to the often too-homogenous stages of New York's institutional theatres. They are also valuable because they attract to these theatres the kinds of audiences whom are not normally accustomed to seeing themselves reflected on stage. My favorite moments in these shows were those to which I couldn't relate, but to which many of the people around me obviously could.

After each of the performances, I saw audience members texting and calling friends and family members to tell them what they'd seen. And during the intermission for *County of Kings* the women behind me talked about buying their nephew a ticket to the show. "He should see this. He could *do* this." And if there is some vanity that comes along with that, if these actors allow themselves to love the spotlight a little too much, I say that is only their due. Ⓐ

County of Kings. Written and performed by Lemon Andersen; developed and directed by Elise Thoron; sets by Peter Ksander and Douglas Stein; lighting by Jane Cox and Lily Fossner; sound by Rob Kaplowitz and Matt Stein. Presented by Spike Lee, Culture Project, Steve Colman, Jayson Jackson and Tom Wirtshafter, in association with the Public Theater at the Public Theater, 425 Lafayette Street through November 8. Tickets: $25–$50, 212-967-7555, or www.publictheater.org

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A Boy and His Soul. Written and performed by Colman Domingo; directed by Tony Kelly; choreographed by Ken Roberson; sets by Rachel Hauck; costumes by Toni-Leslie James; lighting by Marcus Doshi; sound by Tom Morse. At the Vineyard Theatre, 108 East 15th Street, through November 1st. Tickets $20 to $55, 212.353.0303, or www.vineyardtheatre.org

MUSIC REVIEW

And the Beat Goes on... and on, and on...

▶ Works by Beat Furrer, Bernhard Lang, and Steve Reich at Moving Sounds 2009

NAOMI PERLEY

Last month, the Austrian Cultural Forum, the Argento New Music Project, the Music Information Center Austria (MICA), and Le Poisson Rouge jointly presented Moving Sounds 2009, a festival "devoted to sound and its roles in contemporary music." The three-day festival, which sought to bring together artists working with sound across different media and genres, featured several concerts of works by "classical" composers as well as by DJs, an art installation at the Austrian Cultural Forum, panel discussions, and parties. In order to get a taste of the festival, I attended concerts on September 12 and 13 and one of the panels on the afternoon of September13.

The curators, Michel Galante and Peter Rantasa, sought to bring together like-minded artists from the United States and Austria. The concerts on September 12 featured works by Austrian composers Beat Furrer and Bernhard Lang, and finished with a performance of Steve Reich's seminal *Music for Eighteen Musicians*.

Beat Furrer's *Xenos II*, for narrator and a twenty-person chamber ensemble, addressed through the medium of music several of the hot topics of the festival. The basis of the work was Furrer's own voice: the instrumental parts are a musical transcription of Furrer speaking. At the symposium the next day, the composers spoke at length about the challenges of transcribing non-musical sounds for musical instruments, and the difficulties of notating and conveying to performers the types of sounds they wished to hear. Furrer cited *I Am Sitting in a Room*, by American composer Alvin Lucier, as an example of what he was aiming for in his own works. In *I Am Sitting in a Room*, the composer first recorded himself reading a text. He then played it in a room, recording it onto a second tape as it played. He then played the recording of the recording, producing a third recording. With each subsequent recording, the voice becomes less clear and the resonances of the room itself become the dominant sound.

In the first movement of *Xenos II*, Furrer would read a single word, which was then musically refracted by the chamber ensemble, in the form of a soft chord. The sparse, light texture and the static calm of alternating words and chords evoked the restrained, minimal style of Hungarian composer Gyorgy Kurtag. The opening of the second movement immediately jolted the audience out of this Zen-like atmosphere, beginning with a series of alarmingly loud, dissonant chords in the woodwinds and brass. This textless movement was in every way the opposite of the first, with constantly shifting registers, timbres, and dynamics.

In *Differenz/Wiederholung 2* (the title is German for *Difference/Repetition*), Bernhard Lang also explores the human voice, albeit from a different angle. It is written for three vocalists—including a Kurdish singer and a rapper—and a chamber ensemble of approximately ten musicians. Lang used texts by the philosopher Gilles Deleuze (the work is named after his *Difference and Repetition*) and writers William Burroughs and Christian Loidl. He sought to create a counterpoint between different styles of singing, between improvised and composed music, and between spoken narration and song.

In addition to these dichotomies, the work also explores the possibilities of repetition. Lang, in addition to being a classically-trained composer, has been heavily influenced by turntablism and DJ culture, and the effects of this aesthetic came to the forefront in this work. The vocalists often get "stuck" on a word or syllable, mimicking with their voices the effect of a DJ looping a sound over and over. The aesthetic of repetition carries over into the instrumentalists' parts as well. Violinist Miranda Cuckson and electric guitarist Oren Fader built some thoroughly enjoyable improvisations out of small, simple motives throughout the piece, which lent the whole work a sense of unity and dramatic force.

While Saturday's concert focused on the voice, in various forms, Sunday's looked at quite a different aspect of sound. It featured works for percussion and electronics, performed by TimeTable Percussion Trio and DJ Christopher Just. In addition to works by Bernhard Lang and Beat Furrer, the trio performed works by New York composers Sam Pluta and Elizabeth Hoffman.


Beat Furrer

First up was a multimedia work by Sam Pluta, a young composer studying at Columbia. In addition to some percussion instruments and electronics, there were two TV screens hooked up to the electronic equipment. As the performers made different sounds with the electronics, stripes would flash across the TV screen with varying intensity. While the work had a completely different texture from those of the other night, dominated by electronic sounds, some of the same compositional ideas were clearly at play, with a focus on repetition and consistent texture.

The oldest work on Sunday evening's concert was Beat Furrer's *Music for Mallets*, composed in 1985. In this work, each of the three percussionists played a different mallet instrument: the xylorimba, the marimba, and the vibraphone. The work was in a way an etude in composing for a limited timbre, and at the same time fit with the general trend in this festival towards an exploration of repetition and minimalism beyond the style of Steve Reich and Philip Glass.

In a fitting twist, Furrer's work was reinvented later on the program by DJ Christopher Just, who performed a live mix based on *Music for Mallets*. This performance was one of the highlights of the festival. Just combined many different styles of music, classical and popular, in his mix, with fragments of *Music for Mallets* weaving in and out above everything else. This work struck at the heart of what the curators were trying to achieve with this festival, by directly synthesising a classical work and a DJ set. If anything, I would say that the festival could have used more of this type of collaboration. Because the different media and genres showcased in the festival often appeared in separate events at separate venues, it was easy to ignore what you were less interested in, and to focus only on the classical music or on the DJ parties or on the symposia. But by putting the two types of music in one concert, and ensuring that the audience listened to both, the curators achieved a fusion of styles and provided the necessary context for fruitful discussion and collaboration across genres.

Just's remix was sandwiched between two works by Elizabeth Hoffman, an Assistant Professor in composition at New York University. The first work, *Ascension*, was a tape piece—the only work on either of the programs that didn't involve any live performers. The second work, *Vissera*, was for percussion trio and live electronics. Both works showed Hoffman to be a composer preoccupied with questions of timbre, who took the festival's focus at its most elemental level. She was the only composer who used a wide variety of percussion instruments, instead of limiting herself to a few of one type or another. In this way, her work had more in common with the many American composers who have been exploring expanded percussion timbres throughout the twentieth century.

The final work on the program was Bernhard Lang's *Monadologie IV*, for three drum kits. As in *Differenz/Wiederholung 2*, Lang drew on a philosophical text as his source of inspiration—in this case, Gottfried Leibnitz's *Monadology*. Leibnitz sketches in this text a metaphysics based on the idea that everything in the world is derived from simple cells, called monads. The parallels between this idea and Lang's aesthetic are easy to see: Lang derives his works from simple motivic cells, which he constantly expands, repeats, and varies.

In *Monadologie IV*, Lang combined his aesthetic of repetition and variation with a desire to return to the basics of percussion—the drum kit. In this way Lang's work paralleled Furrer's *Music for Mallets*. Lang wanted to strip away all the extra sounds and instruments that have entered the percussionist's arsenal in the last few decades—no chimes, no marimba, just drums. "The drum set is a kind of musical sign or symbol for jazz music, for rock music, and it's both the sound and the energy which interests me," says Lang, "and in *Monadologie IV*, it's especially the energy of three drummers playing together, one drum set in the middle being the engine for the whole piece." The end result was a powerful work that had the energy and momentum of *Differenz/Wiederholung 2* despite the pared-down timbre. It was a great finale to the concert. Ⓐ

film REVIEW

The Revolution *Will* Be Televised

A scene from *The Baader Meinhof Complex*

▶ *The Baader Meinhof Complex*, director: Uli Edel (Germany, 2008)

ANTONIA LEVY

Revolution is a spectacle, and terror is public performance. That, it seems, is the message of the action-filled *The Baader Meinhof Complex* by German director Uli Edel. Adapted from journalist Stefan Aust's book of the same title, the film attempts to tell the "true story" of what later became known as the first generation of the Red Army Faction (RAF)—Germany's Weather Underground, but with a martyr twist. Both radical-left organizations were off-springs of SDS-led anti-war, anti-imperialism, anti-colonial student activism in the 1960s; both shared similar sets of values, strategies—and enemies in the form of a 'fascist' or racist state and a profit-driven, ignorant establishment. But in addition to numerous bombings and bank robberies à la Weather Underground, the activities of three generations of RAF members account for over thirty homicides and several iconic suicides of their own, as dramatically commemorated at the end of the film.

As suggested by an exorbitant ad campaign preceding its release, *The Baader Meinhof Complex* is an impressive movie indeed: with a cast that reads like the who-is-who in German cinema, a scandalous budget (in German standards) of twenty million euros, and the meticulous cloning of renowned historical pictures for the screen, down to minute details of revolutionary dress codes, book shelves in prison, or car brands used for kidnapping. Following Aust's journalistic chronology of RAF's rise and fall, the film's impressive scenes lay out the context for the group's emergence: brutal police beatings of unarmed protesters at the shah of Iran's visit in Berlin 1967 and the police killing of Benno Ohnesorg, often cited as the first casualty of the 1960s protest movement; passionate appeals for resistance and action in front of huge student crowds by Rudi Dutschke (a popular SDS leader) and the assassination attempt on him in 1968, which was evidently inspired by German tabloids' lurid coverage of the student movement. The camera seems like a participant in the scenes depicting the angry blockade of Springer, an infamous publishing house, and ensuing destruction of delivery trucks by protesters.

Also in the thick of it: Ulrike Meinhof, the coolly observing but fiery writing editor-in-chief of a political magazine who leaves her husband because of his adultery. Soon, more protagonists enter the scene, each wrapped in their stereotypical imagery: Andreas Baader, the macho for whom "fucking and shooting" are the same, and Gudrun Ensslin, the cool blond, still without a gun. After Baader is arrested for an anti-war action involving the setting of fire in two department stores, Meinhof is recruited to help with his escape—during which she makes her famous leap, out the window and into the underground. Therewith, somehow, the RAF is born.

Over the next two years, there are bombings and pamphlets and guerilla trainings in Jordan—a memorable movie moment when topless German revolutionaries (they are sunbathing) face irritated Palestinian freedom fighters (who dismiss their hedonist comrades soon after). Then, in rapid succession, the dramatic arrests of almost all leaders of the group's first generation in 1972, followed by clippings from their five long years in a maximum security prison—during which they obtained an impressive number of prisoners' privileges—and their widely televised, two-year long trial. Meanwhile, the so-called second generation was born whose bombings and killings and hostage-takings still wore the ideological signature of previous RAF actions, but which were primarily done in an attempt to force the release of the founders from prison. The state, however, did not comply, leading to the martyr deaths of most RAF members in the Stammheim prison.

In the end, this fast-paced and picturesque rundown of Germany's revolutionary heyday leaves the viewer breathlessly staring at the rolling credits; wondering after two and a half hours of blazing teargas, flaming pamphlets, dirty language, and untimely deaths: Where have all the ideals gone? And where did they come from in the first place? As detailed as the film is in dealing with historical facts and figures, it fails to offer any real reasons why the sheltered daughter of a Protestant pastor (Ensslin), the journalistic icon of Germany's left establishment (Meinhof), or the fatherless high school drop-out with a weakness for fast cars (Baader) all ended up among Germany's most wanted.

If this movie, as was the filmmakers' stated intention, is meant to educate today's twenty-year olds about the origins and intentions of the RAF and left radicalism, it might need a second, less-spectacular, more critical sequel. It needs a lot more than beautiful pictures in chronological order to grasp the intense moral purpose behind the violent passions of that era; to elucidate how historical memory, for example of Germany's Nazi past, influenced ideologies of terror and the resulting political actions of left militant organizations; or to explain the destructive effects of aggressive infiltration and intentional provocation (most of them later deemed unlawful) by various government agencies on various leftist factions. In addition to what the film is missing, even for a German native with a fairly decent education in the country's radical history, some of the new characters constantly arriving on the film scene remained a mystery, and lots of the movie's abounding details are lost on the uninitiated viewer. Another minor observation: the translations of the aggressive and intentionally abrasive speech among RAF members appear astoundingly modest in some of the subtitles. An intentional concession to MPAA rating? One wonders.

Hence ... sit back and enjoy the entertainment more than education when the revolution is televised: blockbuster-style, Golden Globe- and Oscar-nomination style (the film didn't win either), and don't forget the popcorn! If interested in less lengthy but more in-depth investigations into Germany's recent revolutionary past, films like *Germany In Autumn* (*Deutschland im Herbst* by Werner Fassbinder et al, 1978), *The State I Am In* (*Die innere Sicherheit* by Christian Petzold, 2001), or *Legend Of Rita* (*Die Stille nach dem Schuss* by Volker Schloendorff, 1999) might be more sensible choices. The latter, for example, deals with a little-known and even less discussed detail of RAF history beyond *Baader Meinhof Complex*, and the communist entanglements of East and West Germany's pasts.

The movie was adapted from an autobiography by Inge Viett, who together with nine other RAF members escaped imminent prosecution in the 1980s by going into hiding in Germany's communist east. Provided with fake identities and logistical support for a new life by the East German secret service, they remained undetected until the fall of the Berlin wall when unification entailed the loss of protection from a sympathetic system and led to discovery and eventual conviction by West Germany's law enforcement. But there is spectacle added to this adaptation, too—differing from Inge Viett's story, the film's main character is shot while trying to escape on a motorcycle—as if fictional accounts of (attempted) revolution can't do without a seemingly necessary blend of drama, romance...and martyrs. Ⓐ

Why You May Not Be Repped in CUNY Senate

SHAWN RICE

For this month's installment of the DSC page, we have a mix of the practical as well as a more reflective section about what it means to be a student at the Graduate Center and also be employed by the Graduate Center itself. Let's start with the practical.

Party

We're having a party, and you're invited. Find it on October 23, starting at 8pm in 5414. There will be booze, and there will be food; but, really, what more do you need for a way to let off some steam mid-semester?

Meetings

We have three more plenary meetings this semester: October 23, November 11, and December 11. All the meetings start at 6pm in room 5414. Everyone is welcome; please come if you have any interest.

Free Legal Consultations

Free legal advice is available for you at the Graduate Center. Look on the DSC website (www.cunydsc.org) for times and a form to signup. Walk-ins are welcome, time permitting.

Travel Grants

Go to a conference. Really, it helps your CV. Before you go, apply for a travel grant for up to $300. Save your receipts. Forms are available on the DSC website.

Voting for Chartered Organizations

Next, chartered organizations need to turn in rosters quite often to remain active in the eyes of the DSC. This has always been a tedious process for both the chairs of the organizations as well as for the Co-Chair for Student Affairs. This year, we've implemented a much more intelligent system that works through Votenet, the voting system that we use to run our elections.

Now, the chartered organization chairs no longer need to chase down members and potential members to receive the requisite number of signatures; instead you should receive a link to the voting system in which you can "vote" for the organizations, which is, effectively, a signature.

If you haven't received an email, then please look at the DSC website for a link to the voting system. You might even find new organizations that you want to join.

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Let's move to the reflective. As graduate students in the Graduate Center, we hold the obvious position of being, well, students. I generally think of myself as a student first. Yet, much, perhaps too much, of my week is spent planning for classes that I'm about to teach and grading papers.

This is because I'm also an adjunct, and I probably spend each week worrying more about what and how I'm going to teach than I do with my work. In all likelihood, most of you are in the same boat, acting as both students and teachers, occupying both sides of the university.

As an adjunct, I am paid by Hunter College, and so there is a split: I'm a student of the Graduate School, and I'm an employee of Hunter College. However, those who have teaching fellowships, those who are Grad B's and C's are both students and employees of the Graduate School, making for a schizophrenic situation. But, as you might occupy both of these positions at once, most of us are looked at as students first and perhaps as students and students alone.

One practical manifestation of this situation, and the one that I want to focus on, is that Grad B's and C's make up a population of part-time instructional faculty at the Graduate School. Yes, you are teaching at other campuses, but you are technically employees of the Graduate School and not the campus at which you teach. Because of this, for lack of a better word, weirdness, we don't have a seat that is due to us on the University Faculty Senate. I should actually say you don't because, as an adjunct, I'm not one of the over 600 part-time faculty who are not represented.

And, even more practical, the DSC is sponsoring a snap-election of all part-time instructional faculty at the Graduate Center—a population that contains perhaps thirty others besides Grad B's and C's— in order to elect *pro tempore* representative to send to UFS.

So, if you fall into one of these categories, look out for the call for nominations. Ⓐ

Health Issues

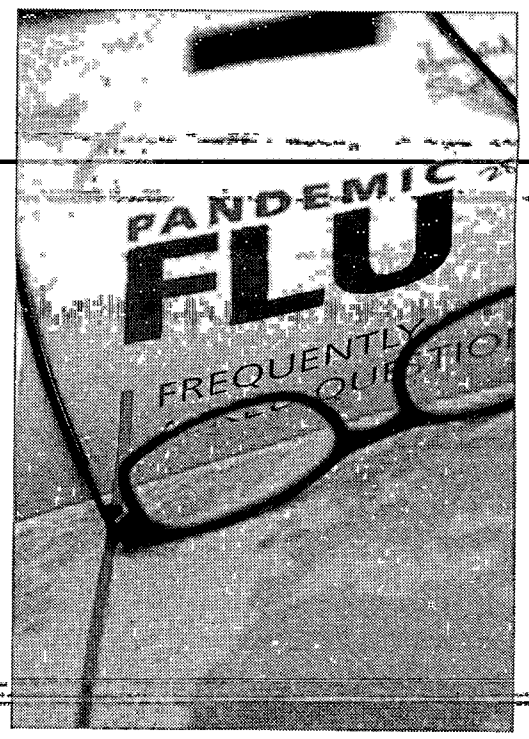
Continued from page 5

surers. Politically we are not at the table speaking for the care we need. We are used as bargaining chips nudged back and forth between politicians and the insurance industry. Forcing us to pay for health insurance is big leverage for getting insurers to lower premiums and accept people with pre-existing conditions. Practically speaking, our health care coverage is never discussed as serving us and the particular health care needs we may have.

We understand that we are vulnerable, we want care, but most of us can't afford it! We get sick with everything from common colds to early cancers. We get hit by busses while riding our bikes and acquire sports injuries as we try to take personal responsibility for staying fit. We get depressed and struggle with addictions. And, we need and want preventive care. Women in this age bracket are in the prime years of fertility. We need access to health care so that we can have healthy pregnancies and families when we want them and have reasonable options for deciding what to do when we don't.

Most of the young invincibles I know are troubled about not having health insurance but the options they are presented with are out of reach. At one point, when I was uninsured graduate student I found the nearly $200 a month New York State Family Health Plus Plan and the $250 a month Student GHI coverage unaffordable with my salary as a research assistant and teaching fellow. To qualify for free health insurance through the New York State I needed a pre-tax income of no more $800 a month. This is less than what most of my colleagues pay monthly in rent.

The debate about national health care reform is connected to a long-standing and ongoing struggle for health care at CUNY. This struggle is about more than the right to see a doctor. At CUNY, graduate students, and recently graduated part-time faculty, teach more than half of the courses offered—and are uninsured or underinsured. Our under-protected health is a major vulnerability to this university. As such it undermines the university's mission of providing high quality education to poor and working class New Yorkers. Our underinsurance, the precarious position in which it leaves CUNY, and the death and resurrection cycle of the 'public option' are reflective of the troubling stance our society takes denigrating and underfunding all things "public"



Unlike most universities, CUNY does not have a health insurance mandate. Supposedly, this is meant to protect students from the cost of paying into a university-wide health care system. In practice it means that CUNY is absolved of any responsibility for our health care and that our student fees cover the majority of the wellness services offered on this campus. As of last year, matriculated Graduate Center students who meet employment requirements are eligible for insurance as student employees of New York State. The coverage that some of us receive through the New York State Health Insurance Program (NYSHIP) was hard won. The Profession Staff Congress of CUNY, the Doctoral Students Council, the Adjunct Project, and the Graduate Center administrators, students and faculty who fought for this should be applauded. However, as it functions now, the NYSHIP agreement still leaves even those of us with coverage grossly underinsured and leaves adjuncts who are not matriculated students simply uninsured.

As chair of the DSC's Health Issues Committee, I've had the unhappy privilege of trying to help students find a course of action when they encounter NYSHIP's limitations. For example, if you are under forty, the plan only allows for $60 every two years for routine care. It provides no coverage for preventive care or diagnostics—like tests for sexually transmitted infections. The dental plan included only pays for mercury fillings, not composite fillings, which are less toxic. Unsurprisingly many students are hard pressed to find health care providers that accept our plan. Worse yet, many only become aware of its limitations after they exceed their annual, or biannual, allowances and begin receiving claim denials and bills in the mail.

Reflective of our position in the health care debate in Washington, at home within CUNY we are also being used to disburse risk. For a single person, our insurance costs New York State and CUNY about $100 a month. It's cheap in part because it doesn't cover much. It is also cheap because it allows the private insurers involved to enroll more young invincibles under the expectation that we won't need, or want, much health care. It also allows both private insurers and New York State to dismiss our needs now that we have insurance that is considered better than nothing.

The single payer, or Medicare for all, options have long since disappeared from our national debate. But, this option is the one most likely to address the health care needs of young adults in public institutions like CUNY. It could drive down cost by eliminating administrative expenses and leveraging economies of scale. It would ensure that working and non-working students and their part-time faculty instructors were covered when they got sick or had accidents. Delivered well, it could even begin to break down some of the stigma we place on public goods.

If you missed the October 8 forum and would like to know more about health care reform and how you can get involved in the national debate, the Student Health Committee of the Public Health Association of New York City is planning a health care reform teach in on this on October 22. The event will be held at Columbia University. For more information go to www.phanyc.org. Ⓐ

Poll Finds Satirist Matt Lau's Approval Rating at All-Time Low

MATT LAU

Whether it's because they never thought his "Back Page" "articles" were funny in the first place, or because they gradually began to discern the formulaic and insipid nature of most of his jokes and premises, or because he has cast aspersions on too many members of the fragile Graduate Center community, or because his articles have now reached a new low of self-referential aggrandizement—one thing is clear. According to a recent poll, satire columnist Matt Lau is persona non-grata at the Grad Center these days.

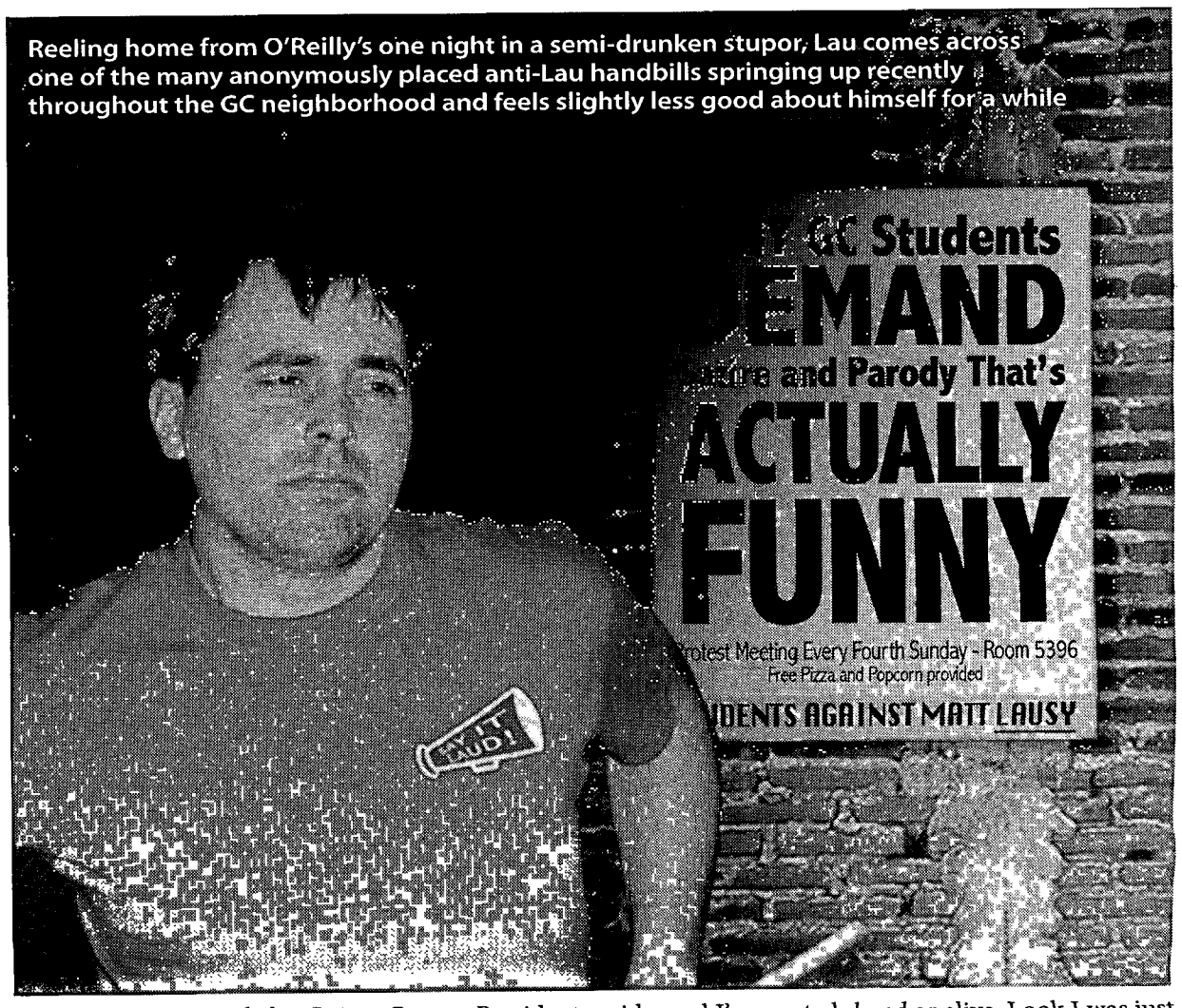
The poll was conducted by a group of students concerned about the diminishing levels of humor and wit in the official satire column of the university. The poll asked students whether they approved of Lau's column, disapproved of it, or had no opinion. 90 percent of respondents had no opinion, while the other person who participated expressed vituperative disapproval.

Poll spokesperson, Mark Schiebe, who was coincidentally also the one person to disapprove of Lau in the anonymous poll, had this to say, "It would be is easy to tolerate the disreputable imagination of Lau if the offensive scenarios he came up with were at all funny.

"But what, may I ask, is funny about faculty freezing to death during a bikini car wash fundraiser in February or starving students once again eating the free computer paper in the library for their Thanksgiving meal or the History Department's softball team medaling at the Special Olympics or the University President spooning with another professor for a promotional "Men of the GC" wall calendar or suggesting that the GC would be taken over by Interboro Technical College because it has superior job placement support?

"Generously speaking, perhaps these sordid and outrageous ideas could in themselves have made for useful satire premises, but again and again Lau has resorted to cheap bits, gags, puns, and when all else fails, the photoshop skills of the Advocate's layout editor. Over and over he has relied for his premises on puns," said a visibly angry Schiebe, who looked tired from a long day of polling himself again. "The Graduate Center and the Guitar Center, President Kelly and R&B singer R Kelly, Oral Examinations and the Freudian Oral Stage; respected Professor Jerry Watts and the Diogenes of Midtown Jerry Watts. These puns are about as funny as jokes about persons with no arms and legs or babies with spears in their heads. Sure, at first you laugh, but then you feel guilty and dirty, even after you've taken a few cold showers."

When asked whether he had burned out or faded away, in a typical example of his lack of literary discipline, Lau attempted to quote both Peter Tosh and Bon Jovi at the same time in what he thought was a hilarious joke. "I'm a cowboy on a steel horse I ride, and I'm wanted *dread* or alive. Look I was just trying to make a little money to pay down my tab at O'Reilly's. And yeah, it is kind of fun to slander good honest people; it makes me feel like a right-wing media commentator. But I can't stop now, after all the shaming I did of how our boss, Advocate 'editor at-large' James Hoff, only paid us with his unused food stamps for writing for this paper, we've finally gotten a raise! In addition to our $50 dollars a month, I now get a Papa John's pizza coupon book that James only made me pay $25 for! I can't tell you how many half-eaten extra-large meat-lovers there are at Mark Schiebe's apartment right now. And I'm not even talking about the pizzas!" Ⓐ



Reeling home from O'Reilly's one night in a semi-drunken stupor, Lau comes across one of the many anonymously placed anti-Lau handbills springing up recently throughout the GC neighborhood and feels slightly less good about himself for a while

ph.d. comics BY JORGE CHAM